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THE ORETICAL MODELS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

In general, in the theory of international relations, there are a number of the most common modeling methods. Logical-deductive models based on theoretical assumptions about the object under study are often used in theoretical research and comparative typological generalizations. The basis of theoretical modeling variability is political science development through change and competition of paradigms. Representations of the subject, methodological principles, characteristics of problems and empirical tools of political research are grouped according to ideological preferences, maintenance of the power structure within a scientific discipline and perpetuating the established order. The aim of the paper is to describe the modeling methodology in the field of international relations theories. The overview of classic paradigms of international relations has shown the absence of the adequate ones for a bilateral relationship analysis. However, the theory of modeling and a scenario approach has a high prognostic potential for bilateral relations studies.

In addition to theoretical and analytical modeling in the theory of international relations, empirical-oriented models have been developed significantly. They tend to use a large amount of empirical data and a great number of quantitative statistical methods of mathematical analysis. The construction of such models is often considered as a stage of general analysis, which assumes the formalization and mathematical expression of basic elements and relationships of the objects under study. Mathematical models have significant advantages from the point of view of specifying and clarifying conclusions and increasing analysis and generalization complexity.

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1. Introduction

Modern theory still ambiguously names today's system of international relations as a Post-Cold War system. The reason for it is in growing dynamics of international political processes, as well as in their contents which lost and lose simplicity. Over the last decades, one of the evident international relations trends is that nation-states significantly decreased their power of defining the global system. Moreover, there is no dominating framework in theoretical studies of international relations, and upon that new research centers continue to open. Their interpretation of the current international policy is diversely conducted in many ways. All this contributes a lot to shaping theory indefiniteness.

These circumstances pose the urgency of doing theoretical and methodological reflection, particularly apparent in regional and case-study level studies. The rivalry that still exists among the main theoretical approaches preconditions complicating schemes, even at the empirical level, forcing scholars to make a lot of efforts to rationalize them. Typological descriptions of international relations that use competitive logics of theoretical constructs create mutually exclusive models of political systems. They are influenced by the methodological approaches established in the theory of international relations and global policy, too.

2. Problem Statement

Political Realism, Realpolitik, Power politics, is the oldest and most frequently adopted theory of international relations (Burchill, 2005). Generally, there are a number of frameworks in theoretical modeling of international relations, and most of them tend to be a realistic/neorealistic theory, represented by E. Carr, G. Kennan, H. Morgenthau, R. Aron, R. Niebuhr, K. Waltz, and B. Buzan. While focusing on studying power balance and national interests, and military and political problems, they acknowledge that nations play leading roles in international engagement system. From this point of view, at least the 17th century system of international relations in Europe—and, later, the global system—is described with the help of the term “Westphalian system”, with the idea of the nation-state as its core. In spite of the complex character of real interactions between nations, national institutions, and individuals, their macro-structure is described through the developmental steps of the Westphalian system of international relations as a state-centric model. Within the realist framework, the character of international relations is specifically rational in its principle and is interpreted through the terms of national interests and power balance. The substance of national interests comes down to 3 constituents, national safety, meeting its economic demands, and improving its reputation (Wolfers, 1951). In their brand new studies, neorealists focus on investigating inter- and super-governmental structures in the type of intergovernmental organizations and unions that influence the foreign affairs and form the international structure. One of the realism/neorealism approaches is presented by geopolitics and geostrategy studies that were quite popular in Russia in its post-Soviet period. In terms of geopolitics, a nation's power and its interests are determined by its location, climate, demographic situation, and natural resources. Another kind of realism framework is the “Buffer Relations Theory”, mainly represented by M. Ayub, O. Knudsen, A. Vandenbosch, R. Rothstein, M. Partem.

Attractive and rational at first sight, realism has certain significant aspects that cannot allow treating this framework as an omni-purpose one. First, the predictability of realism is limited by the principle of describing what is “real”, i.e. what exists rather than what is possible or preferable in future. Second, the state-centrism (the statism) of the realist framework effectively narrows down the object field—it eliminates other, non-governmental actors—TNC, NGO, national, gender, environmental movements—from being subjects of international relations. Third, the ways to define national interests, and the reasons why they are taken differently in different countries are also a problem. This is because realists ignore the social-cultural components of a political process in a given country.

Significantly, the implicit realism dominates the strategies developed by modern national elites, who evolve policies of decisions considering other states and other participants of international relations, though often accompanied by liberal-idealist rhetoric. It is liberalism, or liberal-idealistic framework that serves as the main alternative to the realist vision of international relations. This framework focuses on non-governmental actors of international relations, human ideals and values, and ways to provide international security and elaborate international legal order. Liberal framework of international relations is prominently represented by R. Keohane, J.S. Nye, A. Moravcsik, B. Rasset, S. Krasner.

The liberals disclaim power and military forces priority in governmental actions on the global stage, and oppose them with economic, legal, social and cultural leverage. As important members of international relations, the governments themselves are not of major influence, and non-governmental actors compete with them. This, in turn, results in “blurring” the national sovereignty and erasing the edge of domestic and foreign affairs.

Methodologically, a neoliberal version of the liberal-idealist framework acknowledges J. Nye’s works, who applied the “soft power” concept to international relations, as well as his followers and critics—A. Vuving, G. Holik, T. Todd, J. Melissen, T. Hartman. The “soft power” theory studies informal public institution constituents (ideology, religion, public opinion, business-lobby, etc.) that influence the national political area. Models based on the approach define and classify methods and forms of governmental influence, determine the efficacy of competitive activity methods.

Another neoliberal approach is the theory of democratic world. Their supporters believe that the tone of a government’s political regime is directly related to the direction of its foreign policy. For example, modern liberal democratic states are unwilling to enter into a war against each other (Kulagin, 2003).

The grounds within which liberalism/neoliberalism is basically criticized are the following. Liberals attach too much importance to moral and ideological aspects of international policies. However, many of the governments consider them not as much as tools to implement their aims related to combating with their rivals. With the normativist principle, liberal approach supporters often appeal to what is right and not to what is possible.

Many of the theoreticians justly see the Marxist approach as the third international relations framework. It is based on the Karl Marx’s historical materialism approach, which takes production methods, production relations, and the social classes that they produce as the basis for political systems. Marxist structuralism manifests when the class struggle is put in the heart of the international relations system, whereas the state is managed by the governing class that focuses on the property of production

means. The imperialism theory, significantly contributed by V.I. Lenin, uses the dependency category to describe struggles between the colonial powers for economic and political division of the world.

The neomarxist tradition developed K. Marx's ideas into the world-system theory by I. Wallerstein and A.G. Frank. In a rather generalized way, world-system modelling links—through certain cycles—the development of capitalism to a modern capitalist world-system formation where the most developed countries of the "center» and of semi-peripheries and peripheries dominate. Competition between countries does not exclude the commonality of their goals mainly focused on economics and production, which is reflected in the policy of the central countries in their desire to exploit the markets and resources of other countries (Zuykov, 2012).

Contrary to realism that sees states as holistic entities, constructivism draws its attention to the importance of identity, culture, and law and order as key components in studying development and policies of a state (Reeves, 2010). Unlike realists and neorealists, constructivists point out that value-normative ideas are not considered as tools to assert and reason national interests, but as independent factors of their formation.

3. Research Questions

Although the main frameworks of the international relations theory as well as the concepts and methods existing within them have a great number of advantages, it is not often effective to use them in terms of bilateral relations between different countries. First, complicating international political circumstances less and less correspond to the rigid methodological framework of accepted approaches and theories, thus forcing us to use methodological pluralism as a study basis. Methodology pluralism shifts the research, shifts the opposition "either / or", and thus expands analysis boundaries. The authors do not deny the leading role of governmental structures in international relations and treat the role of countries' administrative elites as a main factor in relations development. Foreign policy is an authority of the nation, which is responsible for creating a foreign policy strategy and activities. At the same time, the foreign policy course is greatly influenced by other political and economic forces that are constantly fighting for statehood. In connection with this, the authors also consider non-state representatives as analysis objects. Their activities are considered as factors drawing a relationship trajectory.

Second, all the classical frameworks of the international relations theory tend to regard international relations as a consistent system – the view that is not obligatorily applicable at less large-scale levels of international interaction.

In this respect, theories and methodologies oriented at case-analysis have recently become very popular. Alongside, prediction technique methods are increasingly used in the theory and practice of international relations. These methods are aimed at identifying situation development versions and elaborating the most acceptable political solutions. One of important forecasting tools is the modeling method, according to which simplified copies of real systems are constructed and analyzed. The basis of the modeling method is the concept "model", i.e. simplification of the object under study, reflecting its real structure.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the paper is to describe the modeling methodology in the field of international relations theories. The overview of international relations classic paradigms has showed the absence of the adequate ones for a bilateral relationship analysis. However, the theory of modeling and scenario approach has a high prognostic potential for bilateral relations studies.

5. Research Methods

The modeling method as such goes beyond predicting international relations, for it is applied practically in all fields of science. Most generally, the term ‘modeling’ is used to reflect principles of the cognition theory both at the theoretical and empirical levels. This method uses models of real objects to study their most significant characteristics. Constructing ideal simplifications is modeled through a deductive analysis of real objects. In reality a complex generalization study of a large amount of data by many parameters appears to be one of widespread important factors to be used while modeling, especially in social objects research. This approach requires a strict selection of theoretical constructs, on the one hand, and empirical methods, on the other. Thus, the connection between theory and empirical data is one of modeling problems.

According to the traditional research model, the model construction based on theoretical hypotheses implies verification through empirical, mainly quantitative methods (Chilcote, 1994). At the same time, American researchers K. A. Clark and D. M. Primo note that the verification of theoretical models is based not on empirical data as such, but rather on their models (Clarke, Primo, 2012). These models are constructed on the basis of the same characteristics as theoretical ones, which in general does not reduce modeling application effectiveness, as empirical model verifications are often unnecessary.

6. Findings

As a rule, formal mathematical modeling of international relations uses economic, military-political, technical and other data. Formalization provides a kind of “accounting standard” that can often help us think through some issues more carefully than ordinary-language arguments can. It is noteworthy that realism had a significant impact on the development of this direction. Rational models, game theory, bargaining theory, security models, etc. were formed under realism influence. It should also be noted that formal modeling methods development of international relations was affected by their involvement of foreign policy in applied research during the Cold War (Powell, 1999).

Currently, modeling is actively used in the study of negotiation process, deterrence policy, power balance, international institutions functioning, crises and conflicts (Turonok, 2005). Identification of the interrelations between significant factors and parameters of the political process under study underlies such well-known models as J. Forrester's dynamic models. L. Richardson's well-known model described by the ordinary differential equations system is used for analysis and prediction of arms race processes (Richardson, 1960).

In the second half of the 20th century, with the development of electronic computers, computer models of international relations appeared (Ushakov, 1978). One of the most promising methods for

analyzing international relations problems is the so-called hierarchy analysis method. This method was developed by an American expert on decision theory Saaty and has recently been used extensively (Saaty, 1984, 2016). The method is based on dividing the problem under consideration into a number of sub-problems, each of which in turn can be sequentially detailed to the required level. It allows to reduce the complex problem analysis to the analysis of its sub-problems, which assesses their importance (priority) or 'contribution' to the original problem solution (Abayev, 2011).

One of the basic ways of international relations modeling is the method of event-analysis, which allows to organize and structure complex political processes in the form of event series. This methodology was developed to monitor the socio-political situation in countries, which were of interest to US foreign policy. An essential feature of this method is identification and classification of typical signs of the event, on the basis of which it becomes possible to predict the course of events objectively. Informational and analytical models based on this method allow one to solve complex applied problems, to monitor and even forecast and build the international situation scenarios. At the same time, there are constraints in the development of the event-analysis application and quantitative models of international relations in general. First of all, this restriction is connected with today's information and analytical capabilities and the high level of complexity of the simulated processes, which do not allow achieving the desired level of accuracy in forecasting of international processes. In addition, the applicability of such models is affected by the competition of theoretical directions. Among them there is no complete unity towards the basics of formalization and parameters construction of interactions models between subjects of international relations.

7. Conclusion

Concluding the review of international relations modeling method, it should be noted that its application has significant prospects in the study of international relations. For example, significant differences between the socialist and post-socialist periods of Russian-Mongolian relations can serve as the basis for constructing at least two empirically-oriented interaction models (Badmatsyrenov, Rodionov, 2013). The identification of bilateral relations models will help rationally reflect typological features of the state's interaction development. It is quite advisable to use forecasting modeling, since there is no single true and unambiguous option for the international relations development. In this respect, the construction of forecast scenarios will allow one to identify and describe factors affecting their state. As a result, both historical retrospective and current situation characterized by a multivariate development demonstrate the expediency of distinguishing various models of relations.

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