

ANALYSIS OF KEY SCHOLARS' VIEWPOINTS ON ONTOLOGICAL SUPRANATIONALITY PARADOX OF UNIVERSAL INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Shohjahon Kukiboyev

University of World Economy and Diplomacy

Abstract: This article examines whether a universal international organisation that can sustain peace and justice is possible in actuality. It discusses the issue under Ontological Supranationality Paradox (OSP) through viewpoints of key IR thinkers. It argues that effectiveness requires supranational authority, however this authority will undermine the international and universal character of IOs. As a result, universal international organisations face structural limits that cannot be resolved through only reforming or improving cooperation.

Key terms: international organisations, supranationality, sovereignty, anarchy, global governance, international law, power politics, peace

Introduction

In the liberalist school of thought, international organisations are one of the most essential solutions to create “perpetual peace”. From the League of Nations to the United Nations, we hoped that a universal institution could help us to restrain violence, protect justice and guide development. However, failures of IOs didn't stop up to this day. There are still full-scale wars, genocides and open oppressions going on, the international law is applied selectively, powerful states often bypass or block collective decisions, etc. Numerous scholars try to explain this situation as problem of political will, mistakes in designing IOs or temporary power imbalances (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Keohane, 1984), but this article takes a different approach. Rather than asking why international

organisations keeps failing in practice, it will study if a universal and effective international organisation is possible in principle. Most of the existing theories suggest that these failures could have been avoided, but states are choosing not to act properly/morally: institutions could work better if states cooperated more, if they trusted each other more or accepted stronger rules. Realist theories usually connect this problem with concepts like anarchy and power politics, while liberal institutionalists emphasise the states didn't realise yet the importance of cooperation, norms and mutual gains (Waltz, 1979; Keohane, 1984). The English School of Thought also says that international order is possible without world government as form of "International Society" (Bull, 1977). But, the new problem is that it still depends heavily on great powers. If the great powers don't seek order, that virtual society will not work either. It will only work, when smaller powers start waging wars, try to destroy order and the great powers stop them. Therefore, we can sense that there is something largely missing in the discussion, which is, according to this paper, a direct examination of the ontological status of international organisations themselves.

This article argues that the problem is not mainly empirical or moral, but existential. Many scholars fully admit that universal international organisation can only be effective if it has supranational authority (the ability to make binding decisions and enforce them). However, this kind of authority cannot coexist with the concept of 'internationality'. International means it is among the nations, among sovereign nations not political units that function as a province of one country, in the first place. IOs are created and funded by states; armies of states are used to coercively apply decisions, and even the administration staff (not only the direct representatives) that make it appear as if the IO is a separate political unit (such as secretary-general of the UN), come from certain countries, they don't have planetary citizenship. Hence, IO cannot escape

underlying power relations without stopping to be international. This creates what this article calls the Ontological Supranationality Paradox (OSP). One thing to note is that, we do not try to depict cooperation or IOs as completely useless. Instead, this article seeks to change expectations by showing the structural limits within which such IOs must operate.

Research Methods

This article used qualitative and theoretical research approaches. The hypotheses is not tested with empirical data because it uses conceptual analysis to examine the basic conditions under which IOs exist and operate. The argument is developed through a trace-back logic, starting from the requirement of effectiveness and moving backward to questions like authority, enforcement, sovereignty. Key assumptions of international relations theory, such as anarchy, state sovereignty, power asymmetry, are treated as analytical starting points, not variables to be measured. The main content of paper is discussion of classical and contemporary literature in political theory and international relations, including perspectives such as realist, liberal institutionalist, English School. This method allows to clarify structural limits that are often neglected in policy-oriented or empirical studies.

Discussion and Analysis

Any IO that wants to sustain peace and justice must be able to do more than facilitate dialogue. It must be capable of making binding decisions and ensuring compliance, especially in crisis, emergency situations. Otherwise, rules will become optional. Classical political theory already made this point clear. For example, Hobbes argued that law without a sovereign is merely advice, since obedience ultimately depends on coercive power (Hobbes, 1651/1996). In international politics, no such

sovereign exists above states. Some may argue about hegemony, but that's another topic. Realist scholars have repeatedly emphasised that this absence of higher authority defines the international system. (Waltz, 1979). Neorealists even see anarchy having more influence on states' conflicts than eternally-power-seeking nature of humans. From this perspective, IO cannot compel states to act against their interests. IO become at their weakest point exactly when enforcement is needed mostly. Hence, undoubtedly, effectiveness requires some form of supranational authority.

However, the acquisition of supranational authority introduces a deeper problem. International organisations are not independent political entities in the same way states are. They are created by states, financed by them, IOs rely on them for personnel, legitimacy and enforcement capacity. Even their administrative bodies are composed of individuals who are citizens of particular states. Of course they are shaped by national legal and political backgrounds, they have their preferences and cannot act as supreme, just, neutral judge (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004). This means that IOs are embedded within existing power relations, they don't stand above them. The English School captures this tension by describing international politics as an "anarchical society" (Bull, 1977). Order can exist without world government. However, it too largely depends on shared norms and, crucially, the management of the system by great powers. If powerful states disagree or feel threatened, rules might become suspended or ignored. Morgenthau (1948) similarly argued that international law and institutions reflect the interests of dominant states. In this sense, IOs do not neutralise power; they organise it.

The problem becomes sharper when universality is added. A universal international organisation requires broad membership, and, yes, even those powerful states with large economic and military powers. As a result, they provide disproportionate share of funding and enforcement resources which can give them an

informal leverage in IO. If decisions run directly against their interests, they can retain the option to withhold funding, block action, or withdraw entirely at any time. The history of IOs provides many examples of this dynamic. This exit option is central. Domestic political systems are different, authority is backed by monopoly over force and taxation. IOs depend on continued consent. Rousseau already recognised this dilemma in his critique of early plans for international federation. He said that states would either refuse to join a coercive union or attempt to dominate even if they join (Rousseau, 1761/2005). Hence, universality and enforcement are also in opposite directions.

We can summarise these tensions in a term **Ontological Supranationality Paradox (OSP) used by this paper**. On the one hand, a universal international organisation must possess supranational authority to be effective in maintaining peace and justice. On the other hand, if IO has such authority, it undermines the its international character by threatening state sovereignty. This can also encourage domination by powerful members, otherwise they threaten that they will withdraw. The paradox is ontological because it concerns what international organisations are, not simply how well they perform.

This paradox also explains why moments of crisis shows us limits of IOs so clearly. Carl Schmitt claimed that “Sovereignty reveals itself in the decision over the exception”(Schmitt, 1922/2005). If we apply this claim here, we can see that when obeying rules costs national interests, states will choose themselves. Yes, IOs can manage routine cooperation, they can send humanitarian aid to mitigate, but these are not enough to get rid of the conflict. And they cannot control the exception without becoming sovereign themselves. If they become, they cease to be international organisations in the usual sense.

Liberal institutionalist and constructivist scholars might object that IOs matter because they can shape preferences, norms and identities over time (Keohane, 1984; Wendt, 1999). Yes, these mechanisms are real and important. However, they operate most effectively in low- to medium-stakes situations. Here, cooperation already aligns with state interests. However, as soon as existential threats or interest conflicts arise, normative influence alone is insufficient. The paradox does not deny gradual cooperation. It tries to see what are the limits of possible achievements at the universal level if we go on with this form of cooperation.

Conclusion

This article has argued that we should not see the repeated failure of universal international organisations to sustain peace and justice only because of poor design, weak leadership or lack of political will. Instead, it has proposed the Ontological Supranationality Paradox (OSP) as a way to explain these failures at a deeper level.

The paradox shows that effectiveness requires supranational authority, but supranational authority undermines the international and universal character of the organisation itself. This is not a temporary dilemma, it is a structural one. The article demonstrates that international organizations face restrictions because their design restricts their operational capabilities. States establish and fund international organizations which leads to enforcement power relations between them. When important conflicts happen or essential interests get jeopardized then organizations lose their ability to maintain rules which results in partial adherence by their members. That's why, we see greatest operational boundaries of IOs during their most critical emergency situations. Although institutions do have value, their topmost advantages remain unreachable because of fundamental system design limitations. The theoretical

consequences of the OSP exist together with their effects on policy discussions. People on social media platforms, experts during their public lectures, political commentators, etc, who demand changes to universal international organizations, assume that expanded powers and increased membership can operate together without creating conflicts. The paradox suggests that this assumption is flawed. The expectations placed on global institutions exceed their actual capacity to deliver results. The recognition of these boundaries leads to the development of practical forms of international cooperation which include various solutions for different needs. And, again, important thing is that this argument should not be interpreted as a denial of international partnership together with global community standards. International organizations can still help countries work together by providing coordination and decreasing their operational uncertainties while handling their everyday cooperation activities. The international system does not recognize them as neutral sovereign powers. The acceptance of this boundary leads to a more truthful understanding of how global governance operates.

References

1. Barnett, M., & Finnemore, M. (2004). *Rules for the world: International organisations in global politics*. Cornell University Press.
2. Bull, H. (1977). *The anarchical society: A study of order in world politics*. Columbia University Press.
3. Hobbes, T. (1996). *Leviathan* (R. Tuck, Ed.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1651)
4. Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After hegemony: Cooperation and discord in the world political economy*. Princeton University Press.
5. Morgenthau, H. J. (1948). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace*. Alfred A. Knopf.

6. Rousseau, J.-J. (2005). *A lasting peace through the federation of Europe* (C. E. Vaughan, Trans.). Project Gutenberg. (Original work published 1761)
7. Schmitt, C. (2005). *Political theology: Four chapters on the concept of sovereignty* (G. Schwab, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1922)
8. Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. McGraw-Hill.
9. Wendt, A. (1999). *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge University Press.