

GV1600

INTRODUCTION

TO

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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What is the significance of the disagreement between neo-realists and neo-liberals?

Why international event occur in the way they do? Why did a certain war break out? Why are some countries richer than others? Why do relations among states change over years? These are questions in the study of international relations which is about relationships among the world's state government and the conceptions of those relationship with other actors (such as the United Nations, Multinational corporations, and individuals), with other social relationships (including economics, culture and domestic politics, and with geographic and historical influences. Realism and idealism are two main theories in the study of international relations, they are always seem to be conflict with each other, the debate between them was come out ever since the creation of the two theories, the continuing argument through out their development, and their debate always seems to be in the past perfect tense, the present progressive tense and the future progressive tense.

Realism is a school of thought that explains international relations in terms of power, realists assume that international relations can be best explained by the choices of states operating as autonomous actors rationally pursuing their own interests in a system of sovereign state. They believe that states are the major actors in world politics; states are

sensitive to costs and behave as unitary-rational agents; international anarchy is the principle force shaping the natives and actions of states; States in anarchy are preoccupied with power and security, are predisposed toward conflict and competition, and often fail to cooperate even in the face of common interests; International institutions affect the prospect for cooperation only marginally; The globalisation does not alter the most significant feature of world politics. In a word, realism looks at the world as it really is rather than how we would like it to be.

Against with realist, idealism in contrast is more likely to have the view of how the world ought to be and tried to assist events to turn out the way. They believe that the human nature are basically good, friend and peaceful, and it can become the basis of peaceful and cooperative international relationships; state is not a unitary or united actor, they are sets of bureaucracies each with its own interests, but they see the corporations among nations, transactional actors such as terrorists group, and international organizations as central actor in some issue-area of politics; International law, morality, and international organization as key influences on international events rather than power alone; International system are based on the community of states and have the potential to work together to overcome mutual problems.

As time went by, the realism changes from historical realism to now about structural realism, changes from classical realism which is popular up to the 20th century, to modern realism during the time 1939 and 1979, and after 1980s, realism became more concerned with hoe anarchy rather the human nature affected the policy of states, the dominant stand in realism becoming neo-realism(or structural realism II). Neo-realists attempt to make realist principle more simple and formal.

At the same time, liberalism become more focused on how international cooperation might make it possible to overcome the negative effects of anarchy, and it's dominant stand becoming neo-liberal institutionalism (whose short term can be neo-liberalism). Neo-liberals differ from the traditional liberalism in that it accepts several realist assumptions. Firstly, They now believe that states are unitary actors (although they still admit that non-state actors are subordinate to states) pursuing their self-interests. Secondly, They broadly accept the anarchy structural in the international system, but they still strictly keep their belief on the co-operation, and they still believe that the regimes and international institutions can mitigate anarchy by reducing verification costs, reinforcing reciprocity, and making defection from norms easier to punish. Thirdly, they begin to see integration at the regional and global

level is increasing. Also, they believe absolute gain rather than relative gain.

There are several main features of neo-realists and neo-liberals debates.

The first debate is on the view of state. Although both neo-realists and neo-liberals agree on that state is the most important actor, and all states are unitary actors and states performs in an anarchic system, Neo-realists see anarchy as placing more severe constraint on state behaviour than do neo-liberals.

Secondly, Neo-realists see international co-operation as hard to achieve, very difficult to maintain and they see more conflicts arise between each other rather than benefits received. But neo-liberals in contrast believe that states will be able to achieve cooperation fairly often, they use institutions to facilitate the pursuit of mutual gains and the reduction of possibilities for cheating or take advantage of another state, they believe that cooperation is the best method to achieve mutual benefits. Neo-liberals concerns about the concept of reciprocity, which means a response in kind to the other's actions, after one has demonstrated one's ability and willingness to reciprocate- gaining a reputation for consistency of response- the other actor can easily calculate the cost or

benefit of cooperation and thus reciprocity can be an effective strategy for achieving cooperation, in a situation of conflicting interests neo-liberals believe that reciprocity can be counted as an active and helpful hand in solving out the international security, international political economy(IPE) problems.

More importantly, the argument between relative gain and absolute gain can be the most 'issue' area. Neo-liberals stress absolute gains from international co-operative relations. Although in the case that other states may gain more from the movement, but because of their belief of absolute gain, they won't care how greater benefit other state gains than itself. As state power is mix of many elements, such as natural resources, industrial capability, moral legitimacy, military preparedness, popular support of government and so forth, but in general, there are power resources (which are elements than an actor can draw on over the long term to develop) and power capabilities (which allow actors to exercise influence in the short term). In the sense of neo-liberals, they would more likely to develop their power resources such as GDP to ensure their absolute gain. By contrast, Neo-realists more likely to highlight the idea of relative gain, which is the ratio of the gain that two states can bring to bear against each other. It matters little to neo-realists whether a state's capabilities are rising or declining in absolute term, only whether they are

falling behind or overtaking the capabilities of their rival. In this sense, they are more likely to investigate on their military capabilities, because it is easier for them to overtake the capabilities of their rival in a shorter time and less cost. In other words, Neo-realists will ask who will gain more from international cooperation, whereas neo-liberals will be concerned to maximize the total level of gain for all parties.

Furthermore, neo-realists think that in an anarchic system, all states have to look after their survivals, they need to make sure the order of society, and maintain it to be healthy, wealthy and peaceful, so that they assume security and survival to be the most important issue. According to the fact of lack of central authority, security can therefore only be realized through self-help. Neo-realists' idea is a theoretical foundation for the cold war policies of containment, the determination of U.S. policy. Cold war seems to be a military competition, and both the United States and Soviet Union had spent too much money to develop it. On the basis of the self-help, neo-realists don't trust other states; they tend to see international cooperation to be unachievable. On the other hand, neo-liberals care more about the international political economy and they think that it can be achieved by regimes and institutions, they see regimes as an important and widespread phenomenon in international relations, it is an active and effective method to control actions applied by states.

Moreover, in the anarchic international system, the absence of central government would create some problems in the international co-operation. The two most significant problems are collective goods problems and security dilemma. A collective good is a tangible or intangible good, created by the members of a group, that is available to all group members regardless of their individual contributions, participants may be able to gain by lowering their own contribution to the collective good (in terms of free rider), but If too many participant do so, the collective good problems, government can punish free riders by passing law against or by levying taxes such as national defence, highways. But in the anarchic international system, the absence of central authority sharpens the difficulties created by collective good; it is difficult to maintain cooperation when each state is attempted to realize their possibilities free riding. Another problem is the security dilemma, which means that one state's action of assuring their own security would affect the security of other state. For instance, one state of deploying more military force may push other state into the position of insecurity. To the neo-liberals points of view that the collective goods problem, the security dilemma can be solved. They believe that regimes and institution can facilitate co-operation. They take some practical examples to support their view, such as The Ballistic Missile Technology Control Regime, the concert of

Europe after 1815 and the post-cold war era of the 1990's, and also the IPE, which can be seen as solution in international security, they also mentioned the usage of alliance or coherent to be together to the concept of collective security. They also promote to use regime, institutions to solve the collective good problem, in some sense, they are optimum in the world politics. They believe that regime can help solve collective good, problems by increasing transparency, they see future regime would be particularly strengthened according to fast-developing information technologies. In the opposite way, neo-realists don't think that international institutions and regimes can mitigate the constraining effects of international anarchy on co-operation; instead, they think more negative effect of cooperation. As neo-realists see human nature is selfish, they see state behaviour be cheating, in the situation that state can earn more benefit from being free rider; this would decrease the efficiency the cooperation. And also they see alliance is very instable, states will always seeking their own best gain and ignoring other states or all state as a whole.

Finally, neo-realists concentrate on capabilities rather than intentions, whilst neo-liberal look more at intentions and perceptions than at capabilities.

To conclude, from realists & liberals' debate to neo-neo debate, it always is the most quarrel field in international relations. They see human nature, the world politics structure, the interest of nation, and the co-operation system, form of gains in different way. They were, they are, and they will be competitor all the time. It may be true that one side of the two take better position at a point of time, but more generally, it can be seen cyclical and oscillatory term in office and has a monotonic ever-lasting tendency.

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