

SOCIAL APPROACH OF THE RELATIONSHIP CONCEPT IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

In this paper, we will address to deficits of the study of relationship construction in IR by approaching the meaning of the concept in network structures. After presenting the interactions patterns as one of links sources as well as of conceptualizing of relationship, we will introduce the social roles of relations as an approach of the social processes. We will show that relationship have a relative character that is related with information flow, culture interaction and which is detached from the realism perspective. Furthermore the approach will offer a theoretical surveillance from social and group's perspective of the interconnectivity between international actors.

Keywords: network, behavior patterns, social relations, information, international actors.

Introduction

The existence of the *relations* among actors result from the history of interactions in a horizon of time under different situations or events. How the actors develop this relations between them based on their position and information access in network structures is probably the most disputed discussion from international theories.

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The discussion begins from the classical paradigms view as realism and neo-realism where relations between actors are considered to be constructed on the base of the exercise of power, influence and on the survival tendency¹ (Morgenthau, 2007, Waltz, 2006, Mearsheimer, 2006). The outcome of such understanding is a pragmatic logical scheme of the links where the actors have an enough degree of paranoia to try to be more powerful as their partners continuously.

On the other hand, the paradigms as constructivism consider that an important role in relations construction is occupied by the similarity and identity among actors, and how the values are assigned². A second assumption, resume to the fact that in international structure, an important role is occupied by the culture as an interaction dimension and cultural intelligence as a new kind of ability to adapted to the new culturally diverse situation from the global level³. However, both types of paradigms, grant an important aspect to the relations to explain how the actors exercises the influence and power in the system to achieve the interests. And neglected the importance of what relations represent from the social network perspective, and thereby what the actors follow through relations construction from point of social processes.

For this reason, the paper aim is to make a theoretical surveillance of the *relationship* concept in social and group terms. Through this approach we try to put in evidence the link between social and security dimension as source of dynamics in structure as network. And to discuss what is the role of social patterns in relations construction under structure trends.

The paper is divided in three sections, in first section we present some preliminary of the theoretical framework. After that, we analyze the relations construction in International Relations through social mechanisms, where we use the interaction process as pattern sources. The last section are the conclusions.

¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politica între națiuni*, Iasi: Polirom, 2007, pp. 585-587; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Teoria politicii internaționale*, Iasi: Polirom, 2006, p. 120; John J. Mearsheimer, *Tragedia politicii de forță*, București: Antet XX Press, 2003, pp. 28-31.

² Alexander Wendt, *Teoria socială a politicii internaționale*, Iasi: Polirom, 2011, p. 260.

³ Jolita Kiznyte, Ruta Ciutiene, Andre Dechange, "Applying Cultural Intelligence in International Project Management", in *PM World Journal*, vol. IV, issue VI, 2015, pp. 1-16.

1. Preliminary

Same as social constructivism, we consider that the basic of the international system structure are the links set among actors and social dynamics, which occupied rather than material positioning. Because of this, we identify the source of interaction in the perspective which information created and which is materialized in the actors decisions.

Considering the *relations* and *information* concepts as the central elements of the approach, allow us to interpret the international system imagine as an emergent out-puts from the continue interactions among actors. This particularity, allocate to the links the creation role of the structure interface where the dynamics represent one of the socialization patterns in social terms between actors.

The last idea is contoured around the *information* concept which in a social network contain data about the structure, state, entities characteristic and behavior of this. Therefore, the *information* -from the social perspective- represent a deductive variable about dynamics, trends and environment shape which can allocate different meanings to the existing or hypothetical relations. This possibility conduct us to assume that each actor from a social network have a knowledge base compound from personal information and general ones to which he has access through time needed. Thus, we allocate to the actors the capacity to assimilate and use information to create new social elements in the structure.

2. Social construction

The *system* concept in International Relations field, has allocated two meanings: first is correlated with the *state* where the security is the essence. This represent the perception of an entities group about how the actions or the behavior of an external actor can affect the integrity or the personal interests in the system⁴. The last meaning, refereed to a *stable environment* due to the internal rules and laws which govern the actors

⁴ Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for profit: Bringing the revisionist state back in", in *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1994, pp. 72-107

behavior and assure the stability of the system⁵. These two meanings, represent in International Relations the "constants" which influence mostly the actors perception in interaction process through the fact that are used as landmarks in the way that environment is perceived.

From this causes, the social importance allocated to the *system* concept in IR paradigms came from the necessity to structure the social reports among actors in order to reveals how the entities are integrated and perform. However, an alternative to describe or to report to the international environment is through the *network* concept. As Hafner-Burton et al. show, this concept is used in IR paradigms to make reference to a particular mode of organization which sustain common actions and cooperation⁶. The advantage of this view, is that replace the internal mechanism -which usually impose the assignment of the *black-box* as an internal reference- whit the social dimension which can provide answer to key question using the structural approach. In this sense the network research is focused more on the activity effects on the structure then change effects on the actors. This being the general discussion between neo-realism and constructivism.

As a social construction, the network integrate the *state* and *stability* concepts as parameters of the patterns which emerges from the interaction process, and influence the structure dynamics. This approach satisfy -in general- through interaction based on a cultural set of norms the Ackoff's conditions that:

- *the behavior of each element has an effect on the behavior on the whole.*
- *the behavior of the elements and their effects on the hole are interdependent.*
- *however, subgroups of the elements are formed, each has an effect on the behavior of the whole and none has an independent effect on it*⁷.

Which allocate to international activity the influence dimension in order to explain how connectivity between actors behavior and groups dynamic can lead to environment transformations.

⁵ Jean L. Cohen, *Globalization and Sovereignty*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 118

⁶ Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, Miles Kahler, Alexander M. Montgomery, "Network analysis for International Relations", in *International Organizations*, no. 63, 2009, pp. 559-592

⁷ Russell L. Ackoff, *Creating the corporate future*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1981, p. 15

We start the surveillance with the analyze of the network as a reference architecture in order to show that understanding of the international system as a network do not have a mechanical development as realism or neo-realism argue⁸. In contrast with this, we attribute a dynamical evolution which can change over time the behavior variation of the actors. The lack of stiffness to the network make to exist an additional support on social construction outlined by the social objects which have a determinant role in limiting the choice, and work as a constraint of the actions.

In this sense Finnemore and Sikkink argue that the norms have a decisive role in the political changes of the actor, which conduct to the change of international landscape through propagation of the idea⁹. This follow to define the path from the formulation by the actor to the internalization and its acceptance as a norm. And Katzeintein, called conformity¹⁰ in order to describe the predictable outcomes for a particular behavior of an actor.

The follow of this argue in structure approach is used as an epistemological orientation by the constructivism to consider that the configuration of the international system in time is determinate by the *idea* distribution among actors¹¹. As a second element, the *idea* and the sharing of this among actors, fulfills the role to provide the knowledge and to construct a networking culture. The force of the *idea* in comparison with the power and influence in the classical sense is reflected in an environment with more than one dimension of activity where it can be translated in the instruments, resource, preferences or innovation. What we want to reveal through the implication of the social objects in the network construction is that they represent "*common knowledge*". And the objects used in the international system by the actors formulate information sets which setting the interaction between actors.

⁸ Barry Buzan, "From international system to international society: structural realism and regime theory meet the english school", in *International Organization*, vol. 47, no. 3, 1993, pp. 327-352

⁹ Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International norm dynamics and political change", in *International Organization*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1998, pp. 887-917

¹⁰ Peter J. Katzenstein, *The culture of national security*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 28-29

¹¹ Alexander Wendt, "Constructing international politics", in *International Security*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1995, pp. 71-81

2.1 *The interaction process*

This part is focused on the interaction patterns which exist in relationship between actors. The discussion begin from the decisional process attributed to the foreign policy in the sense that each decision represent a direction on long term and an action on the short term. The question which rise from this is what is the role of the information diffusion in relationship? In a general way the answer is that assure the flow between actors and describe the integrations of the interest groups dynamics. As a particular answer, the diffusion create through combination of data flows with the behavioral patterns the configuration of the relationship.

In this sense, the search of the interactions patterns represent the identification of the diffusion mechanisms from policy adoptions¹² to integration process in the relationship. In fact the diffusion represent a metric of interaction which provide meanings that reunites character variations which governing the social actions in links set. Therefore, can have either a voluntary or coercion manifestation in the relations which drive to competition, demands or to vertical influence.

Berry and Berry argue that the diffusion mechanisms are created by the four forces which allow that transfer either voluntary, coercive or combination between actors¹³. The voluntary adoption, represent a continuum function of the actors in the relationship with the partners which allow to be more adaptive in the behavior. On contrary with this, the coercive manifestation represent an emulation of the actor in one moment of time in relationship with the partners which can assure the maximization of the value or survive in a domain. Therefore, in the relations with others, the actors will use the communication channels to construct different dependences or to produce an external signal. Lake interpret the objective of these actions in alliance constructions as development of some parts of

¹² Diane Stone, "Transfer agents and global networks in the 'trans nationalizations' of policy", *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol.11, no. 3, 2004, pp. 545-566

¹³ Stokes Frances Berry and William D. Berry, Innovation and diffusion models in policy research, in Sabatier A. Paul and Weible M. Christopher, *Theories of the policy process*, ed. 3th, Boulder, Westview Press, 2014, pp. 169-200

relationship which already exist¹⁴, with the properties that minimize the cost of actions and the security sustained. This modification alters the internal frequency distribution which competing with reproduction and adaptation after their imitation and selection process.

On the functional level, the adaptation using the diffusion contain a dynamical approach which is based on the calculation of the most efficient actions set. Because of this, the interdependence between actors on the interaction level involve process like persuasion, sanctioning and imitation in the form of response to the influence that they receive. Analyzing the actors behavior as a diffusion in interdependence, Martin show that existing of the reciprocity of the diffusion do not imply a specialization of the actor actions on the medium terms¹⁵. This behavior choice represent instead the tendency of the actor to make prospection of the possibilities which exist in relationship before to begin an integration. On the other hand on a long term the reciprocity diffuseness create a historical of the relationship which can assure a balance points set.

The implication of this possibility is found in the probability of the actors to make predictions about reality before to answer, base on the historical experience. This discussion brings forward the fact that the understanding of diffusion imply the approach of the coordination problem between actors. Where the discussion referee to a temporal and quantitative dimension of outcomes of the actors into relationship and the limits to assimilation.

2.2 *The relationship surveillance*

To explain the links between actors in a network will refers to the *relationship* concept as a social one. This approach, have the advantage to be more closes -in a general sense to the social constructivism and institutional liberalism face to the pragmatic approach. First propinquity with the IR paradigms represent the structural significance of the *relationship* in terms of the interconnection among entities. In this sense, Kelley et al. define the

¹⁴ David A. Lake, "Anarchy, hierarchy and the variety of international relations", *International Organization*, vol. 50, 1996, pp. 1-33.

¹⁵ Lisa L. Martin, Interests, Power, and Multilateralism, in *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1992, pp. 765-792.

relationship in the context of inter-group interaction as a: "intertwined of two peoples have mutual influence on each other and they are interdependent"¹⁶. Regard with this, the definition given by Kelley, reveal a similar mechanism of connection among entities like the interdependence concept from international paradigms.

Allocate this structural frame to the links among actors in international environment, these receive a role in production of the power, which affects the actors capacity¹⁷. This complementarities between relationships as a *structure instrument*, and as a *mechanism* in power production¹⁸ is summarize to the fact that in a normative structure, the modes function and normative process among actors are dependent operations. Because of this, the existing of a complex agenda and a multiple projects between actors grant to the relations set a various mechanism in dissemination of the knowledge¹⁹ and influence²⁰ in discursive practice in the network. This intersection between structural complementarities and group connection on the organizational network conclude in formulation of the social power through relations mechanism.

On this account, in a complete network the "anarchy" state as Axelrod and Keohane enounced²¹ become a false affirmation about the state which governance the environment. The argumentation start from the presumption that governance of a network represent the management of the complementarities and of the connection between actors. Therefore, the legitimization of the power granted to a common government or to a super-agent as neorealism sustain become unfounded. Instead of this state, network take the properties of the deterministic chaos in the sense of an

¹⁶ Harold H. Kelley et al., *Close relationship*, New York: W. H. Freeman & Co, 1983, p. 18

¹⁷ Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics", in *International Organization*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2005, pp. 39-75

¹⁸ Daniel J. Brass, "Being in the Right Place: A Structural Analysis of Individual Influence in an Organization", in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1984, pp. 518-539

¹⁹ Hermina Ibarra, "Network Centrality, Power and Innovation Involvement: Determinants of Technical and Administrative Roles", in *The Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 36, no. 3, 1993, pp. 471-501

²⁰ Noah E. Friedkim, vol. 58, no. 6, "Structural Bases of Influence in Groups: A Longitudinal Case Study", in *American Sociological Review*, 1993, pp. 861-872

²¹ Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions", in *World Politics*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1985, pp. 226-254

evolution with a fuzzy direction in a long period of time. In this condition the network governance is replaced with the relations management implemented in the system by the actors groups.

A secondary propinquity which relations needs to accomplish in the interaction and socialization process are the social principles. This discussion follow to highlight how the inter-groups interface can construct the relations set under different social events and how influence the interaction. From this perspective, the *relations* are possible to be defined in terms of the behavior patterns. Based on this possibility, Sherif and Sherif argue that in social interaction, the behavior patterns can be understand through the reciprocal behavior exposed between actors and which is associated to the expectations manifested.²²

Following the framework developed by Sherif and Sherif, we can classify the roles of the relationship in interaction in three classes: First class represent the rules and instruments set which have the goal to elaborate the social mechanism that can assure the existence of the relationship. As the main domain, the public diplomacy is maybe the most important tool that can facilitate the communication and social construction between different groups.

As a communicational process, the public diplomacy is defined by the Sharp as: "*the process by which direct relations are pursued with a country's people to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented*"²³. In this terms the concept represent an instrument of the *smart power* used by the actors in relations to promote their interests in domains where the application borders are diffuse. A particular field of the public diplomacy is occupy by the cultural diplomacy, which imply a set of actions based on the change of the values, ideas and different cultural or group identity aspects. In application of this diplomacy, the actors follow to create a smart dialogue among the own entities. This type of dialogue is integrated on the public interaction because the entities which manifest the interest to

²² Musesafer Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, *Social psychology*, New York: Harper & Row, 1969, pp. 139-141

²³ Paul Sharp, Revolutionary states, outlaw regimes and the techniques of public diplomacy, p. 106, in Jan Melissen, *The new public diplomacy*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, pp. 106-124

interact with different culture have a multitude of information sources which can facilitate knowledge and exchange.

Thus, the link between diplomacy and power result from the complementarities substance form of the concepts. Through this, the public diplomacy is a combination of the particular values from the social entity with the group interest, reported to the available quantity of the resources which can be allocated to the application. However, because the power is limited, his exercitation in interaction conduct in time to the consumption and in the end to extinction, this process create for the actors the necessity to conserve the power using subsidiary instruments. Therefore, the use of the power request the search of alternative channels of manifestation which to accept the different power types.

What result through application in the relationship, is a set of interaction rules based on the accepted common values created and evaluated through particular values which have been shared before. Through this, the actors follow a stable space of interaction constructed on common values and identity norms. On this account, the combination between diplomatic institution with the public diplomacy matter in the manner which can assure a multilateral openness in the form of transnational cooperation²⁴.

The second class of role is the reciprocity. On a first look, this class present some similitude with TIT-FOR-TAT model developed in strategy approach on the relationship. This correlation in the repeatedly interaction, is based on enforce of the adaptation process of the actors behavior in order to maintain the optimal degree in interest solution. In practice the thinks are little different, in the IR field and special on international law, the reciprocity represent a principle of the symmetric behavior in sort with the adopted response of the interaction partners. In his analyze, Keohanne approaches the reciprocity that the actors can develop in relationship in two types: specific and diffuse²⁵. This characterization reveal

²⁴ James A. Caporaso, "International relations theory and multilateralism: the search for foundations", in *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1992, pp 599-623 și Robert Cooper, *The breaking of nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty -First Century*, New York, Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003, p. 94

²⁵ Robert Keohanne, "Reciprocity in International Relations", in *International Organization*, vol. 40, no.1, 1986, pp. 1-27

how the different sequence of flows can be influence by the perception of involved parts through density representation of the events. What is important in the Keohanne classification, is that he formulate a difference between similar exchange sequence as norms and the proximity sequence with a crisp character as institutions.

Through this, the classification confer to reciprocity concept a representation which in essence is the shared degree of the actors in different situation. Thus, the interpretation of the promotion instruments as public diplomacy or soft power used is that are elements which formalize the behavior in time. On this account, the material factors from IR became the idea which have impact in social process and reflect the interest and establishes of the behavioral norms.

The last role in general sense is the exchange process in time of interaction. The difference by the social form is that in IR, this role is possible do not accomplish always the reciprocity meaning. The argumentation is that the role appear as an effect of the reciprocal reliance between involved actors, and characterize a form of interaction which is based on trust and on the international regularization. In this case, and because the exchange do not have a social meaning, the international laws are formulated from treaty, agreements and international procedures which conferred an institutional form.

The expressiveness of this role in relationship, indicate the willingness of the actors to develop an extensive meaning to interaction which to be implementing in the behavior. Therefore, the adoptions of this meaning in their perspective of the actions and in the opportunities creations enable the actors to have a different forms of direct means which can influence the relationship. This kind of interventions may produce on the short time a distortion of the relationship which on the network level can express a stress experience. This mechanism through the intervention can transformed in a stress is similarly with the snowball. The procedure take in account the fact that some interventions represent sign that one or more actors try to change their position in the structure with the aim to toughen the openness to the information flow.

Thus, the interpretation of the relations set in IR by the actors under different context conduct to allocation of a development degree in future perspective to each relationship, which can oscillate. Therefore, the

decisions which can take about how relations need to evolve in depth, represent the rapport between positive perspective existence and how the network is possible to change.

In fact, this correlation between the behavior patterns and expectation is materializing in the identification of a real and rational perspective of the link in time by the actors. The applicative part of this, is founded in formulation of the action strategies about the self-interest of the social group which help the actor to create a sustainable micro environment which allow to achieve his expectations. On this sense, all three groups represent instruments and techniques of interaction among actors which have the role to facilitate the dialog and the possibility to achieve the goals.

Interpretation of the actors behavior through the above model, highlight the tendency to intensify the connection through different channels in the network level to assure a better the information access. Through this action, the actors have the possibility to develop the social power in the structure using their capability to manage the information distribution in some areas from the network.

This interest for the actors' position is related with what they can represent for the groups in a network as transitions nodes. On the other hand, the performance objective followed by the actors through their place, is understood as the rapport between outsource control degree and the enforcement of the sanctions imposed by other actors²⁶. This tendency, to have a dominant position is correlated with the concept of "*libido dominanti*" -as a particularity of power manifestation in the network, which assure the exercise of influence over dynamics vectors. These two objective describe for each actor the competitive tendency in the network reporting to the social interaction.

Therefore, through the need of the actors to be recognized in the network is defined the necessity to be framed into a reality expressed by the rest of the actors. This implication assure that through interaction and socialization the actors can receive the attention needed to confirm their existence. In this sense, the importance degree into the structure, make the

²⁶ Mavis Hiltunen Biesanz and John Biesanz, *Introduction to Sociology*, 3th edition, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1978, pp. 148-151

link between the actor role in one situation for the groups as cut point and the possible rewarding which came with affirmation or received attention.

For performance in this complex process, the actors need to have in rapport with the partners an order and predictability degree which to assure behavior transparency. In relationship construction this allocate the "meanings" in attempt to decode the information and to eliminate the uncertainty from the process. On that account, the social process (interaction and socialization) between actors to be recognizing in the network must be seen in terms of particular imposed conditions for the each situation. In his work, Fiske argue that in social process, which are organized in term of the existence relations, this elements of transparency represent an evaluation parameter of the social relationship²⁷. Where, their use is related with the organizational patterns of the group in the sense of maximization of the positive outcomes for the each participant²⁸. Thus, the interaction between the actors it can be interpreted through continue searching of the partners in the network and the behavior adaptation to respect the structural characteristics. In IR, this interpretation of the searching can be found on the interaction constructions as alliance or partnerships between actors on the structural level. And this is possible because the strategic decisions represent regularities engaged in reiterated actions of the actors.

3. Conclusions

We begin the study from the assumption that relations among international actors represent social constructions which are capture in a network structure. Because of this, we thought that the relations represent an interconnectivity element which are submitted to the social process. And assure the maintaining of the actors interest in interaction environment. This transposition of the discussion from the International Relations paradigms in a social perspective represent in fact a simplification of the reality where the accent

²⁷ Alan Page Fiske, "The four elementary forms of sociality: Framework for a unified theory of social relations", *Psychological Review*, vol. 99, no. 4, 1992, pp. 698-723

²⁸ Marvin E. Shaw, Philip R. Constanzo, *Theories of social psychology*, New York: Mc Grow-Hill Inc, 1970, p. 304

is placed on the links between actors. Analyzing this model allow us to change the political perspective with a social one where the concepts as power, influence, balance, institutions and interdependence are replaced whit social behavior, information, norms, reciprocity and connections. On this dimension we understand the international relations as links set which are subjected to Ackoff's conditions. Therefore, the discussion about how the relations are constructed start from the motivation of the actors to interact and from the meaning that is granted to the relationship. Because of this, the information about the network and state actors have a main role in the production of the interaction need. This desire of the state actors is translated as a form which can maintaining the own interest in the network and to make to be more connected with the others in the sense to benefit after opportunities. In this sense, the submission of the behavior to the Ackoff's conditions define the dynamics in the network through interactions between actors.

A second consequence of this conditions is that the interface of the social network include in fact in a sociological sense the intersection between actors behavior and groups dynamics which leading to the system transformations. Including the relations as links among actors receive the meaning of the communication channels which are sustained by the strategically interest materialized on the social behavior and submitted to the social regularization. The changes of the international system, implement to the relations a continuity factor in time. From this fact the actors have the tendency to adapt the relations to facilitate the social process between them. This calibration of the relations as social channels was possible because in a global world the channels take the meaning of the mutual dependence as Kelley defined in group approach and Nye with Keohane considered through interdependence concept in international relations.

In the end, we conclude that relations approach through social constructivism represent social channels based on the object classification used by the state actors. On this consideration, the construction process represent an integration of the similar objects classification by two or more partners in a social regularized form with the characteristic of communication channel. The understanding of relations constructions in International Relations field through this description reveal that the links

between actors represent not just an institutional ties but receive a role of social channels which can connect actors with similar behavior. However, the shortcoming of our research is the lack of values measurement of relations between international actors. Because of this, the discussion proposed remain just on theoretical level. Second there exist a need of more social instruments which can to explain the effects of cultural interaction on social level.

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