

MODERN REFLECTION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND WORLD POLITICS

Peter Terem*

GETNET Tamene, 2010. Modern International Relations and World Politics. A Brief Overview (*"Moderné medzinárodné vzťahy a svetová politika: stručný prehľad"*). Bratislava: Iura Edition, 2010. 275 pages. ISBN 978-80-8078-325-9.

In the summer months the School of Management of the City University of Seattle issued a textbook of International Relations for the needs of their students. However, the book entitled "Modern International Relations and World Politics: A Brief Overview" may also be used for students of other universities (private and public), studying either the degree program "International Relations", or the course "International Relations", which is now an integral part of several related study programs, such as "Political Science", "European Studies", "Public Policy and Public Administration" and so forth. The author of the textbook is Getnet Tamene, MSc., PhD., university teacher currently working in the above-mentioned School of Management in Bratislava. Rich teaching experience the author gained from his activities at various colleges and universities (among others, e.g. the Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Trnava University, Comenius University in Bratislava, as well as at foreign universities such as Anglo-American College Prague or Webster University Vienna) is transformed into the intention to provide the academic community with a publication that aspires to fill, at least partially, the existing gap in the offer of this type of literature.

The volume in question constitutes a text, whose content is a testimony to the author's deep knowledge and understanding in regard to the contemporary theories of International Relations and politics. Through the prism of his newest

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publication it is quite evident that he has a long time experience in dealing with issues of International Relations. The author has carefully demonstrated professionalism and his deep interest in the field, which is a proof of his long term academic career in various institutions.

First of all, it is important to acknowledge the efforts of the author to present a textbook that has the ambition to provide “*a carefully designed theoretical platform*” to handle both the theory itself, as well as the ensuing practice of International Relations. However, within the limited space of 275 pages, this book cannot be regarded as constituting an exhaustive and all-encompassing presentation of such a broad and complex issue. Despite this fact G. Tamene’s publication covers a theme which is currently very rare on the Slovak book market. Concerning this issue in the Slovak republic we can identify only few original contributions to the field over the last two decades. Therefore, this book represents a significant attempt to fill the existing publication gap in the Slovak environment.

The publication under discussion has emanated from the most recent literature in the field of International Relations and world politics. It reflects contemporary thought on current fundamental issues of International Relations and world politics. The text is structured into logically interconnected and coherent parts. It provides an coherent picture that reflects one of the possible ways of organizing the whole book.

Compared with the existing titles (Krejčí, O. 2007: "International Politics", Lidák, J. 2007: "International Relations, International Politics" and others), a greater emphasis is apparently put on theories, definitions and the outline of the nature of current international relations. Given his rich academic experience, G. Tamene is aware of the fact that within an infinite amount of information flowing through, the theories serve as a selective tool allowing us to distinguish the important from the unimportant. We are interested not only in how the theory can be used for the analysis of certain events, but also how the selection and analysis of these events is constructed by different theories. This corresponds to the content itself, which consists of four chapters.

The first one constitutes an introduction to the study of International Relations and world politics. The author approaches the shaping of International Relations as a field of science and scientific research methods. Subchapter 1.7 is to be considered a significant enrichment, since the author, in Slovak conditions in an unusually detailed way, elaborates on International Relations

from the perspective of countries outside the "Euro-American civilization" (Latin American and African theoretical postulates as well as the theoretical framework of Iran, Pakistan, India, China and Japan). The benefit is also a closer approximation of major debates of the examined field of science. However, the inclusion of these theories in the first chapter can raise questions among students, particularly given the fact that the theories *per se* are dealt with only in the third chapter. We note that, neither in the case of the already mentioned monographs, nor in the presented textbook there is more space devoted to science research methods, even though it is a well-known fact that the methodology in the field of International Relations in Slovak conditions lags behind e.g. Czech or Hungarian higher education institutions.

Second chapter, which constitutes approximately sixty pages, is focused on clarification of the key structural terms such as system, actors, hierarchy, polarity, anarchy. This chapter further deals with the terms defining control, such as dependence, independence, hegemony, mutual dependence, colonialism, globalization and terms regarding the quality of life (e.g. human rights, stability, peace, public order, justice, equality, freedom and democracy).

Apparently, author's main goal within the third chapter there is to provide a lucid explanation of the theories of International Relations. Author elaborates on Realism, Liberalism, Marxism, Neomarxism, Critical Theory, Postmodernism, Constructivism, Feminism and Environmentalism. Special attention is dedicated to the Theory of English School. Reading the textbook makes clear that the author wants to show the utmost importance and contribution of other than realist approaches to International Relations. This can support the growing trend towards an open discussion in wider scale within academia.

While deeply analyzing the history and development of International Relations as an academic discipline, it has become obvious there is a special relation between Realism and International Relations. According to Guzzini, no other social sciences discipline in the West has ever experienced such a great fusion of an academic discipline and a school of thought. Departments of International Relations, which were created after the Second World War, perceived the research orientation of Realism as a common approach. After an in-depth analysis of the Second World War, the dynamics of changing international relations was accepted. On contrary, the trust in peaceful change was shattered. The only way to deal with this change was to balance the situation through power policy. Later, after the influence of Realism had

weakened, the academia perceived that the premises of Realism had quietly been spread into the whole discipline of International Relations.

According to the textbook of G. Tamene, International Relations and international policy have become so complicated that they are beyond the limits of understanding within the realistic paradigm. Transnational relations caused radical change of democratic principles, where the power is delegated in order to control certain areas and global politics as whole. Global policy is out of the citizens' reach. Supranational relations question political treaties and conventions that represent the core of the world order. Nowadays political Realism is not able to sufficiently explain many phenomena within the international relations any more. Therefore it is very useful to apply other relevant approaches, for instance pluralistic conception of the Theory of Interdependence. Contemporary world shows the obvious asymmetric distribution of the advantages of interdependence. Subsequently, mutual dependence causes mutual vulnerability.

It is evident that in 1980s and 1990s International Relations as a scientific discipline went through a significant shift in thinking. Realism changes its position from a prevailing theory to the position of one of several theories. These theories compete with each other. Submitted textbook reflects this reality in the third chapter.

Fourth chapter deals with problems of world policy and International Relations at the beginning of the 21st century. Author elaborates on international environment and the attributes of contemporary world politics and economy.

The reader can appreciate questions at the end of each chapter, which can contribute to a fruitful and inspiring debate with students.

G. Tamene's present publication undoubtedly constitutes a valuable contribution. It will certainly enrich everyone who shows an interest in the field of International Relations and politics. The author did not intend only to summarize facts that have been already published, but he rather endeavors to contribute to the subject with his own views and ideas (mostly critical) that are in some cases provocative and generate controversy, as they do not always fit the mainstream ideas. This, however, is not detrimental to the discussion; quite to the contrary it strengthens it – because such a dialogue may contribute to the development of International Relations as a scientific discipline.

To conclude, the presented textbook represents an adequate introduction to the study of International Relations and effectively complements the contemporary literature with the ambition to further increase the quality of professionals in the field of International Relations.