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A Forgotten Paradigm, Why Postmodernism Should Be Used in Research on European International Relations

Summary: The article is focused on the postmodern paradigm and its uses in research on European international relations. It shows how postmodernism is understood in philosophy and how it can be adopted by political science methodology. Although, all aspects – positive and negative – as each paradigm postmodernism can't be used to every kind of analysis. As a result of European philosophy and based on the European background, the postmodern paradigm seems to be the most suitable for European state research. That's why the suggestion included in the text is described in the context of this kind of issue.

Keywords: postmodernism, European state, post-modern state, dual reading, international relations

Zapomniany paradygmat - dlaczego postmodernizm warto stosować w europejskich badaniach stosunków międzynarodowych

Streszczenie: Szukając sposobów badania europejskiej przestrzeni międzynarodowej, z nieuzasadnionej przyczyny, wielu badaczy zarówno polskich, jak i środkowoeuropejskich, pomija postmodernistyczną perspektywę w swoich pracach. To zaniechanie, nieuzasadnione w opinii autorki, pozbawia badania nad stosunkami międzynarodowymi rozwinięcia nowych perspektyw poznawczych oraz ponownego sprawdzenia aktualności dotychczas utrwalanych i powielanych sądów m.in o państwach narodowych w Europie. Celem artykułu jest wskazanie tych obszarów, w jakich nie tylko możliwe jest wykorzystanie postmodernizmu, jako paradygmatu badawczego ale również podkreślenie jego wartości dla nowo prowadzonych badań nad europejską przestrzenią relacji międzynarodowych.

Słowa kluczowe: postmodernizm, Europa, państwo, stosunki międzynarodowe

Contemporary social science researchers have at their disposal a whole range of theories that serve as a basis for their research in the international space. There are only a few, however, who decide to make use of postmodernism. This is still a fairly new concept; however, researchers are aware of the weaknesses of postmodernism, thanks to numerous

critic opinions, and are able to avoid the traps into which a researcher who blindly follows the trends of methodology can fall. Despite the rather rich literature on the subject, Polish political scientists only occasionally refer to this paradigm. The insignificant number of comments are usually general and do not serve as an example of this approach in research on contemporary international relations. Some Polish political scientists; among others Teresa Łoś-Nowak (2013), Jacek Czaputowicz (2007, pp. 30-32), and Roman Tokarczyk (2009; 2010) recognized postmodernism as a useful theory in political science. There are philosophical or purely theoretical studies on postmodernism as a theory, but it has not been fully applied as a basis for a study on politics or its selected aspects (Bernacki, 2000; Kuźniarz, 2011). It is a great shame though, since postmodernism, often used in world research, seems to be a concept that can be applied in the work of a political scientist with great benefit for the world of science.

The study of the international space and its ongoing internal politics is often a study of the behavior of states. The conditions of globalization impose a certain perception of this space and its actors and force us to search for such instruments that would make it possible to study them. However, it is not a fact that the contemporary international reality, as well as the actions of the contemporary nation-state, take place in the postmodern reality or even post-postmodern reality¹. This observation implies to refer to research paradigms, the objectives of which will allow for the analysis of the most recent challenges that arise before the state, both concerning its functioning in the international space, as well as within its borders. However, the application of the achievements of disciplines other than political sciences within the framework of social sciences is a very useful and even necessary measure for a deeper analysis of the examined issues (Ponczek, 2016). Assuming that there is not a single theory that is completely consistent ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically, since there are several theoretical schools within each one, the choice of paradigm is always at risk of criticism. Researchers also cannot ignore the achievements of the existing theories and their influence on the chosen theoretical school of thought.

At the same time, it is necessary to make a decision and indicate the objectives and research framework, and therefore, the first step will always involve indicating whether the positivist or critical theories in international relations are more relevant to the researcher. Each of the choices has both advantages and disadvantages.

Such an attitude results in a search for a paradigm in the area of critical theories. One of them is postmodernism, which is based on the belief that it is impossible to separate knowledge from its valuation. Moreover, it draws from the achievements of earlier concepts of Marxism, neoliberalism, and globalization. It also constitutes certain contraposition to the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, although its presence in social sciences has not become apparent until the last decades of the 20th century (Żukowski, 2009, p. 51). In the opinion of postmodernists, objective epistemology is not possible, as the researcher is always a part of the researched reality and his involvement, preferences, or spectrum of knowledge influences the degree of cognition of the studied political

¹ The terms *postmodernity* and *post-postmodernity* will be understood as synonyms throughout the text.

and social space. Thus, research methods, in the postmodern perspective, are neither measurable nor objectively verifiable. Moreover, postmodernism, as a current of thought, implies the necessity of combining various areas of knowledge, i.e., history, philosophy or cultural studies, and the acknowledgment of the fact that erudition and the intellectually efficient human mind do not have to be sufficient to understand reality. Rather, the postmodernists see a link between the knowledge obtained and the power by which it was acquired and exercised. The functioning of postmodernism within the political science, or even in a narrower sense as a theory of international relations, is based on a deconstructive approach. Thus, the interpretation of the researched phenomena, subjects or events is relative, as it is conditioned by the place and time of the researcher and the researched reality.

Despite critical remarks regarding the objectives of this approach (Blok, 2018, p. 29; Barut, 2017; Hahne, 2007; Ptaszek, 2009; Kubera, 2013)², it seems particularly useful in a specific case of researching the functions of the European nation-state. Contemporary international reality and the dynamism of social processes implies the need to search for particular examples and a rather well-defined research field for phenomena related to the functioning of the state and its institutions.

The Objectives of Postmodernism in International Relations

For postmodernists, politics is understood as solving problems “here and now.” It is the specific political and social problems that are the subject of the researcher’s attention, not the hierarchical perception of state institutions and their mechanisms of solving the emerging tasks resulting from this structure. It is important to remember that although the world is composed of different civilization areas, the contemporary imposition of a Western narrative and the deliberations on the necessity to remodel the existing structure of the state are focused mainly on a liberal-democratic European state (Wilczyński, 2006). Therefore, the focus on the state and the theory of its functioning forces us to naturally refer to the philosophy and history elaborated by researchers from the circle of European culture and to describe the experiences and transformations of the state institutions on the basis of the observation of the so-called Old Continent. Postmodernists, as Żukowski notes, who rejected the experience of the Age of Enlightenment, pointed out that despite the declaration of service to humanism and man, the researchers and philosophers from that period were not guided by the equality of people. Their knowledge was the one of a white man, brought up in the Christian tradition and using the Eurocentric viewpoint of world perception (Żukowski, 2009, pp. 50–82). Postmodernism, by rejecting the privileged Western thinking in favour of accepting multiple narratives, allows for an idea that the model of the nation-state and its functions formed in the past can be characteristic for Europe only, and should not necessarily be promoted as an ideal model all over the world. What is more, it forces us to reflect on the current scope of the state’s

² Among the critics of postmodernist theory was the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas: (2014).

activity, its possibilities in the international space, and the expectations that citizens formulate towards its institutions. If we assume that events and their consequences are never apolitical as such, postmodernism allows us to tear down the existing concept of the nation-state as a universal matrix and to reflect on its European, and thus an example local in the scale of the world. At the same time, it undermines its privileged, Eurocentric perspective, which until now dominated the narrative about the existence, shape, and functioning of the national state in the international space. Over the years, we have become accustomed to perceiving the nation-state as a brilliant union of power, authority and solidarity between people who organise their lives together in a given territory (Reis, 2004). In Europe, since the 19th century, it has been considered a desirable way of organising society. What is more, a similar position was imposed on other regions of the world regardless of their former philosophical, legal or religious achievements in this field. Nevertheless, the modern world is forcing us to redefine what a nation-state is and what should be expected of it – from a political, economic, military and cultural perspective. As one of the Polish researchers, Andrzej Szahaj, emphasizes, many cultural standards, ethical and ideological beliefs, legal regulations and the resulting social norms that accompany the reflection on the contemporary world are the legacy of philosophical thought, historical experience and the Eurocentric perspective of Western civilization (Szahaj, 1996).

The concept of merging the postmodern state with the European nation-state became the basis for research and analysis of Robert Cooper, who stresses in his publications that the postmodern state is the result of the international order established by the Treaty of Rome (1957) and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) of 1990 (Cooper, 2000, pp. 19–20). He points to the characteristic features of postmodern politics, which *de facto* guide European states. Cooper has doubts whether the United States itself, despite being a party to the CFE treaty and drawing on the Western tradition, can be included in the group of postmodern states. Similarly, in Cooper's opinion, Russia does not meet many of the conditions that characterise postmodern states (Cooper, 2000, pp. 28–29).

In Cooper's opinion, the characteristics of the postmodern world and its policies are as follows:

- ceasing of the differentiation between domestic and international politics, and therefore the recognition of many mechanisms as existing in both fields;
- change in the traditional policy (i.e., internal policy) of the state and the necessity to apply forms of social control other than those used to this day;
- rejection of power as a means of resolving conflicts, and consequently the need to introduce a new law codification and to develop a culture of political conflict resolution;
- an increase in the sense of meaninglessness of traditional state borders and a change in their function;
- recognition of a security model based on transparency, mutual openness, and mutual sheer will of states (Cooper, 2000, p. 22).

The new world with its postmodernity requires the creation of a postmodern state and vice versa. European societies, which are changing with the rest of the world, expect

that a country will continue to be a means of effective organisation. But it must take on a new shape and define the tasks it will be able to carry out in order to take its place in the international political arena (Bonefeld, 2015). Postmodernism tries, *inter alia*, to develop a concept of political world criticism that is not rooted in traditional philosophy. And once this “anchoring” is noticed, the proposed analysis becomes more pragmatic in its very nature, more relevant to current events, and thus contextual and local. Both the phenomena accompanying the globalisation and the return to local identities co-create, in a seemingly dualistic way, a vision of the contemporary states functioning. As Akira Iriye, an American-Japanese researcher, emphasizes in his book, contemporary international relations should be seen as space where culture, its values, and clichés are constantly transmitted (Iriye, 2013). The contemporary theories do not question the primacy of the nation-state in the international space, but the dispute between them concerns the extent to which the contemporary nation-state has the power to act independently on the international stage, and to what extent it is determined by the structure of the globalised system in which it functions (Czaputowicz, 2007, pp. 30–32). The postmodernist perspective, stemming from the post-positivist movement is very rarely used by Polish researchers in the field of political science, is, however, much more popular in Western European scientific circles and provides a possibility to find an answer to this question (Balon, 2014). Therefore, it seems important to use the postmodern paradigm to present the current changes to the nation-state in Europe. As the above-mentioned paradigm presupposes the positioning of the examined reality in the cultural context and the presumption that its specificity clearly influences reality’s functioning and present shape (Żukowski, 2009, pp. 50–82).

Postmodernists Concepts of the Perception of the State and Power in the 21st Century

The perception of power and its role in the contemporary world, proposed by one of the main representatives of postmodernism, Michel Foucault, allows us to take a different look at the tasks the said power has to perform in the postmodern international space (Krawczyk, 2012). However, power is defined by the French philosopher as a certain type of relations between the individual entities. It is worth noting, however, that Foucault does not perceive these relations as an attempt only to seek the domination of one of the parties, but also reserves the right for the adversary to refuse or rebel against these aspirations. The essence of power is not an obligation, repression or suppression, but the creation, channeling, and reproduction of political forces. It is also a component of the social networks that operate in the state (Błesznowski, 2016, pp. 98–104). Foucault indicated that the European state functions in three dimensions: theological, political, and social. In each of the historical periods, other institutions have been responsible for meeting the needs of their respective areas of activity. Thus, priests or churches performed theological functions, the ruler and warriors were responsible for political issues, and society, as farmers and craftsmen, maintained the social functions. In such a state, the

autonomy of citizens is a delusion. They are subject to the actions of the authorities, which consist of ruling or domination. This distinction introduced by Foucault forces us to consider the functions of the state in both cases. While domination is associated with building the hierarchy and order of the state, ruling involves influencing and regulating the lives and behaviours of citizens (Foucault, 2000, p. 174). In Foucault's opinion, the ruling is an art that simultaneously creates the state and its functions. What is more, by calling it pastoral power, he believed that it concerns mainly citizens and not the territory (Foucault, 2010, pp. 141–144). This perception of power, and with it the state and its functions, corresponds to the contemporary postmodern vision of the state as an institution not limited to a single territory in terms of the performance of functions vested in it. Globalisation changed the meaning of borders as lines dividing areas and forced states to act also in extra-territorial space. Foucault's main concern is the reflection on the functioning of power and the state in postmodern conditions. As the world is not homogeneous, its activities are not replicable, and the superior subject is the citizen, there is a need to redefine the functions of the state in the international space of postmodern relations. As Czaputowicz explains, Foucault's introduction of the concept of "governmentality" (*gouvernementalité*) is intended to define the consolidation of power exercised by state institutions by means of political economics and security policy in order to govern and influence citizens (Czaputowicz, 2007, pp. 169–170). Governmentality has led the state to take on a managerial role in relation to the citizen and not the territory. In Foucault's opinion, governance is primordial in relation to the state, and preceding the state, it creates it on an ongoing basis (Foucault, 2010, p. 257). Therefore, the functions of the states result from the style of governing, as a change of style may automatically cause a change in the type of functions necessary for it.

The choice of the postmodern paradigm is also supported by the phenomenon of globalization, which, in the opinion of Zygmunt Bauman (2008, pp. 183–185), not only gave a new character to the political reality but above all made it impossible to assess the state's actions and the effectiveness of its functions with the help of the existing tools. The transnational nature of the challenges faced by the state makes it necessary to seek an answer to the question about the scope and possibility of performing the state's functions in the postmodern world. Europe (Bauman, 2005), as an area of particularly visible globalization's influence on the actions of individual actors, is a favourable research field, in which the question about the future of the nation-state takes on an additional, historical meaning (Bauman, 2000, pp. 67–91). It is not only a question of positivist perception of political order but rather of how the European state is to find its place in this dynamic, global world. Bauman stresses that the modern world supported the nation-state by setting the three pillars of sovereignty for it: military, economic, and cultural (Bauman, 2000, p. 74). Postmodern reality does not provide the luxury of such clear-cut tasks. Rather, the state has to maintain a "dynamic balance" and define the scope of its functions, possible to implement in a world that has become a network of interdependencies and connections. The relationship between the economy and politics is indisputable, but the extent of mutual interference, the control of power over these processes and, as a result, the creation of tools to achieve state objectives becomes crucial

for the debate on the functions of the state. Bauman also emphasizes that the postmodern world means not only the globalization of economics but also of knowledge, access to information and cultural flow. Such a state of affairs requires a redefinition of power, which until now has been associated with exclusive access to knowledge. The state has lost one of its monopolies, and thus the scope and assessment of its effectiveness in the eyes of society have changed. The expectations of citizens are different from those of a few decades ago, and thus the tools by which the state executes its functions must be evaluated. Europe, according to Bauman, is such a laboratory for the phenomenon of globalisation and its permeation into the political life of a postmodern state (Bauman, 2009, p. 21). Not for the first time in history, as Bauman stresses, Europe is facing chaos, which forces its subjects to address the issue the future tasks of the nation-state will be shaped. The events of the 19th century and their brutality were also connected with the demolition of the well-known and safe economic, political and social order. European countries, therefore, have experience in dealing with challenges of this kind. However, as Jerzy Oniszczyk adds, today's world is much more complicated than two centuries ago and the network of interconnections and dependencies at various levels makes the current situation much more difficult than ever before (Oniszczyk, 2012).

Postmodernism Tools for Political Science

The proper understanding of the postmodern paradigm does not consist in rejecting completely the scientific findings or rational thinking. The rejection of dogma does not necessarily mean the rejection of science and its achievements as such. However, postmodernists emphasize the necessity of constant verification of the current scope of scientific knowledge, the search for new forms of precise naming of processes and phenomena researched by social sciences, and finally the acknowledgement that science does not give an unambiguous answer but is only an attempt to understand phenomena occurring in the postmodern world. Nothing in science is, in their opinion, guaranteed epistemologically, and thus the researchers must be aware of the limitations of the cognitive abilities of their methods. Researchers are also unable to dissociate themselves from their own cultural and historical perspective, which will always be a filter for their assessments and judgments of the researched reality. At the same time, relativism only concerns the research method and not scientific judgments and conclusions. The researcher's awareness that he or she participates in the researched reality allows him or her for a self-reflection and a change in the optics of the researched phenomena (Dunin, 2007, p. 5).

When deciding on the choice of a postmodern paradigm, four aspects necessary for the construction of such discourse should be pointed out.

The first one is treating the knowledge presented in the paper as a cognitive issue. This applies both to theoretical studies presented by the supporters of other theories of international relations and to the postmodern paradigm itself. Thus, the crucial question

is not so much to know the functions of the postmodern state as to how their use by the nation-state is inscribed in the wider political and social matrix of postmodern Europe and the world. According to the concepts of the founders of postmodernism power and knowledge construct the state, which in turn means that the state is not a finite creation, but one that is constantly being formed depending on the needs it faces. Its functions, as well as its institutions and the way it legitimises its actions, change with the level of knowledge of the citizen and the state itself. The creation of power by knowledge will be important for further analysis of the functions of the nation-state in contemporary Europe. If one assumes the variability of the state of knowledge and the need to verify the policy being pursued, a dialogue between the state and the citizen is necessary. As a result of this dialogue, the idea of the state's functions is both born and reborn. It can, therefore, be supposed that this knowledge is never used up, and the functions of the postmodern state presented in the paper will continue to evolve and transform under the influence of the postmodern conditions of the nation-state. The knowledge that we possess today, and that is used by the state to exercise its power is the basis for strengthening or weakening certain functions of the state.

The second element is the use of so-called genealogy, i.e., the historical thinking about the nation-state and its functions, which reveals the meaning of the relations between power and knowledge. In other words, the discovering of sources and meanings given to them for a specific interpretation of the past. By learning the reasons for the paving over of some historical events and highlighting others, we can understand the significance of the state's actions in the context of the knowledge that it wanted to use to strengthen its authority. A certain historical narrative is always just one of many possible perspectives, and its preference above others always serves specific political purposes of power. At the same time, imposing a perspective forces one to act in accordance with the concepts it advocates. It should be remembered that the genealogical approach implies that there is no one and only great history, but many "smaller" stories intertwined with each other, which have different dynamics and effects used by the authorities – the knowledge (Devetak, 2006, pp. 237–240). Therefore, it is important not only to understand a given historical event but also to become familiar with the process of its construction in the tradition and memory of a given community. This "narrative reality" is important not because it actually happened in the past, but because it was memorised in the collective consciousness and took an important place in the narrative about the state. Thus, certain facts become elements of constructing the identity of both the state and its citizens. Therefore, the next question is how certain events were shaped in the historical memory and which were forgotten and omitted for a better legitimacy of the implemented policy. In other words, how the authorities and the state justify their functions and the way they are exercised, and which of them are omitted in the public discourse of the nation-state in Europe.

An important element of the postmodern paradigm is its textuality, i.e., the perception of political and historical events as "text," the meaning of which ought to be read in at least two ways, the so-called dual reading. As Derrida said, the interpretation of events is as important as the event itself (Derrida, 2011). Therefore, one of the tasks set when

applying the postmodern paradigm is to look for contexts and elements that impose a certain point of view of the described functions of the nation-state in the postmodern world. The question that must be raised concerns the reasons that enabled the occurrence of a given phenomenon and the function that was initiated as a result of this event and conditioned the change of reality in the state or beyond. Assuming that the postmodern world uses reason rather than violence to legitimize its power, it is also important to understand how it uses the law to impose coercion as one of its constitutive functions.

The consequence of such thinking in a postmodern paradigm is a reflection on the meaning of territory and borders in postmodern reality. The establishment of specific borders is not an innocent, pre-political action, but a foundation for the space for exercising power. According to postmodernists, the geographical borders of the nation-state are more often the result of political implications than of objective geographical conditions. Nevertheless, how in the globalizing international space a state can perform its functions if the territorial scope of its power is blurred, just as the borders as limiting its functions.

Postmodern perspective not only dissociates itself from the existing perception of the state as a post-Westphalian outcome but also makes it possible to avoid the premise that "history is written by the winners," thereby the rejection of the imposition of the optics of the processes taking place in the postmodern state, which is not influenced by the philosophy and political tradition of today's Europe. In short, the postmodern paradigm facilitates the research of the functions of the contemporary nation-state by allowing to narrow them down, in this case, to Europe, as a region close by mean of the civilisation, even if from a historical perspective it has different political, economic and social experiences. Despite all the differences, it is consistent in its understanding of the premises and concepts that emerge in political science. Deconstruction and dual reading, as methods of postmodern paradigm, give (with such a narrow-meta narrative) a better chance for precise analysis and an indication of those state measures that will allow for an understanding of social needs and for indicating those state functions that will be necessary in the postmodern world. In this way, a narrower field of research will also make it easier to avoid the accusation of low post-exploitation value, which appears with respect to postmodernists³.

Acknowledging that the contemporary nation-state is no longer merely a space of sovereign power and coercion, but has become a performative entity that emerges as a result of certain practices, actions and decisions, postmodernism offers, as a continuation of the positivist, or perhaps even more post-positivist current, tools that can be useful in the study of such a subject (Bauman, 1995, pp. 90–107). One of them is deconstruction, which allows to redefine already known concepts and to determine them again in the post-modern international space. Similarly, the method of the so-called dual reading, i.e., such a re-reading of the previous actions of the state institutions that will reveal internal tensions and incoherence of their functioning that were overlooked so far, in order to

³ S. Żukowski (2009, pp. 75–82) presented and discussed the criticism of the postmodern approach in the study of international relations.

allow for the reconceptualization of their functioning in postmodernity (Devetak, 2006, pp. 240–245).

The advantage of the chosen paradigm can be the language. Postmodernism is often accused of being too hermetic. The new reality forces us to search for increasingly precise, and often non-existent up till now, descriptions and definitions of the studied phenomena and processes (Łoś-Nowak, 2009). According to Ernesto Laclau's ideas, constructing a language means also constructing a subject, which in itself allows for a change, a transformation of the named subject into a constantly changing reality (Laclau, 2001, p. 8). Slavoj Žižek explains that each name contains a number of descriptive features and refers to those objects in the real world that have these qualities. Moreover, according to the Slovenian philosopher, the name is a condition for preserving the unity of the named object and creating its identity (Žižek, 2001, p. 119). By naming; therefore, we give the identity to the studied subjects and define their constitutive features. What is contained in the language also shows what is beyond it and leads to discourse understood as linguistic and behavioural practices. This means that the language used by the researcher reveals certain features of the researched subjects, and also omits others, which at a given moment are subject to regression or fade in practice. At the same time, political discourse, no matter what optics it may adopt – right-wing, left-wing, or any other – creates specific subject positions with which social actors can identify. Thus, while agreeing with Laclau and Mouffe, who refer to the epistemological values of the discourse, the postmodern paradigm provides a field of objectivity and creates the conditions to rethink the multidimensional relations occurring in society and the state as its living space (Laclau, Mouffe, 2007, p. 117). In their opinion, social phenomena are characterized by a constant game of differences that never ends. They call such a situation a "sewn-up society." In a society determined in this way, they present political phenomena, especially those contradictory and opposing, as an endless game in which one or another narrative dominates for a certain period of time and it is this narrative that, in a given period, imposes the structure and hierarchy of the elements co-creating the reality. Understanding this narrative, its causes and effects broadens the research perspective of a political scientist and makes it possible to see new factors in the functioning of the state in the international space of the postmodern world (Kostecki, 2005). Imposed by philosophers of postmodernism, specific for the area of their study, the nomenclature can only be partially implemented by political science and become a starting point or a tool to develop one's own language, more adequate to the description of the international space (Gadamer, 2003; Taylor 2009, pp. 147–187). Therefore, what at first seems to be a weakness may, during a closer analysis in the field of political science, turn out to be an advantage of the proposed paradigm. As Alexander Wendt notes, the international space, and thus also the state as its most important subject, is a product of ideas, values, experience, and so it is necessary to constantly observe, study and determine the phenomena that occur in it, so as to be able to diagnose and analyse processes occurring in it (Wendt, 2008, pp. 188–211). What is more, the researcher must use an appropriate and adequate conceptual apparatus, for which space creates the proposed paradigm.

Summary

In conclusion, when taking into consideration the studies of Polish researchers of international relations and their methodological guidelines (Haliżak, Kuźniar, Symonides, 2004; Haliżak, Kuźniar, 1994; Pietraś, 2007; Pietraś, 2002; Karwat, 2012; Krauz-Mozer, 2005), when undertaking research on the problem of the European nation-state and its functioning in the postmodern international reality (ontological layer), one may use a postmodern paradigm, the philosophical assumptions of which should be supplemented with theories drawing on the traditions of political sciences (epistemological layer). However, the analytical tools and constructions should refer to a specific example (or examples) of the functioning of contemporary states as an exemplification (methodological layer). In addition, the use of language nomenclature derived from postmodern philosophy should be complemented by concepts from the field of social sciences (terminological layer) that will enable precise identification of phenomena that occur today in the space of international relations.

Thus, the postmodern paradigm not only limits the field of research to the European state, which is often the subject of such analysis but also allows us to study the postmodern international reality and the relations that take place in it between subjects, including states. Through its tools, including deconstruction and the dual reading method, it enables not only the redefinition of the existing principles of state functioning but also the broadening of their meaning, the identification of new areas of tasks or their rejection in favour of new ones that correspond to contemporary political, economic or social conditions. This does not exclude, however, the use of methods known in political science to study text, context or discourse analysis, which allow for in-depth analysis of public political, social and cultural discourse (Sasińska-Klas, 2015, p. 177). The objectives of postmodernism and the application of its methods make it possible to acknowledge the areas, aspects, and political mechanisms that have been ignored in the narrative so far. In line with the premise that the world of politics is a world in which the examined processes are ontologically uncovered, the researcher is not required to be an external observer, which makes all comments and conclusions more relevant to the postmodern reality, the dynamics of which are changing faster than ever before (Klementewicz, 2011, pp. 93–100, 112–114). The observer, who does not shy away from being entangled in the studied reality, may also use the notional apparatus and his knowledge from other disciplines of social sciences to enrich the language of political sciences. Finally, the postmodern paradigm that embraces power as a certain construct of action in political space depends on many variables and provides interesting insights into how it is used and inscribed in the wider social and political matrices of the postmodern world. Thus, it enables reflection on the essence of the functions of the national state in today's Europe.

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