



EXPANDING THE HORIZON OF FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS: A NEOCLASSICAL REALIST APPROACH

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Abstract:

Neoclassical realism (NCR) has diversified the determinants of foreign policy analysis. It has blended the proposition of Innenpolitik, classical realism and the structural realism. The three (independent, intervening and dependent) variables which denote international anarchical structure, domestic factors of the state and the response to the external stimuli respectively has given a holistic view to the foreign policy analysis. While doing so, various scholars of international relations have questioned its paradigmatic relevance but still they trace their roots in the realist paradigm because they incorporate the realist proposition.

Keywords: Neoclassical Realism, Foreign Policy Analysis, Innenpolitik, Classical Realism, Structural Realism, Paradigm.

Introduction:

Till now, realism has faced severe criticism from other paradigm but it has survived though it has shown the divisive trends. With the passage of time in order to satisfy different needs of time and researchers, some new variants of realism have been introduced (Omar). The prominent variants of realism are defensive, offensive and classical realism. The prior talk about balance of power so as to maximize security while the later wants to maximize security by maximizing power (M. Kozub-Karkut, 2019) while the classical realists are locating the roots of every international insecurity in the imperfect human nature (Pashakhanlou, 2009). For them power and national security are the main components of the world's politics (M. Kozub-Karkut, 2019). Since then the theoretical literature of International Relations has been dominated by the assumption of 'systemic determinacy' which negate the viability of domestic/unit level variables. Scholars like Wohlforth,



Zakaria and Schweller in 1993,1998,2004 respectively has contested the proposition of only structural level variables. Although they don't deny the importance of structural variables but they want to inculcate the importance of unit-level variable as well. According to Fareed Zakaria "a good account of a nation's foreign policy should include systemic, domestic, and other influences, specifying what aspects of the policy can be explained by what factors" in the review article of Gideon Rose Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy he accumulated the assumption of and termed it as neoclassical realism (Kitchen, 2010a) (Omar, 2013). As it has both the components of classical as well as neo realism so it was termed as Neoclassical Realism (Firoozabadi).

The theory has three variables. International structure is independent variable, the domestic politics are intervening while international out-come is dependent variables (Schweller, 2004)164,.According to him both internal as well as external variable are responsible for the formation of foreign policy (M. J. Kozub-Karkut, 2019). For the Supporter of this theory the first and foremost force to drive the foreign policy is the position of the state in the international system and more precisely by its relative power capability in the international system. And because of this they are in the sphere of realism (Rose, 1998). At the same time, they say that though the external forces influence the foreign policy but their impact is not direct, the impacts of systemic pressure first pass through the intervening variable (Schweller, 2004). which differentiate the neoclassical realism from the structure realism (Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2016). According to Gustav Meibauer the roots of foreign policy formulation are imbedded in the beliefs of the individuals positioned at the helm of affairs (Meibauer, 15 August 2019). But these individuals are not free in taking of decision because the international structure and domestic politics limit their policy options (Rose, 1998) (Ripsman et al., 2016). In other words, the international system does not dictate but shape the behavior of a state (Foulon, 2015).

Here the impacts of internal and external factors on the foreign policy formation is a contention among different school of thoughts. The proponents of Innenpolitik theory advocate that foreign policy is the outcome of internal politics of state and consider the internal elements as independent variable while offensive realists advocate that system determines the goals and objectives of a state's foreign policy they also argue that the level of interdependence determines the role of international structure, more the interdependence more will be the role of systemic pressure (Basrur, 2009). Accordingly they consider systemic variables as independent variables. Although both school of thoughts are clear in their minds, bold and predictive in their approach but most of the time their predictions are inaccurate and oversimplified. Similarly, the supporters of defensive realism consider system level variables as independent variable but practically they take both internal and external elements in consideration for the different types of behavior in foreign policy. They consider international system as a product of natural conduct, and only those countries go for the first strike who's military or any other factors get a clear incentive. When some people inside the country try to instigate the country for war it is unnatural. And most of the time some internal interest groups are responsible for that.



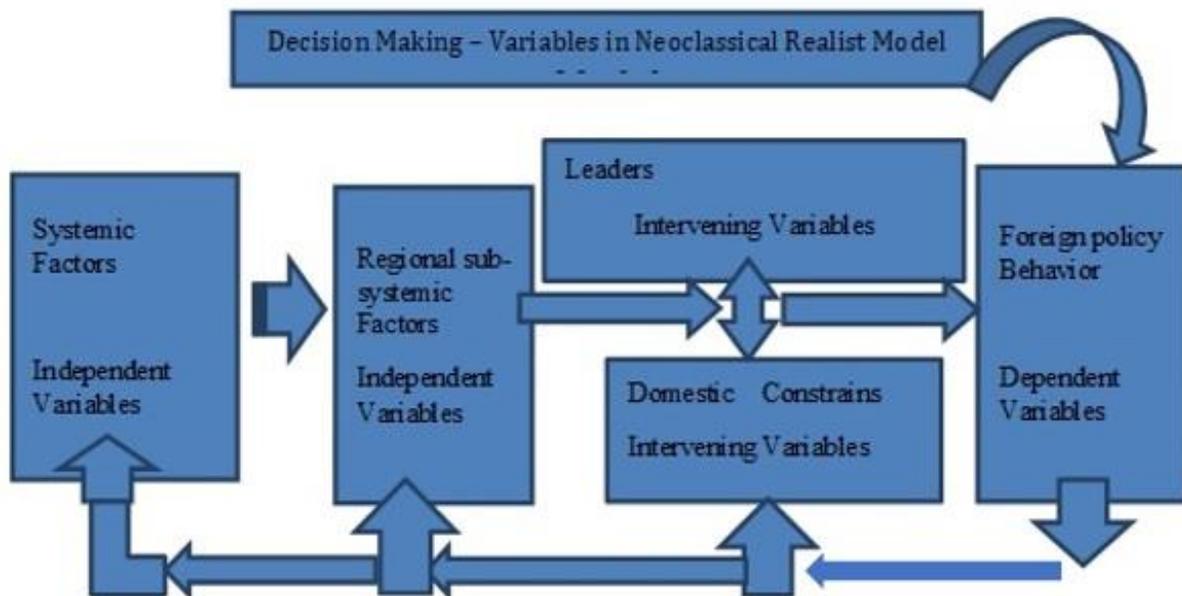
According to NCR if we consider only the internal elements in determination of Foreign policy then we will be misguided because the most dominant factor in foreign policy formulation is their relative material power. Similarly, the Defensive realist focus more on the response to threat of a country without taking this notion that threat perception is not entirely determine by the relative material power (Rose, 1998). A good theory of International relations while formulating the foreign policy should not escape the internal elements like national culture, domestic politics and individual decision makers. (Zakaria, 1992) Schweller, a prominent neoclassical realist argue that the balancing of a state against the threat is not entirely determine by the systemic factors. But this also includes the elements of domestic politics. He further elaborated that there are mainly three elements “elite cohesion, social cohesion and government stability”. When there is harmony among these elements then the political elite of state reach to the common points and gave a suitable response to the systemic pressures (M. J. Kozub-Karkut, 2019). NCR recognize the importance of structural variables particularly their position in the relative material power. Their proponents believe that the system does not dictate that how the state should organize itself internally in order to achieve the incentives provided by the system (Sterling-Folker, 2012)⁷². (Sterling-Folker, 2012). The final decisions about its operation in the anarchic world rest with the domestic structure of the state (Taliaferro, 2006). They are of the view that the accurate calculation of constrains and incentives of the system and their translation into the behavior state is very difficult because of the lack of information and uncertainties, so the explanation of neorealist in insufficient. Here ideation matter which guide the decision maker to creates the alternatives and more policy options and to deal with the pertaining constrain and incentives in order to translate them into the vital interest of the state (Meibauer, 15 August 2019). NCR believe that the independent variable of Innenpolitik shall be put on the second place because in the past the states has never violated the systemic determinants nor have lost the opportunities being showered by the international system. A good theory of Foreign Policy has to answer the question that what is the effect of international system on the national behavior? Moreover, the effect of relative power is some time vague for the political actors therefore NCR warn that if analysts didn't follow the effect of international system carefully they may interpret the causal relation wrongly. And attribute the causal significance to the apparent factor which may not be the real (Rose, 1998).

Neoclassical realist has chosen the relative position of a state as independent variable (Ripsman et al., 2016)(Beqa, 2017)³²³(Rose, 1998). Now they have to define and operationalize the concepts. In order to do so they refer the term power “the capability or resources, with which states can influence each other, they distinguish between these power resources and country's foreign policy interests”. So here state signify preferences which guide their external behavior through term used by Fareed Zakaria the state power.

NCR believe that instead of seeking security, states want to shape and control the external environment in otherwise anarchic world (Beqa, 2017). According to them the material power of state will define its goals and objectives. The more the material power a state has the more will be



its influence in the international arena and similarly reducing its power capability will decrease its sphere of influence in the anarchic world. According to Zakaria: when the decision makers come to know that there is a relative increase in the power position of a state only then they expand their interest abroad (Meibauer, 15 August 2019). Unlike constructivists, they consider international system as a reality they do not believe in their view that “Anarchy is what states make of it”. Constructivist do not agree with the view that international structure is independent actor and limit the activities of the state (Foulon, 2015). NCR believe in the objective reality of relative power which may have a substantial effect on the interactions of states` outcome. NCR does not stop at the external factors only. Being the theory of foreign policy they argue that if you want to understand how states interpret the external environment and then respond, for that you have to know that how the systemic pressure passes through the unit level which they call as intervening variable such as the perception of the decision makers and the domestic structure of a state. In NCR the leaders have to pass through the pushes and pulls of both the internal and external politics (Rose, 1998).



1.1 External factors

International system is the independent variable and starting point of neoclassical realism. Gideon Rose the pioneer of the theory said in his reviewed article “the scope and ambition of a country’s foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specially by its relative material power capabilities” (Rose, 1998)146.. About international system Kenneth Waltz said:

“International- political systems, like economic markets, are formed by the coaction of self- regarding units. International structures are defined in terms of the primary political



units of an era, be they city- states, empires, or nations. Structure emerges from the coexistence of states. No state intends to participate in the formation of a structure by which it and others will be constrained. International- political systems, like economic markets are individualist in origin, spontaneously generated, and unintended” (Waltz, 2010)

Waltz argue that anarchy and hierarchy are two principles that can possibly bring order in the units of any political system (Waltz, 2010). Domestically units are arranged in hierarchical manner in which there is division of labor and subordination to the central authority however it is not possible in the world because that will need a world government which is not possible in the presence of the sovereign nations state system, so it is clear that there is anarchy in the world (Waltz, 2010)104.. The chief characters according to Waltz of a political system are (1) The relations of units among each other. We can call it ordering principles, (2) The level of differentiation among the units, and (3) The third one is; among the units how the capabilities are distributed (Ruggie, 1983).

1.1.1 International System

In international relations power is most important factor in determination of the status of a state in the international system. Now the question arises what is power? In this regard Kenneth Waltz gave a useful definition according to him “power is the extent that affects other, more than they affected on self”. So the best way of understanding the state power is to know about their capabilities of influencing other and conversely deter the influence of other. The component of power may also include its size of population, its geography, natural resources and its industry. It also includes the association and dependence of one state on the other and the relative capabilities and strength, which determine its status and position in the world order. Indeed, it is very difficult to accurately quantify states on the bases of their capabilities however there are five broader parameters on be bases of which we can divide states knowing their capabilities. They are “super /global powers, great powers, middle powers, small powers and mini-states” (Handel, 1990). The global powers are those who do not have only great military and nuclear capability but they must be recognized by the other states as dominant actor. And they have the ability to make decision on any important event happening in the world (Spanier, 1993). We can define the super power as ‘is the one, over which the joint military efforts of all non-super powers would be unable to achieve military victory because the later are not likely to survive a nuclear on slight”. So we can say that super power cannot be defeated in any military confrontation. The interests of a super power are spread all over the world and the others powers have territorial interests due to the limitation of their powers. According to the definition of Norwegian paper the power and capabilities can be defined in four main dimensions, moving from hard power to soft power. They are the; Military of a state, technology and Economy, culture and demography of a state. But in present power is multidimensional. If a state contains more dimensions the more powerful a state will be. Currently US is occupying the leading position in the world. While China, Brazil and India having large territory and populations are contesting for higher position in the international structure. Among these countries China has become the major power



and India and Brazil are still considered as the regional powers (Nayar & Paul, 2003).

1.2 Unit level variables

There are various domestic variables which influence the foreign policy but among them the three major variables are as follow (Holsti, 1989). The first is the perception and images of the leader of the state, the second is the strategic culture of the state, the third is the relations of state and society.

1.2.1 Role of Policy-Makers

Among others the most important intervening variable is the role of those who occupy important position in decision making process. He/she may be the Dictator, the Prime Minister, the President. He/she maybe the member of cabinet or an advisor dealing with the defense and foreign affairs. They can be call as FPE (foreign policy executive). Usually these individuals have every information about foreign states and control every intelligence report about foreign country (Ripsman et al., 2016). Further the psychological model shows some other wide range of checks on the decision making process of decision maker that how they will cope with the crisis at the eleventh hour specially if they have less, incomplete and contradictory information. To start with, we know that all the people have a set of core beliefs, images and values which guide us about their understanding and their interaction with the rest of the world (Sutcliffe, 1998). All these are extremely personalized because they are informed by the past values and experiences of the individuals. Once this cognitive filter is formed it cannot be altered easily. Now this filter will determine that how they pay attention to the external stimuli, how they understand events, information and signals.

1.2.2 Strategic Culture

The second most important intervening variable is the strategic culture of the state because it can influence the though process of the state intellectuals that how they perceive the change in their external environment. Those scholars who studies the strategic culture have differentiated the organizational structure from broader idea of strategic culture (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993). According to Elizabeth Kier and Jeffrey Legro military is a bureaucratic organization and they study the effects of military culture in the formation of security policy. Legro argue that in the second world war the military didn't violate the rules of no usage of chemical weapons due to the military professional and military organizational culture. Similarly Kier is of the opinion that military doesn't opt only offensive strategy. He says that during the first and second world war period the organizational structure of French army went for the defensive strategies regardless of the threat from German army, because they prefer to appease the internal politics. On the other hand, Kupchan says that strategic culture is deeply rooted in the idea of national security which take the spirit from the general public and elites.



Thus strategic culture constructs the strategic understanding of social elites, political leader and the general public, and when the constructions of these ideas become routine and institutionalize they shape the state behavior (Ripsman et al., 2016). Sometime state intentionally construct by bringing some historical events to shape the behavior of the general public in order to bring ease to the government in policy formation (Samuels, 2003). The dominant ideology can also be include which influence the attitude of the state in dealing with international communities, it gave ease to a government for the use of force in regional or international politics and in shape of nationalism it is a vital element of strategic culture (Wohlforth, 1993), According mark Haas, ideological affiliation is an important determination in the pattern of international alignment (Haas & Haas, 2005), A culture which is dominated by strong nationalist forces and are committed to support state in every thin and thick are really helpful for a state to devise its national security policy (Ripsman et al., 2016). Kitchen said that the prevailing ideas in the society hugely influence the policy response of a state to the structural imperatives Kitchen, 2010b).

1.2.3 State Society Relations

The third important intervening variable in the foreign policy formulation is the relation of state with the society which can be define, as the interaction of the central institutions of a state with different social and economic groups. The questions related to the level of harmony between state and the society is; 1) the differences between state leaders and the society on the foreign policy issues, 2) the level of social and political cohesion and the support of public for national security and foreign policy objectives. These are the factors which effect the power of the state leader to mobilize and extract the nation's power (Zakaria, 1999). The other most important component of state society relation is the civil-military relations. This involve the institutional interaction of political elite, civil society and the military with each other. Military has technical expertise in defending the state by the use of force. The problem is how to draw a balance between the control of military by the civilian and to intact the strength and professional capabilities of the military because the military has own parochial interests. (Huntington, 1981)

Rapprochement between Neo and Neoclassical Realism:

Some of the Scholars of international relations argue that realism has lost its utility and the neoclassical realism while attempting to integrate the ideational influences and domestic politics in their analysis is an attempt to give new life to realism. And argue that Neoclassical Realism as a post hoc explanation of the anomalies of Neorealism. This make Neoclassical realism as paradigmatic incoherent indistinctive (Rathbun, 2008). They agree on the importance of intervening variable but still they are confused in the applicability of intervening variable, that what variables exactly shape the policies of the state. In the last decade they have made extensive efforts but there is lack of coherence in their work (Tang, 2009). Mostly they pay attention to the confirmation of cases. In term of methodology it cannot be satisfactory, this makes refining and testing of NCR difficult. Therefore, NCR should pay more attention to its quantitative studies and methodological



issues (Tang, 2009).

The proponents of NCR are of the view that the philosophy of paradigm in social science and natural science is a bit different. In social science a little indistinctiveness and incoherence are not fatal to the very existence of a paradigm. Other realists have adopted more pragmatic approach to the issue, they are of the view that the explanation of anomalies in the world politics are more important than the preservation of theoretical structure of neorealism. Some prominent neoclassical realists like Jack Snyder and Christensen do not want to be a part in the controversy of whether it is neorealist or not. They do not want the reconciling of “heterogeneous arguments”. Randall Schweller a prominent theorist also focusses more on differences than the similarities. Davide Fiammenghi criticizes Kevin Narizny for his article “On Systemic Paradigm and Domestic Politics” in the article Narizny argue that the incorporation of domestic and structural variable in the neoclassical realism is against the assumption of Realism, He is of the opinion that realist should either coverage state or they should abandon realism. Fiammenghi consider it as flawed understanding (Fiammenghi, 2018).

Along with this both Neorealist and Neoclassical Realist do not deny the role of domestic politics in the international politics. Though Neoclassical Realists have arranged the role of domestic politics in a systemic way. We can say, Neoclassical Realism is the natural offshoot of Neorealism because neoclassical realists have just extracted role of domestic politics from the concept of state-society relations or nationalism of Kenneth Waltz which is to harness the hidden material power of the state (Rathbun, 2008). However, the architect of offensive realist John Mearsheimer firmly believe that “great powers are like billiard balls that vary only in size”—“like units” that do not vary in their preferences’ (Fiammenghi, 2018).

On the other hand, the structural realism gave primacy to the international structure only while the NCA recognizes the viability of relative power but coupled it with the internal structure of state, evaluation and perception of leaders about the structural forces in shape of relative power. So the values and beliefs of the decision makers which can play a vital role in response to the external stimuli is the intervening variable in the decision making process for NCA. However Structural realists don't comply with this. Similarly, Neo-realism talk about the systemic pressures on the state and are they are silent or cannot explain the response of the state to the structural pressures. While NCS tell us how a state can act in particular circumstances. Neo-realism consider security of the state in the anarchical world while NCR rejected the notion and argue that “states attempt to change international system based on their own preferences through increasing their own power”. In contrast to Neo-realism NCR pay heed to the subjective structure in the state they are of the view that “behavior of states in international system can be understood through cognitive variables such as perceptions and misperceptions of states rooted in systemic pressures and threats as well as systemic variables such as distribution of power and capabilities of states” (Firoozabadi)



Conclusion:

Today we are living in a global world where dependence among states have increased very much. States need the addressal of several issues and the fulfilment of different needs. This vast range of need includes defense and security (both traditional and nontraditional security threats), promotion of economic gains and advancement of economic interests. Making alliances to broaden its political sphere. In this complex situation a minor mistake and leads to a disaster. For this purpose, the foreign policy analysis is need to be deconstructed in order to reach out to the minute details and adopt more formidable policies for the states. In case of structural realists, it is easy to pick the low hanging fruits but there is always a gray area between opportunities and cataclysm. And this is the area where serious deliberation needed. Similarly, if we overshadow the structural imperatives and take unilateral decisions based on the internal politics then there is always a chance of huge catastrophe. Because disregarding the structural imperatives and the infringement of any international treaty which has universal implication may hamper the vital interests of the state. For this purpose, the neoclassical realism has expanded the horizon of foreign policy analysis and incorporated the intervening variable (domestic structure) to the international structure of neorealist for the foreign policy formulation. Though the elements of the intervening variable are not quite clear, different neoclassical realist have different tools to grab the internal sentiments of a state but the essence remains the same that the ideation of the leaders, society and different state institutions matter. And if they are in line they can gave better response to the external stimuli. They form the preferences with the collective wisdom which enable the state to extract the best from the multi face international structure. Secondly it gave a methodology to judge the possible response of the other states. (Fiammenghi, 2018)



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