The New Structure of Foreign Policy after Establishing the United Nations

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Abstract

This research studies the role of the United Nations in international relations based on realism and liberalism theories. Realismshows that the United Nations was created and works to support the great states to obtain more powers. For instance, the veto wright gave these states more power than other states. Furthermore, the United Nations decreases the cost of battles because of sharing the cost with other states in the United Nations. On the other hand, liberalism looks to the United Nations as a tool to make peace in the world by the incentive of an open communication between states.

Introduction

The last century had a major impact on international relations by creating many non-state actors. Non-state actors significantly influence international relations. Scholars in this field have two conflicting opinions about the role of non-state actors in international relations. The first opinion is that non-state actors do not have any impact on international relations because these entities do not have any sovereign power. The second opinion, which is from the opposing side, shows that these entities will promote peace in the world by transforming conflicts from wars to negotiations.

This paper describes some aspects of foreign policy theories and how they were implemented through the establishment of the United Nations (UN). First, this paper will look at the effect of classical realism on the establishment of the UN and how non-state actors are considered a challenge for classical realism. It will further analyze how classical realism views international relations. This paper will also focus on the two main assumptions of classical realism: power and the self-interested state. The paper will then explain what classical liberalism is and explore how this liberalism explains the structure of foreign policy in the UN era.

The Establishment and Structure of the United Nations

Representatives of the U.S., UK, France, Russia, and China met from August to October 1944 in Washington, D.C. to discuss a proposal on transforming the UN. The purpose of this meeting was to establish lasting international peace. On April 25, 1945, a conference began in San Francisco, which included representatives of fifty nations who signed the United Nations Charter on June 26. The charter came into effect on October 24, 1945.

The UN has many goals, which include: maintaining international peace and security; achieving international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems; and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. To achieve its goals, the UN has six organs: the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice, and Secretariat.

How Realism Explains the Establishment of the United Nations

The theory of realism looks at international organizations in one way; it asserts that international organizations are mainly created to cater to particular states' interests. Therefore, the UN was established based on particular states' interests (Mearsheimer, 1995). Furthermore, power, in the realism theory, begins with achieving the goal of state survival (defensive realism) and ends with global hegemons (offensive realism) because the world is anarchic (Mearsheimer, 2001). As a result, realists believe that states are out to maintain power (defensive realism), increase power (offensive realism), or demonstrate power (offensive realism) (Geeraerts, 1996). After World War II, the six great powers understood that wars could not achieve their goals because of the high costs incurred during the war; they therefore established the UN to achieve their goals.

Consequently, the first offensive realism explanation as to the establishment of the UN is that the six great powers wanted to obtain more power and achieve more of their objectives with fewer costs.

Supporters of these reasoning present two key lines of evidence: The first is that the UN has created official multi-polarity, giving multiple countries a veto right under its rules. The second is that the UN decreases the cost of wars for each great power by sharing costs among UN members. For instance, the US spent less in exercising its military power against Saddam Hussain in 1990 by sharing costs with the UN. Some scholars believe that this decision went against the UN Charter, but it enabled the great powers to use war to defeat Saddam with fewer costs.

The second offensive realism explanation for the establishment of the UN is that the great powers deserve to achieve hegemony. The UN created the first legal global hegemony by just a few states. The countries with a veto right—the U.S., the UK, China, Russia, and France—have hegemony above other countries. This goes back to the idea of multi-polarity. Others look at the veto right as a global hierarchy system, with the countries that hold a veto right at the top of this system. The realist theory prefers a bipolar world, but the balanced multi-polarity in the UN system is less of a concern than unbalanced multi-polarity would be (Mearsheimer, 2001).
The defensive realism looks at the establishment of the UN as a mechanism used by states to achieve security (Glaser, 2014). Therefore, the establishment of the UN gives weak states in the world an opportunity to feel secure under the UN charity.

The fourth classical realism explanation is that the establishment of the UN does not oppose any core values of classical realism. For instance, the classical realism theory uses the state as the main unit of international relations, and the UN does not affect this basis since it has no dominant power over individual states. Though the UN may encourage coalitions to face conflicts, it supports state sovereignty to uphold peace in normal situations. Overall, the elements of the realist theory actively support the establishment of the UN and they do not oppose its establishment. Furthermore, classical realism believes that there are just three main actors in international relations: sovereignty, recognition of statehood, and the control of territory and population. At the same time, the UN does not have any of these features; therefore, the UN, viewed from the realism point of view, is just an extension (Geeraerts, 1995). As a result, some scholars who oppose the realism theory consider the impacts of non-state organizations, such as the UN, a challenge to realism. This challenge motivates some scholars, such as Waltz, to criticize the classical realism theory and introduce the neo-realism theory. The neo-realism theory is based on three new assumptions: The first assumption is that a state is not the sole player in international relations. The second assumption is that using force or fights is ineffective as a policy in this era. The third assumption is that the traditional hierarchy of issues with military has been replaced by agendas (Geeraerts, 1995).

On the other hand, the classical realism theory believes that securing cooperation between states is difficult because of relative-gains considerations and concerns about cheating. Every state looks for any cooperation based on gains(Mearsheimer, 1994). States look at the gains in two different ways. The first way is absolute gains. In this way, every state focuses on maximizing its profits without caring about others. The second way is relative gains, whereby every state focuses on how the gains will be divided. The realism theory believes that states which look for absolute gains are likely to cooperate because they will accept any gains to maximize their power without comparing themselves with other states. For states that make their decisions based on relative gains, they worry much about how the gains will be divided among members (Mearsheimer, 1994). The second obstacle in securing cooperation is associated with cheating because every state wants to achieve its goals without caring about others.

Besides these obstacles, classical realism assumes that a balance of power logic motivates states to make collaborations and alliances (Mearsheimer, 1994). It also suggests that cooperation will result into stability if it has long-term benefits. The UN has this feature, which means that it has the ability to continue (Mearsheimer, 1994).

How the Liberalism Explains the Establishment of the United Nations

In the second half of the last century, the movement of non-state entities was on the rise. As a result, many scholars, such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, reject the core arguments of classical realism about state-centric. These scholars show many case studies examining the changes that have been facilitated by non-state entities such as the UN.

The new movement is called the liberalism theory, which focuses on the public, the culture inside states, and any factors that affect them (Geeraerts, 1995). Classical liberalism focuses on the inter-state culture in explaining international relations. In this twentieth century, many scholars support the liberalism movement in the world. They assume that the establishment of the UN was a result for expanding liberalism. Therefore, liberalism looks at the establishment of the UN as a mechanism used to advocate for peace by affecting cultures. Classical liberalism believes that increasing communication between states cultivates peace in the world. The UN therefore creates a good environment for states to communicate either directly, through the UN meetings, or indirectly through the UN organs. The establishment of the UN also creates a new way of solving international conflicts.

While classical realism assumes that the UN is a tool, which states use to acquire power, classical liberalism assumes that states cannot achieve their goals without working with the UN. The difference between these two ideas is that classical realism believes that states have many options to achieve their goals; therefore, the UN, or any non-state entity, does not have a large impact on states. Classical liberalism believes that there is only one way for states to achieve their goals through supporting non-state entities, which means that non-state entities have a significant impact on states and they control their achievements (Geeraerts, 1995).

International Relations Following the Establishment of the United Nations

Realist Explanations

Classical realism believes that a state is formed by the material structure of the international system. It assumes that every state works to expand its hegemony in the world. As a result, some realist scholars argue that the UN is a tool used by the great powers to expand their own powers in many ways. The first way is the establishment, which is described above, of a new multipolar world hegemony through the veto right of five countries: the U.S., the UK, China, Russia, and France (Fassbender, 1998). This veto right creates inequality between UN members and divides the world into two groups: veto countries and non-veto countries.

Classical realism focuses on expanding the individual states' powers through any means. Therefore, the UN supports the great powers in achieving their goals with fewer costs. Before establishing the United Nations, the great powers had to foot the full costs of their wars, but now they can achieve their own interests with the support of other UN member states (Strohmer, 2010).

The great powers can also use the UN when they need to resolve a conflict in a state, which they do not have much interest in. Sharing the costs with UN members decreases expenses, and the great powers are still the main actors in the world (Glaser, 2014). The great powers can also use the UN to maintain a good reputation when they make a war. For instance, when any great power fights with any state through the UN, it sends a peace message to the state's neighbor, which means that the great power does not have any hidden interest in the region apart from the fight it has with the involved state (Glaser, 2014). As a result, the great power will get more support from the neighbors. The great powers, in general, ask the UN to make decisions in any global conflicts when they are sure that the UN will support their decisions except that they look for another coalition. For instance, the US asked the UN to make a decision against Iraq in 1990, and it worked through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Kosovo because the opportunity to make a decision by the UN was difficult (Glaser, 2014).

The UN is not self-reliant in terms of resources; it relies on the support it receives from the great powers. This gives the great powers the ability to dominate the UN by offering or withholding resources (Mirbagheri, 2000). For example, every state wants to achieve its own interests, and supporting the UN would be continuous when the organization achieves or supports the state's goals.

Classical realism assumes that conflicts between states are the normal situation in the world. It assumes that peace can only be obtained through military strength. Therefore, classical realism believes that the UN will not make peace in the world (Greeraerts, 1995). The truth is that the UN has changed the way of conflicts between states.

Liberalist Explanations

Like realism, as described above, liberalism is a theory consistent with the existence of the UN. It assumes that increasing communication between states leads to a more stable world and thus supports a body that encourages more interstate dealings and cultural change. Liberalism also applies to many aspects of how the UN acts in international relations. The first aspect is the assumption that dealings between states create global stability.

According to this theory, the UN supports peaceful international relations through expanding the forms of communication channels available between states. Besides formal meetings at UN headquarters, the UN has many international programs that offer communication between countries, such as the World Food Program (WFP). This program distributes food commodities to support development projects and works in collaboration with international agencies in many different countries. It thus serves as a basis for international communication among states on the topics of food and development.

There is another way through which the UN can be used to make positive impacts within states. This is by supporting the new actors or campaigns inside states (Wadlow, 2002). In general, the new inter-state actors prefer to collaborate with the UN to achieve their goals or inter-state changes. They focus on the trust between the UN and the state's representatives to ensure that the change they want is achieved (Wadlow, 2002).

Many scholars reject this view based on many points. The first point is that the UN has little power and it therefore does not have any real inter-state impacts(Ashgate, 2001). In many cases, the UN did not have authority to stop suicide inside states, such as what happened in Rwanda in 1994. In the mid of the UN mission, Rwanda's government asked the UN to leave before even finishing its mission in there (Gourevitch, 1998). Furthermore, any inter-state impacts happen depending on whether the relevant governments are willing to get involved. For instance, the UN organs work through agreements with governments. Therefore, the UN, in reality, does not have direct inter-state impacts. The second point is that the UN does not have enough economic sources. It is therefore weak and under pressure from its supporters.

The second aspect is that culture can change through direct and indirect dealings among states. Liberalism offers two ways through which cultures can change: natural selection and cultural selection. In natural selection, residents of a state do not adapt to their culture, and they start to shape a new state. The second way is through cultural selection, which happens when a state makes direct or indirect communication with other states (Wendt, 1999). The UN can affect states through cultural selection because it gives states a forum for communication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, every theory evaluates the UN based on the role it plays in international relations. For instance, classical realism focuses on two main points: state and power. These two factors do not support the UN. The UN is not a state, and it does not have any sovereign power in the world. The neorealism theory added international organizations as players in international relations, but the UN does not have any power. As a result, the realism theory looks at the UN as a platform through which the great powers in the world can achieve their goals.

Classical liberalism focuses on the culture inside states. It explains how the international organizations can make changes inside states. From the above analysis, the UN achieves some liberalism goals. For instance, liberalism assumes that communication between states leads to peace, and the UN can achieve this through its organs.

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