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International relations is one of the most dynamically developing disciplines within the social sciences. For many years, a multitude of scientists in numerous research centers around the world have been attempting to demonstrate the meaning and importance of their particular research, both theoretical and empirical. Yet in parallel, the discipline of international relations is struggling with a wave of criticism undermining its legitimacy and the very sense of its existence, raising doubts about the research focus and achievements in theory formation. Part of the scientific community, mainly sociologists and political scientists, also consistently question the autonomy and independence of international relations as a separate discipline. Despite these obstacles, its representatives for quite some time have been firmly demonstrating their research autonomy, arguing that despite the undeniable inspiration drawn from many scientific branches, international relations as a discipline has enough specific, individual features. This does not mean, however, that an attempt is being made to separate this discipline from its roots, entrenched in the science of politics, and undermine the impact such disciplines as sociology, economics, history and law have had on the discipline of international relations.

An important challenge for international relations as a discipline is also the rapid development of the surrounding reality. It forces the representatives of this scientific discipline to deal with the constant need for redefinition and finding new terms to explain the emerging phenomena. The pressure of having to keep up with the ongoing changes is often a cause of frustration resulting from the simple observation that keeping pace – in scientific terms – with the changing world is virtually impossible. These conditions in no way facilitate the performance by researchers of a predictive role, recognized as crucial in the study of international relations. It is also a situation that, to an extent, inspires creative restlessness among scholars in international relations, bringing a positive effect for the discipline as a whole thanks to stimulating reflection and lively discourse.

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In this context, it is therefore not surprising that new publications presenting the latest research results in the field of international relations regularly appear on the market. One of the most inspiring, but at the same time most controversial topics dealt with are the theoretical frameworks, models and considerations. Contrary to opinions about the final surrender of international relations in its attempts to create a cohesive theory, or – in a milder version – about its theoretical immaturity, researchers are increasingly willing to explore the theoretical plane. Over the last thirty years in Poland, in this field we are facing a real renaissance in publishing. For the first time in the history of international relations as a science discipline, students in this field can read the translations into Polish of such classical theorists as Hans Morgenthau (Morgenthau, 2010), Kenneth Waltz (Waltz, 2010), Alexander Wendt (Wendt, 2008).

Unfortunately, the original Polish theoretical achievements in the field of international relations are still very modest. This is mainly a consequence of difficulties in competing with the Anglo-Saxon tradition of thought in the field – or more precisely, Northern American one. However, Polish scholars are catching up very quickly and with increasing confidence and firmness engage in polemic discussions with both the renowned and emerging theories. It should also be noted that Polish researchers in international relations are insightful observers of global research trends and discoveries, immediately responding to emerging new approaches and directions of theoretical reflection. Precisely these new, emerging lines of thought, as well as concepts with an already established position in the science of international relations, are the main focus of the publication edited by Ryszard Zięba, Stanisław Bieleń and Justyna Zając, released by the Faculty of Journalism and Political Studies of the University of Warsaw, entitled: *Theories and research approaches in the study of international relations* (available in Polish, orig. title *Teorie i podejścia badawcze w nauce o stosunkach międzynarodowych*).

The publication contains thirteen studies on currently relevant, inspiring but also controversial theories and approaches in the science of international relations. Their authors have analysed the latest global scientific achievements in their chosen area. The texts in question thus not only present the most important concepts, but also demonstrate their condition and position within the discipline. The articles are also – which is their great advantage – an excellent review of the most recent world literature and sources. Although the scientific editors of the publication resigned from introducing a particular formal division of the content (beyond separation of individual articles), the articles can be split into three basic parts on their own merits. The first part is a group of texts devoted to theoretical concepts of the classical approach, the second consists of analyses of approaches related to broadly understood constructivism, while the third contains articles on various theoretical reflections – without a common denominator – on a broad spectrum of topics of interest to contemporary international relations. In a sense, this split into parts shows the varying focus and internal divisions within the discipline. Their history is reflected in the four debates between supporters of various paradigms that took place over the last few years among scholars in international relations. Despite numerous discussions and attempts to find common ground and reach an

agreement, the differences between the various “schools” were in fact only perpetuated, what is clearly confirmed in the surveys carried out among scholars in international relations by Richard Jordan and his collaborators since 2008 (Jordan et al., 2009; Maliniak et al., 2012). They show visibly that the main grounds for disputes between international relations researchers include: methods, epistemology, ontology and paradigms. The long years of internal dispute are no longer a surprise for the representatives of the discipline – they remain, however, a key argument of its opponents. The firmness with which the representatives of the various paradigms stick to their respective views leaves no doubt that an agreement within the discipline of international relations is impossible to achieve, what could be considered either its greatest flaw or the biggest advantage.

According to the order of priority and impact within the discipline, the first group of texts is devoted to classical approaches in the study of international relations. It opens with an article by Marcin Kaczmarski on neoclassical realism. The next article, by Rafał Tenerowicz, discusses the second most important paradigm among the classical ones – namely, new liberalism. As shown by the already cited survey and study by Richard Jordan, these are the two most dominant and influential concepts in the discipline. And although there is no doubt that both realism and liberalism are losing popularity in favour of new – often only seemingly attractive – approaches, nobody in the science of international relations questions their position, as they are indeed the starting point of all research within the discipline. In practice, this means they are virtually impossible to ignore. Researchers are therefore divided into – in simplified terms – two groups: the first represented by the followers of one of these paradigms and the other by its opponents. No wonder that in a publication devoted to theories and research approaches these two occupy the first two positions. It is worth noting, however, that both authors decided to discuss the latest achievements and reflections within those paradigms. At least two reasons for this choice can be identified: one is the extraordinary variety and ambiguity of each of those paradigms, what makes a truly comprehensive presentation and discussion in a book chapter format truly impossible, and the second is the presence in the market of many publications devoted to the history of these respective approaches.

The topics discussed in the next three texts remain in a close relationship with these traditional paradigms. Bartosz Wiśniewski discusses the theory of democratic peace; Maciej Raś analyses the transnational perspective approach, while Ryszard Zięba presents the theory of securitization, experiencing a veritable renaissance as a research topic among both Polish and international scientists. The first two concepts are strongly associated with liberalism and for many years have been functioning within its theoretical space. The theory of securitization has over the years been linked to political realism, but today its scholars are increasingly willing to include elements of the liberal paradigm in their work. The concept of security in the science of international relations is undergoing a very interesting process of demilitarization.

Researchers in international relations are increasingly willing to take up the issues of cultural, economic, energy security, etc. In analysing this part of the book – though the problem affects basically the entire volume – what arises some doubts is the use by

the authors of the term “theory”. Can we really, within the traditional meaning of the term, talk about theory of securitization and theory of democratic peace? It seems that the authors represent in this case a rather liberal approach. Is this an error? Certainly not, although it is worth maintaining extreme caution in this regard, as in the science of international relations the term “theory” is used in many different meanings, ranging from understanding it as an ordering and/or clarifying factor, ending with demonstrating the paths of development of the world. But it is a problem not particular to the discipline of international relations, as the significance of this term in the entirety of social sciences is not unambiguously defined. This specific lack of a single, cohesive definition unfortunately causes many disagreements within the discipline, but also inspires criticism, e.g. from representatives of exact sciences.

Another group of texts is devoted to broadly understood constructivism. Its classic form is discussed in the book by Alicja Curanović, while Justyna Zając devoted her article to the international role theory, which is directly linked to the issue of participation in international relations and that of identity of the participants, which are the main topic of the analysis presented by Stanisław Bieleń. The discussed articles show non-obvious links between the science of international relations and sociology. There is no doubt that the latter has earned the title of “older sister” of international relations. Over the years, creatively though not uncritically, the discipline of international relations assimilated many of the empirical, methodological and especially theoretical concepts of sociology. The authors in their respective analyses – though not directly – prove that, despite all, the exchange of ideas between sociologists and scholars in international relations was uneven and rather one-sided.

Constructivism as one of the most popular contemporary research approaches is very deeply rooted in the social sciences – especially in sociology. For this reason, it could not be ignored also by the study of international relations. The chief constructivism theorist, Alexander Wend, for several years now has been present in the top three of the ranking of the most influential researchers in international relations, and his book is considered as one of the most important publications on international relations in recent times. His main research goal – even though he was aware of how challenging, not to say impossible, was this idea – was to build a general social theory that would enable viewing international phenomena with the assumption that the actors (participants) in international relations are socially constructed. In practice, this meant an attempt to create a kind of idealistic concept of international order. The importance of this approach and its role in modern science of international relations could not be ignored by the editors of the volume, hence the articles directly devoted to constructivism and referencing it were a must in the publication.

The last group of texts indicated by me above shows the multidimensional character of the science of international relations. Five researchers undertook a presentation of a wide range of issues that are becoming increasingly popular as research topics among contemporary scholars in international relations; and thus: Marlena Drygiel describes the theory of political adaptation, Renata Włoch focuses on critical theory, Agnieszka

Bógdał-Brzezińska addresses the broadly understood postmodernism, Agata Włodkowska-Bagan discusses the category of competition, while Tomasz Pawłuszko – that of an international system. The authors of these articles (especially the last two) were facing a difficult challenge of delivering a precise description of existing concepts and often – their redefinition. Suggesting specific terms to explain new phenomena for many years now has been the task of scholars of international relations in Poland. Implementation of concepts existing in the world into their native language and into the framework of pre-existing Polish research often was a risky and ungrateful task. Many of the categories discussed in this section function well and are used by many theoretical schools – this also means that, in practice, they are understood and interpreted differently by these schools. I believe that the texts belonging to this section of the publication will become an inspiration and pretext for further research and discussion.

The content presented to the readers by this group of authors makes for an extremely interesting publication, significantly refreshing the offer of available publications on the theories and approaches in international relations on the Polish market. It has several indisputable advantages. Firstly, the editors managed to gather a group of experts – which is worth emphasizing, not only made up of political scientists and scholars of international relations – the real connoisseurs of the topics they discussed. Secondly, the publication is an excellent source of knowledge about the recent literature in the field of international relations; bibliographies provided together with each respective article greatly facilitate an overview of current literature. And finally – what is highly important – it has excellent educational value.

This publication will without a doubt find a permanent place as one of the most important reference materials suggested to students attending classes on theory and methodology in the study of international relations. It is a pity that the editors did not consider this possible function of the book a bit more by, for example, having all texts follow one unified format, with specific clearly separated sections. This would enhance significantly its didactic value, even though of course the publication was prepared not only with this in mind. An omission was also, in my opinion, lack of abstracts and keywords in Polish and English for each individual article – today it seems to be an editorial minimum. There is no doubt, however, that the presented publication is a highly recommended reading for everyone interested in the theoretical aspects of the study of international relations. For both researchers and practitioners, it should become a must-read.

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