

Abstract

This thesis traces and explains the French stand vis-à-vis the 2003 US-led war on Iraq. It highlights how using its identity and its emphasis on adhering to an international framework outlined by the norms disseminated through global institutions, France displayed its institutionalist identity, which proved to play a pivotal role in why France took this anti-war stand during the run down to the war on Iraq.

Realism, while essential to understanding the French behavior during this time, proves not suffice to explaining Paris's complex stand and is supported by incorporating the theories of institutionalism and constructivism to correct it for a full picture of the state of international relations in 2002-2003.

With its emphasis on norms and the identity, constructivism helps us formulate a more comprehensive sense of what shapes national interests and in turn foreign policy in France. Constructivism cannot be detached from institutionalism because norms are transmitted through institutions, which affect the behavior of states and are deemed by France as sources of legitimacy.

The study proposed here will thus show that while realism, with its emphasis on the balance of power, are deemed the essence of the French stand vis-à-vis Iraq, it will show how institutionalism and constructivism are altogether pivotal to gaining a multi-faceted, comprehensive understanding of why France stand stood up to the world's hegemon in this less lucid unipolar order.

The thesis will also trace the Gaullist era and will shed light on a possible correlation between French Presidents Charles de Gaulle and Jacques Chirac. It will also show how de Gaulle contributed to the framing of contemporary French foreign policy and highlight how part of the French stand regarding war is part of historical fundamental French suspicion of unchecked international power or hegemony.