

Poststructuralism and the Analysis of International Relations

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Abstract: *Postmodernism and poststructuralism move from the phrase that history is narrative and narratives are texts or meaning is encoded in language. If life is a narration, it must have a language. If it has a language, then it can be deconstructed. These are the alternative explanations of the history. Language, as a means of communication, is a tool that social relations emerge and human interactions are supplied. As it plays a role of 'bridge' between thought and action, it reflects the world of conception and perception of humanbeing. Poststructuralist theory applies on some methods to understand and explain international relations. Deconstruction is the literary theory of poststructuralism, and the method of double reading presents a two-dimensional reading possibility to those concerned with it. As it offers a commentary on the dominant interpretation in the first reading, it pressures on the instable points in a text in the second reading. Poststructuralism sets linkages and relationships with some other disciplines, and thanks to these linkages and relations, it develops new aspects and horizons on the understanding and explaining of international relations.*

Keywords: Poststructuralism, International Relations, Deconstruction, Postmodernism, Language

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Introduction

This essay seeks to put a critical inquiry of *poststructuralism* in International Relations forward in order to understand international relations at the present times. The main purpose of the essay is to determine what poststructuralism is and to research what its merits and shortfalls in international relations are. The basic problématique of this Paper is to realize how poststructuralism influences on analyzing, understanding, and explaining of international relations and discover how functional and adequate poststructuralism is to understand and explain international relations. The article seeks to find an answer the questions about how poststructuralism does help or not for explaining and understanding international relations and how useful and beneficial poststructuralism is in the analysis of international relations. In the studies on international relations, it is observed many definitions and descriptions and met with lots of emphasizes on poststructuralism. Many international relations researchers and theorists discuss the subject through much point of views. While poststructuralism deals in many disciplinary studies, we take it only with its reflections on international relations to understand and explain due to the field of study of us.

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In the essay, the main subject observed on poststructuralism that it is not a freestanding discipline and occurs inside a large context of social thinking. Poststructuralism seeks to unsettle the things established, and by its own specific methods and ways, it tries to make re-reading on lot of things about the social life, the state, and international relations. Language as a means of communication is a tool that definite social relations emerge and humane interactions are provided. As it plays a 'bridge' role between thought and action, it reflects the humanity's conception and perception world. The approach that comes with poststructuralism is that we should save from stable patterns and review our perception on language and discourse. In this context, we should review and reconsider this world and determine actions by the mentioned critical ways of poststructuralism. The methods of '*deconstruction*' and '*double reading*' bring a new reassessing possibility in (I)nternational (R)elations and enable that the things settled are solved. As it gives an opportunity to understand and explain international relations, differently and critically, by its special methods and ways, it causes to raise new horizons for researchers, observers, theorists, and others. Postmodernism and poststructuralism, as a point of starting point, move from the principle, "*History is a narration and narratives are texts or the meaning is encoded in language*". Because the life itself is a narration, it should have a language. If it has a language, then it can be deconstructed. These are alternative explanations of history.

In this article, in the first section, it is tried to draw on the relationship between poststructuralism and international relations and its aspects on understanding of international relations. In the second section, it is discussed the merits of poststructuralism. Finally, the shortfalls of poststructuralism are the content of the third section, and the essay ends with a conclusion including the main theme and the basic highlights of the study.

Poststructuralism and International Relations

In the disciplinary studies in International Relations on Poststructuralism, we witness to a great deal of definitions, descriptions, observations, and emphasizes on poststructuralism, and most of the researchers and theorists approach the issue with their various opinions and point of views. As poststructuralism deals in many disciplinary studies, we will focus solely on the reflections of poststructuralism on international relations to understand and explain it due to our field of study. Poststructuralism is a way of understanding and explaining international relations. By the tools and functions that it develops, it helps for realizing and (re)considering the realm of international relations. In this point, we meet about the language as the most effective means of poststructuralism.

Etymologically, the concept of "*poststructuralism*" consists of the words of "*post*" and "*structuralism*"¹. As "*post*" points out to "*the being of later or after than something*", "*structure*" suggests "*the way in which parts of something are related to each other what it's organized and*

arranged”, and structure is something consisting of several parts which here denotes the process of building. While “*structuralism*” as a concept refers to consider a text as a structure having meaning inside itself, poststructuralism refers to arrange and organize different parts of something (literary, language, society, etc.) into a post– or this time–system in which every parts related and connected with each (other).

When it is taken a glance at the focus of poststructuralist perspectives, it’s seen that poststructuralists argue “references to natural necessity only reinforce the powers that be, and silence alternative voices. They have sought to unsettle those rules having become reified, such that they appear to be a part of the natural order. In so doing, they have emphasized interpretation”.² What appearing as a reality represents one possible world while marginalizing alternative possibilities? “Poststructuralist challenge is directed at the theoretical and philosophical foundations of international relations as well as the traditional perspectives” ability to account for a transformation from a modernist to a postmodernist or post-sovereign world”.³ “Poststructuralism advocates a position more differently than both the traditional realist and idealist perspectives in International Relations and offers some significant insights on the construction of the national-international dichotomy, the relationship between national identity and security politics, the discursive character of the concept of security, and the late-modernist transformation of security.⁴ It makes an important contribution to the debate on whether or how to expand the concept of security, and “poststructuralists are critics not only of power and nor even of knowledge as a form of power, but of the validity of knowledge and reality of self”.⁵

We can see poststructuralism as a view “both a reaction against and an escape from Hegelian thought indeed in the specific French historical development. This ‘reaction’ or ‘escape’ from Hegelian thought, with Deleuzian terms, is “*play of difference*” against “*labor of dialectic*”.⁶ Peters argues that “Deluze’s interpretation of Nietzsche and his Nietzschean critique of Hegel serves as a conceptual grounding for poststructuralism and that Deluze’s Nietzschean critique of the Hegelian dialectic should be more fully acknowledged as both the major keys to understanding French poststructuralism and a basis and starting point for an alternative radical theorizing”.⁷ According to Peters, “Poststructuralism never ‘*liquidated*’ the subject but rather rehabilitated, decentered, and repositioned it in all its historico-cultural complexity”.⁸ “A genealogy of poststructuralism which recognized it as a “*movement of thought*” that means crossed national boundaries, cultural traditions, and in the novel and unexpected ways, the North-South configuration of rich and poor nations would need to come to terms with poststructuralism’s intercultural and international transmission, exchange, appropriation, and misappropriation. In these new contexts, as the question of poststructuralism that is “over” must be considered as an absurdity, the question of Nietzsche’s influence or legacy, as less important, perhaps”.⁹

Poststructuralist theory moves from several methods for the understanding and explaining of international relations. These are *deconstruction* and *double reading*. “*Deconstruction* is the literary theory wing of poststructuralism, a roughly described anti-foundationalist intellectual movement that originated from France in 1960s”.¹⁰ *Deconstruction* unsettles the stable concepts, influences on these settled concepts, and discloses “parasitic relationships” between the opposed terms. “Smith translates the poststructural *deconstruction* of the subject as a method of “studying *locality* as a place where local struggles are, and the alternative discourses on the meanings of “global conditions” are played out”.¹¹ We can realize that poststructuralism and deconstruction offer a method yielding an ethnographic public(iz)ation of multicultural subject identities. *Double reading* suggests an opportunity of two-dimensional reading to the ones concerned with itself. As it offers a commentary on the dominant interpretation in the first reading, it pressures on the points of instability in a text during the second reading.¹²

These two methods, *deconstruction* and *double reading*, bring new reassessing possibility in international relations and enable that the things settled are solved, and moreover, they give an opportunity to understand and explain international relations differently and critically with its own specific methods and ways. “Despite Derrida, who is one of the founder theorist of poststructuralism, does not elaborate a single deconstructive method refusing programmatism in

favor of his own exemplary literary and cultural and philosophical readings, it is easy to see that this literary deconstruction challenges the traditional assumptions about how we read and write”.¹³ He insists on that every text is undecidable and a contested terrain. “For Derrida, the deconstructive reading prisms open inevitable and unavoidable gaps of meaning that readers fill with their own interpolative sense”.¹⁴ It is to make meaning solely by the reference to other meanings against which it takes on its own significance for him in the nature of language. Therefore, never can we establish stable meanings by attempting the correspondence between language and the world addressed by language. In this sense, poststructuralism helps writers and readers recognize their own literary involvements and investments in the text of science and calls into question a variety of literary norms of empirical science. However, “Derrida’s work and the poststructuralist movement with which it was associated had long been suspected of –perhaps unwittingly and unintentionally– promoting nihilism and authoritarianism”.¹⁵ “In this point, Derrida invites us to dwell at length on the more cynical view of the imperative to speak in another’s language”.¹⁶

As an argument, it’s suggested that poststructuralism sets linkages and relationships with another disciplines and develops new aspects and horizons on the understanding and explaining of international relations thanks to these linkages and relations.¹⁷ The relationships between poststructuralism and postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism, poststructuralism and liberalism, poststructuralism and Marxism, and poststructuralism and politics/the being political are the key points to understand and explain international relations, and these bonds make poststructuralist approaches more functional. By the power that poststructuralism takes from these bonds, it enables to be perceived the basic elements of international relations and provides us for reconsidering and reassessing the settled ones. Here, one of these bonds is the link with postmodernism.

In the first stage; “the relationship of poststructuralism and postmodernism”¹⁸ offers an “interdisciplinary structure”.¹⁹ Some scholars who are called as “*poststructuralists*” in different fields of social sciences such sociology,²⁰ political science, and literature have an effect on the scholars of postmodernism and the theory of postmodernism. This interplay relationship contributes to the construction of postmodernist discourse. With regard to the postmodernist idea, it could not have been produced significant contributions to the international relations studies, and the postmodernist international relations could succeed a complex relation of analysis of power and knowledge at the global level, supplying a poststructural theory of change to international relations. The term of “*poststructuralism*” is often used side by side, even interchangeably with “postmodernism”. It is commonly believed in the postmodernist intellectual movement is inspired by the poststructuralism, which roughly refers to Derrida’s textualism and Foucault’s genealogy.²¹ Essentially, postmodernism and poststructuralism, as a point of departure, set out from the criteria “History is a narration, and narratives are texts, or the meaning is encoded in the language. Because life is narrative, it must have the language. If it has the language, then it can be deconstructed. This line of reasoning bracketed alternative explanations of history, excluding them from consideration.”²²

Secondly; “the debate surrounding the relationship between poststructuralism, postmodernism and post-colonialism (as “a child of postmodernism”) is highly charged and developed”.²³ “Post-colonialism’s concerns about identity and disruptive effects of colonization enable us to understand the inspiration source of poststructuralist project”.²⁴ Taking the dangers of engaging in the deconstructionist exercises without a postcolonial expose into account, we can think postcolonialism has a bond with deconstruction and poststructuralism. These links have the relations emerged from “a peculiar historical context”, in particular, “the French colonial experience in Algeria”.²⁵ This situation shows the historical roots of poststructuralism go to French of 1968.

Ahluwalia argues “If so-called ‘poststructuralism’ is the product of a single historical moment, then that moment is probably not May 1968 but rather the Algerian War of Independence”.²⁶ “It is important therefore to examine the relationship that most French poststructuralists have had with colonial Africa and, in particular, Algeria”.²⁷ Derrida, as a French

poststructuralist thinker, says himself is a “French Algerian” besides.²⁸ The importance of Algeria lies on a crossroad and bridge of a great deal of civilizations and traditions. Algeria is present at a place where the civilizations of East and West juxtapose and many cultures and communities are integrated each other. By the decolonization process that is accepted as a starting point for the world, Algeria opened the doors of the discourse, way of action, and activity of poststructuralism.

Thirdly; in the relationship between liberalism and poststructuralism, it's accepted the existence of a question mark about whether poststructuralism is antithetical to liberalism or not. Friedman suggests some poststructuralist thinkers like Foucault “shares the hostility of many liberals to the state and other agents of modern power”.²⁹ As to this thought, “poststructuralist liberalism is implausible”.³⁰ Because the challenge posed by poststructuralism is epistemological and ontological, not political according to liberal critics. “It is a threat of relativism or nihilism to the individual and the truth as real entities”.³¹ However, while poststructuralist opinion is criticized with its relativistic and nihilistic structure, it leads an extremity and a linguistic complexity. In addition, the poststructuralist view is a *threat* to traditional values and professional standards because it makes the meaning destabilize.

Fourthly; taking poststructuralism into consideration in context of its link with Marxism, we witness “poststructuralist thinkers like Lacan, Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze surpass Marxist thought. For these theorists, poststructuralism can be “characterized by three major intellectual themes: the exorbitation of language, the attenuation of truth and the randomization of history”.³² “Poststructuralism strafed meaning, over-run truth, outflanked ethics and politics, and wiped out history”.³³ That is, it has been unscathed by poststructuralism. “If then, poststructuralism can be understood to have displaced Althusserian Marxism; it is because poststructuralism breaks up the relationship of Marxism and the psychoanalysis, breaks with Marxism by pitting psycho-analysis against the totalization and teleology of a Marxism analysis”.³⁴

Finally; we should give attractions to the relationship of “the political”, “politics”, and “poststructuralism”. Between “the political” and “politics”, it's accepted there is a distinction. This distinction is seen as a narrow or broader meaning of “the political”. As “politics” is a reference to *elections, political parties, doings of governments and parliaments, the state apparatus, treaties, international agreements, diplomacy wars, some institutions and actions of statesmen and women*, etc. “the political” has to do with the establishment of that very social order setting out a particular and defining other areas of social life as not politics. Poststructuralist approach, in this point of view, attempts to provide tools for rethinking its movement from “politics” to “the political”. Here, it appears that poststructuralism as a deconstructivist and psychoanalytic view entails the constitution of the subject, includes an inextricably link with the constitution of a particular social and symbolic order, and poses the questions of time, essence and language.³⁵

It will be true to mention about Walker's opinions on international relations through a poststructuralist window as a consequent. Walker's significant contributions to poststructuralist thought were on ethics in international relations. The basic question at Walker was about ethics in international relations to frame it, and he asked what ethical behavior in international relations was. According to Walker, “the literature has made ethics and ethical relations a central concern. However, the poststructuralist engagement with ethics is, in many ways, different from the literature of normative international relations radically”.³⁶

Walker suggests “relating to ethics in international relations, this has implied to question the ethical constitution of international relations as a realm where there is no place for morality making obvious that this is a historically contingent conception infused with politics”.³⁷ “For Walker, international relations theory does not help us to understand politics. International relations theory, as a historically contingent, limits to what we consider possible, and this limit makes us fail in understanding the contemporary world”.³⁸ He assumes politics or international relations are separable from ethics because ethics is able to solve political and international relations problems and issues. In addition to this, he mentions the limits of political imaginations

and points out the principle of state sovereignty that was moved by this political imagination can be seen “the primary constitutive principle of modern political life”.

Merits of Poststructuralism

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Poststructuralism has a functional structure to understand and explain international relations. The structure has both positive and negative ways, and while its positive way points at the merits of poststructuralism, its negative ways offer its shortfalls. It's a key element and theory at the present times to comprehend international relations, international politics, and the world politics. As it carries some negative aspects for international relations, it can present positive contributions to international politics too. In particular, with its critical sides, while it provides critical points of view and reviews for world politics and international relations, it enables the opportunity to reconsider the use of language and discourse in international politics.

In the context, Fierke argues that “international relations are a “social” endeavor. Language is the central feature of our sociality and therefore, on some level, it must be taken seriously”.³⁹ Because humanbeing becomes a social existence and entity, language is, naturally and synchronically, a part of this sociality. Language is a form of expressing of humanbeing as well as himself is a social unit. If language and humanbeing are a social factor, it is debated that there is an absolute relationship between language and human. Language helps us perceive the social world and enables to send messages to this social world. Moreover, people at the same time are an existence who thinks. From one point of view, if it is thought that thinking comes true by language, we will have to accept the relationship between language and thinking. In this way, we can reach possible correlations between language and thinking, and human being and sociality. Poststructuralism in this point helps us realize and notice the factor of language to comprehend international relations positively and plays a functional role as its one merit by its critical emphasizes on language.

We see that poststructuralism as a merit plays a bridge role between cultures and peoples. When it is thought the functions of mass communication tools, transportations, and developments in the fields of technology, science and industry, poststructuralism provides intercultural communications by the power that it takes from postmodernism and carries cultures on other cultural climates too. By the way that it constitutes the cultural mobility, it puts *new* cultural and social forms and patterns instead of the settled, while poststructuralism coming with dictation destroys taboos. This situation synchronically leads some great developments from architecture to art, from literature to science are lived. Additionally, while this mentioned developments cause economical and financial vigor and liveliness, it provides the transferring of richness and wealth into new areas and regions by the lanes and lines that poststructuralist activities and actions occur.

Globalization process is the most effectual element in this context. As the boons coming with globalization grant some functional tools and developments (like intercultural interactions, transportation and communication means, TVs, radios, internet and other networks, etc.) to poststructuralism, the interactions among peoples increase; new cultural forms spread on the Earth; trade and financial activities enliven; critical language and perspective improve (on the issues), and new reactions and expectations emerge. e.g., a Japan car that is bought gives a Japanese feeling.

Poststructuralism has a two-dimensional structure. It firstly inclines towards the opposite side and then, returns towards itself. As the process of making a “*neo*” aims at “the being opposite” or “the other”, itself is exposed of such process. That is, while poststructuralism wants a reformation and transformation, itself lives a reformation and transformation. While it approaches the issues by a critical way, the things that itself brings are questioned by a critical manner. As poststructuralist view criticizes “the other”, at the same time it criticizes itself, “I” and “We”, too. In this point, we come face to face with the concept of “*poststructback*”. If it is recalled that poststructuralism means arranging and organizing different parts of the thing into a “post-” or this time-system in which every part is connected with the others, poststructuralism is everything that

is returned towards itself with its multiple dimensions and processes. During the time pointed (the centuries of XX and XXI), poststructuralism is at the lived process of *poststructback*.

The concept of *poststructback* means “returning”, “structuring to backwards”, and “struckback to the main source”. It is the leading backwards and turning back of a poststructural movement or action towards itself. Here, *Arab Spring* or *Arab revolutions*, which was launched with Tunisia in 2010, carried on other Arabian or African countries like Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Yemen and Syria,⁴⁰ and spread into other regions like Nepal, Napoli, England, and United States by protests, governmental responses against the protests, political movements, changes of regime, and international and external responses and reactions, can be seen as a poststructuralist and “poststructbacking” movement. These movements basically aimed at changing and restructuring the established systems and structures in these countries by the powerful states of international relations as a poststructuralist action and activity and reached its basic purposes and intentions in some countries.

An example of poststructuralist movement appeared in the USA long before Arab revolutions too. This movement had begun by the control of White Man as a rebellion against White Man and by the status quo in favor of Black Man. This movement of rebellion beginning as a “blackish movement” arrived at (North) Africa and Arabian geography and bronzed. In the beginning, while it took Arabians and Africans under its effect, it began to show its effects on Europeans and Americans afterwards, besides. While White Man hoped profits from these movements, it lived a boomerang effect and met with the conditions that it was not hoped and wished. Today, these poststructuralist white powers face with many problems and issues to the detriment of them. The unemployment and poverty that White Man lives at the moment, the loss of market share and influence over these countries, the narrowing of the trading volume in these countries, and the bad debts etc. are the impacts of this (poststructback) condition. Consequently, the young population heads towards rebellions, and the effects of economic crisis increase day by day, and the earth is dragged into a more chaotic and insecure position. We see this case in the rebellion movements in London in 2011, the demonstrations of “*Occupy Wall Street*”,⁴¹ the 15-M movement in Spanish, which emerged against the economy policies and the governmental public services, the situation of Greece that now lives, and the problems in the other European countries like France, Germany, Italy, and Portugal. Shortly, a poststructuralist movement, as seen above, has already transformed into a *poststructback* movement.

According to Gadamer, “understanding international relations is, one might recognize, first of all an attempt to make sense of intercultural relations where language, social practice, and social meanings meet and challenge each other”.⁴² As a poststructuralist positive contribution in this manner, “it interrogates changing meanings, recognizing their ambiguities, and accepts that there may be no single “underlying truth” concealed behind them.⁴³ In this interrogation, the concepts of “dialogue”, “horizon”, and “fusion of horizons” have significance.⁴⁴ The truthiness, the role of language, the reflection on the research practice, and the positionality and personality of a researcher are the basic elements. As to poststructuralism, not any single truth, facticity, and reality are there. All of them should be reviewed and reconsidered. They may be false or wrong; maybe, true. In the matters, issues, realities, and events, we accept them as true and real, may be a mistake.

Poststructuralism emphasizes “*difference*” as an important analysis unit and analytical tool. “It emphasizes difference both as an important focus of analysis meant to supplement IR’s refusal to engage its inherent hierarchies and marginalization, and as an analytical tool that investigates the violent dynamics of an international predicated upon exclusion and exploitation”.⁴⁵ Poststructuralism presents a rejection of foundationalism and both the epistemological and ethical variety. It generally criticizes social constructivism not to question more directly the way structure and subjects are constituted, and its focus is on how the constitution of social subject is directly linked to the discursive founding of the social order.

Poststructuralist theorists concentrate on power/knowledge relations and accuse critical/historical materialist approaches in international relations.⁴⁶ In this context,

poststructuralism interrogates the constitution of structures and subjects and makes a connection between the subject and the discursive founding of social order. Emphasizing that power and knowledge have a reciprocally interaction and a linkage, it suggests the way of having power passes through having knowledge. Because, the powerful being is the being having knowledge in his palms. Shortly, we can say poststructuralism breaks new grounds with its discourse on power and knowledge.

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It needs to be pointed out a point; as poststructuralism is taken into account as “a genuine departure from the idealist-realist binary which rules international relations theory”,⁴⁷ it seeks to inform the study of international relations with new moral, philosophical, and linguistic insights by the objective of displacing this binary perspective. By putting an emphasis on such traditionally “marginal”, or “absent”, instances as difference, representation, copy, mimicry, and alteration, poststructuralism aims at pursuing the project of reflexivity and awareness in international political terms (one which is grounded on a repudiation of the mutually exclusive categories of presence and absence, identity, and alterity).⁴⁸ The poststructuralist view in international relations causes to emerge awareness and sees some issues like identity, difference, and alterity in the poststructuralist critical ways and methods. Because poststructuralism goes beyond the settled and leads to “re-” (re-think, re-consider, re-view...etc.), contributes to international relations positively. With its approaches on presence or absence, it adds a new perspective into the issue of ontology. It carries the problématique of ontology into new horizons and takes it beyond the familiar in this manner.

Summarily, the basic merits of poststructuralism from which we benefit is that it enables us to realize and understand international relations with a more critical perspective and more question marks. While it contributes to us in terms of moral, philosophical, and linguistic perspectives, insights and departures to review, reassess, rethink, and reexplain issues and matters in the area of international relations, it facilitates to understand the world more easily. Poststructuralism provides we notice “differences” and “others”, interrogates the changing meanings, and accepts that there may be not any single truth concealed. Moreover, with its connecting and integrating ways, it sets bridges between cultures, communities, people(s), states, and civilizations and makes the world a more “global village”. The most important is that poststructuralism forms a new civilization and tradition. As a matter of the fact that, if these ways establishing and structuring of poststructuralism are not present, our world maybe be a clan one day. The world, thanks to poststructuralism, is rescued from a small clan by turning towards a global arena with its multi-cultures, communities, peoples, and states. *“The social doing verbs at the population and social of the govern”*.

Shortfalls of Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism, includes negative ways with its positive sides either. These ways reflect its shortfalls. Since it melts the entire solid and unsettles all the settled, it makes negative contributions to understand and explain international relations by its critical attributes and reviewer way, at the same time. What’s clear about Phillips⁴⁹ that poststructuralism becomes a break with structuralist thought, not a development on structuralist thought but it has a complex link with structuralism. It appears that some of its main themes, connected to language and human subject, continue. “A key theme of poststructuralism has been to place questions over the extent to which language can mimetically represent social life and to force a greater attention to be paid to discursive processes by which, so-called, representations are established”.⁵⁰

Poststructuralism, as a philosophical term, “signifies a break with structuralism as a linguistic theory that challenges the direct correspondence between language and the real world, and instead sees meaning as arising within the human system of language and signification”.⁵¹ Poststructuralism, which is considered as one of the critical theories together with postmodernism and feminism by “Frankfurt School that constitutes the basis of critical theory”,⁵² does not consider international relations as a “free-standing” discipline and tries to place international relations in a broader social thought context. However, its main purpose is to “unsettle established

categories and disconcert the reader". While it seeks to unsettle things established, it tries to make a rereading on many things in social life and international relations by the methods and ways that itself develops. It appears that we can see that language, as an element to understand "relationships", is the basic focus and the central characteristic of our sociality when looked at poststructuralism in the realm of language.

Language, as a means of communication, is a tool by which social relations emerge and human interactions are supplied. As it plays a role of bridge between thinking and action, it reflects the conception and perception world of humanity. The approach coming with poststructuralism is that we should save from stable patterns and review our perception on language and discursive. We should review and reconsider the present world and the things inside it. Moreover, we should determine our actions according to the critical approach by poststructuralist critical ways. Such critical way will take us into new horizons to realize and comprehend international relations.

Poststructuralism demands the restructuring of systems and dictates its own structure over them by the power of unsettling, establishing, and making something "re-". While doing this, it uses language and method special to itself. In this process, while the dictating side enforces the other unsettled side to orient and accord itself into this new or neo system, the unsettled structure is obliged to embed into a *post* system. When we take the example of NATO into consideration, NATO thinks and plans for settling and establishing a world order according with its own aims and objectives. It declares its own intentions and programmes on the world by the meetings and summits, and its written official notifications,. *e.g.*, NATO wants to establish some missile defense systems on definite points of the world. One of them is planned to set in Turkey. USA assesses that this defense system is a protection wall against threats that can possibly come from some countries (like Iran) despite the rejections from some countries (like Russia, China, and North Korea).

"The threat from Iran's short- and medium-range missiles was developing more rapidly than previously projected and that in the near-term, the greatest missile threats from Iran would be to U.S. allies and partners".⁵³ Despite the nuclear programme and other controversial issues of Iran in international relations, Turkey, which has significant economic, social, political, cultural and more importantly, historical bonds and relations, is the neighbor state to Iran. Between Turkey and Iran, it is unavoidable facticity that there are so strong trade and diplomatic linkages. However, because Turkey is one of the most important states in international politics and a crucial member of the international system and because of its bonds and commitments (by treatments, agreements, legal arrangements, membership for international organizations...etc.) with international political system, it remains under the pressure against this condition and conjuncture mentioned, willingly or unwillingly. In most times, it cannot be sure of what it should do and act indecisively against some critical situations. It is usually face to face with a dictation as is now in the defense system issue⁵⁴. On the opposite of poststructuralist pressure, Turkey lives a *break* from the traditional approaches and goes away from its settled order politically, diplomatically, culturally and historically. In this situation, the use of language and the point of view on Turkey as a subject of international system done by this (poststructuralist) western are significantly effective. That is, the action done by the aim of protecting some countries unsettles the established and displaces the political and politics.

In addition, poststructuralism makes important contributions to the debate on the problematization of *sovereignty* and *otherness*; it is "a search for thinking space within the modern categories of unity, identity and homogeneity; the search for a broader and more complex understanding of modern society which accounts for that which is left out- the "other", the marginalized, the excluded".⁵⁵ Poststructuralism in international relations develops a different opinion about "other" and opens a various door to understand and explain international relations. When we consider that the states are still the main actor in international relations, we can see that the states ontologically position according to "other". Poststructuralism, in this point, seeks to comprehend "other" and "otherness" in international relations and to determine a constant base and meaning for it. "Other" is in a place and position against "the Same Being", "I" and "We".

The reading of “otherness” presented by poststructuralism has a highly significant place in social sciences. While the reading gives a chance to reread, rethink and reconsider for many discussible issues about “other” and “I” in social sciences, it leads to review negatively the established perception of “otherness”.

With a bomb attack in Beirut in 1982, the President Bachir Gemayel and many people with him were killed. While Israel occupied Beirut after this event, it killed dozens of people within Sabra and Chatila camps. When asked whether Israel was innocent or responsible, Levinas, who is accepted among poststructuralist thinkers, says, “Because the Jews are concerned with the other, they are always responsible”.⁵⁶ “The other” for Levinas is “neighbor who is not any necessary kin, but who can be. If you are for the other, you are for the neighbor. If your neighbor attacks another neighbor and treats him unjustly, who can you do?”⁵⁷ Levinas asks.

From the perspective of Campbell, this approach of Levinas keeps the Palestinians outside of the reach of those to whom “I” and “Same” is responsible. Above all, “the other” for Israel, since the history of foundation of Israel, has been the Palestinians, and Israeli politics has been shaped around encountering with the Palestine, “the other”. The right to be one of the Palestinians has not acknowledged by Israel neither as a “neighbor” nor a state and people. While the sovereignty of Palestine tries to be taken from their hands, their idea of founding unity and ideal of structuring a homogenous nation are ignored by both Israel and international community that consists of “re-” and “post-” structures. Moreover, for Israel and the others on the same line with it, Palestine should be “marginalized” and “excluded” from international system. Palestine is actually a reason of being for Israel. Israel, by its perspectives on the other, sees Palestine as an “enemy” and tries to place its existence on a stronger base. As for this means is to the Jewish “opposition” and “difference”. The historical background, cultural differences, religious structure, and points of world of Palestine and Israel are more effectual. In short, if there is “I”, it is natural to be “other”. This is not a problématique issue. The problem is in the unjustly, oppressively, tyrannically and cruelly application of otherness on “another” community, people, nation and state as seen in the disagreement and disaccord between Palestine and Israel.

As the interpretative analytic, poststructuralism problematizes sovereignty in world politics as well as in the research practice itself. The interpretative analytic invites us to reconsider and destabilize not just the conceptual categories that international political economy deploys (the state, the firm, the financial system, the economic actor, capitalism), but also the way that knowledge is produced and legitimized in the disciplinary practice”.⁵⁸

It emphasizes on state sovereignty in international relations and argues the tension between international anarchy and international society. Debating arguable matters about state sovereignty, it expresses that many problems arise from interpretations of sovereignty and they stem from the institutionalization of structures that transcend state sovereignty and that a relationship exists between the principle of sovereignty and the claims of a society of states.⁵⁹

In a concrete way, states today are considered as the main actor of international relations, and relatively, they are the unique independent element inside and outside. While they keep on their passport and visa applications and while holding the power of legitimate use of force in their hands, the concept of state sovereignty is interrogated by such poststructuralist attempts and actions. Because, the poststructuralist approach claims that the boundaries of state may not become definite and absolute and that the claims of states which carry legitimate discourses and just claims according to them may not be an indefinite facticity. From this point, the contribution of poststructuralism into international relations appears as an interrogation and review of discourses and actions of the states in international relations. Besides, in order to not any absolute reality exists in terms of poststructuralism, the reality and the facticity that the states defend may not be real.

In brief, when we ask what the basic dilemmas or shortfalls of poststructuralism are, we meet with a dichotomy. Poststructuralism is indeed an action heading towards an opposite target, and its main goal is to *re-* and *post-* structure this target. However, by the effects of some elements, poststructural actions turn backwards, towards itself, and this constitutes a dichotomy or

dilemma. That is, poststructural actions, as a *boomerang*, aim at the doers of this action a while later, and the makers of poststructural action meet with a *poststructback* effect. Today, Globalism, United Nations, Islamophobia, Dialogs between Religions, the exportation of Christian values into the rest of the world, the war with Salafi movement, Philistine problem, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the struggle with Al-Qaida, China-Uighur crisis, Sudan issue, immigration movements, the actions of NATO, the activities of NAFTA *et cetera*... while these are the reflections of poststructural action in international relations and in the world, Arab Spring, Wall Street demonstrations, London rebellion movements, the economic depression and crisis in Europe and in the world at the present times, the public demonstrations against capitalism, the West and the effective international organizations (NATO, UN...), the Sunni-the Shi'a tensions etc. are emerging a reaction against the mentioned poststructural actions with its *poststructback* effect. Namely, poststructuralism is infelicitously hoisted with its petard.

Conclusion

With the study, it is tried to draw on the relationship of poststructuralism and international relations and its aspects on understanding of international relations and the merits of poststructuralism and the shortfalls of poststructuralism were discussed. It has been seen that poststructuralism sets links and relationships with other disciplines and develops new aspects and horizons on the understanding and explaining of international relations. Poststructuralism as a deconstructivist and psychoanalytic view⁶⁰ entails the constitution of the subject, includes an inextricably link with the constitution of a particular social and symbolic order, and poses the questions for time, essence, and language.

With regard to its merits, while providing a critical point of view and reviewing onto world politics and international relations, it enables opportunity to reconsider the use of language and discourse in international politics. Among language, thinking, human, and sociality, it reaches some evident links. As the boons coming with globalization grant some functional tools, interactions among peoples increase to poststructuralism, trade and financial activities enliven, and a critical language and perspective improve on that the issues and new reactions emerge.

When we think poststructuralism in terms of its shortfalls, it presents a break with structuralist thought; not a development on structuralist thought, it is. However, it has a complex link with structuralism. Its main themes are connected to language and human subject, and its main purpose to unsettle established categories and disconcert the reader. While seeking to unsettle things established, it tries to make rereading many things in social life and international relations by methods and ways developed by itself. Poststructuralism demands for re-structuring of systems and dictates its own structure into them, unsettling the establishment and making something "re-". While doing it, it uses a special language and method belonging to itself. In this point, the Western/Atlantic ally is seen as an example with its settling and establishing a world order in according with its own objectives.

Poststructuralism contributes to the debate for the problematization of sovereignty and otherness, besides. It is a search for thinking unity, identity, and homogeneity for a broader and more complex understanding that is left out "the other", "the marginalized", and "the excluded". If we take the instance of Palestine into consideration, we see that the right of being of the Palestinians is not accepted by Israel neither as a "neighbor" nor as a state. While the sovereignty of Palestine has been tried to take from their hands, their ideal of establishing a unity and homogenous nation have been ignored by both Israel and international community.

In brief, poststructuralist theory presents a critical method to understand, interpret, and explain international relations, and it makes a positive support with its characteristics inside international relations itself. Poststructuralist contribution to the field of international relations is considerably significant. In this point, we see the debate occurs about whether a "real" or "true" poststructuralist stance exists or not.⁶¹ Poststructuralism, as a political theory,⁶² while directing its critiques on the mainstream international relations theories, takes critiques on itself too. Among

international relations researchers, not any entirety of theory and a constant base exist about what poststructuralism is in reality. Poststructuralism, however, continues to be effectual and incoherent theory of the discipline of international relations.

NOTES

¹ “Post”, “Structure”, “Structuralism”, “Poststructuralism”, Longman, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, (UK: 1978, ISBN 0-582-77646-5); C. Soanes and A. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, (UK: Oxford University Press, 2005, ISBN 0-19-861057-2).

² K.M. Fierke, “Wittgenstein and International Relations Theory”, 92, ed. Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrand, *International Relations Theory and Philosophy*, (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2010).

³ Lene Hansen, “A Case for Seduction? Evaluating the Poststructuralist Conceptualization of Security”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 32 (1997): 371.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁵ Jeffrey Friedman, “Liberalism and Post-Structuralism”, *Critical Review: A Journal of Politics and Society*, Vol. 3, No: 1 (1989): 5.

⁶ Michael Peters, “Nietzsche, Poststructuralism and Education: After the Subject?” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 29, No. 1, (1997): 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰ John McCornick, “Derrida on Law; Or, Poststructuralism Gets Serious”, *Political Theory*, Vol. 29, No. 3, (2001): 419.

¹¹ Patrica T. Clough, “Poststructuralism and Postmodernism: The Desire for Criticism”, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1992): 543.

¹² See Jevgenia Viktorova, “International Relations: Approaches, Issues and Analysis”, *Lecture 5: Critical & Post-Structuralist IR*, University of St Andrews, 3, 32.

¹³ Ben Agger, “Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 17 (1991): 112.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁵ McCornick, *op. cit.*, 395.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 402.

¹⁷ “Poststructuralism”, Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-structuralism#cite_note-7.

¹⁸ See David Patrick Houghton, “Positivism “vs” Postmodernism: Does Epistemology Make a Difference?” *International Politics*, (Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2008). See also <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/ip/>; James Der Derian, Michael J. Shapiro, *International/Intertextual Relations, Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, (USA: Lexington Books, 1989).

¹⁹ Felipe Krause Dornelles, “Postmodernism and IR: From Disparate Critiques to a Coherent Theory of Global Politics”, *Global Politics Network* (2002): 19.

²⁰ “It is such that poststructuralism poses its greatest challenge to social science, sociology in particular”; Clough, *op. cit.*, 550.

²¹ Zuhtu Arslan, “Taking Rights Less Seriously: Postmodernism and Human Rights”, *Res Publica*, Vol. 5 (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999): 205.

²² Thomas C. Patterson, “Post-structuralism, Postmodernism: Implications for Historians”, *Social History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1989): 83.

²³ Pal Ahluwalia, “Out of Africa: Post-Structuralism’s Colonial Roots”, *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2005): 139. See also Pal Ahluwalia, “Post-Structuralism’s Colonial Roots: Michel Foucault”, *Social Identities*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (2010).

²⁴ Ahluwalia, *op. cit.*, (2005), 152.

²⁵ Alina Sajed, “The Post Always Rings Twice? The Algerian War, Poststructuralism and the Postcolonial in IR theory”, (*British International Studies Association*, 2010): 2.

²⁶ Ahluwalia, *op. cit.*, 138.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

²⁸ See Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin*, (Trans.) Patrick Mensah, (Stanford: CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

²⁹ Friedman, *op. cit.*, 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

- ³¹ Ibid., 6.
- ³² Terry Eagleton, “Marxism, Structuralism, and Post-Structuralism”, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1984): 104.
- ³³ Ibid., 105.
- ³⁴ Clough, op. cit., 544.
- ³⁵ See Jenny Edkins, “Politics, Subjectivity, and Depoliticization”, *Poststructuralism & International Relations: Bringing the Political Back*, (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 1, 6, 16. See also Martin Morris, “The Critique of Transcendence: Poststructuralism and the Political”, *Political Theory*, Vol. 32, No. 121 (2004).
- ³⁶ Peter Narby, “Poststructuralist Approaches to IR and the Question of Ethics: A Reading of R.B.J. Walker and David Campbell”, Thesis Study (University of Wales, 2006), 1.
- ³⁷ R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1-25.
- ³⁸ Narby, op. cit., 10.
- ³⁹ Fierke, op. cit., 88.
- ⁴⁰ See Garry Blight, Sheila Pulham and Paul Torpey, “Arab Spring: An Interactive Timeline of Middle East Protests”, *Guardian* (5 January 2012): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>.
- ⁴¹ See “Occupy Wall Street”, <http://occupywallst.org>; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/occupy-wall-street>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/01/us-usa-occupy-may-idUSBRE8400UV20120501>.
- ⁴² Chris Farrands, “Gadamer’s Enduring Influence In International Relations, Interpretation in Gadamer, Ricoeur and Beyond”, 33-39, ed. , Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrand, *International Relations Theory and Philosophy*, (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2010).
- ⁴³ Ibid., 33.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 34.
- ⁴⁵ Sajed, op. cit., 3.
- ⁴⁶ See Scott Burchill and at al, *Theories of International Relations*, (USA: Pulgrave Macmillan, 1996).
- ⁴⁷ Necati Polat, “Poststructuralism, Absence, Mimesis: Making Difference, Reproducing Sovereignty”, *European Journal of International Relations*, No. 41998 (1998): 447. See also Necati Polat, “Post-Yapısalcı Yaklaşımlar”, ed. Atila Eralp, *Devlet, Sistem ve Kimlik*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996).
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 448.
- ⁴⁹ Martin Phillips, “Distant Bodies? Rural Studies, Political-Economy, and Poststructuralism”, *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2002): 82, 83.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 99. See also Andreas Bieler, Adam David Morton, “The Deficits of Discourse in IPE: Turning Base Metal into Gold”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, (2008).
- ⁵¹ Marieke De Goede, *International Political Economy and Poststructural Politics*, (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4.
- ⁵² Sezgin Kaya, “Uluslararası İlişkilerde Konstruktivist Yaklaşımlar”, *A.U. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (2008): 90.
- ⁵³ Umit Enginsoy, “Turkey Mulls Participation in Missile Defence System”, *Ankara: Hurriyet Daily News*, 9/15/2010, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=turkey-mulls-participation-in-collective-missile-defense-system-2010-09-15>.
- ⁵⁴ NATO declares that the first missile defense system in Turkey is activated in February 27, 2012. “Malatya”daki NATO Ussu Faaliyete Gecti”, *NTVMSNBC*, (February 27, 2012): <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25325769>. See also “Ballistic Missile Defense”, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49635.htm; “Missile Defense Shield in Place to Protect Europe, NATO Chief Says” (May 21, 2012): http://articles.cnn.com/2012-05-21/us/us_nato-missile-defense_1_defense-shield-missile-interceptors-missile-threat?_s=PM:US.
- ⁵⁵ De Goede, op. cit., 4.
- ⁵⁶ Andrea den Boer, “Emmanuel Levinas, Ethics and Rupturing the Political”, 65, Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrand, *International Relations Theory and Philosophy*, (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2010).
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 66.
- ⁵⁸ De Goede, op. cit., 5.
- ⁵⁹ Walker, op. cit., 173.
- ⁶⁰ Psychoanalytic > Psychoanalysis “is a body of ideas developed by Freud and others. It is primarily devoted to the study of human psychological functioning and behavior, although it can also be applied to societies.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychoanalysis> (2012).
- ⁶¹ See Colin Hoadley, “Machiavelli, a Man of “His” Time: R.B.J. Walker and the Prince”, *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 30 (2001).

⁶² See Stephen K. White, "Poststructuralism and Political Reflection", *Political Theory*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1988). In his study, White argues how can poststructuralism inform political reflection? He says this is a complex and difficult question for a number of reasons. See also Mark Neufeld, "Reflexivity and International Relations Theory", *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 53 (1993).