

Realism and Relative Gains in International Relations

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Abstract

Relative gains fall within the zero-sum game in state relations and are also linked to the behavior of states with regard to balances of power and without regard to other factors, such as the economy. In international relations, cooperation may be necessary to balance power, but concerns about comparative advantage will limit such cooperation due to fear of other's behavior and mistrust about the behavior and interests of other states. However, relative gain concerns may sometimes be mitigated by individual social preferences.

Keywords: realism, neo-realism, relative gains, absolute gains, international relations theories

Introduction

The field of theorizing in international relations (International Relations: IR) witnessed changes and transformations before and after the Cold War, as international relations theories seek to explain reality or international phenomena and variables according to a variety of lenses. Post-positive theories have emerged that question rational positivist theories, except that the latter has updated its assumptions, it can be said that the best that the theories can offer is to develop simple explanations for major events so as to simplify the way of understanding and interpreting them, and then predicting the future. The relative and absolute gains came in the thought of the two renewals, and cooperation appears as a point of contention between the two renewals. In a dialogue between the positivist theorists, each of them sought to analyze the international reality within assumptions that meet some points and differ on some other points.

The importance of the research

The importance of the research comes from the importance of identifying the modernization of the assumptions of the new realist theory, which results in the gains in both parts and their importance in the preferences of countries, which have an impact on the cooperation process.

The aim of the research

The research aims to highlight the concept of relative gains and absolute gains within the updates of the assumptions of the two neo-realist and liberal theories and the contributions of these concepts in enhancing or limiting cooperation

Research problem

The study examines a fundamental question, which is what the relative gains are, what are the foundations in the perception of new realism, and what is the impact of the gains in motivating the cooperative phenomenon.

Research hypothesis

The study assumes that the neo-realists are pessimistic about the possibility and limitation of cooperation between countries in light of international chaos, due to the lack of trust and the security dilemma, which means preference and maximizing relative gains over absolute gains.

The methodological framework of the research

The descriptive analytical method was used to describe the relative gains and the comparative method to compare it with the absolute gains.

Structure of the research

The research is divided into two demands, the first is neo-realism and the second is relative gains in international relations

The new realism

Relative gains are an essential foundation in the assumptions of classical realism, including structuralism, as classical realism is a very important theoretical approach in international relations and the interest of thinkers, theorists and researchers in it, and it explains the world as it is and not as it should be, as it goes back to the famous thinker (Abdul-Amir, 2009).

(460-395 BC), in the fifth century BC, in his interpretation of the (Peloponnesian) wars that took place between Sparta and Athens and the defeat of the latter, which he attributed to human nature and the inevitability of war and the importance of tactics in it. Therefore, many books were written in this field (Sun Tzu, 2010).

Then agreed by (Thomas) Hobbes and (Nicolas Machiavelli) on the same assumptions about the importance of force in international relations (Julian, 2017), for example, Machiavelli called for the use of all means that would preserve the state, including force, cruelty and deception in politics, and described the army as a roof for the palace. which protects what is inside (Nicholas, 2015).

Realists go to the fact that power is a complex concept that combines the goal and the means at the same time (Iyad, 2015). Power by definition is a relative and unstable concept. In this regard, Morgenthau stresses the necessity of having three goals for international politics, which are as follows: increasing power or maintaining Power, or its manifestation for control and influence, is central to every relationship between two states (Muhammad, 2002).

Given the chaotic nature of the international system, any gain in power by one state is an inherent threat to its neighbors, and it is thus assumed that any potential exchange between states must maintain the pre-existing balance of power (that is, it focuses on relative gains) i.e. the balance in the balance of power is the only guarantee of peace (Andreas, 2012).

Whereas the liberal founders assume that the leaders of the state will accept any agreement that makes the state better by meeting the conditions of social and economic cooperation that work towards peaceful coexistence (that is, they focus on absolute gains) (David, 1995).

Returning to the realist theory, which is based on the idea that the state is the main actor, and it recognizes the central role of power and its material distribution (Belkhairat,2017), as well as interest in politics of all kinds, and that international relations are power relations that are subject only to a fundamental and basic law, which is the law of national interest. Anwar,2007), due to the human nature that is characterized by evil and selfishness, according to the analyzes of thinkers, so it is assumed that the balance of power mitigates some wars and prevents some of them and helps in laying the foundations of security and peace (Richard,2007).

Therefore, the realist theory gradually moved from the concepts of human nature to the interactions between structural and practical in understanding international politics; This is because it is a flexible theory that was able to create its assumptions, so the new realism, which is called “structure” with its pioneers (Kenneth Waltz, Mearsheimer), emerged, updating its assumptions and based on scientific and objective foundations, which assumed the acquisition of power is not due to human nature, but to the importance of the structure of the international system * and its chaotic nature (anarcuy) and the importance of survival that pushes states to gain power (Al-Mahdawi, and Salih), and thus it assumes that the state is the main actor and that its goal is survival and security in light of the chaos of the international system and the absence of a supreme authority (Khaled,2007).

Therefore, countries resort to maximizing their power and entering into competitive arms races to increase the level of protection, which results in the so-called (security dilemma)*(Der,2014), in a world that suffers from the ambiguity or lack of real information and the preoccupation of countries with the principle of preserving existence and its survival and everything related to security The national identity of the state and its international and external position in the international system, and therefore the state seeks to increase its security and destabilize the security and stability of others.

(Koujali,2012) The realist theory separates ethics and politics, as moral values are not valid in the field of international relations, as states are unable to ascertain the intentions of other states, and therefore they are She lacks trust and her relationships with the other are based on mistrust and uncertainty, so she clings to relative gains (Nuruzzaman,2006).

The realist theory builds its vision in general on the basis of skepticism about the generalization of the phenomenon of cooperation between states, and that the maximum possible cooperation is that cooperation that occurs between decision makers. It is conditional cooperation for the sake of the national interest, as it serves as a means to achieve common interests. The different conditions for cooperation between countries according to their international standing and their strength ratio (Salem,2016).

Relative gains in international relations

Absolute gain and relative gain go hand in hand in the real world. It is a difficult task to make appropriate calculations separately, given the complex international context. In general, it refers to behavior based on the probability that if the probability and costs of war and conflict are low, the prospects for cooperation are bleak, consistent with the relative gains. On the other hand, if the cost of combat is high enough to prevent potential conflicts, cooperation is possible, in line with absolute gains. Globalization and international integration are two processes that push the real world toward the latter path. Hence, calculations of absolute gain are becoming increasingly important in contemporary international relations.

Relative gains prevent countries from moving forward in the direction of cooperation and deepening it, as those rules that frame international cooperation are used to achieve military superiority (force), and concern about the unequal distribution of gains increases distrust of the results of cooperation and hinders and questions the issue of dependence. Mutual and prefers self-reliance and reduce contact that maintains peace or reduces the resort to conflict (Awad,2016), as shown in the following figure:

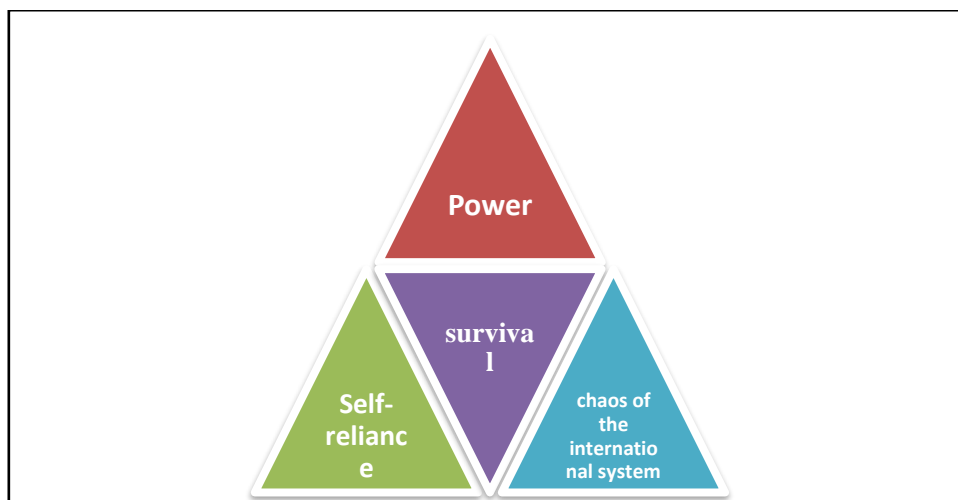


Figure (1) illustrates the most important foundations on which realism is based

Hence the assumption of the neo-realists, led by (Joseph Grecohamsh), that states are concerned with the relative gains from cooperation, that is, the extent of the gain achieved by other countries and the extent of the gain that they themselves achieve, and this explains the importance of the balance of power for the new realism imposed by the structure of the international system (structural) which is linked to states' control of each other (Brown,2004).

Thus, states are interested in distributing the relative gains resulting from cooperation, as the positions of states cannot be trusted, for today's ally may become the enemy of tomorrow, and states move and interact according to the priority of survival. From this point of view, the neo-realists believe that international cooperation is difficult to achieve; Because countries are boycotting any cooperation that would benefit relative to other countries, as a result of the chaos of the international system and the lack of authority that protects the legitimate rights of these countries (Griffiths and O'Callaghan, 2002), as shown in the following figure:

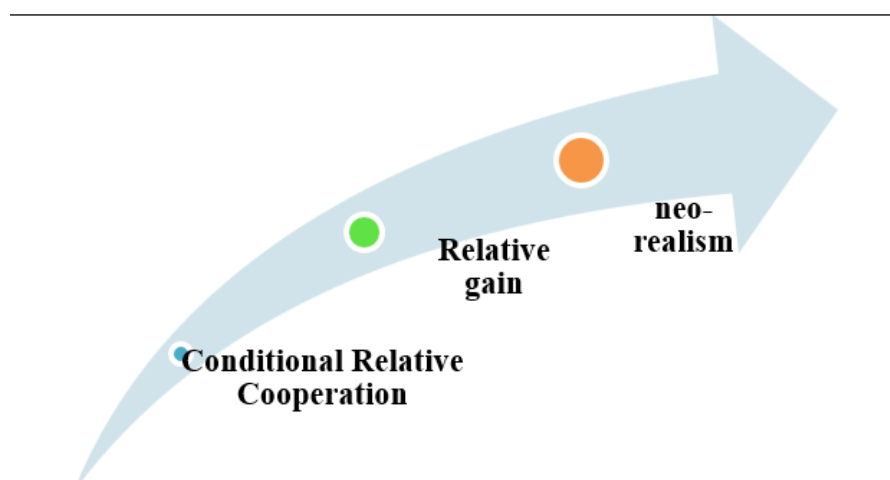


Figure (2) shows the relative gains

Therefore, the neo-realists raise the issue of concern about inequality and not the scarcity of gains, as they vary according to the size of allies or opponents and according to the relational arena such as economic, cultural or military (Cair,2020), and therefore the international system moves from a state of equilibrium to a state of imbalance as a result of change and divergence of interests Countries (Robert,2009), which creates the problem of gains as called by (Joseph Greco) that countries will refrain from cooperation whenever they are sure or believe that their partners are likely to achieve more gains as a result of their self-reliance and constant striving to maximize their gains. The state (A) compares its gains with the state (B).) And then the matter of cooperation between them becomes very difficult (Joseph,1993).

It is noteworthy that realism, both classical and new, has been criticized, including that realism is pessimistic about human nature, and its basic assumption that only states are the main actors, bypassing other non-state actors that have come to influence international politics, as well as its adoption of the basic assumption that states search for power to Security and survival without international cooperation being of great and increasing importance to them in order to achieve a kind of equal stability (Ahmed,2014), and realists in general and structuralists in particular argue about the issue of mistrust and mistrust in light of international chaos, as it pushes the state to become preoccupied with not achieving its own gains. only; Rather, it is also preoccupied with the size of other countries' gains and the continuing state of concern about the possibility of achieving the greatest amount of gains, as well as who will gain more? Which creates a state of imbalance in achieving disproportionate gains between countries (Kenneth,1979).

Protectors focus on the relative gains in international cooperation, because countries in light of this chaos mainly fear for their survival, so the idea emerges that (changing the incentives of countries), that is, that common interests are achieved when there are three main influential factors in motivating countries to work on relative gains. It is as follows (Murad,2018).

The perception of the partner in the framework of the relationship: This factor has a vital impact and importance in the preferences of states towards gains within the framework of any cooperative relationship, as if any party views its partner as a threat or an economic or military risk, the interest in relative gains will increase, while the opposite if the two parties do not They view each other as a potential threat, the relative gains will be reduced, and then the opportunities for cooperation will be greater.

The context of the cooperative situation (what is cooperation for) the nature of countries' preferences for relative gains is affected, except if it increases and decreases with the change in the cooperative situation, even if the nature of the opponent does not change, the increase in interest in relative gains may increase if it is related to higher policies (security, military).

The impact of decision-makers' beliefs: The more the leaders' perceptions and ideas of the nature of the international environment are centered within the realistic perception, the more they will justify and increase their concerns about the relative gains of their countries.

Realism focuses on rational, utilitarian choice, that is, it emphasizes (self-materialism) and work to achieve private interest and how to obtain that interest, that is, the latter constitutes a major motive to motivate and motivate behavior, as well as selfishness that emphasizes that the character of evil is inherent in the individual, which makes the interest Individualism takes precedence over principles as a priority. As for the relationship of the individual with the other,

it is based on fear. Thus, the realist theory sees that states are a reflection of human nature (27), and thus differs from the rationality of liberalism, which is described as a moral value and prioritizing its principles over its interests, and its individuality aims at the independence of the individual. And to preserve his rights and freedoms (Adel,2018), and no one restricts his freedoms or infringes on them, and considers that freedom is restricted only in the event of abuse (Naef,2018).

With regard to self-reliance within the assumptions of the realistic theory, this matter constitutes a key element in order to achieve relative gains, given that states always act according to their own interests and do not concern themselves with the interests of the other party, being selfish, and thus they do not recognize the mutual dependence that liberalism assumes. Therefore, self-reliance arising from fear, distrust, mistrust from the other party and aggressive intentions that make countries resort to maximizing their power to enhance their sense of security in light of international chaos (Barkan,2010), and therefore countries are interested in achieving their goals and planning for this gives them strength and influence (Adel,2009)

One of the most important outputs of anarchism is self-reliance and the difficulty of cooperation between states and perhaps impossible at times when security becomes a rare commodity, so states resort to working to achieve relative gains instead of absolute gains. The state refuses to enter into a cooperative relationship that would achieve absolute economic gains, because if the other country gains more than it, the fear of turning those gains into a military force will prevail, and then the principle of suspicion and uncertainty will prevail over that relationship (Koujili,2018).

The neo-realists, both defensive and offensive, agree on the need to build a world of peace, but they do not see an easy way to it because of the chaotic nature of the system that leads to security competition and inevitable conflict. Therefore, countries are better to follow policies of restraint, whether military or diplomatic coercion (Karen,2015) as in the following figure :

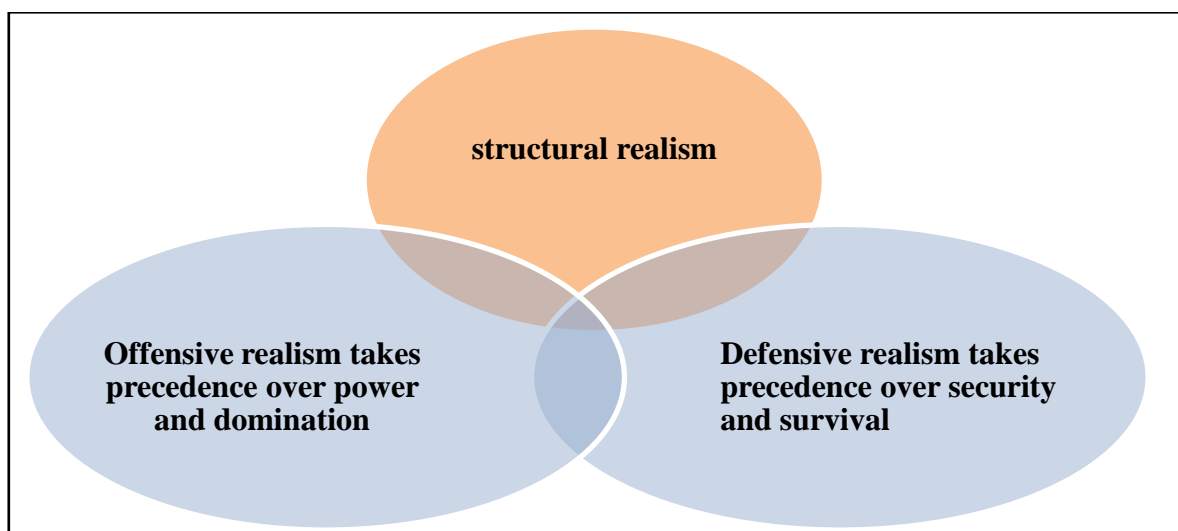


Figure (3) illustrates the forms of realism

Therefore, realism tends to maximize relative gains and power, and to emphasize the importance of the great powers that are affected by the external environment more than the internal environment. Thus, realists do not differentiate between good or evil states. All forces

act with the same logic regardless of their political system or ideology, except that there is a difference, which is relative strength and the meaning of It is the survival that drives them to aggressive behavior (John, 2012).

Adherence to relative gains is a barrier to cooperation, which in turn prevents building peace and transforming conflict, as the latter is an approach by building bridges of mutual understanding between the parties and highlighting differences and resolving them by peaceful means by replacing and transforming our perceptions about issues, actions, people, groups and others (Ali and Abdul-Ilah,2018). This means that adherence to relative rather than absolute gains will prevent the conflict from being transformed, and thus the roots of violence remain in all its direct and indirect forms, and may be motivated. (Khreisan,2019)

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, the concept of relative gains is one of the recent contributions of supporters of the realist theory, and it is a response to the trend of supporters of the institutional liberal theory, which suggests that states will be able to leave short-term advantages in favor of long-term cooperation, which works to alleviate international chaos in the absence of A world government, as the relative gains assume the importance of paying attention to the military and security aspects in light of the mistrust, mistrust and security dilemma existing between countries.

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