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## Keywords of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Global Politics and Vavien Theory

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### Abstract

After the Cold War period, the disciplines of social sciences experienced a major transformation. Undoubtedly, debates on grounds such as globalization, neo-liberalism, and post-modernism have created new fields. However, it would be an incomplete to discuss only about these grounds as there has been an extraordinary inflation of concepts within the field of social sciences. Therefore, the emergence of new concepts has brought about the emergence of different perspectives in the theoretical field. In many analyses in the fields of debate, approaches to understanding and explaining the post-Cold War period and the 21<sup>st</sup> century have gained intensity. In other words, it has become an important issue to diagnose and identify this period from various perspectives. In essence, this study aims to make a contribution to these perspectives by comparing perspectives and examining their interrelated nature within the period in questions. In order to place the relevant claim in a conceptual context, the framework has been named “Vavien theory.”

### Keywords

21<sup>st</sup> century, Global politics, Vavien theory, Social sciences

### INTRODUCTION

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the two major World Wars, from the Cold War era to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, changes in the political, economic, and socio-cultural spheres have brought about a number of transformations. It is possible to analyze each period in this context under variety of headings and scopes. However, as of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has become difficult to evaluate the current situation as the balance and content of the time-space dichotomy have accelerated. For this reason, the literature is examined, it is evident that there are various studies in many different fields which aim to understand and explain the 21st century (de Faria Pereira and de Araujo, 2024; Harari, 2020; Rana, 2011; Carroll, 2010; Phillips and Tessin, 2001; Lipschutz, 2000).

What is noteworthy here is that the keywords used in the axis of the main areas of discussion in terms of social sciences have increased in quantity and quality. Although it is a difficult undertaking to build a theoretical ground within such a framework, this study aims to build a conceptual and theoretical scope in order to diagnose and analyze the current situation. For this purpose, the “Vavien theory” comes to the fore in order to analyze the current situation. In each conceptual and theoretical endeavor, of course, a progression in stages should be mentioned. Therefore, this study is considered to be the first important stage in this progress.

### FOUNDATIONS OF A THEORY BUILDING

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries should be considered the threshold and turning point of a new phase or dimension for Europe as well as for the world. This is because, apart from the French Revolution, the period declared the Age of Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the developments that followed constituted a period that can be considered extraordinary in terms of the global balance of power. Here, one encounters various perspectives of what can be defined as the “project of modernity” (Martinelli, 2005; Norris, 2000). The expression “various perspectives” is related to the innovations seen across disciplines in the relevant period to the extent that they support each other. When the views of Smith and then Marx in the field of economics, Taylor’s views in the field of management and organization, Hume’s and Kant’s views in the field of philosophy, Comte’s views in the field of sociology, Hobbes’ views in the field of political science, and Newton’s views in the field of physics are taken into account, it becomes possible to make the framework in the

rationalism-positivism-humanism triangle, which is actually built on “one-single-uniform” more meaningful (Callahan and McIntyre, 2020; Parkinson, 2005; Feichtinger et. al, 2018; Wilson and Mayrl, 2024). This framework led the world to two major world wars in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It should be emphasized that when the foundations and causes of the two great world wars are analyzed, the direct or indirect influence of the factors that built the modernity Project can be discussed. Structural factors based on science and legitimacy have formed the background of many dark pages in human history through wars and destructions. However, they have also been the basis for many technological innovations, especially in the relevant basic military fields.

The construction of a “one-single-uniform” identity, centered on the “nation state” and its citizens, has been one of the most prominent features of this period (Anderson, 2006; Arendt, 1962). Empires consisting of nations or communities were replaced by nation-states that prioritized homogeneity. In fact, this is thought to have been one of the main themes of regional and international competition in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The point to be emphasized here is related to the fact that this basic paradigm was constructed within many different disciplines. After such a process, it can be said that a very different outlook and concept emerged after the 1970s. The transformation represented a paradigm that was new but did not change the basic dynamics and motivation. This is because globalization also created new areas of transformation that strengthened the project of modernity (Featherstone, 1990; Shahidullah, 2019). This can be attributed to the oil crisis on the one hand and the effects of the detente period in the bipolar system on the other (Bini et. al, 2016; Hogan, 1992). Here the field of “updating” can be introduced. The update is actually linked to the adaptation of globalization to the new era. This adaptation has undoubtedly not been independent of the fundamental transformation of modernity. Since this period, the construction of “post”-oriented discourses and concepts have been witnessed. For example, discussions on modernism have been replaced by discussions on post-modernism (Butler, 2002; McGowan, 1991). It is possible to add examples such as post-Fordism and post-structuralism in this context (Amin, 2003; Choat, 2010). Therefore, there is a strong link between globalization and modernism.

In the 1980s, globalization-centered debates began to appear more intensely in the literature. Particularly at the end of this period, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, the global conjuncture evolved into a new dimension. This dimension brought about a quantitative and qualitative increase in conceptual diversity in every field of social sciences with the cooperation of globalization and post-modernism. However, the emerging “ambiguity” picture also revealed different views within its own context (Bauman, 1993). It is also possible to consider the expression of different views as a contradiction. As of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the promises of globalization have not had direct and typical reflections in each field. For example, with the undeniable effect of the declared victory of liberalism, the promise of a world where the walls disappeared in the global sense was in question, but on the contrary, a time period in which many more walls were built compared to the Cold War period was encountered (Ariboğan, 2017).

In another perspective, the contradiction between globalization and the far right can be brought forward (Gunaratna and Pethö-Kiss, 2024; Kondor and Littler, 2024). It would not be wrong to express the dimension of “standardization/uniformization” as one of the biggest promises of globalization. However, there has also been the emergence of resistance mechanism and a reflex against globalization. This reflex initially emerged in the post-Cold War period, with a focus on culture. In fact, discussions on globalization and culture have frequently found a place in the literature (Storey, 2003; King, 1997). This is because cultural elements, which were almost frozen during the Cold War, started to come to the agenda again, and cultural history was rediscovered. This rediscovery has led to the rise of multiculturalism debates since the 1990s (Taylor, et. al. 1994; Horton, 1993; Willett, 1998). One step later, the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed the rise of the far right, especially in European countries. The factors confirming the rise of the far-right are linked to the rise of far-right parties in general elections in many European countries. Apart from these socio-political outlooks, the crises that emerged in the economic sphere also showed how fragile the (neo)liberal ground is (Dumenil and Levy, 2011; Overbeek and van Apeldoorn, 2012). Moreover, since the global financial crisis of 2007–2008, many countries have had to face small and medium-sized economic crises (Berlatsky 2010; Nayak, 2013). The contraction in the global economy and trade in the aftermath of the global pandemic represents another important example that can be added in this context (Saad-Filho, 2021). Therefore, discussions on the return of the state in the economic sphere should not be overlooked (Garrard, 2022).

Within this general framework, it is possible to talk about the Vavien theory for the purpose and effort of building a new theoretical ground in the light of globalization debates. Here, a technical concept is aimed at being a guide for the social sciences in terms of understanding and explaining the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the most general terms, Vavien, as a technical term, means the following: a type of electrical switch that turns on and off a lamp or group of lamps from two separate places. Here, the ability to act and direct from two different places is actually important in order to analyze the framework that has been expressed so far -as this is how it becomes possible to read the different appearances and contradictions that emerge on the axis of globalization and post-modernism. For example, while the emphasis on “standardization and uniformization” comes to the fore in the cultural focus of globalization, it is also witnessed that local and ethnic identities are on the rise. One step further, instead of the “global village” (McLuhan, 2013) approach, national reflexes have become much stronger, and far-right parties, groups, and leaders have come to the fore. Along with this reflection in the field of culture, a period exists in which, for example, there is an attempt to activate the basic parameters envisaged by (neo)liberalism in the economic field, on the other hand, states have started to make their presence felt in the economic field again. Therefore, while the construction process on three axes with globalization, post-

modernism, and (neo)liberalism continues, on the same line, this construction process also creates opportunities that will feed and reveal the opposite of its promises as a natural reflex. In other words, the resistance of local cultures emerges against the emphasis on standard culture. Despite the “claim” that liberal values are winning, extreme right-wing indicators are on the rise. While concepts such as pluralism and multiculturalism are frequently used, at the same time, nationalist discourses with an “other” are becoming more widespread. This context makes the following point clear: The modern paradigm project has been built on solid foundations and facts since the 18th century. Although the relevant foundations have undergone changes and transformations in the process leading up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the points of discussion continue along the same lines. This claim offers arguments that can form the basis of the Vavien theory.

If it can be said that the age of reason has expanded its sphere of influence in the modern period after the age of faith, then it is necessary to state that the current time period is the age of interpretation. Such a picture enables the emergence of a field well-suited for the creation of a theoretical ground appropriate for the requirements of the age or period. However, this field ignores neither the modern nor the post-modern scope. On the contrary, it shows that both scopes continue to exist and feed each other. It is for these reasons that the Vavien theory is aimed at being constructed. The theory claims that all discussions that are seen as separate, independent, and different from each other are directly related to each other. Therefore, it does not seem possible to talk about theoretical competition and conflict. At this point, attention should be drawn to the conceptual difference between contradiction and conflict. For a conflict to exist, there must be two completely independent and unique actors. In the view of Vavien view, these actors should not be independent or unique from one another.

It is possible to start discussions on what kind of future awaits the world tomorrow, apart from today, from the Industrial Revolution (Kovel 2007; Streeck 2016). As of the first quarter of the 21st century, discussions on the future are linked to global climate change as a natural consequence of industrialization. Here, scenarios that will lead the world to “the end” are also on the agenda. For this reason, it is stated that nature-centered policies and practices should be established in the analysis of the nature-human dichotomy because “end-oriented” theories suggest that policies in this direction should be developed. However, the fact that nature and environment-oriented policies create new investment areas should be taken into account in this sense. Therefore, on the theoretical ground, it is possible to talk about two main parameters that support each other, and these two main parameters move on the axis of capitalism. In other words, while nature is extraordinarily damaged by the impact of capitalism, attempts to minimize this damage are actually important for the sustainability of capital. Thus, new investment areas emerge. Undoubtedly, the debates on the green economy are examined, it is evident that new areas of “investment” are on the agenda in the medium and long term in order to build a green economy. This is another argument that confirms the theoretical basis of the study.

## CONCLUSION

No social, economic, or political phenomenon should be evaluated in a single context. The relevant social, economic, and political phenomenon have an impactful and reactionary framework within a cause-and-effect relationship. Particularly when the basic parameters of the 21st century are analyzed, the extent of these effects and reactions can be understood much better. Within the scope of this study, evaluations have been made mainly on the relationship between the dimensions.

In light of the evaluations made, determinations on the phenomena that feed or trigger one another on the axes of globalization and post-modernism are included. A conceptual and theoretical basis was built in order to justify the findings. The increasing number of keywords in the analysis of social sciences has made it difficult to evaluate the current process. The reasons for this difficulty can be the subject of a separate study. However, here, the scopes that cause and feed each other in terms of the general paradigm since the 18<sup>th</sup> century were mentioned. Following the related scopes, the aim was to lay the foundations of the Vavien theory in terms of transferring the phenomenon to theory.

Of course, the conceptual and theoretical groundwork attempted to be realized within the framework of a subject should not be read as the only point of determination of the current situation or the only correct point of view. However, this should not mean completely ignoring the analysis of the 21st century. These analyses can be considered the first step and stage of a process of understanding and explanation. Therefore, it should be emphasized that there is such a step-by-step aim within the framework of the Vavien theory argument.

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