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POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MUTATIONS. POLITICAL REALISM

Empirical studies

Keywords

*Economic realism,
Political mutations,
Great Powers*

JEL Classification

F20

Abstract

The characteristics of contemporary international relations cannot be understood without their doctrinaire analysis, outlined around three main approaches: realist, liberal and structuralist. Even if the object of the study is the same, they provide extremely different responses to questions such as: What relations are established between states? Who are the leading players on the international scene? What is the priority in approaching the international relations of a state? How are the relations between states characterized and determined?

This study aims at highlighting the manners in which multilateral approaches are the way to manage global business, either through flexible, open, variable forms, or through reviving the tradition of international institutions.

Many of the political, economic and social mutations that took place over the last decades of the 20th century and the early 21st century have considerably changed the image of the world, and have paved the way for obvious transformations of international relations. By carefully monitoring the transformations on a global level, we can witness a rapid change of geopolitical contents. In the past, states and peoples were isolated, atomized, but nowadays, they are interdependent. In the contemporary world, once with the weakening and collapse of totalitarian systems and subsystems, with the stimulation of decentralization trends and their subsequent disintegration, a new political stereotype was created.

While international security was based on the arming principle and on the competition between the two political blocs until the fall of the communist regime, in 1989, nowadays, international relations are making the transition from confrontation and opposition to a new international order. Economic and trade interdependence, in an era dominated by scientific and technological expansion, led to an increased complexity and dynamics of international relations (Irimia et al. 2008).

The competition between states already takes place on other "chessboards" than the traditional, military and diplomatic ones, targeting the capitalization on international trade and finance, mutual aid and military technology, "international expansion" - a perspective which has accelerated the movement of ideas, images, values, information and events. These new "chessboards" do not call for the use of force. The interstate competition is no longer based on the traditional strategic-diplomatic interaction in which every player or political actor remained a separate unit, but on an interdependence which is established further to political dialogue. The major changes in the hierarchy of the international system result mainly from internal failures rather than from interstate contradictions.

Moreover, international relations have also changed because of various intra- and interstate *integrationist processes*. In the contemporary world, integration is one of the primordial factors of external politics and of international relations overall. At the beginning of the 21st century, the world went through many changes that took place both inside and outside the states.

Our analysis of the mutations of world economy decision-makers aim at answering some major questions: Who are the leading players on the international scene? How are the relations between states substantiated? What factors determine the

rise and fall of great powers? What are the effects of globalization on the decision-makers of the world economy? What changes are foreshadowed on the new "chessboard"?

As a defining line of research, we are paying close attention to the translational perspective of the power centers from the Mediterranean Basin, as a pivot of antiquity, to the Atlantic and Pacific, in the modern era, after a particular trend marked by tumultuous events. As if this were not enough, significant changes in the international division of labor occurred in the postwar period, and new centers of economic power were reconfigured, changing the balance of forces between them.

The internationalization of production, the increasing international trade, the globalization of financial markets, the increasing inequalities both between the within world states, the regional integration process - from an economic, as well as monetary viewpoint - the depletion of resources, the degradation of the environment, the current scientific and technological revolution in the field of computer science and telecommunications are economic and social phenomena that have been taking place at the global-scale over the past 60 years, radically changing the world's evolutionary paradigm and exacerbating the competition of the Great Powers for world domination (Luca et al. 2009).

In this study, we will attempt to show if the multilateral approaches are the right way to manage global business, either through flexible, open, variable forms, or through reviving international, long-standing institutions. It is clear that international organizations can no longer function in the same way as before, a change in their own structures being necessary. It remains to be seen both if they, and the member states, are ready for this reform. At the same time, developing countries represent the miracle of the 21st century. More and more people discuss China's ascension among the world's Great Powers and its place in the political and military world hierarchy. Finally, it is yet to be determined if the leadership of global economy is fundamentally linked to the ideological conflict, like it has been the case in the past 50-60 years, or if it also depends on the economic, financial and scientific-technological competition.

The characteristics of contemporary international relations cannot be understood without their doctrinaire analysis, outlined around three main approaches: realist, liberal and structuralist. Even if the object of the study is the same, they provide extremely different responses to questions such as: What relations are established between states? Who are the leading players on the international scene?

What is the priority in approaching the international relations of a state? How are the relations between states characterized and determined?

Realism essentially starts from the premise that states target fewer ideals and many more power or security interests in their actions (Landes, 1969). Thus, the advocates of the realism theory conclude that states act rationally by attempts to maintain and increase their power and security. This doctrine is deeply-rooted since the ancient times. To list only a few of the doctrinaires of this current: Tucidide (460-400 B.C), who explained the Peloponnesian War so accurately, Machiavelli (1469-1527), Hobes (1588-1679), Carr (1939), Schwarzenberger (1939,1941), Wight (1946), the last three in the Great Britain, followed by Schuman (1933), Niehbur (1936,1959), Spykman (1942) and Morgenthau (1948), in the USA, on the background of the dominant role obtained in international politics in the postwar period.

The function of political realism has a double meaning: on the one hand, the issue of understanding state behavior, and on the other hand, the orientation of own behavior according to the interest of other states.

Political realism creates a bridge between the normative theories of international relations and the political praxis which founded a successful foreign policy in the USA (Gilpin, 1999; Calleo, 2002).

Man's anthropological existence is characterized by self-preservation efforts, having a direct effect on accumulating power to the detriment of others.

Due to the uncertainty and incapacity regarding the existential situation, man aspires to increase his power for *safety* purposes (Luca et al. 2011). This safety can only be guaranteed through constant accumulation of power.

The American Hans J. Morgenthau, the most important representative of political realism, argued that "*power means the domination of certain people over other people's thought and behavior*". From this statement, he proceeded to identify the essential characteristics of a realistic take on power and, implicitly, on conflict:

- the abuse of power, in many cases, with disastrous consequences;
- the expansionary trend, i.e. the multitude of international conflicts;
- the fact that the power and the immediate goals of the states engaged in conquering it are oriented towards guaranteeing prestige, sovereignty and national security;

- the tendency of the states engaged in the power struggle to mask their own purposes in ideological formulas; for this reason, conflicts for power can be perceived as conflicts of other nature, or pseudo-conflicts, even though the mere identification of their real cause should not leave room for other interpretations.

Thus, six theses have been identified: (Morgenthau et al.1985; Bonacker, 1996).

- The thesis of *continuity* – starts from the idea that politics are governed by objective laws that are deeply rooted in human nature and have not changed since the great thinkers of ancient times. This approach lays emphasis on reason, and foreign policy must be put into perspective.

- The thesis of *relative or absolute gains* – starts from simple questions that lead us to a certain line of political understanding. These questions are: Do we really know what our motivation is? Do we know the others' reasons? The conclusion is that realism's rational politics as the only good politics due to the fact that they reduce risks and increase state benefits.

- The thesis of *political sovereignty* - the realists believe that a fact that holds true for the general character of international relations is also true for the nation state, perceived as a reference for contemporary foreign politics.

- The thesis of *supranatural rationality* – while a person, an individual, can start from the Latin principle "*Fiat justitia, pereat mundi*", a state actor cannot act on such a basis.

- The thesis of the *superior capacity of state agents* - political realism starts from the principle that a nation's moral aspirations cannot be identified with the moral laws that govern the universe.

- The thesis of *the lack of international capacity of state agents*, also known as the "amorality" thesis.

Starting from the unfortunate experience of the events from 1939 – 1945 and from the period of the Cold War, Morgenthau distrusted human nature. He noted that the number of great powers constantly decreased from the 17th century until the date when he published his thesis, expressing skepticism about the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union had the capacity to guarantee world peace. Based on the experience we referred to, Hans Morgenthau drew four major conclusions about the situation that characterized the Cold War, with reference to the USA and to the USSR:

- ever since the beginning of the 18th century, the number of great powers decreased;
- after World War II, there was no buffer-power between the USA and USSR capable of mediating a potential conflict;
- the Great Powers no longer had the possibility to use territories to compensate for the

adverse balance between them or to eliminate tensions;

- in the second half of the 20th century, due to the impact of scientific and technological development, the world was headed for a “total mechanization, total war and total domination”. The realist current, however, found new forms of expression.

Realism promoters therefore believe that the sum of human qualities and defects is passed on to the state, as an actor in the international relations system; it consists, in turn, of the actions of the national states and the consequences of these actions, such as, for example, the creation of international organizations. Like the individual, the state tries to ensure security and protection accumulating power to the detriment of other states (Hinsley, 1967; Donnelly, 2001; Griffiths 2003).

Alongside the concept of power, the concept of national interest is of cardinal importance for political realism. National interests consist of the protective function, national sovereignty and the monopoly of the use of physical force on the inside. At state level, the power conflict is relatively quiet. At international level, it is conflictual, due to the fact that the all-powerful and universally-recognized instances are missing. It oscillates between attempts to weaken the international system, by anarchizing it, through war and détente periods (Nogee et al. 1992; Guzzini, 2000).

The dynamics of international relations is constantly changing due to the fact that the foreign policy of the states is determined by their national interests. The conflict arises in order for one state to gain power, and for another to lose power. Starting from these terms, a resolution or transformation of conflict is almost impossible.

To conclude, we can criticize realism for the fact that, instead of providing solutions to avoid conflict in international relations, it supports, at normative level, the use of force and power in maintaining tense relationships between states (Papp, 1991; Lawrence, 1996). In recent years, however, mainly due to the declining importance of national states, the realist theory on conflicts changed under the impact of empirical and analytical theories on the nature of international conflicts.

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