Research Proposal:

The Effects of 'Quasi-Institutions' on International Security

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Introduction

Neoliberal institutionalism purports that humans and states are rational actors, that there is a natural goodness of actors, and that cooperation is ultimately achievable (Keohane, 1998). Institutions, in this view, are an effective mechanism through which cooperation is attained and agreements are reinforced. This international relations theory would accordingly suggest that institutions have a positive effect on international development and sustainable growth. Recent attention has focused on how institutions can help to address threats to international security (ibid). For significant threats to international security and stability posed by weak and failed states including increased crime, terrorism, epidemic disease, energy insecurity, and regional instability (Burchill et al., 2009), institutions are playing an important role. While mounting research on the impact of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and others has supported the institutionalist claims, there are also less well-defined organizations that are playing a role in international development, termed here as "quasi-institutions." This paper seeks to answer: Do quasi-institutions (i.e., multi-national corporations, non-governmental organizations, and non-profit organizations) that function without any centralized oversight or governance help or hurt the progress of international security aims? Potential policy options for managing or harnessing those impacts will also be explored.

Literature

International Security

In the context of nation-building, Dobbins et al. (2007) includes under the umbrella of security "peacekeeping, law enforcement, rule of law, and security sector reform." Feil (2002)

defines security to encompass "all aspects of public safety" including the environment, institutions, and the lives of citizens. Feil goes on to posit that there are defined tasks for obtaining security that should be followed in order to obtain his definition of security. Such effort toward security must be addressed with a united effort that is integrated and supports demobilization, demilitarization, reintegration, reconstruction, and facilitates the increased access to important intelligence information (Feil, 2002). Stepanova (2004) simply considers the new security policy aim to not be one of winning a war but one of winning a lasting peace. Taken together, "security" is the ability for individuals to not feel endangered in their environment, which is, in our global structure, provided by the oversight of governments and institutions. Some might argue that security can also be provided by non-state actors (e.g., Al Qaeda members may feel protected and secure by their membership and by their beliefs). Threats to international security are commonly seen to arise from the weakened or failed state (Patrick, 2009). A failing or weak state (such as in the instance of many African states), will display challenges in physical security, political institutions, economic management, and social welfare. Sovereignty of weakened states is only legally relevant. A failed or collapse state, would mean that the challenges faced by weak states have become absolute. Failed nations are presently a security challenge. Significant threats to international security and stability posed by weak and failed states include increased crime, terrorism, epidemic disease, energy insecurity, and regional instability. This highlights the position that states cannot pretend that what happens to one state is their burden to shoulder alone and national security becomes an issue for international security. Investment in the continent that houses a great portion of the failed states is a good step towards the larger picture of security regardless of which civilization facilitates that shift.

Dobbins claims, that in the activity of nation-building during an intervention, the first responsibility is to achieve public security. This is one of the reasons that peaceful intervention without military is a challenge, such as with over 60,000 NATO soldiers being deployed in Bosnia in the 1990s. Security in a state that has emerged from conflict must possess several demonstrable factors as put forth by Dobbins et al. (2007):

1) Laws and enforcement: While one might like to believe that humans can co-exist rationally and peacefully without centralized authority, in this world order, thus far this has not been the case. As such, a body of laws to which the citizenry of a state are inclined and supportive is essential as well as the enforcement of those laws lest they lose their meaning.
2) Basic human provisions: Epidemics, hunger and inadequate shelter challenge a state's citizens to observe the rules of law in their desperation. Without access to clean water (i.e., spread of malaria), food (e.g., the Sahel facing massive drought and famine), and housing (i.e., slums of Brazil), confidence in the infrastructure of the state wanes and allegiance is challenged for want of basic human needs.
3) Governance: Adequate oversight that is free of corruption and abuses of power (Feil, 2002) is important for institutions to create a level of security that is both stable and just. For example, while Russia is enjoying a re-emerging presence (Stepanova, 2004), it continues to face considerable infrastructure challenges owing to a great deal of corruption within its government.
4) Economic stabilization: Economics are a cornerstone of any stabilizing state, which also affords for proper governance, basic human provisions, and law enforcement.

Economic stability also affords for an upwardly mobile society that contributes to further growth.

5) Political freedoms: While democracy, as Dobbins et al. (2007) proclaim, is not a prerequisite for a stable society, having a government in place is. The intervening authority may be able to support an initial government infrastructure but ultimately, as in the case of Iraq, the people must be free to choose their own leadership so that they feel empowered to drive their nation to rebuilding on terms that are their own.

Security, thus, is an important international consideration and as globalization of the world continues, re-emergence of neo-liberal thinking has occurred (Burchill et al., 2009).

Neoliberalism theory

The theory of liberalism is one that assumes humans to be naturally good. Liberals champion rationality and progress as well as free trade (Burchill, 2009) and site the emergence of mutual cooperation among great powers over time as a level of transcendence of irrationality and a movement toward a natural state instead of giving in to violence. The criticisms of liberalism are largely to the assumptions liberals make in their claims. Such assumptions are that there is no future threat to the current rational state of democracy, that there are no barriers to the ideal of democracy including religion or culture, and that political communities are predictable (Burchill et al, 2009). It is argued that liberals over-simplify the world in their application. Neo-liberal institutionalism, rooted in liberalism tradition, assumes absolute gains with the potential for cooperation among states. Neoliberal institutionalists see how both states and actors may contribute to cooperation and even provide institutions with a neutral actor seat at the table to alleviate uncertainty when states enter into agreements (Keohane, 1998). Some

criticisms of institutions as actors include: 1) Institutions yield no real power, which is only truly afforded to the state. The power of institutions is an illusion since their "backers," or states, are the ones to whom the power is can be attributed; 2) Alternative theorists (i.e., realism) believe that states will resist cooperation in instances when their partner(s) in agreement may benefit to a greater extent than themselves. This would re-enforce the notion of relative gains; and, 3) Cooperation, by its very definition, is something that emerges in the absence of cooperation, or conflict. Therefore conflict is the pre-cursor and underlies the realist position that conflict is the natural state (Keohane, 1998).

At the heart of the debate about institutions as actors is authority versus influence. For example, if Iran's nuclear program is under question (as it is) by other states, and the United Nations (UN) is leveraged to bring about agreement, the question of who holds the power over the agenda is a good one. While the UN may not have legitimate power over its member states, it still functions as the common body between Iran and the United States. So, if the United States has power, the UN has influence by pooling consensus of the member states. The question is which is more legitimate. While Keohane (1998) supports institutions as viable actors, he warns that they, too, must be subject to governance and be held accountable requiring transparency that has thus far not been a consistent practice.

Institutions

International institutions are defined as "relatively stable sets of related constitutive, regulative, and procedural norms and rules that pertain to the international system, the actors in the system (including states as well as nonstate entities), and their activities" (Duffield, 2007). The United Nations first established international institutions for specific purposes

geared at cooperation, such as telecommunication. Since then, thousands of international institutions and quasi-institutions have been formed to fulfill the role of stabilizing regulator. Institutions are an important vehicle through which state participation broadens their preservation of self-interest and, in the neo-liberal view, increases opportunities for cooperation (Burchill et al., 2009). The presence of institutions and compliance with their organizational objectives by all state participants is a normative activity that weakens state sovereignty in favor of a common aim (ibid).

Power within the framework of institutions is an important concept. Neo-liberalists support the cooperation that the presence of institutions brings (Keohane, 1998) but it is important who these institutions are. Sanctioned institutions such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), United Nations (UN), and World Health Organization (WHO) are Western-dominated and thus pursue their activities according to the Western perspective. Participation in these organizations has been an effective means of protecting self-interests of states with common values.

It is posited that institutions, as they were originally conceived, are weakening in their ability to support multilateral ideals, are unable to be as agile and responsive as the current international landscape demands, and face the challenge of inability to obtain consensus among states. Wright (2009) calls for institutional reform as a result of the documented ineffectiveness in bringing about international cooperation for critical challenges. This ineffectiveness is surmised to have lent to the rise in quasi-institutions (Patrick, 2009).

"Quasi-institutions"

During the Cold War, the notion of Westphalian Sovereignty prevailed wherein non-state actors had no impact on domestic structures (Lake, 2003). Post-Cold War, non-state actors became significant contributors to the erosion of sovereignty that resulted in diffusion in political authority, alliance shifts, weakening of nation-state, and new international challenges and crises (Haass, 1999). As an example, under the Cotonou Agreement (Europeaid, 2010), non-state actor participation in development efforts in the ACP-EU (Development cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of States) is formally recognized.

Non-state actors (NSAs) are a large part of international regimes. In a world of nation-states, non-state actors move about without oversight (Arts, Noortman, & Reinalda, 2002). The term "non-state actors," however, does not adequately describe the influence of these bodies on international relations and security. "Quasi-institutions" more appropriately adds connotation to the fact that non-state actors in many cases have sanctioned influence over values, norms, growth, and development. Quasi-institutions are non-state actors to include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), mult-national corporations (MNCs), religious groups, and in some cases, media. It is also important to recognize that violent non-state actors (VNSAs) are significant contributors to development. For the purposes of this paper, VNSAs will be excluded from analysis because they fundamentally serve to disrupt security, wherein the research question seeks to review impacts of institutions who proclaim added value.

Non-governmental organizations are key partners in multilateralism that is becoming more desirable in the international structure (Patrick, 2009). Globalization in the 20th century supported NGO expansion as these quasi-institutions are less bound by state restrictions. NGOs originated from the United Nations (UN) and are funded primarily by governments. Each

state, therefore, is able to extend their interests through these sanctioned NGOs or quasi-institutions (Keane, 2003). Keohane (1984) posits that states get into a habit of compliance with regimes because they represent prevailing values and majority preferences. Quasi-institutions, as representatives of state interests, help to diffuse values and norms in their international activities and, thus, contribute to larger regime structures (McCormick, 2004).

Policies of institutions (i.e., UN) pave the way for quasi-institutions (i.e., NGOs) to conduct development activities (Munarriz, 2008). The presence of quasi-institutions is often characterized as contributing to globalization (Abeles, 2006), which can be assumed to subject host communities to damage and loss, either intended or not (Muchlinksi, 2003). Quasi-institutions are not subject to governance and further push towards global economic deregulation is clearing the field for institutions, in general, to operate without accountability. Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) have an evolving role as "quasi-legislators," though the aim of their engagement in normative regulations for institutions is questionable in terms of effectiveness (ibid). Neo-liberalists would press for this regulation and central authority.

Multi-national corporations play an important role in globalization as they often stimulate the addition of jobs, direct investment, and economic activity in host counties (Weinstein & McIntyre, 1986). Governments compete to attract MNCs and often alter their tax structures, environmental, and labor regulations as a result. These practices can greatly benefit economic growth or alternatively challenge the trust in government for the differential treatment and accommodation afforded to foreign entities (Ballinger, 2001).

It is important to distinguish NSAs from VNSAs. Violent non-state actors are increasingly prevalent and maintain significant organization to their activities. While an assumption is that these VNSAs are self-funded through criminal means, it is also documented

that states themselves finance VNSAs as a means of extending their interests (Polgren, 2005). For example, the Colombia drug cartels have an extensive submarine force said to be the largest in the world after China and the United States (U.S.). The Lebanese Shiite movement is the "first non-state actor processing strategic missile forces" (Arasli, 2011). Or, one need not look far to understand the tight organization of Al Qaeda, who has become a household name. VNSAs function well within weak states and are best able to recruit followers as well as obtain refuge there. VNSAs stand out among non-state actors and require their own approach.

Quasi-institutions, in their relationship to power capabilities as part of international regimes, are an important consideration for the research agenda (Krasner, 1982). Neo-liberal thought around governance many not have accounted for exactly how large a role these actors increasingly play and the reality that central oversight and accountability is virtually impossible given the undertaking (Haass, 1999). Quasi-institutions such as MNCs and NGOs are largely of developed countries and therefore carry with them industrialized premises.

China is a large direct investor in Africa because of its low production costs and because it recognizes the richness of African resources including copper, cobalt, iron, platinum and oil to name a few (Moyo, 2009). As China recognizes it will need access to more resources for its expansive population, heavy investment in Africa's infrastructure including roads, healthcare, and education is an informed commitment to a cooperative future with Africa. The Chinese have also taken a quasi-institutional approach to their relationship. For example, the Chinese Industrial and Commercial Bank purchased a 20% interest in Africa's largest bank in 2007 (ibid). Institutional influence in African economic and security concerns is a strategic positioning that provides China with significant stake. China, however, has not been historically heralded for adequate governance and human rights policies and, as such, there is

rising concern that their interest in Africa is a means to an end for China, but perhaps a new challenge to development for Africa. On the other hand, Chinese investment was heralded by an Angolan economist who said, "China is welcome because it eschews what it sees as the IMFs {International Monetary Fund} ideological and condescending attitude—for {IMF} we should have ears but no mouth" (ibid). Indeed, this is a concern because quasi-institutions can back-door relationships that impact the international playing field and, hence, security. Should China's banking institutions serve to circumvent the institutions in place such as the IMF, such strategic positioning could have significant impact on the balance of power. At the same time, if Chinese institutional absorption in Africa is more palatable than Western involvement, this could be a very good thing for African development and thus influence international security in a positive way.

Effects of quasi-institutions on international security

Moyo (2009) asserts: "Despite the widespread Western belief that the rich should help the poor and the form of this help should be aid, the reality is that aid has helped make the poor poorer and growth slower. In short, it is the disease of which it pretends to be the cure." Similar to this point, there is question as to whether the presence of quasi-institutions helps or hurts the development objectives of countries.

Quasi-institutions can serve as change agents for social, political, and economic structures, both positively and negatively (Weinstein & McIntyre, 1988). While quasi-institutions can be exploitive and unethical, they can also support industrialization, economic growth and technological change. Neo-liberals defend the presence of the non-state actor going so far as to suggest they will prevail over the nation-state (Johnson, 1970). If this

prediction is true, understanding the quasi-institution is that much more significant. Whether quasi-institutional presence is good or bad, it leads to diffusion and diffusion is, at least in the West, a good thing: "The standards diffused by the multi-national corporations are likely to prevail even when their products, their personnel, and their very existence are rejected" (Weinstein & McIntyre, 1986). Singapore is a great example of benefiting from multinational activity. Between 1965 to 1973, unemployment fell from over 10% to 4.5% and its economic growth rate steadily climbed as a result of MNC involvement (Nizamudden, 2007). On the other hand, "proponents of dependency theory assert that these powerful enterprises cause distortions in the national economy by pushing domestic producers out of the local economy while absorbing the local capital" (ibid). MNCs analyze the risk of instability so only those developing countries least at risk become beneficiaries of foreign investment. In the example of Singapore, while MNC investment increased economic growth, it also led to unequal distribution of wealth widening the social structure divide (ibid).

The policies of institutions, such as the World Health Organization, can serve to pave the way for quasi-institutions to conduct activities in host states. Unfortunately, the proliferation of institutional and state ideals through quasi-institutions may serve to increase marginalization of the poor and challenge development (Munarriz, 2006). HIV/AIDS has become one of the greatest threats to international security as the disease undermines any development efforts or gains developing countries might have by weakening the health of their populations on an alarming scale—the economic cost of HIV is nearly 15% of Africa's gross domestic product (Poku, 2006). Organizations that lobby to send more development aid for HIV/AIDS have been successful in increasing the funding available by twenty times since the pandemic broke (Poku, 2006). However, the monumental funding for HIV prevention efforts

has been largely not impactful. Aid and direct foreign investment, therefore, may be helpful but the portion of it that is actually positively impactful remains uncertain.

Analysis of Nike Corporation

In the 1990s, Nike Corporation (an MNC) experienced tremendous growth subsequent to taking their operations overseas. It was quickly highlighted that their participation abroad did not meet with approval and gave rise to controversy over Nike's purported oversight of "sweat shops," or working environments that display human rights abuses such as low wages, long working hours, or hazardous conditions (Carty, 2002). There are two sides to this controversy where humanitarians claim Nike exploited the locals in host countries, and yet Nike claimed provision of a new vehicle for jobs that helped to support unskilled workforces that could, with newly earned wages, contribute to economic growth. Nike also took the position that factories are locally managed and supervised according to local standards, thus offering a stance of working to limit interventionism so not to be a disruptive force in communities. A study of worker satisfaction in Thailand assessed the Nike workers' rating of their supervisors and perceived fair wages; this study documented over a 70% positive satisfaction rating (Stepp, 2001). Nike established its own NGO, the Global Alliance for Workers and Communities, in response to perceptions of in-humane conditions, to help monitor the conditions of their factories. Unfortunately, the gesture came under heavy criticism since the NGO auditors were determined to hide facts and embellish circumstances in their reports (ibid).

While it is not conclusive whether Nike has been successful in attempts to provide humane governance for their factories, the question of how their presence impacts community

support for government is an important one. Revisiting the afore-mentioned security pillars put forth by Dobbins relating to the example of Nike, they all are in a precarious position: laws and enforcement, basic human provisions, governance, economic stabilization, and political freedom. Nike's contributions to economic growth and development may be a fortifying factor in the host-countries' infrastructure by providing work for individuals that might not otherwise have been able to earn a wage. However, as infrastructures go, a weakness to one pillar adds burden to the others, and a weakness to more than one provides for a shaky foundation. Nike undermines laws and enforcement by being a violator of human rights, and is subject to little governance or accountability except by the international community and less so by their hosts. Such infractions can be a de-stabilizing force for security.

Analysis of Royal Dutch Shell Company

Reports have been made for decades that Royal Dutch Shell Company (Shell) has been a significant financier of militant groups in Nigeria, whose contributions resulted in human rights abuses (Smith, 2011). In 1995, Shell was linked to and tried for the contribution to the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a Nigerian non-violent activist who advocated for environmental issues, particularly when concerning the impact of oil on Nigerian natural resources (BBC, 2009). Shell commissioned an independent assessment to provide understanding as to how its presence in Nigeria may or may not inadvertently impact local conflict. While the resulting report was never published, a representative for Shell commented that "we sometimes feed conflict by the way we award contracts, gain access to land, and deal with community representatives" (BBC, 2004). Such engagement in political and security activities undermined Dobbins' security pillars of laws and enforcement and governance.

Shell has further been cited as a contributor to environmental degradation of Nigeria. "Eternal flames" burn day and night as a result of pipelines that run through villages. Environmental activists say the flames have a significant impact on the health of the people, crops, and animals. A local commented: "We live with this [gesturing towards the flames] but we don't see any benefit. It is like we are strangers here" (Polgren, 2005). Further, Shell is not a significant contributor to the local economy partnering primarily with the Nigerian government whose financial benefits do not extend to the communities that house the oil. These activities additionally undermine Dobbins' security pillars of basic human provisions and economic development.

The Nigerian government is a major partner in all oil activities and Nigeria is among the strongest African economies. Yet, as the world's eighth-largest oil exporter, it continues to see a rise in corruption, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and extensive violence (Crane, 2007). This does not meet the rational assumption that the more natural resources, the greater the income, the greater ability to invest in national infrastructure, and thus contribute to international security through human capital and general well-being. The Director of the Council for African Studies at American University, Peter Lewis posits that the Niger Delta violence is a direct result of unrest caused by oil companies (ibid). From this review, it is easy to see how the presence of Shell can negatively impact the security of Nigeria.

Assessment of Positive Impacts

While development challenges can arise from influence of quasi-institutions, positive impacts are important to note. Multi-national corporation creation of jobs, NGO mediation

and direct channeling of resources to indigenous groups, and foreign direct investment by private organizations offer significant contributions to international development.

Multi-national corporations, in addition to benefits earlier reviewed, are important diffusers of environmentally friendly technologies and management practices (Lopez, 2003) that lend to more sustainable development. Technological innovation across the board is also posited to be largely brought about by MNC engagement in new host countries (Egea, 1975). Foreign direct investment (FDI) is private investment into a country's development. FDI has been assessed for its impact on economic growth, and while that direct relationship has not found support, when FDI is complimented by domestic investment, economic growth has been shown to benefit (de Mello, 1999). FDI has had demonstrable impact on income growth in the instance of China (Zhang, 2006). China's economic growth over the past thirty years has propelled it to a role as a great world power, which was once not perceived as likely. Inward FDI that sparked massive manufacturing exports has been cited as the catalyst for China's unprecedented and steady growth.

Non-governmental organizations are often more efficient than formal institutions in delivering foreign aid to the intended recipients. NGOs also have the ability to keep lower administrative costs so that a greater proportion of aid is directly allocated. In response to Wright's (2009) call for institutional reform, quasi-institutions may address the desired agility, and close the gap on achieving the desired multilateralism approach. A case study of Philippine NGOs, these quasi-institutions were shown to play essential intermediary and bridging roles for multilateral cooperation (Aldaba, 2002). Aldaba concludes that "NGOs are well equipped for this because of their middle-class and professional nature and because of various characteristics like autonomy, flexibility, and the ability to mobilize resources." Such

characteristics complement the formality of what States and institutions can themselves accomplish as it pertains to development.

Conclusion

Neo-liberalist thought may not be singularly well-suited to explain the shift in how cooperation among actors will prevail. Due to the insurmountable challenge of the impact of quasi-institutions, aims at oversight may be futile. The presence of quasi-institutions and their relative power in world affairs is a significant departure from the Westphalian structure, and can thus be conceived of in two ways: 1) the increased prevalence and institutionalization of non-state actors is anarchic in the sense that their influence in the world has no central order and is essentially lawless; or, 2) quasi-institutions can conversely be seen as not anarchic at all and instead puppeteered by their sanctioning countries whilst they convey the values, interests and propensities of their financiers and thus have very real oversight, whether it is explicit or not. Somalia is an example of a stateless society from 1991-2006, during which greater order and less chaos was observed as well as greater distribution of equitable wealth and increased standards of living. Somalia may be a metaphor for quasi-institutions in that they function without central oversight but may well lend more relative help than harm in today's international structure because they can serve as the informal bridge to cooperation, as neo-liberalists might hope. Envisioning what that would look like to apply the neo-liberalist school of thought to governing quasi-institutions reveals a blurry exercise, unfortunately. The attempt to govern or regulate quasi-institutions would guide a European Union type structure where nation-states are confronted with compromising on uncommon philosophies for the good of the whole (Joffe, 1998).

The positive and negative contributions of quasi-institutions are many and the comparison does not readily calculate the winner. Research should further focus on the study of quasi-institutions because they are becoming so influential and it is presently essential to better understand their role in international security. Through globalization, we are relying increasingly on the quasi-institution and should attempt to understand these impacts more fully as variables in predictions of security interests. While a review of case studies, and literature does not definitively conclude whether quasi-institutions help or hinder international security, what is clear is that their presence overall does indelibly impact international security. Future research may benefit from documenting characteristics of like actors and empirically measuring their impact on development.

One policy suggestion is to reform and strengthen existing institutions reinforcing governance, accountability and transparency. Such institutions can then help to police, or otherwise guide the activities and relationships to quasi-institutions by laying the foundation for standards that states will become accustomed to and reinforce in their hosting of quasi-institutions. Another suggestion is to simply not try to govern, control, or otherwise regulate quasi-institutions. Instead, work to hold MNCs or NGOs accountable to certain outcomes. Should these institutions contribute negatively to development, in order for them to continue to operate, they should also contribute in a measurable, positive way. Harnessing negative contribution may be impossible, but re-orienting the international standards to become more outcome-driven is a viable long-term strategy. Lastly, another policy option is to engage host countries in limiting the number of quasi-institutions that may function within their borders based on certain criteria. This may promote positive competition among actors such that they will naturally increase their own standards and engage in socially responsible activities.

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