Compare and contrast Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism. Are the similarities more important than the differences?

Name:

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Neo-realism and neo-liberalism present two theories engaged in the explanation of different aspects of international relations from the political and economic perspective outlining the behavior of states in international interactions. The differences amongst the two theoretical approaches to international relations have higher importance compared to their similarities. Neo-realism is an advancement of the traditional aspects of realism whose basis was on the understanding of international relations based on the self-interest nature of states with a shift to the structured engagement of states within the international arena. Neo-realism is founded on the diplomatic aspect of states’ interactions on the international platform as guided through elaborate structures (Waltz, 2000). Realism as a theory is identified as, “It is a general orientation rooted in a central substantive focus (in this case, power). It also, however, is a body of explanatory theories, models, or propositions (emphasizing anarchy and the balance of power).” (Burchill and Linklater, 2013). As such neo-realism as established is founded on realism that is centered on political constraints on the international platform devoid of an international government, but international relations are guided through power and interests.

Anarchy is established as the organizing principle for the refinement of the international political system with all states propagating policies suitable for survival (Burchill and Linklater, 2013). The states are recognized as having differences in capabilities targeted at the pursuit of state specific interests with the balance in power of international relations being guided through the capabilities of states. The premise of neo-realism differs with that of neo-liberalism where states’ actions are founded on self-interest rather than the adherence to the international structures synonymous with neo-realism (Waltz, 2000). International relations when understood through the lenses of neo-liberalism, indicates the pursuit of absolute gains for individual states when mirrored with the gains of other states.
Neo-liberalism has higher inclinations for economic advocacy in the support for the liberalization of economies with the private sector gaining ground in economic affairs compared to government input and spending (Harvey, 2005). Neo-liberalism advocates for increased dissociation of governments from market operations with the propagation of free markets driving the political agenda in international relations. The tenets of democracy are indicated as the pillars for neo-liberalism with international relations being safeguarded through democratic principles. States operating under democratic and liberal policies where the applied systems are deemed as being the best for the society having tried different systems. In the neo-liberal approach, states are indicated as having minimal control in political and economic affairs and all engagements are targeted for cohesion and increased market liberties unlike in the neo-realism scenario where states have supreme roles (Harvey, 2005).

Neo-liberalism is defined through the strictness of adherence to laws and this identifies the existence of cohesion on the international platform through identified legal structures. Neo-liberalism unlike neo-realism is anchored on policies with international relations being subject to identified policies where the good of all nations as opposed to the view of self interests under neo-realism is propagated. Neo-liberalism in describing international relations from the economic and political perspective advances nations as being market states where capital accumulation is global rather than state-related activities with the state serving in ensuring security, astute monetary and fiscal policies, liberalization, and the flexibility of markets. The neo-realist theory propagates the equality of states in the international arena a departure from the neo-liberalist approach where states are identified as having differences within the international platform according to their economic and political strength (Burchill and Linklater, 2013).
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States under the neo-realist theory are identified as self-seeking agents with difficulty in subordination to other states’ interest unlike the cohesiveness underlined through neo-liberal attributes. All states under the neo-realist theory are identified as pursuing increasing power as exemplified through the shift in global dominance from the US and Europe to China, Brazil, and India (Ikenberry, 2011). Waltz (2000) states, “Democracies may live at peace with democracies, but even if all states became democratic, the structure of international politics would remain anarchic.” The statement indicates the difference in neo-realism and neo-liberalism in terms of the place of democracies in international relations with democracy serving in the internal transformation of states. The internal state structures influenced through the democratic perspective under ne-liberalism is discounted as having minimal influence on interactions at the international level owing to trust issues amongst states with all states identified as propagating self-serving interests (Clarke, 2003).

In the development of an understanding of international relations neo-realism indicates the inevitability of conflict amongst states attached to the political ideologies of states contrary to the belief of neo-liberalism where the state has limitations in terms of its role in the international arena owing to democratic limitations (Burchill and Linklater, 2013). The international arena is defined through the absence of concrete structures that compel states to act in specified ways unlike within states where political and state authority serves in the perpetuation of order (Waltz, 2000). The anarchy in the international arena reveals the push for states to have dominance over others politically and economically. Power and security serve as a common dictate amongst the two theories, but with differences in the intentions underlining the power and security. Security in the neo-liberalist context is concerned with law enforcement and ensuring the provision of a conducive environment for the shaping of the economy through liberalized structures.
Security in the context of neo-realist theory advocates for increased protection against other states with the advancement of reduced violence across the globe rather than the promotion of peace, justice, and safety across the globe. The state’s effectiveness is underlined through the increased implementation of measures for the management and mitigation of conflict rather than the elimination of conflict and its underlying contributing elements. The neo-realist approach places significance on multi-polar systems unlike the uni-polar and bi-polar systems under the neo-liberalist approach in terms of dominant states (Harvey, 2005). The relations on the international platform as guided through neo-liberalist principles advocate for states being subjected to international scrutiny on policies and the advancement of democracy. The aspect of subjection to universal ideals is absent under the neo-realist approach where states make decisions not pegged on international principles, but on individual states’ consideration and their actions are not subject to moral principles on the universal platform.

The neo-realist approach identifies the significant differences in cultures, traditions, and systematic approach to issues amongst nation-states and this eliminates the effectiveness of international ideals and subjection to the ideals of other nation-states. Neo-liberalism strongly faults the neo-realism approach regarding the centrality of power in the development of international relations with states being identified as being driven through values rather than being power-oriented (Donnelly, 2000). The neo-realist approach identifies states as being engaged in power games in the international arena with all efforts including political and economic pursuits serving in the increment of power internationally. The self-interest identified through neo-liberalism is limited through the application of moral restraints unlike under neo-realism where morals are shelved in international relations with the end being utilized in the justification of the means engaged (Clarke, 2003).
Neo-realism disregards the means engaged in securing desired results in the international platform with necessity being in the safe-guarding of the nation-state’s interests (Donnelly, 2000). The interests associated with other nation-states are secondary to those of the concerned states unlike under neo-liberalism where the actions of one state consider the impact on other states. Power as understood in international relations has been advanced through the political-military interests and economic interests with neo-realism indicating an increasing shift from the political-military to market-oriented power. Neo-realism discounts the propagated notion of democracy serving in the cementing of international relations with the identification of power quests amongst the democratic nations in terms of market dominance. Neo-realism postulates the need of self-centered ambitions amongst nation-states for political and economic advancement a shift from the neo-liberal approach that recognizes a hierarchal establishment in international relations (Donnelly, 2000).

States seek to better their position on the international arena relative to others and this increases the possibility of nation-states disregarding the interests of others where their interests would be compromised. The structural aspect relating to capabilities distribution amongst nation-states poses the challenge in the realization of cooperation owing to the need of reduced dependence amongst states. International relations then as presented under neo-realism are guided through the balancing of power where each nation-state is identified as seeking the maximization of its position in the international arena relative to other nation-states. Nation-states are engaged in the balancing of power through the increment of internal capabilities and increased economic growth alongside the formation of alliances with other nation-states aimed at the checking of other alliances (Ikenberry, 2011).
References


