

Rethinking the Role of Diplomacy in Shaping World Politics

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doi:10.56397/JRSSH.2023.12.01

Abstract

The interconnectivity between politics, anarchy, and diplomacy is a complex and dynamic relationship that shapes the global landscape of governance and international relations. At its core, politics represents the structured exercise of power within a society or among nations. Anarchy, on the other hand, refers to the absence of a central authority or a state of disorder, often challenging traditional political structures. Diplomacy serves as the bridge between these two seemingly opposing forces. In the international arena, diplomacy is the art of negotiating and maintaining peaceful relations among states, even in the absence of a global government. It is a critical tool used by political actors to navigate the complexities of an anarchic system. Diplomacy seeks to establish norms, treaties, and agreements that mitigate the chaos inherent in anarchy and foster stability. Conversely, the influence of politics and power struggles can both enable and hinder diplomatic efforts. Political interests can either promote cooperation through diplomacy or exacerbate conflict when competing powers collide. Anarchy, as a backdrop, magnifies the importance of effective diplomacy in preventing chaos and violence on the global stage. The interplay between politics, anarchy, and diplomacy underscores the necessity of skillful negotiation and strategic alliances in a world where power dynamics are ever-evolving. Understanding this interconnected web is crucial for addressing the challenges and opportunities that define contemporary international relations.

Keywords: economic growth, global economy, trade, investment, power shift

1. Introduction

The intricate relationship between international relations, war and peace, diplomacy, and foreign policy plays a pivotal role in shaping the world's geopolitical landscape. However, this interconnected web can also be a double-edged sword, capable of jeopardizing global stability and hindering the attainment of international cooperation and sustainable peace.

One of the fundamental issues lies in the pursuit of national interests through foreign policy. Nations, driven by their unique goals and priorities, often engage in foreign policies that may clash with those of others (Sutch & Elias, 2017). This competition for resources, influence, and power can escalate into conflicts, large or small, posing significant threats to global stability. For instance, territorial disputes in the South China Sea have led to heightened tensions

between China and neighboring countries, challenging regional stability.

Diplomacy, the cornerstone of peaceful international relations, is not always successful in mitigating these conflicts. When diplomacy fails or is absent, misunderstandings and miscommunications among nations can lead to dangerous escalations. The breakdown in diplomatic channels, as witnessed in the Ukraine crisis, can result in armed confrontations that might have been averted through effective diplomacy (Gray, 2017).

Arms races and military buildups are another consequence of this complex relationship. Foreign policies that prioritize military strength can breed insecurity and distrust. Major powers, fearing a potential threat from others, often engage in military buildups and arms races, raising the risk of conflict. The Cold War era serves as a historical example of how foreign policies based on military competition could have devastating consequences for global stability.

Furthermore, the violation of international law and norms undermines the foundations of international cooperation. When powerful nations act unilaterally, disregarding international agreements and principles, it sets a dangerous precedent. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States, without a clear mandate from the United Nations, damaged the credibility of international institutions and hindered collective efforts to promote peace.

Nationalism and identity politics are additional drivers of instability. Foreign policies influenced by nationalism can prioritize domestic interests over international cooperation. These policies can stoke tensions, as seen in the Brexit process, where identity politics played a significant role in the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, impacting regional stability and global cooperation.

Resource competition is also a significant contributor to instability. Foreign policy decisions driven by the desire to secure finite resources, such as water, energy, and territory, can ignite conflicts. Resource-related disputes, like those over water rights in the Nile River basin, underscore how such tensions can hinder cooperation and exacerbate global instability.

Proxy wars, a frequent consequence of major powers' foreign policies, further complicate the situation. Superpowers often support opposing

sides in regional conflicts, using smaller nations as pawns. These proxy conflicts, as exemplified by the Syrian civil war, not only devastate local populations but also escalate regional tensions, making diplomatic resolution elusive.

Finally, the failure of international institutions to effectively mediate disputes and enforce international law can hinder the pursuit of peace. Weak or ineffective global organizations can undermine diplomatic efforts and leave conflicts unresolved. The Syrian crisis, marked by the inability of the United Nations to take meaningful action, serves as a sobering illustration of this challenge.

2. Realism and World Politics

Realism posits that mankind is naturally inclined towards world domination; politics being one of the tools that are used to realise this endgame. It is therefore opined that conflict in the quest for dominance is a means of protecting a state's interests and identity (Sutch & Elias, 2017). Realism approaches international politics in a pragmatic manner and posits that through this paradigm it is possible to understand international polity. The main argument is that it is necessary to view international politics through the power relations that drive interaction between respective states.

Realism, and the paradigm it espouses, is based on two pillars; focus on power, and, the engagement in a practical science of politics. In its focus on power, realism opines that world power is centred around states and they are the primary actors on the stage of world dominance. It is also in the study of power politics that one is able to understand state action. Further to these, world affairs are best understood when viewed through the lens of power relations between states. Congruently, through an engagement in the practical science of politics, realism seeks to generate objective laws; laws which are provable through observation and experimentation.

In the study of realism, four major themes emerge: the (necessary) anarchy of the state of nature; the self-interests of power-hungry actors; the priority of power over morality or justice; and, the centrality of the state as a prime factor (Sutch & Elias, *International Relations — The Basics*, 2017). Therefore, a realistic or scientific account of international relations is posited on studying the above four themes. It is on these four arguments that the grand themes of world

politics; international relations, war and peace, diplomacy, and, foreign policy, are suitably analysed.

In order to understand world politics, there is need to analyse it through the eyes of realism. This study will be guided by six principles. First, it opines that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that are rooted in human nature. Second, realism conceptualises international politics through interests which are in turn exhibited through power. Third, interest, which is exhibited through power, is a key concept of world political interactions; a fact that is universally accepted and respected. Fourth, political action is replete with moral significance. While the individual has the ethical right to sacrifice himself in defence of moral principles, the state is not obligated to allow moral disapprobation interfere in the implementation of successful political action. The state is inspired by the principle of national survival in taking this stance. Fifth, realism is disinclined to believe the notion that a nation's moral inclinations are identical to the moral laws of the universe. To a realist, it is one thing to know and acknowledge that a nation is subjected to the moral law; it is another to pretend to know with certainty what is good and evil in the relations among nations. In light of these disparities, a state is held back from moral excesses by the reality that other more powerful states would be inclined to intervene. Six, to a realist, the sphere of political autonomy is as real as that of the lawyer or economist on the world stage. In the same way that these professions describe and have a world view unique to their practitioners, international politics is similarly construed (Sutch & Elias, 2017).

Realists concern themselves with power; the basic component upon which political interaction occurs, rather than on law, morals or even the economy. This is because the sovereign independence of states will always be sought and bitterly protected. As a consequence, there is bound to be near-constant rivalry between states. In the words of Morgenthau, the balance of power is not only inevitable but it acts as a central stabilising factor between sovereign nations (Sutch & Elias, 2017).

In this anarchical structure, power balancing will inevitably ensue. Power balancing can take one of two options; through conquest with the dominant state eliminating any threat or through consensus and adoption of negotiation

rather than conflict. As a consequence, alliances will be sought, and made, with weaker states in an attempt at avoiding overall dominant power by one party. This move is also sought in order to maximise security since there is more states can gain by trade and cooperation than can be gained by conquest. The system of world politics therefore, pushes for balancing rather than being bundled in a bandwagon. As a consequence, states do not seek to primarily maximise power but retain their position in global geopolitics (Sutch & Elias, 2017).

3. International Relations

Various theories have been posited in an attempt at understanding world politics as seen through international relations. The study of international relations theory helps in explaining the world in various ways. It provides a framework for understanding various concepts that form the debates in, among others, foreign policy, law, ethics, and security studies. Basically, international relations theory is an attempt at elaborating the general principles that can help us familiarise ourselves with the complexities of world politics.

Realism, in an attempt at explaining world politics, opines that world politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that are rooted in human nature. Chief among these laws is the belief that a state can, and should have, legal autonomy. In order to realise this, states engage in diplomatic, strategic and military terms with each other. The sovereignty of a state is premised on another rule; that a state is regarded and respected as sovereign because there is no higher body that has the right to issue orders to it (Sutch & Elias, 2017).

This concentration on world politics is based on the fact that the state is both a geographical and legal reality; two of the central pillars of world politics. As a geographical reality, a state is described by its definite boundaries; the definite protected area; a population with specific identity; and recognition by other states as a sovereign entity. As a legal entity, a state is described by the presence of a constitution (written or unwritten); a law corpus that governs the state and its inhabitants; and international convention and treaties defining its relations and obligations in respect to other states and humanity in general.

Realism opines that political action is replete with moral significance. While the individual is

ethically excused in his right to sacrifice himself in defence of moral principles, the state is not so privileged. The state is under no obligation to allow moral disapprobation interfere in the implementation of successful political action; thus, the action of going to war to realise a political ideal is as normal as engaging in the same for self-preservation.

It is also the contention of realists that a nation's moral inclinations are identical to the moral laws of the universe. They opine that it is one thing to know and acknowledge that a nation is subject to the moral law and it is another to pretend to know with certainty what is good and evil in the relations among nations. It is these disparities that hold back a state in its excesses: the real and present reality that other more powerful states would be inclined to intervene keeps nations along the straight and narrow. However, this has not always been the case as has been exhibited by both World Wars and other conflicts that have necessitated the intervention of other states to end human suffering.

4. War and Peace

By studying the relationship between politics and war we are able to discern that the threat to use, or actual use of, organised violence has been the hallmark of politicians against each other with the singular aim of gaining some political mileage (Gray, 2017). Consequently, the waging of war is done at the behest of politics and to the singular fulfilment of those political ideals.

The relationship between war and warfare is, on the one hand, between a legal and social entity, one that comprises of the complete relationship between the belligerents, and, on the other, the actual waging of combat in its military dimension. In this case, the intent of war is to bend an enemy's will towards one's objectives; in case a peaceful strategy fails, one may resort to warfare. What makes the greatest impact is not how skilled one's army is, but rather one's capacity to bend the enemy's will.

In this case, international politics are engaged in pursuit of interests which are in turn exhibited through power. As the quintessential exhibition of power, human conflict is often resorted to in pursuit of confirming this power.

On the other hand, interest, which is exhibited through power, is a key concept of world political interactions; a fact that is universally

accepted and respected. It is this interest that guides a state to opt between war and peace; conflict over negotiations.

Similarly, whatever action is opted for, it will have to be scrutinised in terms of its moral significance. Individuals, known to opt for self-sacrifice in lieu of moral principles, are a stark opposite of states which suffer no obligation to consider moral disapprobation in their quest for a successful political action. While the individual is inspired by martyrdom, the state finds its inspiration in national survival (Gray, War, Peace and International Relations. An Introduction to Strategic History, 2017).

While holding this belief, realists are disinclined to believe the ideation that a state's moral inclinations are identical to the universal moral laws. It is opined that it is one thing to know and recognize that a state is subject to moral law; it is another totally different thing to know with certainty what is good and evil in the relations among nations. It is these disparities that keep a state on a straight and narrow path; not knowing if or when there would come intervention from other states due to their action.

5. Diplomacy

The parallel influence of realism in diplomacy is further discerned when one considers that politics, which is the backbone of diplomacy and a reflection of society, is equally governed by objective laws (Jonsson & Hall, 2015). The whole history of diplomacy is covered with attempts at identifying the qualities of a good diplomat and influencing how it should be practised.

Realism also conceptualises international politics in terms of interests and opines that they find their expression through power. Hence, diplomacy, though not known to use brute force, is a major means of exhibiting power and influencing power relations between states.

Concomitantly, interest, which is demonstrated through power, is a key concept of world political interactions. Through engaging in diplomacy, states confirm that their interests come first; a fact that is universally accepted and respected. It is however the meshing of a state's interests with the interests of another that there is room for negotiation and consensus building among states.

Realists are disinclined to accept the belief that a nation's moral inclinations are identical to the

moral laws of the universe. Time and again it has been proven that it is one thing to know and acknowledge that a nation is subjected to the moral law; it is however another to allude to the fact that it is possible to know with certainty what will be taken as good and evil in the relations among nations. In light of these disparities, diplomacy comes in to provide an alternative means of conflict resolution and realisation of a nation's ideals.

To a realist, the sphere of political autonomy is as real as that of the lawyer or economist on the world stage. In the same way that these professions describe and have a world view unique to their practitioners, international politics is similarly construed (Jonsson & Hall, 2015). Similarly, the diplomatic world is construed and is controlled in a unique manner. In its engagement with the world players and also within themselves, diplomats make use of time-honoured practices, in-house rules, norms and communication modes that are quite different and unique from other professions.

6. Foreign Policy

In its analysis of international relations, realism posits that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that are rooted in human nature. In foreign policy analysis, it is discerned that such laws guide the conduct between neighbours and the international community at large (Breuning, 2017). It is these rules, ensuing from human nature, that provide the best foundation for interstate and international polity.

Further to this, realism contends that international politics is best understood to consist of interests which are in turn exhibited through power. It is state interests that guide the path to be taken in a state's relation with its neighbours and other international players.

As a corollary, interest, which is exhibited through power, is regarded as a key concept of world political interactions; a fact that is universally accepted and respected. This positing by realists explains the quest by states to develop a foreign policy that will not only ensure that its interests are realised, but the decisions, behaviours exhibited are commensurate with the desired outcomes. Realism also aids in the understanding what goes into the making of policy decisions. It gives a glimpse of the reasons that inform state action and places them within their context. In line

with this, interest, which realists contend influences power, is further viewed in light of the factors that influence decision making processes on the international level.

In relation to the above, realism is disinclined to believe the notion that a nation's moral inclinations are identical to the moral laws of the universe. According to realism, a nation's decision-making as reflected in its foreign policy does not need it to be in line with the foreign policy of any international political entity. Per realism, there is a difference between knowing and acknowledging that a nation is subjected to the moral law and totally another to pretend to know with certainty what is good and evil in the relations among nations. It therefore becomes imperative that a state exercises caution in its ambitions towards moral excesses as other more powerful states would be inclined to intervene. This was evidenced in 1991 during the international intervention against Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the UN's intervention in the former Yugoslavia (Breuning, 2017).

To a realist, the contention that the sphere of political autonomy is as real as that of the lawyer or economist on the world stage, gets further support when foreign policy matters are concerned. The uniqueness of foreign policy as a practice is seen the need to have a correct balance between executive decision, advisors and (correct use of) bureaucracy. In the same way that other professions describe and have a world view unique to their practitioners, international politics is similarly construed.

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