



Exploring Planetary Politics in the Post-Human Era: The Ontological Turn of International Political 'Theory' Under the Climate Crisis

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I. Introduction

This study seeks to investigate new international political theories as the traditional Westphalian state-centric epistemology encounters constraints amid the climate crisis. The rise of unconventional human security threats and postmodern risk factors, such as those exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent climate crisis indicators, underscores the inadequacies of current international political frameworks. This situation highlights the urgency of a response while simultaneously signaling a stagnation in international political theory. Furthermore, the surge of extremism and populism in domestic politics raises doubts about the viability of empirical responses. Despite these challenges, the critical issues confronting humanity, like the climate crisis, remain urgent and unavoidable. Therefore, this paper explores the necessity for an ontological and epistemological shift in international politics from a meta-theoretical standpoint, considering the potential of planetary politics as an alternative theoretical model.

Following the establishment of the Westphalian sovereign state system as the foundation of international civilization after the Thirty Years' War in Europe (Suganami, 2002), the field of international politics has evolved, especially after World War II, with the goal of averting another global conflict and maintaining peace (Carr, 1946; Morgenthau, 1948; Sayre, 1948; Waltz, 1979). As a result, modern international political theories are deeply rooted in state-centrism and focus on traditional security within the sovereign state system (Bull, 1966; Keohane, 1994; Krasner, 1988; Wight, 1977).

However, the dissolution of the bipolar system that upheld the traditional security-focused order during the post-Cold War era, coupled with the expansion of free trade and international labor division, has begun to challenge these long-standing paradigms (Buzan, 1991; Kaldor, 2007). The global experiences of the past three years, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, have demonstrated the pressing need to depart from conventional international political perspectives, necessitating an ontological and epistemological reevaluation (Bong et al., 2020; Gómez, 2022; Kodra, 2020). The pandemic, with its transnational spread, required coordinated responses from the global community rather than isolated state actions, revealing the inadequacies of the Westphalian system and its conflicting responses to global health crises (Bialasiewicz and Eckes, 2021; Florey, 2021; John Harrington, 2021).

The acceleration of globalization and the international division of labor post-Cold War have redefined the concept of state borders, as increased mobility and exchanges have transformed the foundation of human existence. The sequence of events following the pandemic has prompted a profound transformation in the international community, indicating a pivotal moment. Understanding the 'post-pandemic international community' as a significant turning point in global society underscores the necessity for research on this transformation.

Crucially, the transition period following the pandemic, viewed through the lens of climate change, has refocused attention on the transnational environmental agenda. By linking the pandemic's causes to climate change, it lays the groundwork for addressing globalization challenges and provides context for

transnational responses. This shift underscores the emergence of the environmental agenda as a priority issue, requiring new forms of global governance, institutions, actors, knowledge, and norms (Dalby, 2016). The planetary crisis, manifested through the interconnected challenges of climate and environmental issues, demands an epistemological approach to their interpretation, which will be a major task in the post-pandemic era. Some responses advocate for an ontological shift to address climate change, framing it as a "planetary issue" (Bauman, 2014). This approach moves away from state or regional problem-solving perspectives, such as the developed vs. developing world or the Global North vs. South, emphasizing the irrelevance of national distinctions by treating it as a universal human problem (Cameron Harrington, 2016; Kurki, 2020). Consequently, the necessity for a fundamental ontological-epistemological shift in international politics is being emphasized.

In pursuit of the research objectives, this paper will critically assess the ontological and epistemological limitations of existing theories like neorealism, neoliberalism, and constructivism from a meta-theoretical perspective. The discrepancies in security concept understanding within each theory will be a focal point of this analysis. Building on this critique, the paper will explore alternatives, particularly the viability of planetary politics as an ontological shift and its practical applicability.

II. Epistemological Limitations of International Political Theory in the Face of the Climate Crisis

Signals indicating an intensifying "rift" in the "metabolism" between nature and humanity have long been communicated to us through various events (Moore 2015: pp.133-153). For example, according to the recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group I, there is a 99-100% certainty that current global warming is human-induced, with a significant probability that the global average temperature will rise by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels within the next 20 years. This prediction is a decade sooner than projections made just three years ago, warning that extreme climate crises are becoming a norm (IPCC 2007: 333). Notably, climate change is deeply intertwined with pandemics. On one hand, global warming is expanding the range of disease-carrying vectors like bats, while on the other, deforestation for large-scale farm development contributes to climate change. In some respects, the COVID-19 crisis may be a preview of a dystopian future exacerbated by ongoing climate change (Wallace-Wells 2020).

In essence, today's world is inundated with signals of fundamental shifts occurring within Earth's environmental systems. The COVID-19 pandemic is merely the latest in a series of persistent warning signals, and it is unlikely to be the last. Thus, the continuation of our desired normalcy seems increasingly unattainable (Shiva 2020). Empirical solutions to the challenges facing humanity typically yield only short-term and symptomatic results when approached through conventional public health methods. As historian William McNeill metaphorically describes, if the relationship between viruses/bacteria and human hosts is "micro-parasitism," then since the Neolithic era, humans have acted as "macro-parasites" on Earth's environment (McNeill 2010). As these macro-parasites, humans have caused severe disruptions in the biosphere, such as climate change, during the modernization process, leading to imbalances in micro-parasitic relationships, resulting in widespread changes in ecological patterns, including frequent outbreaks like the current pandemic. The invocation of the grand narrative of the "Anthropocene" during the pandemic reflects the emphasis on large-scale, long-term structural contexts highlighted by the field of Big History.

These concerns are, in fact, challenging to address within the realm of international political theory. State-to-state existential actions ultimately produce rationality only among selfish actors. For individual 'rational' states, the notion of a planetary human community is an ideal. In other words, the absence of an ontological shift in international political theory only leads humanity to catastrophe due to the climate crisis. What, then, are the limitations of existing international political theories? Through examining these limitations, this paper embarks on a journey to seek alternative epistemologies.

1. Discrepancy Between Reality and Traditional Theories: Neorealism and Neoliberalism

Neorealism and neoliberalism, two prominent theories in international relations that are premised on the

modern sovereign state system established post-Westphalia, posit the international system as anarchic and competitive, wherein states are rational actors pursuing survival (Keohane, 1994; Nye, 1988; Waltz, 1979). The distinction between these theories lies in whether the rational actors pursue relative or absolute gains, resulting in a dichotomy of optimism versus pessimism. Nonetheless, both theories are grounded in a singular epistemology centered on rational state-centrism (Grieco, Summer 1988). This leads to an emphasis on traditional military security, focusing on state survival within an anarchic international system where states are self-reliant actors (Hough et al., 2015). Ultimately, despite methodological differences based on optimism or pessimism—such as balance of power theory, democratic peace theory, interdependence theory, and alliance theory—both theories fundamentally share the same understanding of security, rooted in survival and self-help.

This epistemological approach, both consciously and subconsciously, results in a preference for maintaining the 'status quo' of the international system. Security threats, therefore, are perceived as challenges to a stable international order, representing revisionist changes (Cox, 1981; Gilpin, Spring 1988). Consequently, while the scope of traditional security concepts in neorealism and neoliberalism may extend to include various actors (state and non-state), the content does not deepen beyond survival. Even with potential spaces for non-governmental actors' autonomy and interstate cooperation, in the era of global capital, and particularly in the current era of protectionism, international trade and economic security agendas remain central to national security (Gilpin, 1987, 2001; Hufbauer, Berliner, and Elliott, 1986). These state-centric traditional security epistemologies assume an international society limited to the modern sovereign state system, thus failing to move beyond a state-centric problem-solving approach when addressing transnational and cross-border issues such as environmental destruction, global pandemics, and terrorism.

Therefore, approaches to environmental issues like the climate crisis, based on this epistemology, tend to be addressed in connection with the depletion of resources and the economic structures of individual countries (Hough et al., 2015). While the expansion of the security concept includes non-traditional security areas like the environment, attention is primarily given to the potential threats they pose, without progressing further.

However, the climate crisis we currently face is fundamentally an environmental issue, yet it poses existential threats with political, social, and economic impacts on all nations globally. The changes resulting from climate change are emerging as traditional national security issues, with tangible effects. A perspective that typifies this is the view that climate crisis could significantly disrupt human settlement patterns, food, and energy supplies, thereby threatening civilization itself (Buzan, 1991; Buzan et al., 1998). In this context, the epistemologies of the two mainstream perspectives evidently have limitations. The climate crisis threatens human security and creates resource issues directly linked to survival (Lee, 2022). Thus, the climate crisis and broader environmental issues highlight the necessity for an epistemological shift in international relations that transcends state-centric perspectives to adequately address environmental challenges.

2. Post-Cold War Changes in the International System and Alternative Epistemologies: A Constructivist Approach

The end of the Cold War, marked by the collapse of the bipolar international order dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, signaled the emergence of issues involving individuals and groups, rather than merely state-to-state problems (Fukuda-Parr and Messineo, 2012; Schuck, 2011). Conflicts and disputes related to religion, ethnicity, and race, which had been suppressed by the military security-centric international society focused on survival during the bipolar confrontation between the two superpowers, began to surface (Park, 2007). Additionally, globalization has relatively diminished the importance of sovereignty and territorial boundaries, which were central topics in traditional security studies. The diversification of exchanges between nations—resources, capital, and people—along with the neoliberal competition among states characterized by exploitative capitalism, has not only exacerbated economic polarization within the international community but also intensified domestic wealth disparities, bringing issues such as poverty, disease, refugees, and human rights abuses back to the fore as international threats

(Battersby and Siracusa, 2009; Fukuda-Parr, 2003). In a diversified global society, the effectiveness of state-centric security paradigms has reached its limits. Thus, the necessity for security theories addressing threats to individuals or groups, including transnational threats, has emerged from this context.

Constructivism, in this regard, offers a means to transcend some of the limitations of these traditional perspectives while bridging the gap with reality (Buzan et al., 1998; Farrell, 2002; Newman, 2001). Although constructivism in international relations might seem distant from tangible phenomena like security because it focuses on the explanatory power of abstract variables such as ideas and norms, its significance lies in defining threats from a perspective different from realism and attempting to interpret various security issues within the international community (Choi, 2009).

While acknowledging the anarchic nature of the international system, constructivism challenges the fixedness of an anarchic international system, unlike neorealism and neoliberalism, by proposing intersubjectivity as a basis for variability, thus overturning the epistemology of international relations. By emphasizing the interaction between structure and agents, constructivism suggests that the anarchic nature of the international system is not static but subject to change (Katzenstein, Wendt, and Japperson, 1996; Wendt, 1999). Consequently, constructivism offers a different perspective on security, explaining international security through interactions between actors and between the system and actors (Wendt, 1999). This provides a basis for the possibility of controlling conflicts arising from self-help behavior (pursuit of national interests) among rational states within an anarchic international system. In other words, the determination of states' interests and identities within an anarchic international system is not due to the natural state of the international system itself, but rather through interactions among states as actors and between states and the international system.

Thus, constructivist theory shows significant differences in security perception compared to neorealism, viewing the security dilemma as a result of actors' identities and perceptions. While neorealism sees the security dilemma as arising from concerns over national security instability in response to military build-ups by rival states, constructivism defines the activation of the security dilemma as resulting from states' identities and their perceptions of other states' military enhancements (Buzan, 1991). Constructivism also explains whether international normative frameworks lead to interventions by related countries that do not directly concern their national interests and security. In essence, constructivism establishes security as a "hyphenated concept," achieving expansion of that concept (Buzan, 1991; Buzan et al., 1998).

As a result, the scope of security can extend beyond states to include other entities, broadening the subjects of discussion in relation to security. When interactions among states lead to the recognition that a particular issue should be addressed within the realm of security, that issue is considered a security agenda (Buzan and Waeber, 2003). This deconstructs the realist perspective of perceiving threats as tangible, diversifying the subjects of discourse and placing security tensions under control through securitization (Milliken, 1999). In other words, security is not about existential threats but rather about a process where the subject of security is elevated to a security issue through an agenda-setting process when it is perceived as urgently requiring protection and attention in connection with specific issues (Cho, 2017). For them, security is not based on an objectively or subjectively existing condition but is achieved through a socially constructed process of agreeing on and defining threats through discourse (Lee et al., 2019). Various security issues highlighted post-Cold War are being addressed as significant security concerns through the process of securitization.

Constructivism has contributed to expanding the concept of security by focusing on how states form a collective security consciousness according to international norms on issues beyond their national interests. By recognizing international norms as mechanisms operating within international politics and using them as analytical units for understanding state behavior, constructivism posits that norms respected in international politics significantly influence state actions (Choi, 2009). This allows for the analysis of new security agendas such as poverty, terrorism, and environmental issues by extending the scope of security beyond state-centric views to include individuals and non-state groups. Therefore, from a constructivist perspective, the climate crisis, which this study focuses on, can also be addressed as a crucial security issue,

given the international cooperation and institutional measures being taken to recognize environmental problems as significant concerns in the international community.

Constructivist security perception overcomes many limitations of mainstream international political theories like neorealism and neoliberalism by expanding the range of security subjects. Most importantly, understanding inter-state relations through intersubjective understanding offers the potential for change in these relations, leading to the possibility of establishing cooperative institutions based on the alignment of identities, which is significant. This approach is meaningful in that it centers previously marginalized issues through the expansion of security subjects, fostering a shared perception of them as common problems rather than competitive interpretations, thereby facilitating collaborative responses.

III. Climate Crisis and International Relations

Since the late 20th century, the persistent worsening of ecological issues has made environmental research a significant agenda in international relations. In particular, with the post-Cold War shift from military competition to environmental security as an alternative concept of security, environmental politics successfully established itself as a subfield within mainstream international relations. However, the manner in which environmental issues have been addressed in international relations is problematic. They have often been treated merely as another area illustrating the difficulties of dealing with conflicts of national interest or relative gains in a competitive, anarchic world. Environment has been approached as a "soft" issue area, much like a case study in the classic realism-liberalism debate, focusing on constructing sophisticated international institutions or regimes to mediate state interests (Harrington 2016: 486). More curiously, mainstream international relations has not directly addressed the existential risks posed by the Anthropocene, which concern the very survival of humanity (Pereira and Saramago 2020: 3).

The challenges posed by the Anthropocene to the study of international relations are profoundly fundamental and cannot be ignored. As previously discussed, the Anthropocene disrupts the foundational premises of the humanities and social sciences, and similarly, it shakes the traditional concerns and theoretical assumptions of international relations. Influenced by complexity theory, a metatheoretical shift began in international relations during the 2010s, moving away from universalist, modernist, and linear epistemologies toward more complex, contingent, and nonlinear worldviews. There has been increasing focus on phenomena such as unintended consequences, emergence, divergence, and tipping points, with relationships, networks, and contexts becoming central to analysis. The rise of climate crisis issues has partly driven these theoretical changes. Thus, the crisis of the Anthropocene extends beyond a mere new security issue, challenging the epistemological and ontological foundations of the discipline and questioning the tools and methods of understanding and explanation that have been used (Chandler 2021: 2-3).

This new academic wave emphasizes that the dominant international relations theories were constructed in a different spatiotemporal context from the one humanity currently inhabits. It diagnoses past international relations, born in the ecologically stable Holocene epoch, as being limited by state-centrism, rational-positivism, the nature/society dichotomy, and anthropocentrism. In contrast, political scientists today, confronting the threat of mass extinction and encountering "planetary reality," are called upon to reinvent international relations to explore contemporary security and survival issues (Müller 2021: 72-78).

From the perspective of the history of modern international political theory, the Anthropocene is expected to form a significant watershed. During the Cold War, realism, which centered on the "state/international" unit of analysis, was the dominant theory. In the post-Cold War era, liberal universalism, which took "the globe" as its unit of analysis, gained prominence. Now, faced with ecological crises, international relations must engage in "planetary" thinking, moving beyond the frameworks of liberal theories (Chandler 2021: 6-12).

On another front, in terms of international political practice, the upheaval of Earth's systems, exemplified by the climate crisis, presents fundamental challenges. The strategy of "reform" within the existing Westphalian order has largely resulted in disappointing outcomes, except for the resolution of the ozone

depletion issue. There is an increasing need for a "transformationist" strategy that seeks essential changes in the modern international system (Young 2016: 243-246). The ongoing tensions and conflicts between the integrated natural world and the politically partitioned Westphalian system have highlighted collective action problems within the existing state-centric system concerning environmental issues (Patrick 2021). The recent COVID-19 crisis has further exposed the incapacity of the modern inter-state order, a social construct of a specific time and place, to address Anthropocene-related challenges. The geopolitical realism-based logic of national interest prioritization and zero-sum games has demonstrated the dysfunctionality of the inter-state system. Consequently, the ideal of a liberal world order or global governance has also eroded. Analogous to the Peace of Westphalia and the doctrine of state sovereignty, which emerged to resolve the religious wars of the 17th century, the critical question now is whether a new planetary social order can be created to address the crisis of the Anthropocene (Young 2016: 247-248).

IV. Climate Crisis and International Relations

In summary, the Anthropocene calls for a radical paradigm shift in the study of international relations. It is crucial to recognize that the relationship between the Anthropocene and political science is bidirectional, necessitating the integration of established political science into discussions on Earth system change, while also raising the issue of the "politicization" of the Anthropocene. This suggests not only the potential for the Anthropocene to fundamentally transform the basis of contemporary international political research but also the need for political science to have a voice in the Anthropocene debate. Political science must provide critical discourse with ethical and normative implications while proposing new post-human and planetary governance frameworks as solutions to Anthropocene challenges (Hickmann 2019: 250).

Nevertheless, in response to the new planetary reality, declaring the end of modern state-centric Holocene international relations and considering innovative contributions from an updated international relations (or planetary politics) to the Anthropocene debate is essential. These contributions might include areas such as ecological security, planetary governance, and North-South issues.

However, from the perspective of the sovereign state system, the climate crisis tends to be individualized. This is because there are inevitable differences in how countries like Tuvalu, which is directly affected by rising sea levels, and countries like Korea or those in the global North perceive the climate crisis. Yet, addressing the climate crisis or environmental agenda at merely a national or individual level is insufficient for overcoming these challenges. This underscores the necessity for an ontological shift in international relations, with planetary politics being proposed as an alternative.

1. Climate Crisis and Planetary Politics

Existing international relations theories, which focus on state-centric topics, have limitations in analyzing the diverse political, economic, and social issues arising from the climate crisis, such as climate refugees, border changes, and shifts in food production structures (Lee, 2022). Environmental pollution and the climate crisis suggest a need for a new epistemological shift, as they represent 'post-political' agendas emerging from issues directly linked to national interests, such as sovereignty, economy, and military security, demanding comprehensive and sustained changes in human lifestyles and inter-state relations.

While environmental agendas are perceived as national issues by individual countries, in reality, these challenges cannot be resolved solely with national power. Ultimately, they must be addressed as inter-state issues, international community challenges, and international agendas. Theories based on state-centric, rationalist paradigms and the nature/society dichotomy, as well as anthropocentric mainstream international relations epistemologies, struggle to effectively respond to transnational agendas (Pereira, 2021). This highlights the limitations of mainstream international relations, which focus primarily on actor survival security. The epistemologies presented by mainstream international relations reveal a limitation in viewing the climate crisis agenda merely as a new issue or backdrop (Cha, 2021). Thus, the need arises for a shift from the existing theories' epistemologies that analyze the implicit values, processes, responses, and actors within international politics, advocating for an ontological transformation that posits 'Earth' as a trans-/post-national actor (Hardt, 2021). Given the global impact of the climate crisis, bilateral

cooperation is challenging, and the pervasive influence on states worldwide highlights the necessity for multilateral cooperation. In other words, the climate crisis, signifying a global crisis, calls for an ontological transformation in international relations, moving beyond the exclusive sovereignty-based territorial framework. This necessitates an ontological turn focusing on planetary agency, transcending the dichotomy between nature and society (state).

The ontological shift from international relations to planetary politics represents a natural extension of imagination for genuine survival. The challenge lies in the mediating factor that can realize this ontological turn, which could be the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene reconstructs the planet itself, replacing the core modernist dichotomy of nature/society. It succeeds in integrating nature and humanity, not as something external to humanity, but as entities that coexist in natural spaces, mutually influencing and altering conditions (Pereira, 2021). The discourse on the Anthropocene questions and challenges the modernity assumed as a premise in the humanities and social sciences, calling for a new epistemological shift in these fields (Cha, 2021).

The Westphalian system, a symbol and foundation of past human peace, along with its underlying mindset and the Holocene, has solidified international relations based on sovereign states grounded in established sovereignty and territory (Hardt, 2021). However, the planetary crisis prompted by climate change begins to infringe upon traditional national interests rooted in a human-centered international system and the prosperous environment forged through industrialization and capitalist globalization. The concept of the Anthropocene captures the dual crises of international ecological catastrophe and the impending collapse of capital (McEwan, 2021). Thus, the discourse on the Anthropocene can expand its agenda beyond ecological issues to encompass international political issues arising in the new global environment. In this sense, the Anthropocene, representing the challenges posed by climate change and responses to them, calls for reflection on the planetary tragedy created by humanity (Cha, 2021). As the Earth faces unprecedented crises, the Anthropocene emerges as a crucial keyword for realizing a new approach that focuses on the interactions and correlations between the Earth's systems and humanity.

2. The Colonial Limitations of Planetary Politics and the Anthropocene

However, the integration of nature and humanity through the Anthropocene and planetary politics—the ontological shift from sovereign states to a planetary focus—does not solely offer an optimistic outlook in the era of climate crisis. In the age of protectionism, environmental agendas often serve merely as trade barriers. Although the climate crisis functions as a planetary and transnational agenda, affecting international society and human life both directly and indirectly, it operates within an international political structure characterized by power imbalances and exploitative dynamics. This reflects the Western-centric and colonial limitations inherent in the concept of the Anthropocene.

Carbon emissions and environmental issues tend to exacerbate the conditions for marginalized countries within the international system, particularly those that experienced exploitative regimes during Western colonization (Simangan, 2021). The universalization of the Anthropocene can amplify historical injustices and inequalities by excluding the historically constructed political and economic environments of countries that experienced colonial rule. Thus, the Anthropocene and planetary politics, as new paradigms addressing climate and ecological challenges, must also engage with the global North-South divide and the enduring injustices stemming from colonial histories.

While the Anthropocene has prompted deep reflection on the philosophical underpinnings of modernity and progress, for many who have experienced colonial rule, the era of the Anthropocene is not novel (McEwan, 2021). Colonial domination was not only about subjugating humans but also about subjugating nature as an object of human control (Simangan, 2019). The colonization of the Asia-Pacific region by Europeans mirrored the process of subordinating nature to human activity. Consequently, environmental issues such as the climate crisis and biodiversity loss, now gaining attention in the West, are challenges already faced by those in formerly colonized regions. For most developing countries with colonial legacies, environmental problems like the climate crisis are inextricably linked to fundamental survival challenges posed by colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy (McEwan, 2021). For these nations, discussions on the

Anthropocene may seem like bourgeois ideals. Ultimately, for countries with colonial histories, the discourse on the Anthropocene may appear more as an idealistic, Eurocentric narrative than as a tangible or existential threat.

In conclusion, the emergence of the Anthropocene era is rooted in the industrial revolution and colonialism of Western Europe, making it difficult to avoid the issues of racism, inequality, and historical injustice within the Anthropocene discourse. To address these challenges, it is necessary to incorporate diverse historical experiences. This involves decolonizing the Anthropocene by integrating non-Western imaginations and perspectives, addressing ecological crises, the instability of human and non-human life, land, and the relationships between humans and nature (McEwan, 2021). In this context, a postcolonial approach can be significant, illustrating how long-standing historical injustices from colonial histories deepen developmental disparities and produce economic and environmental dilemmas for former colonies and developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Simangan, 2019).

V. Conclusion: An Essay on the Ontological Shift in International Political Theory

Since World War II, human industrial activities have surged, causing significant disturbances to Earth's systems, such as increased carbon dioxide concentrations, ocean acidification, and ozone layer depletion. This "Great Acceleration" has led humanity to grow as a geological force while simultaneously fostering a foreboding sense of impending catastrophe. Faced with this prolonged state of emergency, international relations scholars are prompted to fundamentally reconsider their discipline's identity. In light of the Anthropocene crisis, what should international relations scholars aim to achieve? In the post-Cold War era, we have sought to move beyond "international" politics to embrace "global" politics, encompassing diverse non-state actors and transnational relationships. However, after the history of human-driven globalization, the warnings of the Anthropocene have emerged, and amidst the tribulations of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is time to envision an evolution towards "planetary" politics.

This necessity has become clearer with the epistemological limitations of the traditional state-centric international system, especially post-Cold War. Neorealism and neoliberalism, international political theories premised on the modern sovereign state system, assume an anarchic, competitive, and hegemony-focused international system, thereby demonstrating limitations in understanding transnational and non-traditional human security issues. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted these limitations, prompting demands for a new ontological-epistemological approach in international political theory to address universal human challenges. Constructivism supplements the limitations of traditional international political theories, explaining various security agendas and pioneering non-traditional security domains in the post-Cold War era. However, issues such as climate change and environmental agendas not only call for an expansion of perspectives but also necessitate an ontological shift beyond multilateral cooperation and state-centric views, focusing on the planet as a unit.

To achieve this, international relations scholars need to practice thinking "from the end of IR." They must first acknowledge the failure of institutional frameworks within existing inter-state systems to address the Anthropocene as a grave reality and existential threat. Similarly, it must be recognized that international relations have been so focused on explaining the power politics of a world composed of states that they have neglected the larger existential threat posed by planetary ecological changes. This acknowledgment of the need to reconsider the foundational assumptions, categories, and concepts of international relations signals a precarious moment, yet it also presents an opportunity for a fundamental scholarly transformation. Pursuing the ontological reconstruction of international relations into planetary politics will be a collective innovation process that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

A transnational paradigm that views the Earth as a unit is necessary to adequately respond to ecological crises, including the climate crisis. Critically examining international societal issues based on ecological crises, injustice, and inequality through the Anthropocene's focus on Earth-human interactions and correlations will effectively address issues unresolved by the sovereign state system. However, it is challenging to deny that the concept of the Anthropocene is embedded in Western-centric perspectives with colonial limitations. For developing countries with capital-exploitative economic structures, rooted in the

industrialization and colonial systems initiated by Western Europe, the discourse on the Anthropocene is often seen as an idealistic narrative rather than a discussion directly connected to 'human security and survival.'

This paper critiques the state-centric epistemologies of neorealism and neoliberalism, which have shown limitations since the post-Cold War era, and reviews alternative epistemologies such as constructivist approaches and planetary politics. It confirms the necessity of an epistemological shift that serves as a foundation for recognizing and resolving complex international issues that are challenging to address effectively under a sovereignty-focused international system. Planetary politics, in particular, could serve as a starting point for an alternative paradigm capable of analyzing and providing solutions for key agendas within the international system, like the climate crisis, which exert influence on a transnational and international scale. This paper raises important questions about how international relations should address unprecedented global crises like COVID-19 and the climate crisis, emphasizing the need to establish new paradigms to replace state-centric theories within international relations. However, it is limited in that it stops short of proposing alternative paradigms directly, focusing instead on critiquing existing mainstream international relations theories and reviewing emerging alternatives.

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