

The Agent- Structure Issue in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) – The “Macedonian” Issue

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Agent-structure issue or agent-structure problem ?

- Christopher Hill
- Issue, not problem - the mathematical analogy is seen as inappropriate to the immense political and historical complexities facing all those who wish to understand foreign policy, therefore agent-structure issue
- Actor, not agent, given the latter's sense in English of subordination to a higher authority (an agent of X or Y)
- “Human beings will always have the ‘wiggle’ room of specific historical circumstances in which to remake at least some of the world”
- Ian Craib – Giddens uses the terms agent and structure interchangeably in his structuration theory

The agent-structure issue in classic social theory

- Karl Marx – “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past”.
- Émile Durkheim - long-term structural forces, or ‘social facts’, such as law, religious beliefs or the norms associated with acting up particular social roles, are the most important determinants of individual behaviour.

The agent-structure in modern sociological theory

- Roy Bhaskar - critical realism, a new theory on the philosophy of science which aspired to be applicable to both natural and social sciences - gives precedence to ontology over methodology and epistemology (ontology comes first!)
- Margaret Archer - critical realist - morphogenetic model - agents and structures constitute distinct, independent entities - the interaction of agents and structures must be studied in its *spatio-temporal* evolution
- Antony Giddens - structuration theory - agents and structures conflate dissolving into each other and do not constitute two distinct entities

The agent-structure issue in IR and FPA

- Christopher Hill - *The National Interest in Question — Foreign Policy in Multicultural Societies* (2013) - there is no clear distinction between 'inside' and 'outside' in Foreign Policy Analysis - the interplay between *domestic* and *foreign* shapes not just one country's foreign policy but also its general development
- Kenneth Waltz - *Man, the State and War* (1959)
- Kenneth Waltz - *Theory of International Politics* (1979)
- J. David Singer - The levels of analysis problem (1961)

The philosophy of science dimension of the agent-structure theory in IR Theory and FPA

- Alexander Wendt, Colin Wight and Walter Carlsnaes - studied the agent-structure issue, each attempting, in different ways and proportions, a combination of the theories of Bhaskar, Archer and Giddens
- Scientific Realism (SR) – a) There is an independently existing world, which is knowable to us, b) This world consists of observable and *unobservable* entities, c) The theoretical entities, which are provided by mature scientific theories, are taken to be true

- Alexander Wendt - *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999) - the agent-structure relationship can help one explain not only how international politics are shaped and reproduced but also how these can *change*
- Colin Wight - *Agents, Structures and International Relations* (2006) - takes agents and structures to be ontologically strictly independent - argues that IR should become a science without need to resort to positivism
- Georgios Evangelopoulos - *Scientific Realism in the Philosophy of Science and International Relations* (2013) – a critical discussion of the introduction of SR into IR

Forget Philosophy of Science (!) – Back to IR Theory

- Nicos Mouzelis — *Sociology — What went wrong?* (1995)
- Need for conceptual tools that pertain to *middle-range sociological theories* and have the potential to assist us in the empirical research on the agent-structure issue in the context of IR and FPA
- We should endorse a study model of the agents/actors and structures, of their interactions and of the outcomes they produce that would incorporate the rationales of both levels of analysis and of the agent-structure relationship.

- Christopher Hill - A conceptual schema based on four distinctions - units and actors, actors and structures, positivism and constructivism, voluntarism and determinism
- Building on the foundation of the above conceptual schema, the researcher involved in the study of the agent-structure issue in IR or FPA, may need to take further recourse to certain conceptual tools afforded by middle-range sociological theories.
- Mouzelis's critique of Archer - Archer fails to point out that the 'externality' of structures is a function not only of *historical time* but also of *hierarchically organized social space*
- Wendt - *Quantum Mind and Social Science – Unifying Physical and Social Ontology* (2015)
- Bourdieu's habitus and Carlsnaes on intentions and dispositions – similarities

Conclusion

- There is no royal way to the study of the agent-structure issue.
- Karl Popper's “trial and error” is quite probably the best available method.

The Macedonian issue

- On 27-09-2007, at the initiative of the then government led by Prime Minister Mr Costas Karamanlis, the Greek Parliament decided that the country's position with regard to the dispute with FYROM on the name issue would be to choose 'a composite name with geographical designation, which would be valid towards everyone (erga omnes)
- We had to refer to one and only 'Greek Macedonia' and not 'Macedonia' tout-court
- maximalist rhetoric characterized the Greek foreign policy between 1992-1995

- Two embargoes against FYROM, the first in August 1992 by the government of Constantinos Mitsotakis, and the second, particularly burdensome for the economy of the neighbouring country, by the government of Andreas Papandreu in February 1994
- Kiro Grigorov - experienced and astute politician - FYROM became a member of the United Nations in 1993
- The relations between the two countries improved after the signing of the Interim Agreement between Greece and FYROM, on 13 September 1995, in New York
- The internal political crisis in FYROM, in 2001
- The refusal of the then Greek Prime Minister, Costas Karamanlis, during the NATO Summit Meeting on 3 April 2003 in Bucharest to discuss FYROM's application for entry to NATO
- The 5th December 2011 decision of the International Court of Justice in the Hague according to which it was judged that in 2008 in Bucharest, Greece had violated article 11, paragraph 1, of the Interim Agreement

What Greece should consider

- The aforementioned 27-9-2007 decision of the Greek Parliament, according to which Greece accepts a composite name, with geographical designation, which would be valid towards everyone (*erga omnes*)
- A viable solution to the 'Macedonian problem' must be found, so that Greece can next focus on major issues of its foreign policy
- During the June 2016 European Union Summit Meeting it will be decided whether the 'green light' will be given to the start of negotiations for FYROM's entry to the EU, whilst a month later, during the NATO Summit Meeting in Warsaw, FYROM's entry to NATO will be decided
- Politics is the art of the possible, the attainable – the art of the next best (Otto von Bismarck)

FYROM – Chances and Challenges

- Greece never raised and will never raise territorial claims against the neighbouring country
- The resolution of the name issue, in tandem with other possible achievements of country's foreign policy, could facilitate the political leadership in FYROM to convince the public opinion that certain recessions were worthwhile
- The 'name issue' is not the only obstacle to the country's entry to the EU
- The handling of the immigration issue should not be added to the existing frictions between Greece and FYROM

Back to Theory

- Greece and FYROM could be seen as *hierarchically* placed interacting agents/actors acting in historical time in the international system - the reference to the hierarchical placement of agents/actors is particularly important since Greece is an EU and NATO member, whilst FYROM is not
- Since we personify the states in FPA, it is important to clearly distinguish between the external and the internal environments of their actions (i.e. between external and internal structural constraints/enablements these two actors have to face)
- We have to pay attention to both intra- and -interactions as mediating mechanisms between agentic and structural causal powers

MANY WARM THANKS FOR
YOUR ATTENTION