

An Examination on Rationality of Unit in International Relations

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Abstract: This paper proposes a question, what is rationality of unit in international relations? It is necessary to critically elaborate definition of rationality in three different stages and comes to the conclusion that Accordant Perfect Rationality is pure rationality without influence of inherent features and exterior limitations; Inherent Bounded Rationality considers the inherent features of unit but ignores exterior limitations and Exterior Structure-Induced Equilibrium adds factors of exterior limitations but choice a wrong analytic unit. Thus, this paper put forward assumptions of Unbalanced Rationality with corrections of existing problems.

1. Introduction

Theory, approach and application of economics are booming and multifarious because of high-speed development of economy after the Second World War. Some classical fundamental assumptions of microeconomics are gradually applying into studies on political behaviors in such context [1], that is, presupposing all units in international relations are rational and these units count income and loss of choices. In fact, all units are beforehand set as rational units in rationalism theories of international relations. Generally speaking, conception of rationality in Rational Choice comes from *the Wealth of Nations* of Adam Smith and the egoism stems from the publications of realism ancestor, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. However, units in international society are not always rational, sometimes, choice based on a mixture of rationality and irrationality. With constantly improving on the theory, consideration behind units is no longer limiting, definition of rationality is more elastic. Such as, Max Weber raised a typology of social action, also, more specific, four explanations for motivation of unit behaviors, they are, Rational-purposeful Action, Value-rational Action, Affective Action and Traditional Action [2]. The Hierarchy of Needs Theory considers that economic benefits are not the only demand for units and motivation of unit behaviors is consistent with principle of satisfaction in concept of Bounded Rationality. The Rational Choice Institutionalism stresses the context restrain unit behaviors via inherent ego and exterior others. Thus this paper attempts to elaborate motivation of units in international relations through paths of Rational Choice, further, spreads out three stages of Rational Choice of units and indicates basics of such three stages of Rational Choice. The paper finally rises up the concept of Unbalanced Rationality with its foundations.

2. The First Stage of Rationality: Accordant Perfect Rationality

The core meaning of the first stage of Rational Choice Theory is Perfect Rationality, rooted from *Homo Economicus*. Namely, units rationally and maximally seek economic benefits, and do not receive any adverse influence from emotion changes and context implication. Thus, consistency of preference and benefit maximization, are two cornerstones for Rational Choice methodology based on individualism [3]. Besides, maximization principle of subjective expected utility is established on consistency of preference, and unit must have a decision when facing a serious of choices with priority order [4]. Perfect Rationality presuppose full selectable information and continuous stable preferences, but, these two basic presupposed conditions are considerable theoretical in international

relations, so, Levin and Milgrom believe real choice in political world is influenced by selection context [5]. Further, selection context and individual factor affect consistency of preferences and the preference also is dynamic. Second, choice in political world built on intuitionistic inference, instinct and intuition, that is, insufficient selectable information makes perception restriction to units so that they could not process rational thinking. Equally, Guith and Kliemt think Perfect Rationality cannot answer the question why there are two ubiquitous phenomenon appeared, first, it cannot answer why unit usually could not maximally benefit from political world, and second, it cannot answer why the unit with maximal benefit is not same as ordinary unit matching in context [6]. In general, the biggest loophole is ignorance of influence from inherent features of units on preference and insufficient selectable information in Prefect Rationality of Rational Choice Theory.

But why rationality in the first stage of Rational Choice is quite pure and circumscribed? Zukert deems that as a theory of positivism, Rational Choice prefers to process analysis in acquired things rather than processing a value judgement in choices [7]. Next, it needs reduced conditions for impact factors of mathematics analysis, which is criticized on epistemology and methodology in changes of rationality. More specific, first, hypothesis of such theory usually is hardly observed and measured. Second, study of Rational Choice lacks of experimental verifications, and it usually adopted reverse deduction to modify result for matching hypothesis in analysis processing. On the other hand, many Scholars of Rational Choice Theory agree that such theory acknowledge unit has different levels of rationality and it no need to test, they also believe view of critics is narrow, because application of Rational Choice Theory is not just restricted to empirical research, and purpose of reverse deduction is not for modifying the theory itself but hypothesis [8]. In conclusion, methodology of Rational Choice Theory is based on micro economical mathematics, so it naturally has advantages on study of political parties' competition and voting strategy and concludes concise results. Meanwhile, it ignores many traditional elements and specific political behavior, which causes scientific result and adoption only on static analysis.

3. The Second Stage of Rationality: Inherent Bounded Rationality

Scholars are gradually shifting focus into features of unit for modifying and replenishing the core conceptions of Rational Choice, Simon settles three patterns for replenishment. There are, considering risk and uncertainty, setting up unit knows other insufficient selectable information existed and adding context constraint and complexity [9]. In addition, He also points out that it is necessarily entirely aware of distribution of risk and uncertainty if considering risk and uncertainty, and indicates to how to distribute preference via setting up unit knows other insufficient selectable information existed. Therefore, he further states satisfaction degree of choice and quasi-optimal choices are criterions of rationality, these two are decided by dynamic and modifiable aspiration level, such level is extended from features of unit. This process stripped perception and choice up [10], in another word, rationality is limited by features of unit, such as perception, intuition and emotion.

Thus, Jones divides analysis framework of political choice into three parts, choice context, and the scope of issues and influence of perception or emotion [11]. That is, application in international relations should construct a context that unit stands in, an issue related with stakeholders and a framework of unit perception. Such application connects Bounded Rationality and Constructivism, points to a study path based on conception of role and identity, just same as realism path based on conception of benefit and power. Yet, there are still problems in such modification and replenishment, Bound Rationality shifts core conception from utility maximization to cognitive process, from payoff function to satisfaction or dissatisfaction, but such modification and replenishment fails to clearly spell out influence of perception and what context it will appear. The result of choice has characteristics, sensitive decrease and hate loss, however, such observation just improves the applicability of theory and do not improves explanation. Furthermore, the modification of context pressure affects changes of perception need to construct a universal cognitive mechanism, which clears change track of context pressure. Nonetheless, there is not a proper descriptive approach [12].

4. The Third Stage of Rationality: Exterior Structure-Induced Equilibrium

Persky concludes that although John Mill's *Homo Economicus* has four obvious diacritical targets of economic interests [13], pursuing comfort, enjoyment, high productivity and accumulated benefits. That is, Mill's concept of *Homo Economicus* does not run over features and ethology of *Homo Economicus*, which are changes and reactions of *Homo Economicus* under institutional structure restraint, thus, Persky indicates institution can restrain or guide preference and emotion of *Homo Economicus*, which also called *Homo Sociologicus*. Actually, such process signifies replenishment for the concept of rationality shift focus from inherent features of unit to exterior institution, also, called as Rational Choice Institutionalism.

Rational Choice Institutionalism focuses on political process and institutional structure analysis, shifts focus from motivation of microcosmic unit to combinational analysis of behaviors and institutions. It also lasted presuppone of rationality, that is, unit has a serious preferences and adopted rational strategy. Implication of politics is not just a comparison of powers and a process of identity, it is a serious pf collective actions. Also, unit seek maximal benefits in political world, it will choose common suboptimum choice. Such phenomenon is explained as political world will form existing information and enforcement mechanism, which decrease uncertainty and transaction cost and make units from mussy to uniform, and this process called as Structure-Induced Equilibrium. However, institution of Rational Choice Institutionalism is short of distinct definition. First, definition of institution usually concentrates on the middle-low classes of politics. March and Olsen believe although the definition of institution is existed, it is often simplified as a code of conduct of unit, which means it lacks of structural and systematic application [14]. Second, it is arguable on origin of institution. Institution is not produced by function of institution [15]. Besides, there is a ubiquity of dysfunctional institutions in politics so that it could not explain well on dysfunctional institutions. Third, there are two path of institutionalization, one is compulsory institutionalization from top to bottom and another is induced institutionalization from bottom to top. If expected earnings exceed expected cost, there will be an institutional change, and the driving force for it is influential unit. More importantly, institution is not decisive, but more restriction, thus, institution cannot be as a core factor for deciding unit.

5. The Basic Assumptions on Unbalanced Rationality

Unbalanced Rationality put nation state as unit in empirical study of international relation, it highly simplifies nation state as a unit with consistent behaviors, and does not disclose the game process of elites or interest group. But, it reserves all roles in reactions between units and structures. Unbalanced Rationality restores content of rationality. It believes that behaviors of consistent unit are produced when it facing with a serious of choices sequenced by rational principles, and which rational principles can be rank basis is decide by changes of externalities, features of unit and units preferences. Such process is dynamic and all rational units are always sitting in Unbalanced Rationality. Different path of rationalism has different national target, such as power, security, identity and order. If rational target is a factor for stabilizing status of rationality in certain stage, unit will take it as stating point in such stage, stably chronically seek invariable target. However, preference of unit in real politics is not stable, and if the preference is unstable, the driving for must be come from context conditions, thus, preference is also sequencing under fluctuant context conditions. The reason is the influence of fluctuant context conditions causes nature of rationality changed. More specific, first, unit facing different affair has different rationalities. Second, domestic game causes rationality changed. Thus, Unbalanced Rationality, Unstable Preference and Dynamic context is micro-foundation of framework of Unbalanced Rationality Theory, such three foundations goes spirally with principle of maximal rational benefits.

Scholars holding Group Theory, Pluralism and Function of Social Structure, insist Society-Centric Theory, think unit is just a platform for gaming and if a group wins at last, it will control the policy of unit. But, it hardly explain that state leaders can directly step over groups to make a decision and

certain policy does not have positive impact on domestic domains taking behaviors of group as a basis for analyzing unit diplomacy. Furthermore, if domestic politics connect with international politics, the state leaders facing with two game platforms are better observational than domestic society. Moreover, scholars holding Institution-Centric Theory put institution as basic analytic unit in behaviors of international relation, potentially treat all behaviors as result of institution. It is acceptable for domestic bureaucracy analysis, but not acceptable for international society or system. Nation states are basic unit for constructing international society or system.

Unbalanced Rationality puts nation state as basic analytic unit under State-Centric Theory, as other mainstream theories, it combines different function and role of a country, and forms a rational, single and self-integrated unit. A unit, is not literally single, it is given authenticity by institution, rationality, sovereignty and security. Thus, unit has strong autonomy, behaviors of unit are based on rationality and rationality decides the autonomy of unit. Unbalanced Rationality adopts individualism. It brings out a general question, behaviors of nation state, parties, communions and organizations is resultant action in interior rational unit or in non-reductive rational unit. List and Spiekermann consider that it adopted holism when study on systematic problem or institutional steering problem, also, it adopted reduction approach in holism when it handles ontological problem of society [16]. However, system, institution, social intention and rules of previous two problems can be classified into individual level and the last one only rests on theoretical possibility. Further, they believe that Casual-Explanatory Holism can be a research methodology without contradiction between individualism and holism. The necessary and sufficient condition of application is, there are many meaningful levels, and function of higher level has same structure without synchronicity with function of higher level, also, causal relationship of higher level can stably appear in lower level. In addition, such process is built on description of situation, course and explanation on causal mechanism, and forms a Positivism Epistemology so that Unbalanced Rationality should follow it.

6. Conclusion

The venation of rationality evolution is along with factor analysis, goes forward with choice, preference, identity and utility, formed progressively as Accordant Perfect Rationality, Inherent Bounded Rationality, Exterior Structure-Induced Equilibrium and Unbalanced Rationality. Accordant Perfect Rationality stands absolute rationality without effect of emotion, identity and context. Inherent Bounded Rationality stresses inherent features of unit will affect the preference of rational unit but it ignores structural influence. Exterior Structure-Induced Equilibrium offsets neglect of structural influence but it has an inaccurate analytic unit. Unbalanced Rationality takes Casual-Explanatory Holism, State-Centric Theory and Positivism Epistemology as foundations, extends out theoretical context of Unbalanced Rationality, Unstable Preference and Dynamic context, fix up the problem existed in previous definition of rationalities.

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