



RESEARCH METHODS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: ANSWERING ONTOLOGICAL QUESTIONS OF MULTIPOLAR NATURE

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to analyse how social science research methods in general and research methods for progressive study in international relations in particular have the potential of unifying the modern-day investigative forces of international relations research which should be treated as complementary to one another. This research paper contends that scientific methods induced by researchers of various schools of thought in international relations research, such as those induced by classical realists, positivists, neo-positivists and liberals, need to be practically legitimized by self-regulating mechanisms of international relations research. On the other hand, an epistemological approach to advance qualitative research in the international relations discipline will overtly demand the collaboration with other streams of social science research. In addition to this, such a progressive research methodology should always be pursued in accordance with the collaborative research objectives of other behavioural sciences. This is primarily beneficial for researchers and political scientists who intend to derive research questions by challenging concurrent historical approaches. This research also argues that in order to strengthen the outreach of the quantitative pragmatist approach for progressive and advanced research in international relations, much needs to be done when it comes to the unjustifiable consolidation of one-sided polarized theories. Lastly, academic and scholarly restrictions should be sufficiently relaxed to allow international relations research to spread across more specific and scientific streams of knowledge.

Keywords: Classical Realists; International Relations; Liberals; Neopositivists; Positivists; Realists; Research Methodology; Qualitative Research.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is quite common in international relations research to equate related hypothetical debates with qualitative epistemological theories which further connect the discipline with other streams of social science. This is challenged by the pragmatist approach, which, in spite of the paradoxes of the age-old historical traditions, largely remains centred around pseudo-rationalist objectives for pursuing progressive research in international relations. Moreover, the fulfilment of such objectives primarily depended on logical methods of investigation and knowledge, whereby rendering such research methods as the key factors for differentiating the research methodologies for positivists and liberals.

Various other research methodologies also developed gradually, many of which focused on the evolution of a decisive argument that positivism and neo-positivism could result in the consolidation of inflated concepts of logic and enquiry. Such a complicated interrelationship confirmed that hierarchy in the schools of thought in international relations research simply cannot be validated.

Additionally, the main problem did not lie in deriving a specific research methodology but rather lied in innovating new-fangled research methods which would further enable researchers of international relations to collaborate with those of other streams of knowledge.

2. PROGRESSIVE RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: SOME PERSPECTIVES ON VARIOUS SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Scholars belonging to the school of liberalism in international relations have presented a subtle argument that the options for establishing collaborative institutions for further advanced research in international relations should not be centred around intangible, unachievable and immaterial propositions. It is very important to take into account neutral assumptions, stranded in the process of empirical enquiry, consequently inducing nonaligned and impartial narratives, which turn out to be subtly evident through further methodical and experiential research.

Perspectives of various other schools of thought in international relations research oppose this traditional cum neutral process of enquiry and investigation, disagreeing that research methods in social sciences in general and the ones in international relations in particular should not be centred around unachievable tenets of neutrality and objectivity.

Moreover, empirical research purely based on neutral sensitivity, utopian objectives, and ideal historical frameworks cannot be feasibly quantified. Nevertheless, the central question of any advanced form of empirical research in international relations should not be a one-dimensional form of epistemological enquiry, but should rather be a multidimensional pursuit of feasible inferences.

It should be observed that only systematic reports which are logical and true by nature can be further studied for empirical verification in international relations research. Advanced empirical research in international relations should evolve through the epistemological and experiential processes of data collection, methodical reflection and pragmatic observation whereby developing the rudimentary foundation for new-fangled discoveries in international relations research.

3. REFINEMENT OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Empirical methods of advancement of research in international relations should undergo the most critical process of refinement of empirical research methodologies. Such a critical process of refinement of empirical research methodologies would ultimately result in the development of new-fangled methods of approaching the discipline through decentralized narratives of enquiry and investigation. This process would further contribute towards balancing various other dispersed narratives in international relations research.

Such a critical process of empirical refinement of research methodologies in international relations research would also enable researchers and political scientists to epistemologically study and examine the role of the modern-day globalized nation state. This can be achieved by undertaking extensive and in-depth research on various diverse

issues faced by the citizens of the modern-day globalized nation states such as issues pertaining to poverty, polarization, labour-market relations, gender discrimination, etc.

Refinement of empirical research methodologies can also contribute in the collaboration of new-fangled academic and operational approaches of enquiry from other streams of knowledge such as science, economics, history, linguistics and sociology.

The process of advancement of research in international relations should always complement the process of empirical questioning as is practised while undertaking research in other streams of social sciences. Such a well-balanced approach further helps in the evolution of research in international relations and presents the subject as the key for the evolution of globalization.

The primary procedure for the advancement of research in international relations should be centred around the epistemological observation and presentation of key findings of experiential research in the subject. These key findings should be further examined in terms of the key debates between realism versus idealism and liberalism versus conservatism.

4. EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS RESEARCH

The emergence of critical epistemological issues in international relations research has ultimately resulted in the diversification of the discipline. Such issues have also created opportunities for researchers, scholars and political scientists to refocus their attention on solving subtle ontological problems which have acted as speed breakers in the process of advancement of research in international relations.

It is also very crucial to be equally critical towards qualitative and quantitative approaches, so that qualitative and quantitative approaches can be balanced in a specific form well-adjusted for the development of international relations as a dynamic stream of social science. For research scholars, political scientists, students and other stakeholders of the subject, it might prove to be very advantageous if they implement such critical perspectives in deriving answers for ontological questions of a multipolar nature.

Such a diversified approach would definitely enhance their potentialities, which, would not only be defined by methodical observations and capabilities to relate the subject with other streams of knowledge, but would also be defined by the quality to augment diversified synergies to allow the discipline of international relations to collaborate effectively with numerous streams of social science.

Concerning the question on how to approach international relations research in a more diversified cum pragmatic way, various traditional solutions have been shared by pragmatists arguing that the best estimate can be inferred only through the development of logical and positivist schools of thought on the subject. This research does not essentially approve such traditional solutions because positivist and logical schools of thought have time and again been challenged by societal discrepancies when it comes to their effective and pragmatic implementation in the society.

5. CONCLUSION

The advancement of empirical research in international relations requires research scholars, political scientists, students, professors, authors and other key stakeholders to innovate new-fangled research methods which can challenge the outstanding qualitative and quantitative epistemological designs of research. Improvements and

pragmatic changes in the traditional research methodologies in international relations research are equally imperative.

Abstraction of diversified synergies would be highly effective in employing the subject of international relations in designing new-fangled and instrumental research methods of social sciences as well. Moreover, there are immense creative possibilities of such diversified synergies, as these can help in structuring and innovating novel systematic research methods to advance the discipline of international relations.

Additionally, there is still the urgency to diversify mainstream international relations and expand the discipline across multidimensional domains of social sciences. Diversification and expansion of the discipline would also depend on the collaboration of international relations with other streams of knowledge. Such a feasible diversification can be achieved only when the above-mentioned research methodologies are implemented in a more socially and economically engaged approach.

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