



THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY EVOLUTION

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Abstract: System is an entity composed of parts which are in some kind and degree of interactions between themselves and with a system as a whole. International system is composed of states, as primary actors, and intensification and institutionalization of relations between them enable international society creation and evolution. This means that what makes the difference between international system and international society and in which point relationships in the system evolve in that of "society" can be found in the creation and function of international institutions. This is, also, the main thesis of this paper. International institutions should be defined separately from international organizations and international regimes, although, many authors use them interchangeably. Apart from enabling development of international society, international institutions have an important role in providing formal equality of states, coordination of various states policies and resolution of complex regional and global issues.

Key words: international system, international society, international institutions, international organizations, evolution.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the concepts of international system and international society and considers the way of transforming international system in international society by creation and influence of international institutions as forms of states organized and institutionalized cooperation. The main thesis of the paper is that the international society evolution is provided by creation of international institutions which make order, coordination and cooperation in resolving regional and global issues, possible.

International society represents „surface“, visible part of the world politics, that is pervaded by the world order substance. International institutions are the composing parts of inter-

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national society and, therefore, pervaded by the substantial characteristics of world order which is consisted of capitalistic processes and relations and which main institution is world market. But, the relation between the state and market and, also, the role which global market has in the world society and order creation will be the subject of some other examination. In this paper we are not dealing with the question of international institution creation, where international institutions would be a dependent variable, but only with one of their possible role – as international society creators. Here they are considered as independent variable. The role of international institutions in international society evolution is examined through structural-functionalist methodological approach.

2. INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AND SOCIETY

For international system to occur, at first place, the sovereign states must have been created. The lowest level of their interactions and communications allows us to speak about the *system*. But, "modern states have formed, and continue to form", as Hedley Bull states, "not only a system of states but also an international society."² Only when, among set of elements, channels of communications and mutual relations are established organized structure can emerge.³ International relations are a complex set of relationships between the states, those which are organized, and do not remain just on the level of simple interactions. This way of defining international relations takes states as primary subjects of international system/society and points to the difference between international system and international society where the international society is a more complex unity than international system. According to Bull, *international system* or the *system of states* exists when states have enough contacts between themselves and enough influence to each other decisions so that they can behave as part of one unity.⁴ On the other hand, *international society* or the *society of states* exists "when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions."⁵ International system can exist without international society, but international society cannot exist without international system. We like to watch this relationship as evolution of international system in international society in which the international institution creation represented the main driving force.

Order is a concept which refers to arranged state of relations between two or more actors. Order is composed of organized elements, agents and their relations, in other words, it is a structure. Relations inside the structure, between the elements and between the elements and the structure as a whole, are organized according to the ruling principle which can be found in international institutions. *International order* is the purpose of international society and it represents "relatively permanent state of arranged relations between members of interna-

² Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, third edition, PALGRAVE, New York, 2002, pp. 22

³ Vojislav Vucenovic, Aca Markovic, *Izvorista holisticke teorije organizacije*, Fakultet za obrazovanje diplomiranih pravnika i diplomiranih ekonomista za rukovođe kadrove, Novi Sad, 2011, pp.32.

⁴ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, third edition, PALGRAVE, New York, 2002, pp. 9

⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 13



tional society, based on their formal equality, mutual recognition and sovereignty"⁶. Notion of order should be seen as certain state of affairs and international institutions as the most appropriate mean for its creation and maintenance.

3. STATES AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

States are the primary institutions of international system and society. The notion of society of states is connected to the British school of thought in international relations which differs it from both liberalism and realism. Although liberalism uses the term "community", what differentiate Bull's notion of "society", is the key role of states. Relationships between states can have form of cooperation, conflict, or be neutral and can be spread to various fields of inter-state connections. For realism, on the other hand, it is almost impossible to cooperate under the condition of anarchy and international institutions don't have any significance whatsoever.

States are the main actors of the international society as a whole. Because there is no central authority this society is "anarchical" society, but far away from being chaotic or without rules. Anarchical society is not any kind of society. It is not a society of individuals or nations, but of states as sovereign entities which allows them to enter into mutual relations and create international society and order. Sovereignty means that each of these "independent communities" has its territory, populations and effective government. Effective government relates to the real exercise of state power over the territory and population it claims to rule and independence from any outside authority. But, as Barry Buzan, asked – where is the border between international system and international society and when relations in international system acquire features of society?⁷ The definition of international society made by Hedley Bull, which was mentioned earlier, allow us to see that the key elements that differs international system from international society are the common interests and values of states, set of rules, common international institutions and a sense of obligation. Similarly to Buzan, we can conclude that the key moment when international system evolved in international society was a mutual recognition of the sovereign equality between states, as the key subjects of international relations. But why states wanted to create this formal equality? What is their motivation for that? Again we must agree with Buzan when he said: "Given the inevitability of relations with other units, a common desire for order is the minimum necessary condition to begin the evolution of international society... A minimal desire for order begins to emerge when leaders realize the disadvantages of permanent chaos if interstate relations remain wholly unregulated."⁸

Except from these authors there are those who do not recognize the existence of international society. They are usually connected to realism and speak only in terms of system, denying any possibility of durable cooperation. For us, the very existence of diplomacy, international law, international organizations and regimes indicate the evolution of international system

⁶ Marina Kostic, Mesto i uloga medjunarodnih ustanova u stvaranju svetskog poretka, specijalisticki akademski rad, Univerzitet u Beogradu, Fakultet politickih nauka, 2012, pp. 25-26.

⁷ Barry Buzan, *From international system to international society: structural realism and regime theory meet the English School*, pp. 343, available at: www.graduateinstitute.ch

⁸ *Ib.*, pp. 334



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in society. The best example of this evolution is the existence of the Organization of United Nations. As professor Dimitrijevic explained, when he was considering the UN membership of Kosovo, each entity that wants to become the OUN member must fulfill three conditions⁹:

1. Candidate must be a state – About this condition the decision is made by the UN organs. For the states that recognized candidate as a state, it is formally equal to them.
2. The UN Security Council recommendation – Without this recommendation the procedure of entering into membership cannot start. For this recommendation it is necessary to vote qualified majority of nine members with the condition that none of the five permanent SC members vetoes that recommendation.
3. Two-third majority in the UN General Assembly – When there is a positive recommendation of UN SC, for a candidate to become member of the UN, it is necessary to get two-third majority of present and states that voted in GA UN.

Likewise, the application of new Eastern European states that were created after the Cold War for the UN membership signifies their request to become the members of international society and recognition as states.

The existence of OUN shows us several things. First, it shows us that there are *united nations or states* which indicate the unity of system and plurality of states. Second, the term "united" means that there is not just some simple set of interactions between the main actors of the system but that there are certain common interests and values (principles) under which they are united. Third, the Charter of OUN, beside mentioned common principles and goals, contains and norms, set of rules and procedures which organize relations between member states. Four, Organization of United Nations and its Specialized Agencies points to the fact that there are several common institutions and organizations by which *united* states arrange their relationships in specific fields i.e. international regimes. At the end, United Nations are the indicator of universal international society since the UN membership is almost universal, consisted of states and organized according to ruling principles, norms and procedures contained in the Charter of UN.

4. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS AND REGIMES

As the new institutionalism suggests the focus of institutionalism has moved from traditional concepts of formal institutions and organizations to informal conceptions of institutions and rules. In this sense we must make a difference between concept of international institutions and international organizations, or regimes.

In the early works, in the middle of the XX century, authors usually equated the notions of international institutions and international organizations like United Nations, International Monetary Fund or World Bank. With the process of globalization and creation of various international regimes, especially at the end of 70's, it has become necessary to define these three concepts.

⁹ Војин Димитријевић, *Србија и пријем Косова у УН*, <http://pecsanic.net/2010/02/srbija-i-prijem-kosova-u-un/>



International institutions are complex set of principles, rules and practices of states which creates international society and order.¹⁰ International organizations are formal, institutionalized forms of this complex set and have physical appearance. They have their offices, staff, organizational structure and rules. Organization of United Nations is, in this sense, international organization i.e. one "shell" of several international institutions. International institutions can exist without international organizations, but international organizations cannot exist without international institutions. In some cases, therefore, international institutions can have their organizational dimension, like it is the case with, for example, World Trade Organization, or they can be created around some central treaties like it is the case with international non-proliferation regime which is created around the Non-proliferation Treaty (1970).

To define international regimes, we will use the Reus-Smith classification of international institutions. He distinguishes constitutive, fundamental and international institutions in specific fields of international relations. He explains them in the following way: "Constitutional structures are the foundational institutions, comprising the constitutive values that define legitimate statehood and rightful state action; fundamental institutions encapsulate the basic rules of practice that structure how states solve cooperation problems; and issue-specific regimes enact basic institutional practices in particular realms of interstate relations."¹¹ We should have in mind that these three tiers of institutions are "hierarchically ordered" which means that constitutive structures such as sovereignty can be found in all other institutions such as diplomacy, international law or various international regimes. This is the core of understanding the main pillars of modern international society and order since all of international life and modern international relations are organized through them. To understand the nature of this society it is necessary to understand the basic principles, rules and practices according to which states behave.

5. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

The history of international society is the history of creation and development of international institutions. The role of international institutions is to provide formal equality of states by defining the rules of behavior, "proscribing behavioral roles, constraining activity and shaping expectations"¹² of the members of the international society. We drew our conclusion by making the analogy with the role of institutions inside the political communities-states. International institutions have a function of "law" in international society. They regulate relations between states. As in society where all the individuals are not the same institutions have the function of making equilibrium in which society can sustain itself. Constitutional and fundamental institutions like sovereignty or international law and multilateralism should provide that.

¹⁰ Marina Kostic, Mesto i uloga medjunarodnih ustanova u stvaranju svetskog poretka, specijalisticki akademski rad, Univerzitet u Beogradu, Fakultet politickih nauka, 2012, pp. 11-12.

¹¹ Christian Reus-Smith, *The Constitutional Structure of International Society and the Nature of Fundamental Institutions*, Available at: <http://graduateinstitute.ch>, pp. 558

¹² Keohane O. Robert, *International Institutions: Two Approaches*, pp. 386. Available at: http://academico.direitorio.fgv.br/ccmw/images/4/42/KEOHANE_International_Institutions-two_approaches_%28JSTOR%29.pdf



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This role of international institutions can not be separated from its function to create order and stability in international relations. As we, already, mentioned states are interested in making the order because it is, in the most cases, the best way to secure their stability and survival. It is the best possible way to overcome the disadvantages of anarchical system and security dilemma. As Glaser put it in the title of his famous work "Realists as optimists: cooperation as self-help"¹³, states will choose international institutions when they are best option for the solution of their problems. But, also, we must be aware of the lessons historical institutionalism gives us – once made choices constrain our future options and choices. So, for the states which had chosen international institution creation it would be harder to quit and abandon institutional and organizational arrangements they participate in. The best example of this thesis is the modern history of European integrations. We don't have any example, yet, that some state – member of the EU – departed from the EU membership. This problem is, also, connected with the question of "free riding" because institutional arrangements that states made constrain their freedom of action. Established channels of communication among parts of the unity, i.e. organizational structures, at the same time signify the limitation of freedom of those parts.¹⁴ That limitation of freedom of action of parts becomes the condition and foundation for development of their common activity and influence to the environment in which they exist.

Hedley Bull states that international order cannot be separated from the purpose it should achieve and define four primary or elementary goals of international society: the preservation of the system and society of states itself, maintenance of independence or external sovereignty of individual states, peace and the common goals of all social life such as limitation of violence, the keeping of promises and the stabilization of possession by rules of property.¹⁵ As we can see, all of these goals can be fulfilled by international institution creation. For example, international system/society reproduces itself by making rules of admission into international organizations such as OUN, EU, or NATO. Also, almost every international treaty is open for new signatures under specific conditions. As we saw, only states can become members of these organizations and institutions. They also contribute to the maintaining of peace and security since they provide specific rules for the use of force in international relations and proscribe the possible ways of using it. The UN Charter provides that the force can only be used in the cases of self-defense, breach of peace, threat to peace or act of aggression with the approval of the UN Security Council which gives the recommendations and decide about the measures that can be taken.¹⁶ International organizations, also, represent the global and regional forums for discussion and peaceful settlement of disputes between member states. They have some rules of procedure and decision-making rules which help the member states to create mutual trust and cooperation and to coordinate their policies when it comes to the regional and global issues such as proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, fight against terrorism and organized crime or environmental issues. They help states to lead international society in the next phase of globalization.

¹³ Charles L. Glaser, *Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help*. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2539079>

¹⁴ Vojislav Vucenovic, Aca Markovic, *Izvorista holisticke teorije organizacije*, Fakultet za obrazovanje diplomiranih pravnika i diplomiranih ekonomista za rukovođe kadrove, Novi Sad, 2011, pp.32.

¹⁵ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, third edition, PALGRAVE, New York, 2002, pp. 16-19.

¹⁶ UN Charter. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>



6. CONCLUSION

International institutions should not be seen as something static. They are the processes and not the "things"¹⁷ and they are developing, transforming and changing themselves in order to fulfill their purpose and goals. They evolve to better suit reality. Contemporary international relations are marked by complex interdependence and the process of globalization. Society which is evolving as a result of these influences is usually called "network society"¹⁸ which means that what happens at one part of the world influences all the other parts. We can all feel these consequences after the "world economic crisis" has started in 2008. The "network effects" are especially visible in the fields of financial markets and global trade, as in the environmental field. In this situation, international institutions represent the best instrument for global and multilateral governance which can lead international society to the next level of evolution which is world society. The most significant form of multilateral governance today is G20. The existence of G20 is recognition that states cannot resolve the fundamental questions of their existence alone or that there can be only one "stabilizer". G20 was established in 1999, after the financial crisis that had hit Asia two years before, with the goal of stabilization of global financial market. Some of the measures taken by this Group were strengthening of global financial regulation and supervision over its application, macro-economical cooperation and coordination of economic policies. Member states of G20 represent around 90% of the world GDP, two thirds majority of the world population and 80% of world trade.¹⁹ This Group has become the main advocate of transformation of international financial institutions and organizations such as the International Monetary Fund or World Bank.

Directions of the future development of states, international institutions and international society as a whole are various. Different authors see different possibilities of change and different results of that change. Would it be a society of regions, states, or individuals? Would it still be anarchical or with some central authority, which means, hierarchical? Would it be "international society of globalized states"²⁰, society of "transnational states"²¹, society of multilateral global governance (G20, UN), global state or world society? There are approaches that predict that the nation states will evolve into "large networks" not only in economical, but also in political sense. "Large networks are a set of many individuals, who are networked with each other and thus, a new design that is completely different from the classical... The biggest change is that networks don't have central office and central administration. To have the network to be effective, everyone must feel like he is in the center."²² Although we do not agree with this prediction it is important to have in mind all of these various forms of possible

¹⁷ Marsh D. & Stoker G., *Teorije i metode politicke znanosti*, Fakultet politickih znanosti Sveucilista u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 2005., pp.95.

¹⁸ M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition, Blackwell, 2000, pp. 500

¹⁹ Available at: <http://www.g20.org>

²⁰ Ian Clark, "Globalization and the post-cold-war order", in J. Baylis, S. Smith & P. Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011, pp. 547

²¹ W. Robinson, *Social theory and globalization: the rise of transnational state*. Available at: www.mendeley.com

²² Radosavljevic, Z., et al, "Unsustainability of Classic State and Economics in Modern Conditions", *International Journal of economics & law*, ALFA University, FORKUP, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 2011, pp. 117.



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future organization of international and global life. Whoever takes a leading role must have enough capacity and capabilities to lead, sustain institutional arrangements and resolve international and global issues. It would be very hard for individuals, even the networks of them, to do that. These networks, instead, can serve as the most important and influential advocates of new global trends and directions of international society evolution as well as for international institution creation and transformation. They can put some important questions on the agenda, those that can be best managed by international institutions in the global society network.

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