

Revisionist Powers Seeking for Status within the System by Adopting a Compresence of Cooperative and Competitive Strategies

Authors : Mirele Plenishti

Abstract : Revisionist powers are sometimes associated to revolutionary and status quo powers, this because along the line representing the level of satisfaction-dissatisfaction with the system, revisionist powers are located in between status quo and revolutionary powers. In particular, the case of revisionist powers seeking for social status adjustments (while having status quo intentions) can, in the first option, be refuted due to the disbelief that dissatisfaction could coexist with status quo intentions - this entailing the possibility to trigger a spiral effect by over-counter-reacting. In the second option, revisionist powers can be underestimated as a real threat, this entailing a potential inadequate reaction. The necessity to well manage international change entails the need to understand better how revisionist powers seek for changes in status, within the system. The complexity of this case is heightened by the propensity of both IR scholars and practitioners to infer states' aims and intentions - towards the system - by looking at their behaviours. This has resulted in the tendency to consider cooperative international behaviours as symptomatic of status quo intentions, and vice versa: status quo intentions as manifested through positive/cooperative behaviours. Similarly, assertive/competitive international behaviours are considered as symptomatic (and vice versa, as manifestations) of revolutionary intentions. Therefore, within complex and composite foreign policies, scholars who disbelieve the existence of revisionist powers with status quo intentions, tend to highlight the negative/competitive elements; while more optimist scholars tend to focus on conforming/cooperative behaviours. Both perspectives, while understanding relevant components of the complex international interaction, still miss a composite overview. In order to closely investigate the strategies adopted by (status quo aiming) revisionist states, and by drawing on sociological studies on peer relations, focused on children's behaviour, one could expect that the compresence of both positive (compliant/cooperative) and negative (competitive/assertive) behaviours, is deliberate, and functional to seeking social status adjustments. Indeed, at the end of 90s, peer relation studies focused on children's behaviour, discerned between the concept of social acceptance (that refers to the degree of social preference assigned to the child- how much is s/he liked) and popularity (which refers to the social status assigned to the child within the group). By building on this distinction, it was possible to identify a link relating social acceptance to prosocial (compliant/cooperative) behaviours and strategies, and popularity to both prosocial and antisocial (aggressive/assertive) behaviours and strategies. Since then, antisocial behaviours ceased to be considered as a proof of social maladjustment and were finally identified as socially recognized strategies adopted in function of the achievement of popularity. Drawing on these results, one can hypothesize that also international status seekers perform both positive (conforming/compliant/cooperative) and negative (assertive/aggressive/competitive) behaviours. Therefore, the link between aims and behaviours loses its strength, since cooperative and competitive behaviours are both means for status seeking strategies that aim at status quo intentions. By carrying out a historical investigation of Italy's foreign policy during fascism, the intent is to closely look at this compresence of behaviours, in order to better qualify its components and their relations.

Keywords : compresence of cooperative and competitive behaviours and strategies, revisionist powers, status quo intentions, status seeking

Conference Title : ICPSIR 2017 : International Conference on Political Science and International Relations

Conference Location : Prague, Czechia

Conference Dates : July 09-10, 2017