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ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE, CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This paper addresses the critical reevaluation of cultural diplomacy's role in 21st-century international relations. In an era where the effectiveness of soft power tools is often questioned, this study aims to explore a novel methodological approach by examining the intersection of archaeological heritage and cultural diplomacy to foster sustainable development in global affairs.

Methods: The research employs a qualitative analysis of existing literature and specific case studies in the field of heritage diplomacy. It examines the mechanisms through which archaeological sites, artefacts, and cultural narratives are integrated into diplomatic strategies to promote intercultural dialogue and sustainable practices.

Results: The analysis demonstrates that archaeological heritage, due to its profound impact on identity formation and cultural narratives, functions as a crucial component of the "software" of modern societies. The findings indicate its significant potential as a soft power tool to enhance international relations by contributing to peacebuilding, preserving cultural diversity, stimulating responsible tourism, and supporting economic growth through heritage preservation.

Discussion: The study concludes that integrating archaeological heritage with cultural diplomacy strategies offers a powerful means to advance Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while strengthening political and economic ties. The results underscore the broader applicability of heritage diplomacy in global peace and cooperation efforts. The paper also discusses the inherent challenges of leveraging complex cultural elements and suggests areas for further research into the practical implementation of these interdisciplinary strategies.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Archaeological Heritage, Interdisciplinarity, Sustainable Development, International Relations

INTRODUCTION

Culture and identities, and through them, or in mutual relations with them, archaeology and archaeological heritage, have played and continue to play an important role in international relations. Some might say that this role has decreased in the time of global instability and hard power in international relations. Others might analyze that these cultural phenomena are rooted in most, if not all global, regional and local conflicts.

These diverse views on culture and archaeology in international relations are not a result of opposing data emerging from field analyses, geographic or cultural differences, but rather related to the nature of modern scientific research. In the context of high specialization of different research fields, a process that accelerated in the twentieth century, the narrow focuses of different scientific fields, produce this mirage of discrepancies.

Thus, in the acceleration of the globalization process, some theorists of international relations see trends of pragmatism and dismissal of complex cultural and traditional elements of protocol and diplomatic practice. On the other hand, the anthropologists, sociologists and researchers of other social disciplines might see this acceleration process in totally different dimensions. Thus, the emerging cultural misunderstandings and conflicts, are deeply rooted in culture and identity, which were tremendously influenced by the theories and the artefacts of archaeology in the last two centuries, if not even before. In addition, archaeology and archaeological heritage, as part of the wider focus on the wisdom and knowledge coming from the past, also had great influence on the development of other social sciences, as well as on the development and premises of international thought.

However, contemporary scientific approaches leave little room for axiomatic assumptions, and careful analysis of this area is even more important, given that international relations constitute the primary field in which the development, influence, and reciprocal influence of archaeology and archaeological heritage are defined and tracked in this paper.

The study of these relations gains additional scientific weight when considering that theories of international relations are not only retrospective views on world affairs. Instead, they are deeply socially and politically conscious or engaged analyses aimed at offering answers and solutions to current problems, as well as visions and paths toward transforming the present or future. According to Professor Thomas Smith, theorists of international relations, as well as those from some other social sciences and disciplines, while “trying to explain events and their root causes, often already (with one eye) see toward the future.” This pre-deterministic nature makes the protagonists of this scientific discipline active and prominent elements who, consciously or subconsciously, directly or indirectly, open new paths and transform the “international system” with their visions and ideological solutions. In this context, the possible influence and treatment of culture, identities, archaeology, and archaeological heritage by theorists of international relations in the modern world anticipate their transcendent importance and, more significantly, transform these phenomena into an even more important agent through which theorists directly influence and shape global relations.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study is interdisciplinary, combining approaches from archaeology and international relations (IR) to explore the complex interactions between culture, identity, heritage, and global politics. The methodology is designed to bridge the gap between the material and cultural evidence and theory of archaeology and the theoretical frameworks of IR, particularly in relation to ontological security and globalization.

First, the research employs a qualitative approach that critically analyzes archaeological artifacts, heritage narratives, and their socio-political significance within contemporary international relations. This involves the application of interpretative strategies inspired by Foucauldian archaeology of knowledge, which seeks to reveal how objects,

concepts, and identities are constructed and maintained through power relations and discursive formations. A key aspect is examining how archaeological heritage contributes to states' identity narratives and ontological security needs.

Second, the methodology integrates theoretical analysis from IR, drawing on ontological security theory and constructivist paradigms to understand state behavior beyond material security. It considers states as actors seeking stable self-identity through cultural resources, including archaeology and heritage, which become pivotal in both national security and diplomatic contexts.

Third, the research includes a review of existing literature from both fields. Attention is given to how globalization and glocalization processes impact cultural diplomacy, identity reinvention, and intercultural dialogue.

Finally, the approach endorses collaboration between archaeologists, political scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists to ensure comprehensive analysis, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the research topic and allowing for robust interdisciplinary insights. This methodology ensures a nuanced understanding of how archaeology and archaeological heritage function as dynamic agents within international relations, helping to explain contemporary global challenges and identity conflicts through an integrated analytical framework.

Global Challenges and New Interdisciplinary Solutions

The ever-intensifying economic, cultural, and technological globalization is not just creating a united universe. It has also managed to unite people across the globe in creating multiple new universes. A technological multiverse emerges from the cooperation, knowledge, creativity, and innovation of the whole of humankind. And yet, there are numerous individuals, communities, and societies around the world that are raising the question: Are we the winners or losers of this perpetual, complex, and irreversible process? We are far away today from the idealistic vision of the „end of history “proposed by the prominent global thinker Francis Fukuyama at the end of the last millennium. It is true that the globalization process has transformed dramatically life, culture, societies, and even values in numerous developing countries and the most isolated communities.

However, it also changed and challenged the society, culture and the value systems of individuals, communities, and societies that perceive themselves as leaders and even main protagonists of the globalization process. It seems that today, many in the East and West are united, under the famous words of Edward Said.

This famous theorist of the east-west relations underlined an important conclusion many decades ago that: "No one finds it easy to live uncomplainingly and fearlessly with the thesis that human reality is constantly being made and unmade and that anything like a stable essence is constantly under threat" (Díaz-Andreu 2007, pp.11).

This emerging global fear among individuals, communities, and societies threatened by the global rapid and omnipresent change is urging us to think of new, innovative, and more adequate paradigms of global relations (Kinnvall 2004).

It is not enough today to rest on the comparisons of the unique knowledge of the past of archaeologists, historians or philologists. Instead, one must consider combining the approaches, methods and paradigms of different social and other sciences. On this occasion, and in order to objectivize the relation of archaeology with contemporary international relations, we will include in the equation the additional paradigms of contemporary international relations emerging from other disciplines.

The first is recently labeled as ontological security. While many regions of the world today are confronted with physical insecurity, including terrorism, organized crime, and war, the ontological insecurity is a global omnipresent threat. A looming threat that strongly affects even the most prosperous and stable societies and communities.

Multiple groups, communities, societies, and countries, irrespective of their circumstances in the global processes, feel less and less secure in their visions for themselves and the world. They are left with an endemic feeling that the global change aims towards undermining of their identity, culture, morals, and way of life. This ontological insecurity, well known from the earlier psychological theory, creates extremely anxious, isolated, and irresponsible people. However, we are increasingly understanding that the same powerful dynamics also create anxious, self-isolating, and irrational groups, elites, and countries. Therefore, bearing in mind the inevitability and the news effects of the global change, we are obligated to invest heavily in culture and intercultural dialogue. We should not just permit and look more favorably, but also support the processes, policies, and local, national, and regional institutions aiming to reimagining and reinventing once own values and traditions in the ever-changing world. We are wrong to judge them collectively and prematurely as purely localist and disruptive to global cooperation and security. Instead, this global burst and contemporary searches for identity should be seen as an integral part of the globalization processes. It is the contemporary research in archaeology and ancient globalization that are teaching us that even the most radical localisms represent an integral part of the globalization processes (Tevdovski 2024).

Ontological (in)security and Archaeology

Ontological security represents a concept that entered International Relations (IR) from psychology, but also from the fields of sociology and social theory. The concept and the growing literature on Ontological Security Theory (OST) is still deeply rooted in the paradigms developed in these fields (Giddens, 1984 and 1994), but increasingly relates to paradigms, different aspects and schools of International Relations (Huysmans 1998, Kinnvall 2004, Mitzen 2006, Steele 2005, 2008, Solomon 2018).

Its main premises explain that states seek not only physical safety but also a stable and continuous sense of identity over time. While the pursuit of ontological security is a relatively novel, or at least significantly refurbished, concept, its relevance and practical applications are accelerating rapidly. The need for a reliable and coherent self-narrative that enables a state to maintain agency and coherence in a complex and often uncertain international environment seems to gain new momentum in the last decades.

In addition, aspects of this theory might serve, or be interpreted with a political science term, as “cross-cutting cleavages”, that provide new bridges in the traditional divides of IR theory. Thus, traditionally the realists in IR were dominantly related to the themes of national interest and physical security, and the idealists were left with the softer elements and proposals of policies and shared or global (sometimes cosmopolitan) interest (Jackson 2005, pp. x, 3-4). In this context, the Ontological Security Theory (OST), creates a new bridge between the national interest and the soft, and even typically constructivist elements, such as culture and identity. While, traditionally, security analyses were focused primarily on physical survival and protection against external threats, ontological security highlights and redefines the psychological and identity dimensions of state behavior into an important and independent research area.

Some researchers, like Jennifer Mitzen (2006), tend to expand the concept by linking ontological security-seeking to the state's engagement in routinized relations with significant others. They argue that states achieve ontological security, much like the individuals, by stabilizing their identities through predictable routines and social interactions with others (Giddens, 1984 and 1994). Importantly, Mitzen argues that states may be attached to certain conflictual or dilemmatic relationships because, as such, they provide a consistent sense of self, even at the risk of physical insecurity. It is in this context that the importance of archaeological artifacts and narratives, that have transformed in the last centuries into the “holy grails” or “relics” and “holy books” or “national oaths” of nations is becoming

immense. The deeply rooted sense of belonging, related to these national *sacrams*, elevated them in different contexts to the level of highest national interest, and was traditionally related to the theoretical analyses of the irrational in the policies of the states. However, this paradigm change, challenges such classical realist perspectives by revealing that enduring conflicts may persist not only due to physical security concerns but also because they satisfy states' deeper identity needs (Steele 2008). At the same time, it obliges states, and theorists as well, to refocus on institutions, policies and strategies that prioritize and prepare these “national cultural resources”. Despite the ideological gaps concerning their utilization: being it for the sake of national self-interest or dialogue with others, for ideological and cultural dominance or building bridges in the past and the future. It becomes quite obvious that archaeology and the disciplines protecting, promoting and even “inventing” and “reinventing” heritage and identity are becoming universally acclaimed as important elements in national security and international policies.

Thus, Steele (2005, 2008) develops a comprehensive framework for ontological security in IR, that is of great interest for its potential relations with archaeology. He suggests that ontological security for states involves possessing coherent answers to fundamental existential questions that reflect the state's self-identity. More importantly the arguments of this author go a step further. Stressing the importance of internal debates and reflexivity within states about their identity and security, he convincingly implies that there is a need for investment in research and related institutions. Such infrastructure would be the guarantee for the capability of the state to absorb this constant internal societal dialogue and to transform it into a coherent and productive set of answers to the constant and ever-evolving identity insecurities of its entities.

This aspect of Ontological Security Theory (OST) is moving beyond the idea that states simply react to external threats. It frames security seeking as also about maintaining a consistent narrative and routine that affirms the state's self-understanding over time. The work of Steele also highlights the role of emotions and identity reflexivity (Steele 2008), which implicitly includes the new concepts of “living heritage” and the interpretative dimensions in archaeology, both on scientific and educational level, as integral and useful elements for state behavior and security practices.

In summary, ontological security twist in IR, bring not just prosperity, happiness and social cohesion, but also security of societies and their relations, directly into the sphere of culture, identity and belonging. Thus, it becomes closely related to the capabilities, professional history and impact of archaeology and archaeological heritage in society. This perspective might explain why different states are reengaged in important efforts to promote and protect their identity. What used to be explained as irrational behavior in traditional IR analyses, might be considered in present as strategic efforts for avoiding ontological insecurity. This new relation with archaeology might also open analytical space to understand how intertwined security is with identity, emotional attachment, and the quest for meaning in global politics.

Glocalisation as the smiling face of the globalization process

While ontological security and insecurity locate some of the key problems of contemporary international relations, another paradigm not just evaluates challenges but proposes solutions. The idea of “glocalization” arrived in international relations theory from the business sector. It originates in the Japanese “*dochakuka*”, that can be loosely translated as “global localization” (Pitts & Versluys 2014).

The Japanese entrepreneurs inventing this paradigm explain that global goods, materials, technologies, and, most importantly, ideas have to be additionally locally flavored in order to be well received by local audiences (Robertson 1995). In our case, we should bear in mind that the numerous emerging globalizing tendencies will not bring only complexity,

but will also lead towards increased dialogue, ownership over global processes, and ultimately increased social cohesion. This approach that supports multiple reinventions and reinvigorations of local and regional values, customs and worldviews is a long, costly and many times frustrating process. But its inclusiveness is the only guarantee for a more secure world of individuals and communities with self-esteem and vigor for global competition and interaction.

CONCLUSION

The interdisciplinary relationship between archaeology and international relations offers valuable insights into the ways in which culture, identity, and heritage shape global politics. Archaeological theories contribute to understanding not only the material and historical contexts of societies but also the symbolic and narrative dimensions that influence state identities and their behavior in the international system. These contributions challenge traditional IR paradigms by emphasizing the importance of cultural continuity, emotional attachment, and identity security in global affairs.

Archaeology enriches international relations by providing frameworks to analyze power structures, economic systems, and cultural diplomacy over long temporal scales. It also highlights the political significance of heritage and artifacts in contemporary identity conflicts and diplomatic negotiations. Moreover, recent approaches in IR that incorporate ontological security demonstrate how heritage and cultural narratives become crucial in sustaining state coherence and agency amidst global change.

This evolving dialogue between archaeology and IR fosters new methodologies that bridge material evidence with social theory, offering holistic models to address current global challenges such as identity conflicts, globalization, and intercultural dialogue. Ultimately, integrating archaeological perspectives with IR theory enhances our capability to comprehend the past's impact on present and future international relations, advocating for more culturally informed and inclusive policies.

Thus, the study of archaeology in the context of international relations transcends mere historical inquiry. Instead, it becomes a critical tool for understanding complex political realities and developing pathways toward peaceful global coexistence and cooperation.

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