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Review

An Assessment of Rajesh Basrur and Frederich Kliem insights on "Covid-19 and International Co-operation: IR Paradigms at Odds"

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Theories in themselves presumably serve as valuable instruments for understanding, predicting, or/and exploring international phenomenons, (Gold and McGlinchey, 2017). For observers of international relations, they can be likened to the lingua-franca that enable the communications of a relationship of interactions between an observer and the observed international phenomenon. In furthering such, Rajesh Basrur and Fredrick Kliem's insight into International Relations theory in the contexts of the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic serves as a litmus test to ascertain if the selected theories serve the purpose of their existence (i.e to explain or predict international events or phenomena). Likewise, it allows an opportunity to build upon shortcomings in theories, further contributing to their growth and development, (Jackson and Sorensen, 2013).

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SUMMARY

The duo of Basrur and Kliem's article analysis was centred on a triplet of the major theories of International Relations and their role in explaining the global response to COVID-19. Such a triplet approach focus on the theories of Realism, Liberalism, and Ideationalism (i.e. Constructivism and Normative theory), (Basrur and Kliem's, 2020). The authors made plain their intention for a limited pool of theories to be used for their assessment which didn't concise the selected theories to the pan ultimate tool of analysis. The main theme of their study was predicated on, do the selected theories explain or predict international cooperation or competition in global action concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the authors aimed their focus on the possible strength and weaknesses of the selected theories in providing an understanding of the global response to the pandemic. To ease readers into their thought pattern, the author presented a background into the COVID-19 pandemic focusing on its origins and its impacts on the world order today. Such impacts range from challenges in supply-chain, free movement etc. The assessment conducted in the article was hinged on the role of individual States, the individual leaders, international underlying events (e.g. great power competition between the United States and China, etc), and international institutions in shaping responses to the pandemic either concerning cooperation or competition. On its first theoretical focus, the Realist approach was assessed. Here, it was immediately established that realism has its various tributary sub-theories which were considered in the analysis conducted. Realism sits home for the authors squarely on the observable response to the pandemic in the international system. Example replete here with state resulting to zero-sum competition to ensure their survival first as well as subordinating and international institution to the place of supporting actors. The authors judged the

Realist Approach as having such justification because in the presence of International anarchy there is a trust deficit when it comes to cooperation, so competition is nearly instinctively settled to be the direction. For the Liberalist Approach, the authors opined that although there exists a case for cooperation, in the face of national interest and States survival such is jettison. In this, the Liberalist view for the author is that international co-operation is not automatic. While for the Ideational Approach the constructivist belief system of the thought pattern for a global response is how to secure individual States from the impact of the pandemic. The answer that comes from such is competition, to scrabble for the scarce resource that will secure a particular polities needs. In respect to normative ideational focus, the moral argument lies in who is to be responsible for the pandemic and how are there to be held to account (i.e. legally or politically). In Kliem and Basrur critique, the Ideational approach fails to explain why international competition overrides international cooperation. And from the triplet approach presented, the authors ascertain that realism is better suited to guide the rationale behind the way the world responded to the pandemic. Such punctured the notion that in the post cold war era, realism as a theory is on the decline. Lastly, the response ascertained here is informative of how the world will react to other pressing global issues like climate change, nuclear war, etc.

CRITIQUE

From my interaction with Basrur and Kliems article, on the surface level, I agree with their assessment on the optimized position of realism in proffering explanation to the global response to the pandemic. Nonetheless, a concern for me is how accommodating were the authors in presenting a balanced view of the triplet theory assessed before coming to their conclusion. Firstly, from the title of the article, it presumes a greater emphasis on realism " COVID-19 and International Cooperation: IR Paradigm at odds**.** The IR Paradigm at odds suggests that the theories look did not believe International Cooperation was possible. The Positivist Approach, if applied to the topic will pose the question of how much of an unbiased study was this, absent of value judgement and being neutral. Secondly, the authors in their analyses were overreliant on Statism or a state-centric look at the topic. They focused on the role of state-dominated response to the pandemic, they did not look at the role played by Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs), International Movements, Multinational Corporations, Religious groups etc. Statecentrism being a tenet of realism may have tilted the findings of their research.

Thirdly, the liberalist approach was not given adequate attention by the author to authoritatively arrive at realism as the adequate theory for utilization. Under Liberalism inter-dependency, it could be argued that a pandemic does not go away simply by the pursuit of self-interested policy domestic to a state (i.e closure of borders, etc) as it is a global issue, (Burchill, Linklater, Devetak, Donnelly, Paterson, Reus-Smith and True, 2005). If the situation does not improve in other countries, it still is a threat to the inherent self-interested state. This is because such a state cannot control the variables that shape the spread of the pandemic in other territories which still affect it, (Khan, 2021). So, co-operation is brought to the table, to share information about new strains of the virus, about infection rate in other locations, on vaccine development and counter-pandemic saving methods, (Bollky, T.J and Chad, P.B, 2020). Also, as no state is an island, the inputs required for the production of counter-pandemic measure is not solely found in sufficient quantity in one jurisdiction, meaning states have no other option than to work with other states to survive. Likewise, the global economy links and dependency, is not what can be easily switched off, and the benefit of globalization means the pandemic provides an opportunity to dismantle cooperation. All are in the national interest of all states, making a shared outcome very possible.

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