

Book Reviews

Globalization, State, Identity/Difference: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Relations

By E. Fuat Keyman. *Atlantic Highlands: New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1997, 224 pp.*

What is reality? Is reality what we see? How do we tell what is real, and how do we differentiate "real" from "false" or uncover the truth in an objective fashion? The search for reality or understanding the dynamics of human interaction in an institutionalized setting has resulted in a vibrant debate in international relations (IR) theory over the metatheoretical foundations of knowledge production. Positivists and realists claim that truth and reality can be and have been uncovered by thorough and patient research. Truth is, after all, "out there" somewhere in the real world, and it is the task of social scientists to uncover it. Critical social theorists, however, argue that social science is not akin to physical or even natural sciences, for human behavior is dynamic and varies both spatially and temporally. "Reality" or "truth" can never be discovered or known completely because of the nature of social activity. Furthermore, there are no fixed foundations for judging what is "real," "true," or "false." Hence, the attention of critical social inquiry has focused predominantly on the epistemological and ontological foundations of social scientific methods.

By concentrating on epistemology and ontology, critical social theorists have shown the structural weakness of positivist and realist theories. Furthermore, the inability of positive social science to go beyond surface structures to explore deep structures of knowledge also has been exposed by critical social theorists. The unequivocal outcome of critical social theory is that knowledge, interest, and preference matter and, therefore, cannot be assumed. The critical social theorist does not focus on the cognitive manifestations of knowledge, interests, and preferences, but rather on how they are formed, created, or constructed.

However, despite its ombudsman-like value and importance, critical social theory has yet to emerge as an effective alternative to positive social science. Critical social theory has remained true to its name and has continued to play the role of a harsh but valuable critic. Keyman seeks to buck this trend by providing a basis for using critical social theory not just as an epistemological critique to challenge the extant theoretical hegemony, but also to deploy it as a "first-order theorizing tool"—an ambitious goal indeed. His book is an attempt to bridge the theory-metatheory gap found in IR theory and, at the same time, elevate critical social theory to the level of such first-order theories as the much maligned Waltzian theory of international relations. The challenge of deploying critical social theory not just as a captious force, but rather as a constructive theory, is a difficult and slippery task. Critical social theory should be able to criticize and dismantle without relying on foundational support (i.e., without relying on positivistic moments). In addition, it also should resist succumbing to the temptation of assuming the discourse of the hegemon, in which the "other" becomes the subject.

Keyman attempts to traverse these intellectual minefields by emphasizing the need for dialogical interaction between discourse (object) and subject. The object and subject should

engage each other at the same level, so that one is not privileged over the other. Moreover, a fixed and closed system of dialogical interaction should be sacrificed in favor of a moving system of dialogical interaction. Critical social theory should avoid the temptation to become Habermasian, Foucaultian, Gramscian, or Althusserian; it should be all-encompassing without sacrificing parsimony. In other words, critical social theory should be able to draw from varied theories to become a first-order theory as well as an epistemological critique.

To accomplish his stated goals, Keyman addresses four core themes: the nature and representation of the "structure" governing interstate relations (Chapter 2), the position and role of the state in IR theory (Chapter 3), the vexing problem of reflexivity in critical social theory and its implications for rationality and hegemony (Chapter 4), and the importance of identity/difference in defining and understanding the role of the "other" in IR theory (Chapter 5).

Unlike conventional IR theory, which invariably revolves around the core construct of anarchy, Keyman starts with globalization. He argues that IR theory is ill-equipped to handle the spatio-temporal process of globalization, which is integral and constitutive of interstate relations. To a large extent, he writes, IR mainstream theory ignores globalization both as a process and as a theoretical concept. One reason for this is its excessive preoccupation with security and conflict behavior. Keyman, however, argues that IR theory's inability to understand globalization arises from theoretical and linguistic deficiencies. Two theories that come close to understanding globalization are the Hobbesian theory of world-polity and the Smithian theory of the division of labor or world-system. However, both theories fail to address globalization because they cannot analytically separate the parts from the whole. Both the agent (state) and the structure (the system composed of states) are treated as an organic whole or totality. In other words, both agent and structure become one and the same. The totalizing narrative of IR theory therefore prevents any comprehension of the state's role in resisting globalization, and this results in its inability to capture the fragmentary process accompanying globalization.

In addition to reducing the parts to the structure, the totalizing narrative also historicizes human behavior and institutional development across time and space. In order to fix the problem, Keyman suggests that IR theory should draw from Marx, post-Marxist theories, historical sociology, and the Regulation School. In short, he attempts to provide a mode-of-production understanding of interstate relations without reducing globalization to a totality or privileging the agents over structure or vice-versa. This chapter's highlight is not only the production processes of globalization, but also the universalization of Western modernity articulated through the process of "othering," a process that involves representing the modern self as the privileged entity. This representation then enables the simultaneous construction of the underdeveloped world as the "other." Globalization is not just a material process, but also an identity/difference creation process.

Moving to role of the state in IR theory, Keyman argues that the state is not a spatio-temporally fixed entity and that it is not ontological prior to the very activities that constitute it. Therefore, Keyman devotes the third chapter to examining various theories of the state, and follows Giddens in arguing that the state should be treated as a theoretical entity that is historically situated, and not as a pre-given ontologically entity. The state is a central focal point around which IR theory is constructed. However, despite this state-centeredness, in much of IR theory the state is treated largely as a black box with pre-determined preferences. Structural IR theories also reduce and incorporate the state into the system structure, making it a mere expression of the anarchical system. Hence the state's value as a historically evolving social institution able to influence the system's structure

is lost. Drawing from IR theories and comparative politics, Keyman argues that the state should be treated as a theoretical object that is a historically evolving and dynamic institution.

In the fourth chapter, Keyman forcefully defends the critical turn in IR theory. He refutes Keohane's charge that the poststructuralist and critical agenda cannot develop a constructive research program, and points out that the critical turn promotes radical heterogeneity, a theoretical space consisting of radically different discourses, in lieu of a totalizing and unifying approach. In addition, he argues that just because critical social theory does not follow a rationalist and empirico-positivist research agenda, this does not mean that there is no research program. The research program of critical social theory is historical, emancipatory, nonhegemonic, reflexive, and non-Eurocentric. Furthermore, its focus is on such material processes as production and such nonmaterial processes as identity and difference.

After having discussed production, the state, and modernity as a hegemonic project, Keyman elucidates the final piece of the puzzle, one that would allow critical social theory to become a first-order theorizing tool. The chapter on resisting difference deals with object-subject relations. The theoretical foundations of IR theory derive from a rationalist knowledge-creation process with a commitment toward universalizing the totalizing Western discourse. This totalizing discourse and rationalist incorporation suppresses non-Western voices. Understanding the "othering" process requires the provision of ethical space for the incorporation of such marginalized voices as feminist theory, post-colonial discourse, Orientalist knowledge, and alternative cultural representations. Simply put, Western rationalist discourse cannot speak for "other" voices; they must speak for and represent themselves. Critical social theory must accommodate, without intervention or coercion, non-Western local voices that represent themselves.

Keyman has presented a rather comprehensive theoretical framework for deploying critical social theory. His book is unique because of his effort to identify commonalities and build on them. The challenge lies in deploying his critical nodes to address specific empirical questions and theoretical puzzles. Keyman has taken the first step. However, the usefulness of critical social theory will be judged according to its ability to improve extant theories based on rationalist assumptions and positivist foundations. Keyman has drawn his central ideas from Marxism, post-Marxism, structuralism, the Frankfurt School, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. Purists, however, belonging to each school of thought are likely to quarrel with specifics and Keyman's interpretation of a particular school. Future scholars need to be sensitive to variations within and among each school while using Keyman's theoretical framework.

Keyman should be credited for his admirable job of pulling together the varied and often confusing strands of arguments that traverse the positivist and the critical schools of thought. Moreover, he maintains the elegance and parsimony of his presentation while engaging wide-ranging scholarship on international political economy and international relations in an useful and interesting way. This book is well written and well organized, and the ideas are presented in a systematic and thorough manner. Keyman's synthetic effort relates a rather diverse body of work, ranging from post-Marxism to postcolonialism, to the central theme of the book. One should not be surprised if this book appears on graduate school-level reading lists.

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