

Does Normalization between States Work?

Posted on May 30, 2018

Discussion

The relations between states change quite drastically as the political, economic, social, and cultural changes constantly occur in the world and influence the states' stances.[1] The basis of the relations between states is the national interests, and the national interest is also subject to change in the face of the changing circumstances of the states.[2]

The friendship between states is way too different from the concept of friendship between people as they are unpredictable because the states alter their positions on matters differently.[3] The US and India are excellent examples of states with many ups and downs in their relations. In the modern context, they have become cordial toward each other. The Indian leadership has always been tilted toward Russia, but recently, they have shown an inclination toward America and have made fast paces toward closer ties with Washington. The change of scenario after 9/11 in South Asia has brought India and the US closer.[4] The past relations between France and the UK are also a good example of how the two nations fought for hundreds of years but are now friends and have almost the same stances on matters of global significance.[5] National interest drives how a country reacts to certain actors in global politics. The relations between nations are based on national interests, but some issues go far beyond the scope of national interest as the ideological importance of these issues is much stronger.[6] The issues like that between Israel and Palestine[7], Pakistan and India[8], the US and Russia[9], Armenia and Azerbaijan[10], and Saudi Arabia and Iran are all very complicated, and the normalization of such issues is not very easily approachable.[11] The relations where the powers have ideological differences can be normalized in some contexts. Still, the core issues that are unsolvable can come up at any time, making matters worse and going back to hostility.[12] The countries in these cases cannot come to wholehearted agreements and points of considering each other as equal partners in matters of cooperation. There is a chance of a fallout between them at any point. The relations between Israel and Palestine, for example, cannot be cordial even if the Israelis let Palestine be a state that is in many ways their right.[13]

States cannot really come to terms in a hundred percent equal terms, as there are problems with everyone wanting to be better than others.[14] Plus, as discussed earlier, normalization cannot hold because most of the things that states agree on one day can change in the aftermath of even one statement from one state against the other.

In the current era, the relationship between the US and the Russian Federation is not as bad as it was in the Cold War period, as the relations were very hostile back then.[15] In modern reality, the relationship between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin can be seen as a promising element that can

improve ties between the nations. However, there is a lingering tension between the two that no matter what happens does not seem to go away as the two states are powerful states that want to get a dominant position in global politics. One cannot let the other get to the top even when there is no question at the moment about America being a dominant power.[16] The resurgence of Russia is still seen as a threat to the American century along with the cordial ties of Russia and China.[17]

A search for the term “Normalisation” on the internet is not very fruitful for a researcher who wants to find a definition of the word in a Political [Science and International Relations](#) context. The internet sources that can be found are predominantly related to the normalization of database systems and in some terms statistics that are not very easy to understand. Regarding Political Science and International Relations, normalization is the removal of the hostility and animosity between two states. The term is related to creating a peaceful coexistence between states, but the modern political arena has become a bedrock of bad ideas and ideological intolerance.[18] The dominant nations define what is and is not moral and acceptable. Those who believe in different things or view the world differently are considered enemies or at least backward and primitive.[19] The forceful entry of post-modernization into society is the reason that things have become way too sensitive and now talking about anything is impossible because it means war. These strict rules and cultural appropriations were necessary to make people hostile toward the reigning powers.[20] The psychological, social, cultural, and religious dilemmas these generalizations create lead to acts of terrorism and bad ideas being dominant in a society.[21] The duplicitous stances of the great powers on the political and economic front have also made a scene like that of the Cold War.[22] The role of Russia and the US in case of dealing with ISIS in Syria can be seen as an important determiner of the de-normalization of the relations between Russia and the US that had been a reality for some time now after 9/11. These developments created a hostile and confusing global environment that was a reality of the Cold War period.

Normalization is not as easily achievable in the modern context as many non-state actors have considerable power in the political standing of countries.[23] Pressure groups like terrorist and business corporations, and media empires have a substantial amount of influence in the political arena.[24] The dominant narratives and discourses in the world are clearly being manipulated by the groups of people who want to have power in the world by doing their bidding at any cost. The normalization process has become more complicated in the wake of global discourses. The states have less sovereignty and more people to answer to in the form of non-state actors, [public opinion](#) makers, and the public in the democratic states.

Normalization

The importance of diplomacy for global peace cannot be neglected or undermined as it is one of the leading logical steps that can be taken to remove hostilities. Most states go through at least one confrontational or hostile period of relations with one or more nations.[25] There is a need for understanding and handling the problems between states to make the hostilities and animosity go

away.[26] However, in some cases, diplomatic failure can bring the animosity back after a break. The normalization process is necessary to make the diplomatic steps take a stronghold and create more reasons for cooperation than aggression. Normalization is defined as “normalization is seen as a process involving: the recognition of the need for measures to reduce tension or friction, and their introduction; promotion of improved relations; and isolation, containment or resolution – wholly or partly – of major sources of dispute or tension”[27]

“Normalization between two states is the concept of subsiding the hostility and bringing them closer to implement a sense of healthy positivity for cooperation.” Normalization between two states is quite difficult when they are at war or at odds for an extended period. The normalization process takes a long, but it also depends on how much the state has had the conflict. The longer the conflict and the more complex the issues are the longer it will take for normalization. Normalization cannot be said to be a thing forever as there are cases where normalization did not work for much longer. One of the examples of such cases is of Pakistan and India who came close for a short time and increased cooperation in 2000’s after tense ties but the peaceful outlook remained for a brief time as the public opinion within both states was against the measures that were being considered by the governments. The Kashmir problem is an all-or-nothing game in these two countries, and there is no logical way to solve this problem. However, the normalization of relations between European states is quite a significant step as the different states were each other’s mortal enemies and are now part of a joint confederation. Normalization is a very tricky subject regarding relations between states, and there is a need to make a strong framework for normalization. The framework, however, is tough and next to impossible to make as there are more than 200 countries in the world and all of them look at the world differently in some way.[28] The nations want sovereignty that the powerful states can impede in some ways that are not seen as an infringement of rights but are, in reality, hard for the smaller countries to cope with. The conflicts are also different in almost all cases hence the framework cannot be all-encompassing and relevant in every separate situation.[29]

Process of Normalization

The process of normalization does not work in every case the same. The steps however that can be a part of this process are all systematically combined in a model. Ten steps are proposed by Ronald Barston that become a part of the normalization process in an organic order. The steps are 1) Reestablishment of contact, 2) Informal exchanges, 3) Low-level signaling) 4) Partial resumption of trade, 5) initiation or resumption of Preparatory Negotiation, 6) removal of trade of embargo restrictions, 7) Policy revision, 8) normalization negotiation, 9) conclusion of normalization agreements, and 10) normalization implementation.[30] The steps logically follow each other, and the relation of the steps is also natural with each other however sometimes a few steps might be left out or change order because of the situations in particular cases. The real world is unpredictable, and there is no perfect way to propose theories to help in every situation. The concept of normalization is not always perceived the same as the states have different ideas of what is normal but the relations between states have to be brought to a normal place where they have more incentive to be friendly.

The starting point for the normalization process is also hard to find again because of the same problem of everyone conceiving the idea differently. Even if the point of start is met, there can be a clash on how to proceed and the main hurdles in the normalization process.

Influences on normalization

The normalization process depends on many factors going right or wrong for its fruitful implementation. The process as described above follows a pattern of steps, but the steps do not always go as planned. The internal or external changes in the country's political, social, religious, racial, or any other indicator can easily reverse or undo all of the progress very easily.[31] The relations between the states that are in need of normalization are never in the right place, and the effects of such situation changes can be long-lasting and debilitating for the normalization process. Core issues are very important to address, but in some cases, the core issues are left for later to instill some form of friendliness towards each other. However, the steps taken for the betterment of the relations between the states can still be lost. In some cases, the instant goals of the states can change abruptly because of the political situation, which can lead to pulling the focus away from the normalization process.[32] The normalization process can be discarded at any time if ideological or any other sort of changes occur within or externally and happen all the time in the global political arena. The carryover effect can also take its toll on the diplomatic ties between the nations because the political elite within a country does not take their experiences seriously. One bad experience can lead to speculations of the sort that are not helpful for the state. The carryover effect can be seen as a major influencer on the normalization process. The fact that the behavior of nations is a derivative of human behavior according to the Realism paradigm can be counted as the premise that relates to the ideology. The state, in this case, is a magnified human being.[33]

Approaches to Normalization

The normalization process is a complex and time-consuming process. The consistently changing political environment makes it even harder for normalization with all the fast-moving scenarios that change overnight putting the relations with states more under question as there are no permanent allies or enemies in international relations. The global political arena is filled with examples of nations "changing sides" even though it is not an appropriate word for research. The sides have been changed, which can be seen in the Middle East and Africa in many cases.[34] The perspective of the nations involved is very important for the process of normalization, and there is a need to make the process easier by making normalization of the concept of normalization possible. This means that the approach to normalization should be the first thing the states in question should consider to make the normalization.[35] They should find a way to develop a consensus on what they deem would be the right way to approach the process, and the delegates from both states should work hard on it. The deployment of normalization should be by how the nations perceive the process after the normalization after the negotiation on its meaning and framework. Taking such steps would make the

process go smoother as it would help the nations' delegates come to a consensus on something before the start of the process.

Even in this case, conflicts like border issues and such cannot really be left out of the agenda, and they make the normalization process hard as they are the core issues that can never be subsided unless solved reasonably. The relinquishing control or taking over an area that was under the other nations' control also does not give much confidence to the states as one feels defeated and the other feels triumphant.[36] This could cause a blowout later in life as the resentment of loss can be deadly. The League of Nations and the treatment of Germany, blowing out into a newer and deadliest war can be considered a perfect example of this argument. The war or conflict in the case of different nations depends on their scope but the chances of future blowouts of dominating for normalization. Normalization has to be in terms of equality regardless of the nation's size. Normalization is not a process that can become completely functioning on its own. The process depends on the will to compromise and adjudicate between certain factors depending on the parties' willingness.

Does normalization occur naturally?

The process of normalization depends on the factors discussed above. There are many such instances where normalization can occur naturally because the circumstances between two states follow the same pattern. The initiation of the process as well as natural in some cases. The example of Russia and Pakistan can be seen in this case as the relations between the two states have been non-existent or mostly filled with animosity.[37] The recent shift of India to the US changed the scenario for both Pakistan and Russia, and they have started coming close and cooperating on matters they would not have discussed in the past. The relations have not moved fast or on a large scale at all, but the creation of a seed of friendship between the two estranged states can be seen as a situation-based natural closeness.[38] Normalisation in other cases cannot even be considered natural as the animosity between the two states is way too much. The example of Palestine and Israel comes to mind. In this case, there is no way that the two would naturally come together and start solving problems the two nations need to be pushed together for a peaceful and viable solution, and at the same time, the process of coming together should also be facilitated and moderated by the international community.[39] The killings of thousands of civilians by the Israelis and vice versa cannot be taken out of the equation when talking about the issues. In this case, the viable solution should be monitored and proposed by the mutual consent of the two parties by the [global leadership](#).

Saying that the states start normalization automatically or under supervision or push from outside factors are both wrong assumptions. The move can be initiated due to circumstances that put them together without any outside force or at some point it could be the other way around. The relations between states are way too complicated to be minimized to the level of mere speculation. As discussed above the relations between the states are way too complicated and different in each case. That is why there is no way of saying how the normalization process starts. The question cannot get a satisfactory answer. Still, when the process starts, it takes longer or shorter periods of time to

complete, depending on the factors that affect the initiation of the process in the first place. The debate on normalization cannot be won because there is an example for every different argument that holds true in one case and can be discarded completely in another.

Examples of normalization in the world

The normalization process has worked in many cases in the world, but it can never be said with certainty that it will hold that place forever in the instances that it has worked. There are many instances of nations that went to war for years and became allies.[40] The nations in the European Union are very much a good example of this as they have been in wars with each other throughout history. Still, due to finding a common goal they combined their forces and formed a coalition that is one of the strongest military and economic institutions in the world.[41] The normalization between the European nations can be seen as a model of normalization for the modern world. Still, current factors like Brexit show that normalization might not last long.[42] Brexit is not a clear indication of any war or conflict. Still, it is just a nudge towards the selfishness of the states that is an outcome of the modern state system that has the focus on making the national interests an absolute necessity to achieve even at the cost of other nations like in the case of the US intervention in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan where the motto seemed different than the state's objective and led to the deterioration of the state of affairs in these countries.[43] The world political situation in the current arena is quite deteriorating as wars and peace accords are being implemented to favor the agendas of particularly strong and powerful nations.

Conclusion

The relations between states are unpredictable, and they cannot properly predict the terms and conditions they would apply to others. The state relations in the fast-running global machine are in many ways different from the way things were done in the past. The unipolarity, growing economic connections, weakening of the state borders due to globalization and the terrorism and unrest in the Eastern world have all contributed to the massive changes in the global arena. The new trends in the world have been strongly focused on cooperation in the world, but at the same time, many states hold hostile inclinations toward others. The reasons range from territorial conflicts to ideological differences, and all of these differences contribute to global political unrest. The normalization of relations between these states can be brought about as the international community can play a role in it, or the nations at odds can want to end conflicts. Normalization, however, is not the easiest goal to achieve as the nations would have alternative demands. Even if normalization is achieved, there is a chance that the nations could fall out because of the change in attitudes due to changing global politics and alliances. Normalization is a positive way of making the states come to common terms, but there is a chance that the terms would change and the normalization would lose its effect.

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