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Philosophical Models for Understanding International Relations in Today's Chaotic World

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ABSTRACT

There are reasons to affirm that the international scenario of today's world is marked to a large extent by chaos, which is expressed in the development of a set of conflicts, internal and external, in progress or latent. In this sense, the objective of the research was to describe a-priori some philosophical models to understand international relations in today's chaotic world. Methodologically, geopolitical phenomenology and documentary compilation were used as a sufficient condition for the achievement of the set objective. The conclusion is that the integration of systems thinking and chaos theory with hermeneutics, phenomenology, critical analysis of political discourse and the neorealist approach, provides scholars and analysts with a greater ability to anticipate the multifaceted and often unexpected consequences of global interconnectedness.

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INTRODUCTION

There are good reasons to affirm that the international scenario of today's world is marked to a large extent by chaos, which is expressed in the development of a set of conflicts, internal and external, in progress or latent, possible conflicts or only imagined as probable under certain objective and subjective conditions, For example, the invasion of Taiwan by the People's Republic of China could materialize in a scenario in which Xi Jinping's government assumes the policy of territorial reunification of China with Taiwan, considered as a "rebel province" as a categorical imperative of legitimacy for the performance of its administration.

However, it is worth asking: Is the present era particularly chaotic or, on the contrary, are the dialectical relations - in the materialist sense of the concept - that exist between the protagonists of the international scene a historical constant in crescendo? Although there are no simple answers to this question, the evidence indicates that in all periods of human history chaos has been a constant feature of the international order, always mediated by consensus that has made it possible to reduce tensions between states, resolve conflicts of various kinds and create spaces of order and progress in countries and entire regions, at least for significant periods of time. In this regard, consider the current world order created by the victorious powers of the Second World War in 1945. Thus, chaos is not only a disruptive force in terms of geopolitical entropy, but also a creative principle of international orders and political models that are relatively enduring in time and space.

For the particular purposes of this research, we understand by chaos *Χάος*, following the parameters of the Greek cosmology of antiquity (Muñoz, 2009), a material and symbolically indeterminate space that precedes any experience of order, in which the beings that constitute concrete geopolitical realities are produced and reproduced, therefore:

Chaos and chaotic systems do not necessarily imply disorder in the literal and popular sense of the word; nonlinear systems are irregular, highly unpredictable systems, which manifest themselves in many areas of life and nature, but which cannot be said to have lawless behaviors, given that there are rules that determine their behavior, although these are difficult to know on many occasions. (Lizcano, 2021, p. 01; Kanval et al., 2024).

It is clear then that international relations between States and other agents of power such as multilateral organizations, organized crime or transnational corporations, constitute in essence and existence a non-linear system, irregular in its practices and interests and highly unpredictable for the prospective analyses commonly made by public policy makers, as a condition of possibility to maintain the status quo in countries and regions of the world.

Probably what makes the current chaotic world different is the possibility that the current international order, which keeps it cohesive as a world system, is in its final phase, which could eventually determine the emergence of a new international order with an undetermined ontological content for the studies of the present moment, but undoubtedly with hegemonic actors and factors different from what has happened up to the present, characterized by the dominance of the West. By ontological content we refer to a new being.

In any case, the chaotic or relatively orderly transition of the world order as a whole can already be the subject of philosophical reflection. Due to their multidimensional nature, the conflicts of today's world, which combine political, economic, technological, communicational and military aspects, among other variables, can be studied nemine discrepant not only from the perspective of political science, geopolitical and geostrategic analysis or international relations, but also from the domains of philosophical reflection, philosophy being understood as the primordial epistemological space where diverse knowledge, theories and disciplines converge dialectically. In this sense, the objective of the research was to describe *a-prióri* some philosophical models for understanding international relations today.

Formally, the work is divided into four (04) autonomous sections: the first section describes the philosophical tools that made the development of the research possible; the second section shows the materials and methods used; then, in the third section, the main results of the research are discussed. Finally, the main conclusions of the case are presented without any pretension of arriving at definitive truths or the creation of nomothetic models to explain the international scenario as a whole.

Philosophical and methodological aspects

The authors of this reflection think that it is possible to develop a geopolitical phenomenology, that is, a methodology of a frankly phenomenological character that serves to describe, in an exact and detailed way, the political and geographical phenomena that define the rhythms of power and conflict on the international scene. In this particular, it is appropriate to recall that Edmund Husserl's phenomenology is simultaneously a methodology and a way of seeing the world, that is, a detailed procedure to reveal, the phenomena themselves, as they present themselves to the consciousness of the knowing subject, a subject that through the appropriate use of *epoché* tries to divest himself of his value judgments and, as far as possible, of his previous knowledge in the form of biases (Husserl, 2008; Moran, 2011; Jam et al., 2017), as a condition of possibility to describe the constituent phenomena of his reality, without distorting them.

Phenomenology is a description of what appears by itself, in accordance with "the principle of principles": to recognize that all primordial intuition is a legitimate source of knowledge, that everything that appears by itself "in intuition" (and, so to speak, in person") must be accepted simply as what is offered and as it is offered, although only within the limits in which it appears... (Ferrater, 2004, p. 1240; Jam et al., 2011).

From this perspective, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is also in its own right an epistemology because its description of phenomena as essences that present themselves to consciousness intuitively, are not limited to the act of mere description, *ad libitum*, but aspire to become a legitimate path of philosophical knowledge. However, the phenomenological description is not enough by itself to cover the generality of such a complex and multidimensional phenomenon as international relations, in fact, this phenomenon or set of concatenated phenomena cannot be treated in a general and abstract way, it is necessary to answer the questions: Which international relations and between which countries specifically? To what extent is today's world chaotic, and is chaos synonymous with conflict, or more specifically, how does chaos as a primordial force generate dynamics of consensus and conflict that can be approached by means of different philosophical, inductive or deductive models?

It is precisely in the resolution of these and similar questions that transcendental geopolitical phenomenology emerges as a descriptive tool that combines on equal terms the experience of the world (empirical evidence) with the acts of intentional nature of which Husserl speaks, intellectual operations of cognitive rank or even, in some cases, of metacognitive character, such as: abstraction, judgment and inference (Ferrater, 2004; Rashid et al., 2023). Moreover, the incompleteness of the descriptive act can be filled with a hermeneutics that gives meaning and significance to the phenomena described, so that it would be more accurate to speak then of a phenomenology-hermeneutics close to semiotics that describes and then interprets the texts and contexts that are presented to consciousness, as signs and symbols for intellection.

More specifically, the geopolitical phenomenology proposed by the authors of this research is, simplifying things, a methodical attempt to do the work of critical geopolitics from the phenomenological and hermeneutic model, which has its *raison d'être* in philosophy, a reality that does not mean a disregard or distancing from the theoretical and methodological knowledge coming from other disciplines such as political science or international relations.

Theoretical models

There are currently a variety of models useful for the understanding of international relations in today's chaotic world, these models are made up at the same time by various theoretical and methodological tools, coming from different sciences and disciplines. However, for the specific purposes of this research, four (04) specific models have been selected: a) hermeneutics; b) critical analysis of political discourse; c) critical geopolitics, and; d) the neorealist model in international

relations. As it is logical to assume, each of these models has a philosophical dimension, or can be adapted to the categorical imperatives of philosophical reflection.

According to Gadamer (2004) hermeneutics is the common way of seeing the world consisting in deciphering the symbols and signs that make up what we call reality. From this perspective, the world is metaphorically a text that can be read and questioned in an almost infinite way by an exegete subject, however, hermeneutic interpretation has commonly been done more on books and written texts in general, in order to capture their true meaning, that is, what the author or authors of the work wanted to say conditioned by the coordinates of their time and space, so that it is impossible to understand an author, if previously the social representations of the moment in which he lived are not understood. In this regard, Foucault says:

We call hermeneutics the set of knowledge and techniques that allow signs to speak and discover their meanings; we call semiology the set of knowledge that know where the signs are, define what makes them signs, know their links and the laws of their chaining. (Foucault, 2002, p. 37)

In the field of international relations, hermeneutic action is charged with understanding the sense and meaning of the events that set the political tone in the life of the States that make up the international community, which would be equivalent to deciphering the actions, decisions and real interests of the actors of power, from their own vision of the world. Consequently, when an event of international relevance is presented for the consideration of geopolitical hermeneutics, the researcher must ask himself the following questions: What is the meaning of this event for the geographical and political relations that define the world today? What interests are pursued by the power players who are directly or indirectly promoting the development of these events? Who benefits from this situation?

For Losada and Casas (2008), all hermeneutic action revolves around a deep understanding of natural and cultural phenomena. In the historical horizon of culture, it is then a matter of deciphering: "...the meaning of actions from the point of view of those who carry them out, taking into account the context within which they take place and as conditioned by it" (2008, pp. 52-53). In short, the proposed model of hermeneutics has the following characteristics:

✓ This methodology may be able to read the scope and meaning of political events through the interpretation of a variety of primary and secondary sources, such as: press articles, scientific articles, official documents, political speeches or audiovisual materials. Everything will ultimately depend on the creative capacity of the authors and their handling of the semiotic and interpretative dimension of this version of hermeneutics.

✓ Geopolitical hermeneutics is compatible with a diversity of theoretical or philosophical approaches, among which the following stand out: postmodernity, the neoinstitutional paradigm or neorealist theory, as long as these theories do not deny the preeminence of subjectivities in the ways of seeing and understanding the world, nor interpretation as a prominent way for consciousness to endow the world with meaning and significance.

✓ We should clarify that there is no univocal and particular methodological protocol, *stricto sensu*, for geopolitical hermeneutics. Everything indicates that qualitative methods that proceed inductively due to their idiographic nature are valid to collect and organize the information that will be the object of description and interpretation, such as: critical analysis of political discourse, documentary research or in-depth interviews, among others.

Finally, it should be clarified at this point that hermeneutics is simply a way of knowing reality through a thorough interpretation and interpretative way that can be combined with other techniques and theories of an interpretative nature, such as the critical analysis of political discourse.

Critical analysis of political discourse

The critical analysis of political discourse is a tool that can be very useful for the particular purposes of phenomenological geopolitics, since political discourses are usually the most adequate way to know the interests and agendas of hegemonic power actors on the international scene. The discursive way in which politicians represent the conflicts they themselves produce, how they deliberately omit some facts or distort others in an attempt to persuade and convince the masses, are acts meticulously designed by their political communication laboratories, based on clear strategies that seek at every moment to legitimize leaders and institutions in a national and international audience.

According to van Dijk (1998), discourse analysis is not an easy task, nor is it limited to the use of a few research techniques. In-depth analysis of social and political discourse goes beyond the simple application of different methods. First, it is necessary to analyze philosophically how social structures and groups, together with power relations and organizational constraints, influence the form and content of discourse and are presented by it. In addition, the researcher must have the intellectual capacity to show how domination and inequality in society are manifested through different forms of oral and written expression.

The eminent Dutch linguist (van Dijk, 1998) explained that critical discourse analysis goes beyond the strictly scientific: it adopts a clear position in favor of dominated groups and provides analytical tools to condemn, expose and criticize the discourse of elites and their capacity of persuasion for the achievement of ideological hegemony. Thus, it seeks to promote social and political resistance to ideological forms of domination in contemporary society.

The critical analysis of political discourse goes beyond its descriptive and interpretative capacity of reality and becomes a militant discipline in favor of oppressed people and communities, who suffer the material and symbolic imprint of arbitrary power structures, and then builds analytical tools that facilitate their resistance and tends as far as possible to their liberation. In this particular sense, critical discourse analysis is very similar to the philosophy of liberation developed in Latin America, under the influence of the Marxist tradition by: Paulo Freire, Rodolfo Kusch, Enrique Dussel and Arturo Andrés Roig, among others, which attempted to move from theory to the transformative praxis of social reality.

As a philosophical model for understanding international relations in today's chaotic world, the authors of this research think that the critical analysis of political discourse is an instrument that is identified, at least conceptually, with the following postulates:

- Although discourse analysis has its origins in linguistics, there is no univocal methodology for working with oral and written texts that account for the events and conflicts of today's world, so that discourse analysis can be carried out from philosophy, philology, pragmatics or sociology, among other disciplines. Again, everything depends on the creative capacity and professional training of researchers to address the intangible phenomenon of discursivity on the international scene.
- In the epistemological domains, discourse analysis assumes that the chaos present on the international scene is not a metaphysical force that drives the dialectical development of historical processes. Rather, it is the struggle between irreconcilable interests in power actors that have and, in many cases, originate in a discursive formation that is expressed in narratives, information published daily in different media, policies of disinformation about important facts, events relevant to understanding the world and concrete political actions. Consequently, discourse is the privileged way of understanding geopolitical reality, in which geographic spaces, power relations and the narratives that give them content and meaning converge on an equal footing.

From these postulates it can be inferred that the international reality is constituted to a large extent by discourses and narratives produced by the dominant powers to justify their actions and decisions. In this sense, the difference between reality and discursivity is, in many respects, diffuse, because

international scenarios are constructed and lived from the units of meaning and meaning emitted by the discourses of power and counter-power, since we know realities not in a pure or noumenon sense, but from their communicational representations.

Critical geopolitics arose within the American academy as a response to the classical organicist, militaristic, deterministic and to some extent totalitarian geopolitics used by political decision-makers in the 20th century. Its critical status developed especially considering the approach of policy makers and the ideological context in which geopolitical assumptions are formulated. At this level, the critical stance of geopolitics deconstructs classic assumptions proper to the bipolar vision of the world, from the perspective of its implementation and the aspects that influence its development and at the same time offers alternative analytical perspectives for the observation of a specific social phenomenon such as discourse analysis, preferably related to the territory and its collective representations (Cabrera, 2020).

In this context, the philosophical vision of geopolitics serves to formulate questions that expand the limits of traditional geopolitical analysis restricted to the relationship between geography and power relations, such as: is geography an objective spatial reality or a discursive representation that changes due to the ideology that justifies hegemonic power? In the 21st century, is national sovereignty limited to the dominion of a geographic space? How do contemporary societies subjectively represent geographic spaces? Is critical geopolitics necessarily counter-hegemonic geopolitics? The resolution of these questions depends to a large extent on the theoretical and axiological foundations of the geopolitical analysis used to leverage state policies and, also, on the academic development of this discipline.

For their part, authors such as Le Dantec (2007) assume that critical geopolitics differs from previous geopolitical and geostrategic discourses by defending a democratic vision of the world and, therefore, of international relations that no longer has the State as its central focus. In this order of ideas, the view of geopolitical problems no longer has the powers of the global north as its only field of development, but the perspective of analysis is now extended to the world as a whole, with emphasis on the problems of the global south, normally driven by the interests of the hegemonic powers. Critical geopolitics also takes into account at least 4 dimensions in its analysis of reality: the terrestrial dimension, the air space and the maritime space, to which digital and subjective spaces are also added, from where geopolitical conflicts are represented and signified at every moment, in the heat of the climate of opinion generated by the media of greater international dissemination, which are never neutral.

Everything indicates that critical geopolitics is in tune with the academic tradition of socio-critical studies close to postmodernity and Anglo-Saxon and French liberal thought, the basis of the discourses generically called progressive. It is cosmopolitan geopolitics, which tends towards international cooperation in the Kantian perspective and rejects the development of conflicts over the control of natural resources. Epistemologically, it understands that geographic spaces are simultaneously objective and subjective realities; therefore, in a multipolar and democratic world there is no place for concepts such as "living space" typical of authoritarian political models that continually seek to justify the territorial expansion of aggressor states.

Neorealist model

The neorealist model is connected to the institutional theories of Anglo-Saxon political science with an empirical base, sustained by positivism that claims the translation into the language of mathematical precision of the objects and subjects of studies, an epistemological perspective in stark contrast with the political science that has been cultivated in continental Europe with authors such as Giovanni Sartori, Norberto Bobbio or Bauman, closer to the hermeneutic tradition of political philosophy.

Broadly speaking, neorealism postulates that yesterday and today the State is the central actor within the international order, in this sense, international relations always take place in the midst of tension due to the conflicts of irreconcilable interests of States with different national needs and projects. This situation makes the international scenario an anarchic ecosystem subject in many aspects to the shadow of war and the possibility of the emergence of systemic chaos, as happened in the twentieth century with the two world wars. According to Solomon (2020), the realism vs. idealism debate has been going on since the dawn of World War II in the field of international relations, dominated until then by an idealistic liberalism unable to recognize the imminent dangers posed by totalitarian states such as Nazi Germany to the international order as a whole.

In concrete terms, the neorealist model identifies itself by seeing the international scenario as a space of high conflict that can, under certain circumstances, transcend into a dynamic of growing chaos that would occasionally lead to the construction of a new and different world order, as has already happened in the past. From this perspective, states are always willing to cooperate with their neighbors and allies, but at any time they may choose to take political and military advantages to leverage their position of power in the region of which they are a part.

Neorealism is based on a crude and realistic vision of the nature of historically existing States that reminds us of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, when he stated: *Homo homini lupus*, which in neorealist terms is translated as the States are wolves of the States, in order to highlight the aggressive and even violent nature of international relations under the institutional primacy of the State.

- If one starts from the assumption that States are simply ruthless autonomous entities that act only in accordance with their national interests and aspirations, one consequently has a pessimistic and to some extent nihilistic view of international relations. Nevertheless, this is the view that most influences international policy makers in times of high conflict.
- For the neorealist perspective, chaos, understood as the collapse of the multilateral institutions regulating the current international order, due to the breakdown of consensus among the hegemonic states of the world system, is a latent possibility, so that any international policy agenda formulated by a sovereign state must hope for the best and, at the same time, prepare for the worst, such as wars, catastrophes and unexpected structural changes.

Structural neorealism definitely assumes a pessimistic and negative vision of the world, reminiscent of the contractualist state of nature, in which the project and the interests of the strongest actors prevail, even if these projects openly contravene the parameters of peaceful coexistence imposed by diplomacy and public international law.

Philosophical models for understanding international relations in today's chaotic world

In a less benevolent view, it can be hypothesized that the modern world is facing unprecedented levels of complexity and chaos, which has led to a re-evaluation of traditional theories and approaches in international relations. The emergence of chaos theory has opened new avenues for understanding the interconnectedness and interdependence of international systems. This has led to a renewed interest in exploring the meaning of "theory" in relation to international relations and the impact of globalization on the field.

Chaos theory arises in part from the epistemological crisis of modernity, characterized by globalization, technological advances and complex geopolitical dynamics, which have led to a paradigm shift in the way the world and international relations are perceived and studied. The traditional Newtonian view, based on linear causality and predictability of phenomena, has been challenged by the emergence of chaos theory as a fundamental principle for understanding natural and social phenomena. In the context of international relations, the incorporation of chaos theory represents a break with traditional deterministic and reductionist approaches, emphasizing the interconnected and unpredictable nature of global diplomacy and politics (Kantemnidis, 2016).

Similarly, chaos theory does not claim that everything is inherently chaotic, but rather argues that certain systems, including international relations, are highly sensitive to initial conditions, nonlinear interactions and feedbacks, resulting in complex and often unpredictable outcomes for scholars and policymakers. By recognizing the presence of chaos as the norm, not the exception, in international systems, scholars and policymakers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the patterns, crises and dynamics of global politics. This shift in perspective encourages a break with strictly dualistic thinking and recognizes the intricate web of relationships and dependencies that underpin the global order (Kisanne, 2007).

According to Kiel (1996), the renewed interest in the philosophical underpinnings of "theory" in the social sciences, philosophy and international relations reflects a growing recognition of the need for expanded methodological and conceptual toolkits to address the complexities of the 21st century world, such as: the models described in previous pages. The fusion of chaos theory, systems thinking, and international relations not only revives philosophical discourse, but also offers valuable insights for policymakers, diplomats, and leaders facing multifaceted challenges and opportunities in an increasingly interconnected and unpredictable global landscape.

For Safdari Ghandehari (2016) at the heart of understanding the dynamics of contemporary international relations lies the foundational principle of systems thinking and the interconnectivity that follows from chaos theory in international relations. In the context of chaos theory and its relevance to world affairs, the lens of systems thinking offers a powerful framework for understanding the intricate web of relationships, feedback loops and emergent properties that define the modern international system. When viewing the world as a complex, interconnected system with multiple levels of interaction and influence, philosophers can transcend reductionist and fragmented approaches, thereby gaining a more nuanced understanding of the forces shaping global politics in the 21st century.

Systems thinking, hand in hand with chaos theory, highlights the dialectical, nonlinear and often unpredictable nature of systemic interactions, shedding light on the potential for small perturbations or events to generate significant and widespread consequences. This perspective highlights the sensitivity of international systems to initial conditions and the amplifying effects of interconnected feedback loops, challenging traditional linear cause-and-effect models of global affairs. Likewise, by adopting an interrelated and systemic perspective on international relations, scientists are better equipped to identify patterns of behavior, emergent phenomena, and leverage points for positive intervention and change in the world system.

CONCLUSION

In today's international arena, conflicts are multidimensional and diverse in nature. Whether we look at political conflicts, economic disputes, social unrest or military confrontations, we can discern a complex web of interrelated causes and effects, symbols and meanings that are susceptible to theoretical and philosophical reflection, without which it is not possible to reveal to understanding their true scope. From a philosophical perspective, international conflicts are more than just clashes of interests or political preferences between actors and power factors. In fact, they are *stricto sensu* profound manifestations of ontological and ethical issues that transcend immediate and pragmatic concerns.

For example, in the case of political conflicts, we can see how different notions of power, justice and democracy are at stake, i.e., there is a dialogical problem between different conceptions of the human person, the State and society that manifest themselves discursively and also in concrete actions. Some hegemonic countries claim the right to rule over others based on their supposed historical, cultural or economic superiority. Others, commonly located in the global south, challenge this claim by appealing to universal principles of human rights, self-determination and diversity. From a

philosophical point of view, these conflicts reveal the limits and contradictions of modern nation-states, which are caught between competing claims to sovereignty and cosmopolitanism in a complex and dynamic world increasingly dominated by information and communication technologies.

Likewise, in the case of economic conflicts, we can see how different models of distribution, production and consumption clash. Some countries pursue a neoliberal agenda of free trade, deregulation and privatization, claiming that this will benefit everyone by increasing efficiency, innovation and prosperity. Others refute this claim by highlighting the unequal distribution of wealth, resources and power that it entails, and by advocating alternative models of solidarity, cooperation and sustainability that are reminiscent of failed real socialism. For the philosophical view, these conflicts reveal the ethical and epistemic challenges of economic globalization, which often dehumanizes and homogenizes diverse cultures and environments, but also drives the economic growth and industrial development of central and peripheral nations.

Finally, in the case of social and military conflicts, we can see how different identities, values and interests clash. In today's world, some groups claim the right to recognition, autonomy or self-defense based on their historical, cultural or religious specificity. Others challenge this claim by appealing to universal norms of human dignity, tolerance and dialogue and by seeking to overcome dividing lines and stereotypes. For hermeneutic reflection or for the model of critical analysis of political discourse, these conflicts reveal the crucial role of communication, empathy and critical reflection in avoiding the pitfalls of violence, intolerance and ignorance.

In conclusion, the international scene is marked by conflicts that are not only political, economic or social, but also ontological and ethical. These conflicts have no easy solutions or clear winners, but they provide opportunities for critical reflection, dialogue and the transformation of theory and practice in the heat of new geopolitical realities. By approaching these conflicts from a philosophical perspective, we can broaden our horizons, question our cognitive assumptions and deepen our understanding of what it means to be human and to live in a shared world.

Moreover, the interconnected nature of contemporary global challenges, ranging from climate change and economic interdependence to transnational security threats, underscores the importance of hermeneutic, phenomenological, discursive analytical, systemic and interconnectivity thinking as guiding principles in the study of international relations. The adoption of this paradigm allows for a more nuanced understanding of the cascading effects and interdependencies that characterize modern global problems, thus providing a solid basis for devising comprehensive and sustainable solutions to complex transnational problems.

Together, the integration of systems thinking and chaos theory with hermeneutics, phenomenology, critical political discourse analysis and the neorealist approach equips scholars and analysts with an enhanced ability to anticipate and navigate the multifaceted and often unexpected consequences of global interconnectedness, positioning them to contribute significantly to the promotion of global stability and cooperation in an era defined by complexity and systemic change.

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