

IN THE SHADOW OF CIVILIZATION(S)? CIVILIZATIONAL THINKING AND THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF WORLD ORDER

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Abstract: The article addresses the role of civilization in world politics and how civilizational thinking has been embedded in the (re)construction of the world. Taking into account the conceptualization of civilization as a collectivity and as a quality (as well as a process), a variety of perspectives over the interaction of civilizations is briefly overviewed within the International Relations discipline, through helpful cartographies which reflect the ontological and epistemological issues at stake. Most crucially, emphasis is given on how civilization has been evoked in the shaping of the international society and system, through notions such as the standard of civilization, civilizing mission and civilizing process as well as eurocentrism and its presence in the conceptualization of international politics. Overall, it is feasible to appreciate the political and cultural achievements of civilizations but at the same time also criticize the respective contradictions and the exclusionary logics or mechanisms in the name of civilization(s).

Key-words: civilization(s), international politics, world order, eurocentrism

Introduction: The concept of 'civilization' in international politics¹

The role of civilization in international politics has fairly recently been raised as a major concern in the International Relations discipline (IR). Within the context of the latter, the article addresses this role, taking into account the conceptualization of civilization as a collectivity and as a quality (or a process), as well as how civilizational thinking has been embedded in the (re)construction of the world order especially during the post-cold war but also before. The rising debates over such role are deemed important, since they reflect not only a complex socio-political reality but moreover the horizon of the systematic

1. The article draws –as a modified and extended version– from a paper presented at the conference of the International Studies Association/Comparative and Interdisciplinary Studies Section ‘*Boundaries and Borders in an Evolving World Order: Challenges and Prospects*’. Thessaloniki/Greece, 13-15/6/2016.

advancement of critical thought with regard to the civilizational underpinnings of politics.

‘Civilization’ is subject to polysemy, given its varied understanding, i.e. as a collectivity – a notion which often entails the use of plural (‘civilizations’) – as well as a quality of people or societies and a status juxtaposed to barbarity: a notion which is usually underscored with the use of singular (‘civilization’),² impinging upon a respective process. This conceptual variety is similar to the one concerning ‘culture’, which has been comprehended in terms of spiritual/intellectual development, ways of life, artistic activity and finally systems of signification.³ It is the context of a certain reference which defines both the degree of overlap or distinction of the two terms and their particular dimensions denoted in specific cases.

From a rather obvious angle, the connection between international politics and civilizations is about civilizations and conflict (conflict of civilizations) or dialogue (civilizational dialogue, Alliance of Civilizations).⁴ However, it is not exhausted there, since it also includes civilization as a criterion of distinction in multiple patterns of interaction with political motives and repercussions, involving exclusionary and hierarchical mechanisms and logics. According to a succinct distinction of the analysis of civilization(s)’ function in world affairs,⁵ one major view relates to the role of civilizations in the formation of interests or identities and consequently their interaction in international politics. Here, it is ‘civilizations’ that matter, denoting larger collectivities within which smaller ones arise. Yet from another regard, attention is given to the linkage between the conceptualization of civilization and rules or criteria of governance. In this case, ‘civilization’ reflects the juxtaposition of progress to barbarity.

Out of those two dimensions, the former is underscored in the next section,

2. N. Yurdusev, *International Relations and the Philosophy of History: A Civilizational Approach*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003: ch. 4.

3. G. Jordan & C. Weedon, *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender and Race in the Postmodern World*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995: 6-8, addressing the work of R. Williams, *The Sociology of Culture*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995: 10-14.

4. Respectively S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996 and M. Michael, F. Petitto (eds), *Civilizational Dialogue and World Order: The Other Politics of Cultures, Religions, and Civilizations in International Relations*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; G. Bettiza, *Empty Signifier in Practice: Interrogating the ‘Civilizations’ of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations*, Florence: EUI working paper RSCAS 2014/95, 2014.

5. J. O’Hagan, Discourses of Civilizational Identity, in M. Hall & P. Jackson (eds), *Civilizational Identity: The Production and Reproduction of ‘Civilizations’ in International Relations*, 15-31, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: 29-30.

whereby a variety of perspectives over the role and interaction of civilizations is briefly overviewed, through helpful cartographies which illustrate the ontological and epistemological issues at stake, reflecting IR's meta-theoretical depth. The latter dimension is then discussed, with emphasis on how civilization has been evoked in the shaping of the international society and system, through notions such as the standard of civilization, civilizing mission and civilizing process (third section) as well as eurocentrism with its heavy presence in the conceptualization of world politics (fourth section). The final section underscores the feasibility of appreciating various political and cultural achievements of civilizations, while simultaneously engaging critically with the respective contradictions and the exclusionary logics or mechanisms in the name of civilization(s).

In Huntington's shadow? Charting the role of civilizations in international politics

Regarding civilizational encounters, the argument of S. Huntington over the clash of civilizations,⁶ i.e. that the post-cold war politics would largely take place along civilizational fault lines in an antagonistic venire, proved to be highly influential. Over twenty years later, its 'shadow' remains but it has been complemented by the advancement of a series of relevant arguments and questions. The role of civilizations in the formation of interests and identities has inspired a varied mode of research.⁷ This is eloquently illustrated through a typology of the study of civilizations in politics concerning two dimensions/axes:⁸ one about ontology (what's the specific object of study?) and the other about the mode of observation/specification (who actually specifies civilizations and with what criteria?). In particular, the former dimension comes down to 'attributes' and 'processes'. Orientation towards the attributes of civilizations usually constitutes an essentialist approach, as opposed to an orientation towards the mechanisms and practices regarding the evolution of the phenomenon. The second dimension gets down to either scholarly or participant specification of civilizations. In this case, the definition and description of civilizations by their observer through specific criteria is juxtaposed to the entities' self-perception. For example, the analysis of civilization X may take place in either special scientific terms or explicitly through the self-understanding of the respective people of X themselves. Consequently, according to this typology, mixing both dimensions offers four combinations over the study of civilizations, depending upon emphasis on:

- a) attribute ontology and scholarly specification, focusing on interests (iden-

6. S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

7. P. Katzenstein (ed.), *Civilizations in World Politics. Plural and Pluralist Perspectives*, New York: Routledge, 2010.

8. P. Jackson, How to Think About Civilizations, in Katzenstein *ibid.*: 176-200.

tification of the core principles of civilizations, predominantly urging retrenchment and defence of those principles),

b) process ontology and scholarly specification, emphasizing structural context (geography, interaction),

c) attribute ontology and participant specification, underscoring identity (actions and outcomes searched in a constructivist venire),

d) process ontology and participant specification, encouraging attention to boundary practices (how reinscribing civilizational boundary lines works for the promotion of various aims).⁹

Another typology is also built upon one of the aforementioned axes, namely 'scholarly specification ontology vs participant specification ontology', replacing 'attributes-process' with the dimension 'analytical theory - normative/critical theory'. Thus, four combinations come up:¹⁰

a) Civilizational dynamics: how are civilizations formed and defined and how do they interact with each other?

b) Inter-civilizational ethics: how do civilizations or civilizational identities emerge as ontological realities in the social world? What intellectual normative and institutional frameworks can be devised for the promotion of international peace through better inter-civilizational (cultural and religious) dialogue and understanding?

c) Civilizational politics: how do multiple actors think in varied ways about themselves and others in plural civilizational terms?

d) Politics of civilization(s): how and in whose interest are civilizational categories and boundaries as well as patterns of inclusion/exclusion drawn? Why and how are civilizational discourses deployed to draw boundaries as well as de-humanize the 'other', legitimize repressive and colonial practices or finally sustain unequal power relations?

Those typologies eloquently highlight a variety of issues and arguments. The study of civilizations has undergone various phases within social science in general, but the one, that has recently affected IR, relates to emphasizing an anti-

9. See respectively for each combination Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*; R. Cox (with M. Schechter), *The Political Economy of a Plural World. Critical Reflections on Power, Morals and Civilization*, London: Routledge, 2002: esp. ch. 8-10; E. Adler, 'Europe as a Civilizational Community of Practice', in Katzenstein, *Civilizations in World Politics*, 67-90; M. Hall & P. Jackson (eds), *Civilizational Identity: The Production and Reproduction of 'Civilizations' in International Relations*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

10. G. Bettiza, Civilizational Analysis in International Relations: Mapping the Field and Advancing a 'Civilizational Politics' Line of Research, *International Studies Review*, 16, 1(2014), 1-28: 5-9.

essentialist line of reasoning, in the sense of a suspicious stance over an essentialist view of civilizations and generally political communities.¹¹ Emphatically, another typology of civilizational analysis within IR stresses this ‘essentialism/anti-essentialism’ controversy in conjunction with the narratives ‘clash/conflict-dialogue/engagement’.¹²

Moreover, how civilizations interact with each other in world affairs is complemented by how the former relate to the emergence of international systems. Interest for this has especially taken place in the name of a ‘civilizational approach’ within IR. In this regard, both concepts (‘international systems’ and ‘civilizations’) have been understood both as interconnected social entities –human creations through time– and as units of analysis in history and international politics.¹³ Specifically, there have been international systems composed of several civilizations or even just one, while the contemporary international system basically consists of nation-states, simultaneously including multiple civilizations.¹⁴ In short, the system is characterized as both inter-civilizational and trans-civilizational. It is Western-centric regarding the dominant presence of a specific civilization, while the role of the nation-state doesn’t amount to the loss of civilizational identity.¹⁵ Overall, IR’s meta-theoretical depth, involving the systematic engagement with ontology and epistemology, is reflected in multiple perspectives within the field addressing civilization.

‘In the name of civilization’: The standard of civilization and civilizing mission

While the previous section focused on the diverse analysis of the role of civilizations in international politics, this section brings attention to the connection of the latter with the evocation of civilization.¹⁶ One of the most characteristic

11. M. Hall, *Toward a Fourth Generation in Civilizational Scholarship*. In Hall & Jackson, *Civilizational Identity*, 199-205.

12. Bettiza, *Civilizational Analysis in International Relations*, 17.

13. Yurdusev, *International Relations and the Philosophy of History*.

14. *Ibid.* ch. 6-7.

15. *Ibid.* p. 149.

16. For a more detailed analysis, see K. Mikelis. *From Civilizing Mission to Soft Power? European Powers and the Politics of Attraction*, in J. House & T. Kaniklidou (eds), *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference. Europe in Discourse: Identity, Diversity, Borders. Athens, September 23-25, 2016*, 73-86, Hellenic American University, 2017: 74-76 (the reflections of which are reconstructed in this section) as well as K. Mikelis & D. Stroikos, *Hierarchies, Civilization and the Eurozone Crisis: The Greek Financial Crisis*, in J. Marangos (ed.), *The Internal Impact and External Influence of the Greek Financial Crisis*, 125-142, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017: 127-130.

cases of such connection is the standard(s) of civilization, which is related to the inclusion/entry of a state to a society of states, or else an international society. It is one of the analytical tools of the English School of IR, which has explicitly included civilizational terms in its historical and comparative analysis of diverse international systems.

The standard of civilization relates to the set of assumptions through which an international society differentiates its members from its non-members, by accepting the latter in its ranks through the fulfilment of specific requirements. In other words, state *X* wishing to enter a group is recognized by the latter as equal and fit to enter that group, as long as it matches certain criteria. A notable example is the expansion of the European society of states,¹⁷ regarding non-European members, through the use of this criterion, fundamentally transforming cultures or civilizations and the respective modes of interaction. Membership means neither necessarily the formation of an alliance nor the adoption of common principles but the behaviour of all members as part of a single system. On the other hand, entering the society of civilized states was just a form of interaction, along with unequal treaties or protectorates etc. Discussing the standard of civilization may be considered obsolete, in light of the enlargement of the group of more or less 'civilized states', or undermined with respect to those states' damaging effects through colonialism or tragic wars among them. But it is important as far as contemporary international society is a society with different cultures.¹⁸

Ideally, there have been three modes of understanding the standard of civilization within IR and especially –yet not only– in the name of the English School namely as:¹⁹

- a) a practice constitutive of state identity and international society,
- b) a history of ideas and political thought oriented to the imposition of Western political primacy,
- c) an analytical and/or normative framework, aiming to demonstrate material and normative power asymmetries and hierarchies embedded in civilizational rules, discourses and practices in world politics.

The significance of the respective *problématique* regained momentum as far as

17. H. Bull & A. Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984; Y. Stivachtis, *The Enlargement of International Society*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

18. G. Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984. Cf. A. Linklater, 'The 'Standard of Civilisation' in World Politics', *Human Configurations*, 5, 2(2016).

19. D. Stroiikos, 'Introduction: Rethinking the Standard(s) of Civilisation(s) in International Relations', *Millennium*, 42, 3(2014), 546-556: 549-550. For more details, see the respective forum in the same issue.

the corresponding rhetoric and mechanisms are implicated in the enlargement of international and regional cooperation and integration.²⁰ Notably, globalization entails the emergence of the “global standards of market civilization”, the adoption of which has emerged as requirement for economic development, involving power relations.²¹

The standard of civilization presupposes the existence of less mature or civilized entities as well as non-civilized behaviour. It stresses civilization as a condition or quality (possession of good manners vs barbarian behaviour), related to hierarchical mechanisms and logics which may at times justify violence. Bluntly put, international politics is not characterized by a single logic of the kind ‘a civilized state doesn’t fight’ or ‘war is for barbarians’. Historically, the logic that civilizational superiority legitimizes the use of violence, on behalf of the civilizing actor, has often appeared. One way is to proclaim one’s values subject to compliance on behalf of others. The respective intricacies are eloquently denoted by the drafting of a special document which was read to natives, at a certain time in America’s conquest, regarding the history of the world and emphasizing the salvation of humanity by Jesus Christ and consequently papal authority.²²

Besides the ‘bright’ side of civilization in world history, the other side of the coin includes a darker dimension and in particular civilization’s “historic centrality in legitimating European imperialism and its continuing associations as a license for Western aggression”.²³ In that respect, it has largely functioned as “colonial ideology” or even so as “European ideology”.²⁴ This relates to the logic and mechanisms of civilizing mission especially on behalf of empires, with the notable example of France. The latter’s cultural diplomacy in the 19th century explicitly included this element on the basis that advancing universal principles is desirable and necessary.²⁵ Actually according to a systematic cartography of

20. See K. Nicolaidis, C. Vergerio, N. Fisher Onar & V. Viehoff, From Metropolis to Microcosmos: The EU’s New Standards of Civilisation, *Millennium*, 42, 3(2014), 718-745.

21. B. Bowden & L. Seabrooke, Global Standards of Market Civilization, in Hall & Jackson, *Civilizational Identity*, 119-133.

22. C. Brown, Cultural Diversity and International Political Theory: From the Requirement to ‘Mutual Respect’?, *Review of International Studies*, 26, 2(2000), 199-213: 202-204.

23. A. Phillips, Saving Civilization from Empire: Belligerency, Pacifism and the two Faces of Civilization During the Second Opium War, *European Journal of International Relations*, 18, 1(2011), 5-27: 9.

24. B. Mazlish, *Civilization and its Contents*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004: ch. 2 & 3.

25. J. Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Liberalism in Britain and France*, Princeton:

the activity of cultural institutions of great powers,²⁶ their development has undergone several phases, one of which relates to cultural nationalism in the late 19th and early 20th century, explicitly relating to civilizing mission as well as to national integration.

Moreover, the rhetoric and practices of protecting or maintaining civilization against the barbarian threat have been bluntly pinpointed as “barbarians and civilization in international relations”. In particular, the dichotomy ‘civilization/barbarians’ has often been used in legitimizing political action and the formation of European imperialism, being a crucial part of colonial discourse and imperialist tool. In other words, the stereotype of barbarian and the rhetoric of civilizing mission were used in imperialist ideology and the justification of wars, especially against barbarians or even other imperial powers in the name of protecting civilization. With colonialism breaking down and the increasing incredibility of civilizing claims, the content of this dichotomy was reconstituted, since imperialist practices were still reproduced in light of the idea of the clash of civilizations.²⁷ In particular, the international thought of the 19th century and the early 20th century included civilization as a crucial criterion for progress and belonging, through the use of the standard of civilization and a rising discourse with imperialist, racial, class and gendered references or dimensions.²⁸ In all the complexity of the respective intellectuals, support of conquest against non-Europeans and the exercise of despotic power over them took place even by liberal intellectuals concerned with human equality and freedom. With respect to tackling cultural difference, accounts of progress became more triumphalist and less nuanced or tolerant, while a sense of civilizational and specifically national self-confidence came to dominate on political discourse in imperial powers such as Great Britain and France.²⁹

So, the expansion of the international society has been complemented by the role of civilizing mission in the name of enabling and legitimating imperialist expansionism, related also to culture as “civilizing mission of culture”.³⁰ On the other hand, it would be wrong to assume a single relation between impe-

Princeton University Press, 2005: 165-173.

26. G. Paschalidis, Exporting National Culture: Histories of Cultural Institutes Abroad, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15, 3(2009), 275-289: 277-285.

27. M. Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations*, London: Pluto, 2002.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 156. Also see U.S. Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-century British Liberal Thought*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999: ch. 3.

29. Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 240.

30. J. Reeves, *Culture and International Relations: Narratives, Natives and Tourists*, London: Routledge, 2004: ch. 1.

rial violence and the rhetoric of civilization. After all, an inquiry into the debates over British engagement into war, in the 19th century, succinctly shows claims in the name of civilization towards both defending and criticizing imperial expansion.³¹ Obviously, this means not that civilizing rhetoric was not put in the service of imperial strategies or interests but that it took place in a varied manner. The simultaneous use of the concept of 'civilization' both as justification for expansion or violence and as condemnation of cruelty has been succinctly postulated in A. Linklater's "Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems".³² Consequently, investigating the connection between civilizing rhetoric and strategy, with no prejudice, remains crucial. In this regard, it is challenging to take notice of the original expectations about the function of the UN as a mechanism of defence and adjustment of empires in an era in which the role of nations was constantly increasing.³³

Do these belong to the past or are they just interesting with respect to history? Not necessarily. Indicatively, drawing from N. Elias, attention has been brought by Linklater to "civilizing process", taken to mean the evolutionary tendency of European societies towards a cosmopolitan course with increasing refutation of violence, which is considered an important element for the "sociology of international relations". The focus is given here to the dominant attitudes towards cruelty and bodily and mental harm in world politics as well as to the connection of commitments to universal moral community with states-systems' evolution, with emphasis on the potential of the modern states-system emerging as the site for unusual developments in cosmopolitan moral emotions.³⁴ According to this line of reasoning, there have been "global civilizing processes" as patterns which protect humans from irrational actions of other people³⁵ and they are enhanced through advancing "dialogic politics".³⁶ In that respect, dialogue among civilizations is also dialogue among the civilized. On the other hand, the

31. Phillips, *Saving Civilization from Empire*.

32. A. Linklater, *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, in conjunction with the 'Forum: Linklater's Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems', in the *Review of International Studies*, vol. 43, issue 4, 2017.

33. M. Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace. The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009: 27.

34. A. Linklater, Norbert Elias, the 'Civilizing Process' and the Sociology of International Relations, *International Politics*, 41, 1(2004), 3-35.

35. A. Linklater, Dialogic Politics and the Civilising Process, *Review of International Studies*, 31, 1(2005), 141-154.

36. A. Linklater, Global Civilizing Processes and the Ambiguities of Human Interconnectedness, *European Journal of International Relations*, 16, 2(2010), 155-178.

connection of “civilizing world politics” with the development of world society, within increasingly complex world affairs, is deemed important. Yet, such development doesn’t necessarily mean a positive outcome, since even then there would still be potential for violence.³⁷

Evidently, the Eastern enlargement of the European Union (EU) in the 2000s related also to a civilizing mission towards Eastern Europe.³⁸ For example, the states of the latter were entitled to be considered worthy of the high standards set by the European core. More generally and despite the intricacies of the ‘civilian power Europe’ concept,³⁹ the latter and relevant ones (like ‘normative power’, with an emphasis on the power of systems of values) reflect an aspiration of civilizing process. As a matter of fact, even the economic governance within the EU, especially in light of the management of the economic/financial and sovereign debt crisis, may succinctly be conceptualized in terms of a ‘civilizing governance’, in so far as it is premised on some short of a new civilizing mission, unfolding upon a ‘comply to certain standards or suffer the consequences’ logic and the demarcation between insiders and outsiders, within the Eurozone, that would reposition a member state as a negative signifier in the context of civilizational discourses and the collective pressure of a possible exit.⁴⁰

While it seems reasonable to dismiss the return to civilization as a form of western dominance or hypocrisy or even as an ideological anachronism, it is necessary to bring attention to an important function: how is civilization implicated to broader process of administration and governance involving international order? This process, while connected with the evolution of international law, presupposes some short of violence and offense towards those who do not correspond to the relevant criteria, being comprehended as “civilizing offensive” especially within “the war on terror”.⁴¹ After all, while the imperial era was characterized by a certain offensiveness in the name of specific civilizations or generally civilization, it is still meaningful to search for the respective mechanisms or processes, to the degree that even the present (post-cold war era) entails the remains of colonial logics and mechanisms from the back door (neo-

37. M. Albert, L. Brock & D. Wolf (eds), *Civilizing World Politics. Society and Community Beyond the State*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.

38. See A. Triandafyllidou & W. Spohn, Introduction, in W. Spohn & A. Triandafyllidou (eds.) *Europeanisation, National identities and Migration. Changes in Boundary Constructions Between Western and Eastern Europe*, London: Routledge, 2003, 1-18: 11.

39. See J. Orbie, *Civilian Power Europe: Review of the Original and Current Debates*, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 41,1 (2006), 123-128.

40. Mikelis & Stroikos, *Hierarchies, Civilization and the Eurozone Crisis*, 136.

41. M. Neocleous, *The Police of Civilization: The War on Terror as Civilizing Offensive*, *International Political Sociology*, 5, 2(2011), 144-159.

colonialism). So, it is important to see how an offensive civilizing initiative –the conscious imposition of civilization– is complemented by violent policies and practices not only at an international level but also at a domestic one.⁴²

From a bold point of view, history even today has been characterized by a process of formation of a uniform “empire of civilization”.⁴³ Similarly, “international peace building and the ‘mission civilisatrice’” are of equal interest. Indicatively, how do peace keeping operations entail specific visions for the international organization of states and specifically the principles of liberal democracy and free market economy? Simply put, those missions and post-war reconstruction are connected with the use and transmission of criteria of proper conduct from the core of the international system (in its western and liberal version) towards the periphery. In this sense, they seem to constitute a new version of civilizing mission.⁴⁴ Finally, “civilizing interventions” are equally relevant, i.e. the linkage of arguments for humanitarian intervention or war against terror with the dynamics of civilizing mission. Specifically, what is denoted here relates to a discourse even with racial connotations, giving specific role to the global periphery as well as reflecting great power rivalries.⁴⁵ Finally and as Europe is particularly concerned, a key issue of global identity politics relates to the shift of Europe’s central role regarding international affairs, in terms of civilization and culture, from ‘civilizing mission’ to ‘soft power’. The former hasn’t vanished, taking though subtler forms, while the latter was formulated at a broader Eurocentric context, albeit not a restrictively European one. Indeed, the post-Cold War game of public or cultural diplomacy is both open to multiple players and asymmetrical.⁴⁶

‘It’s the West, stupid’; Intellectual/cultural hegemony and eurocentrism

Having underscored the standard of civilization and civilizing mission as mechanisms or logics with exclusionary venire, special focus is needed on un-

42. For the example of the management of indigenous populations, see R. Van Krieken, *The Barbarism of Civilization: Cultural Genocide and the ‘Stolen Generations’*, *British Journal of Sociology*, 50, 2(1999), 297-315.

43. B. Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

44. R. Paris, *International Peacebuilding and the ‘Mission Civilisatrice’*, *Review of International Studies*, 28, 4(2002), 637-656.

45. R. Knox, *Civilizing Interventions? Race, War and International Law*, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26, 1(2013), 111-132.

46. Mikelis, *From Civilizing Mission to Soft Power?*, esp. p. 81, along with Mikelis & Stroikos, *Hierarchies, Civilization and the Eurozone Crisis*, 128-130.

derstanding the role of Western civilization in the formation of world affairs. Regarding civilizations in international politics, a renowned motto for economy could be paraphrased as 'it's the West, stupid'. It could surely be argued that 'it's the non-Western powers, stupid', regarding the emergence of new regional powers and the repercussions for global power distribution. However, it is a fact that international political scenery during the last centuries was dramatically influenced by the behaviour and the respective codes of Western states. In all its ambiguity and polysemy,⁴⁷ the West includes a set of powerful actors and intense phenomena/processes that have decisively determined the formation of modern world politics and society, such as democracy, imperialism and capitalism.⁴⁸ After all, the Western powers predominantly applied the standard of civilization and civilizing mission. At the end of the day, Huntington's argument takes for granted the important presence of the western civilization in the world, warning for the danger of policies striving for the westernization of non-Western societies.

The West's encounter with other civilizations has taken place within a multifaceted fact: power asymmetry in the relations between the former with the rest (reflected after all in the standard of civilization, mentioned above). The emerging hegemonic reality included an intellectual and cultural dimension, especially regarding basic ideological doctrines evolving in global capitalist economy, particularly involving the seemingly paradoxical but symbiotic pair of universalism and racism/sexism.⁴⁹ An indicative example is found in the direct relation of culture with imperialism concerning European literature and representations of Africa, India or the Far East.⁵⁰ In particular, supporting overseas domination entailed specific narratives in art and geography, rendering imperialistic processes unfolded not only in politics or economy but also culture as well. This has

47. C. Browning & M. Lehti, *The Struggle for the West. A Divided and Contested Legacy*, London & New York: Routledge, 2010: parts 2 & 3.

48. J. O'Hagan, *Conceptualizing the West in International Relations. From Spengler to Said*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002: 9. Cf. N. Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, New York: Penguin, 2011.

49. I. Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-system*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991: 166-180. On a more general note, 'culture and information' is indeed recognized as a pillar of power within the 'systematic geopolitical analysis' framework, along with defence, economy and politics. See I. Mazis, *Meta-theoretical Critique of International Relations and Geopolitics. The Neopositivist Framework*, Athens: Papazisis, 2012 (in Greek): 399; I. Mazis, L'Analyse Géopolitique Systémique: Propositions Terminologiques et Définitions Méta-théoriques Selon l'Exigence Méta-théorique Lakatienne. *Civitas Gentium*, 4, 1(2016), 49-64: 53.

50. E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: A. Knopf, 1993.

continued even after decolonization. As far as the planetary role of English is especially regarded, it has been comprehended as “linguistic imperialism”, referring particularly to the language’s legitimation.⁵¹ According to another view, however, critique against coercion (which was indeed a characteristic of the colonial past) ignores the increasing importance of non-coercive cultural practices. Boldly put, the recurrent reformation of global power is understood better in terms of globalization rather than cultural imperialism.⁵²

In any case, the aforementioned asymmetries have well been conceived in terms of eurocentrism.⁵³ Within social theory, it refers to the assumption that Europe or the West constitutes the centre of the world or that western modernity has universal validity or that Europe is inherently superior to the rest. So, it arises as an ethnocentric point of view of the Other or understanding non-western modernity only in terms of Western influence.⁵⁴ Orientalism is an infamous eurocentric form, in respect to viewing and constructing the ‘East’ through a European/Western perspective. Differently put, it refers to the cultural or ideological representation of the former through a series of specific images, artwork, dogmas, scientific or political narratives or terminology and colonial practices. In this sense, it is a method of reconstructing and dominating the East.⁵⁵ In reverse analogy of this *problématique*, occidentalism comes up as the view of the West on behalf of others, succinctly illustrated as “images of the West” or “The West in the eyes of its enemies”.⁵⁶

Questions over eurocentrism have specialized in the dominance of Western/European experiences in perceptions of international politics. According to a bold view succinctly presented in terms of “decolonizing the discipline: forgetting the imperial past and the imperial present”, the IR discipline in the early cold war is found to having perceived the Third World through the same generalizations, images and prejudices over the 19th century colonies. The rather rare use of terms ‘civilized/barbarian’ wouldn’t mean the direct lack of respective stereotypes.⁵⁷

51. R. Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

52. J. Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*, London: Pinter, 1991: esp. ch. 1 and ch. ‘conclusions’.

53. T. Kayaoglu, Westphalian Eurocentrism in International Relations Theory, *International Studies Review*, 12, 2(2010), 193-217.

54. G. Delanty, Modernity and the Escape from Eurocentrism, in G. Delanty (ed.), *Handbook of Contemporary European Social Theory*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, 266-278.

55. E. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

56. J.G. Carrier, *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; I. Buruma & A. Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*, New York: Penguin Press, 2004.

57. Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations*, ch. 6.

Generally, a systematic charting of international thought in historical depth illustrates “the eurocentric conception of world politics”, confirming orientalism but also its distinction in two versions: scientific racism (emphasizing the difference of superior and inferior races) and eurocentric institutionalism (focusing on the difference in terms of culture and rational western institutions vs irrational oriental institutions). Both variants would be further divided into views in favour or against imperialism.⁵⁸

Notably, eurocentrism has been targeted by a broadly critical perspective, often related to post-colonial thought. In particular, economical, political and cultural emancipation from imperial structures was characterized by certain challenges such as the continuation of a more indirect control of the former colonies by the former colonial powers, the mediation of local identities through authoritarian context and the function of civilization as an exclusionary mechanism on the basis of a hierarchical reasoning (civilizational superiority). The analysis of those challenges has taken place especially within post-colonial studies, analytical tools and questions of which were also included in IR. Here, the purpose is to question eurocentric certainties and advancing alternatives to traditional and dominant thought and practices.⁵⁹ It is reflected in the critique of the strict demarcation of (progressive) West with (backward) East through the eurocentric prism as well as in means of demythologizing the former. This occurs through highlighting the active role of the East in the World, succinctly perceived as “the eastern origins of western civilization”. A notable example is the diffusion of oriental globalization and the assimilation of eastern innovations (concerning ideas, technology and institutions) since 500 A.D. for a thousand years onwards.⁶⁰ Evidently, a thorough exploration into the ‘civilization’ predicament and notably into the civilizational debates, in diverse settings, helps to illustrate the epistemological and ethical assumptions of IR.⁶¹

58. J. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

59. S. Seth, Historical Sociology and Postcolonial Theory: Two Strategies for Challenging Eurocentrism, *International Political Sociology*, 3, 3(2009), 334-338; R. Vasilaki, Provincialising IR? Deadlocks and Prospects in Post-Western IR Theory, *Millennium*, 41, 1(2012), 3-22; N. Fisher Onar & K. Nicolaidis, The Decentring Agenda: Europe as a Post-colonial Power, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48, 2(2013), 283-303; Mikelis, ‘Neocolonial Power Europe’? Postcolonial Thought and the Eurozone Crisis, *French Journal for Media Research*, issue 5 (2016).

60. J. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

61. A. Tsygankov, Self and Other in International Relations Theory: Learning from Russian Civilizational Debates, *International Studies Review*, 10, 4(2000), 762-775: esp. p. 763.

Concluding remarks: Transcending self-indulgence and masochism

In a famous book over long-term global processes in terms of geopolitics and geoculture, I. Wallerstein included a final chapter entitled “the renewed concern with civilization(s)”. There, the small role of civilization in textbooks of political science and economy was ascertained.⁶² Through time, the question-mark isn’t necessary. Since its institutional birth, the IR discipline has been enriched with a variety of analytical tools or issues. Evidently, civilization(s) belongs to the latter. Actually, an example of the ironic (dis)continuities in the history of scientific fields refers explicitly to IR and the study of civilization. It is the renaming of the *Journal of Race Development* to *Journal of International Relations* in 1919, signifying the addition of the study of states and their foreign policy to the study of peoples, without though adopting biological determinism.⁶³ Since then, this concept was developed less in IR and more in other fields, among which civilization and culture studies was specifically developed. The thematic expansion of the IR field during the post-cold war included also civilization/culture, which had previously been an object of concern mainly within diplomatic history.

Consequently, several scholars acknowledge that the inspired analysis of current international politics impinges upon not only the distribution of military or economic power but also the symbolic and material dimensions of politics in civilizational terms or, put differently, civilizational thinking and practices that have unfolded upon the emergence and construction of world order. Needless to say, that this is an issue not of nation-states or interstate relations withering away but of how such entities or relations engage into or reflect civilizational politics. So, if indeed a “new Cold-War style antagonism between... Moscow and Washington” is on the way, based on an ideological difference and contrast between “the neoliberal Western approach and the identitarian conservative approach of the East”,⁶⁴ then it remains crucial how this controversy is reflected through the civilizational logic and relevant concepts.

On top of that, as it was illustrated above, the field’s ontological and epistemological depth is reflected in multiple perspectives addressing civilization.

62. Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture*, esp. ch. 15.

63. Reeves, *Culture and International Relations*, 26, drawing from A. Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997: 67.

64. I. Mazis, Geopolitical Analysis of the Russo-American Energy Antagonism in the Sub-system of the Balkans in the Greater System of the Mediterranean, *Civitas Gentium*, 5, 4(2017), 27-34.

The latter has been succinctly evoked in the shaping of the international society and system, through notions like the standard of civilization, civilizing mission, civilizing process and eurocentrism as a conceptualization of international politics. The obvious relevance of conflict and dialogue as major forms of connection between international politics and civilizations shouldn't lead to underestimating the use of 'civilization' as a criterion of distinction in multiple patterns of interaction with political motives and repercussions, involving exclusionary and hierarchical mechanisms and logics. Put differently, as it was argued, a systematic and thorough analysis of the matter entails both the appreciation of the achievements of civilizations and the critique of the respective contradictions and of the exclusion or hierarchy predicament in the name of civilization(s).

The awareness of the cultural and civilizational assumptions behind IR research entails the need for acknowledging the ethical implications of research as well as for studying the roles, played by those assumptions, and the ways whereby moving beyond the Self /Other dichotomy is deemed possible, in respect to empirical research and policy recommendations.⁶⁵ Within the discipline, the analysis of civilizations is subject to critique over a univocal understanding, which would obfuscate or reify emerging power relations in world politics. In this respect, is the significance of processes concerning civilizations put under question? No. Nevertheless, the crux of the matter is the recognition of the fact that civilization(s) is under scientific scrutiny but also serves as a criterion about how IR fulfils its purpose. Obviously the latter observes. However, its reflective depth is not to be taken for granted: it is judged through its capacity to comprehend the complexity of the function of civilization(s) and the repercussions for international/global processes. A major stake here is to critically expand on claims to civilization, often put in the service of legitimizing power relations. After all, an important issue with the management of multicultural encounters is based on the notion of superiority, entailed in a substantial part of western thought since the colonial era.⁶⁶

Overall, the pair West/Non West just like others such as universalism/relativism, inside-outside, cosmopolitanism/communitarianism are dichotomies within not only science but also socio-political evolution. A pluralist dialectic is deemed necessary for transcending those dichotomies but for a comprehensive understanding of the emerging normative concerns.⁶⁷ In general, the cultural dimension of international politics particularly in the past is connected with west-

65. Tsygankov, *Self and Other in International Relations Theory*, 773.

66. Brown, *Cultural Diversity and International Political Theory*, 204-206.

67. S. Lawson, *Culture and Context in World Politics*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

ern hegemony and arrogance. It is subject to a varied critique, often originated from the western world itself. Within the aforementioned self-indulgence and a masochist western perspective, that would accuse the West for everything, there is a middle ground, whereby it is possible to appreciate her political and cultural achievements as well as the critique of the respective contradictions and exclusionary logics or mechanisms.