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Acapulco, Mexico**

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The Neoidealist Moment in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities

ISA Presidential Address
March 27, 1993
Acapulco, Mexico

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To provoke discussion, this presidential address to the International Studies Association asks the question whether changes in the new, post-Cold War international system require revision of our paradigmatic propensities. In particular, it suggests that the recent transformations in world politics have created a hospitable home for the reconstruction of realism inspired by Wilsonian idealism, and outlines a revised research agenda consistent with these new conditions and the hypotheses the idealist tradition raises for our field's attention.

"I would rather be defeated in a cause that will ultimately triumph, than to win in a cause that will ultimately be defeated."

—Woodrow Wilson

In his presidential address to the International Studies Association in 1992, Hayward Alker (1992) argued that the intellectual roots of modern thinking in our field originated in civil humanist Renaissance visions, such as those of Niccolò Machiavelli and Bartolomé de Las Casas. In so doing, he reminded us of the historical legacy to contemporary theorizing in the study of international relations. But more than this, he underscored how times of turbulent change are catalysts to the reconstruction of theories—to new thinking and new paradigms.

We are today in another period of profound change. So as an extension of Hayward's insights, and in an effort to introduce greater continuity and harmony in a field that often sings cacophonously, I would like to explore a corollary to the contextual and personal sources of theoretical revolutions implicit in Hayward's address. It is this: as the Cold War has ended, the emergent conditions in this "defining moment" (Serfaty, 1992) transcend the *realpolitik* that has dominated discussion of international affairs for the past five decades and invite a recon-

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structed paradigm, perhaps one inspired by the idealist ideas associated with the Wilsonian vision. The question I examine, in short, is whether the early 1990s is a “neoidealist” moment.

System Transformations and Paradigm Shifts

This hypothesis invites us to examine the long-term evolution of theorizing in our field. Paradigm shifts not only result from intellectual exposure of the limitations of the dominant paradigm, but these paradigmatic revolutions also emerge and are energized by transformations in world politics (see Ferguson and Mansbach, 1988). Theories respond to changes in international behavior that erode faith in the prevalent paradigm’s usefulness and provoke alternative approaches. There are fashions in everything; the study of international relations is no exception. Faddish struggles for “hegemony” among contending traditions (Holsti, 1985) continue with renewed animation in today’s changing international context.

As Karl Marx and G. W. F. Hegel convincingly argued, ideas have consequences. Context matters, however, as Victor Hugo acknowledged in his famous adage that “there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.” Nonetheless, ideas have often had less impact on global change than global change has had on perceptions of the relevance and validity of ideas. Theoretical revolutions occurred, for example, following the Thirty Years’ War (the Peace of Westphalia, 1648), the Napoleonic Wars (the Congress of Vienna, 1815), World War I (the League of Nations, 1919), and World War II (the United Nations, 1945). After such cataclysms theoretical habits of mind have been questioned, and “only after such a total breakdown has the international situation been sufficiently fluid to induce leaders and supporting publics of dominant nations to join seriously in the task of reorganizing international society to avoid a repetition of the terrible events just experienced” (Falk, 1970:500). As Pitirim Sorokin (1950:3–4) observed, “Most of the significant philosophies of history and most of the intelligible interpretations of historical events . . . have . . . appeared either in periods of serious crisis, catastrophe, and transitional disintegration, or immediately before or after such periods.”

Thus paradigm shifts have coincided with the conclusions of hegemonic wars, and their core assumptions have been embedded in the conventions and institutions created in their aftermath. Examples abound. Thucydides expounded his classic statement of realism during the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta (431–404 B.C.), whereas Machiavelli and Las Casas advanced their perspective in the midst and aftermath of the Italian Wars (1494–1517) in the age of colonial imperialism. Similarly, the idealism of Hugo Grotius arose following the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) and inspired its elaboration by Immanuel Kant, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Charles-Louis de Montesquieu after the War of the Grand Alliance (1688–1713) during the Enlightenment (Bull, 1966; Cutler, 1991). The principle is illustrated further by the resurgent realism articulated by Prince von Metternich and Karl von Clausewitz following the Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815), as well as by the movement led by Woodrow Wilson to revive idealism after World War I (1914–1919). The resurrected realism driven by the writings of E. H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, George Kennan, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others in reaction to World War II (1939–1945) (and its subsequent neorealist extension amidst the Cold War) is an additional example of the tendency for theoretical reconstructions to occur during and after the hegemonic wars that have transformed international circumstances.

Underlying each transformation in the acceptance of theoretical perspectives has been the advent of a new historical epoch. “These authors were obviously

influenced not only by the arguments and insights of their predecessors, but also by the times in which they lived" (Kauppi and Viotti, 1992:1). The views of each were shaped by their time as much as they helped to shape them. To illustrate, "Suppose Thucydides had lived in a more peaceful international system. Had he any desire to chronicle events, he might have described a very different world, one in which balances of power and war did not play such an overwhelming role. As a result, he might have drawn other lessons about the nature of international relations, or at least modified his realist perspective" (Kauppi and Viotti, 1992:63). So, too, might have Confucius, who lived during the period of warring states in ancient China, or other non-Western realist theoreticians such as Kautilya, the great Hindu political thinker, who also responded to the violent convulsions that surrounded him in India.

While it endured, the Cold War seemed to confirm and validate many of the principles and predictions that realists emphasized prior to and in the wake of World War II, and to invalidate the principles that idealists advocated after World War I. Realism found a hospitable home in which to flourish during the conflict-ridden fifty-year system between 1939 and 1989 when lust for power, appetite for imperial expansion, struggle for hegemony, a superpower arms race, and obsession with national security were in strong evidence.

To many, the seismic shifts that have swept world politics since 1989 with the collapse of the Cold War represent another turning point. This epic struggle "for global preponderance" (Brzezinski, 1992:31) concludes another hegemonic war—but, mercifully, this time without bullets and bloodshed. With the Cold War's end "history's end" (Fukuyama, 1992b)—the liberal Wilsonian script for world history—is in sight. Building on the contributions in integration theory, regimes, transnational relations, and international political economy since the 1970s, we consequently are witnessing the resumption of innovative theoretical efforts to describe, explain, and predict the new developments in world affairs. These theoretical departures differ in focus and motive, for those attacking realism are not part of a homogeneous, coherent movement. Lacking unity, they critique aspects of realism from a variety of perspectives. But those mounting the challenges share an implicit conviction that the dominant realist framework for international affairs may have become inadequate to account for current realities. As Theodore Draper (1992:8) explains the prevailing skepticism, "Somehow the reality falls through the interstices of the theories, [prompting] political scientists to ask why their generalizations fail when they are confronted with something new. . . ."

Yet, the Cold War is barely over and it is too early to know which of the countervailing trends unfolding in world affairs will dominate. As Abraham Lincoln once noted, "If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it." Today, we face great uncertainty about where we are and the direction in which world affairs are headed. The sea changes caused by the end of the Cold War again raise the questions What is new? and What is constant? (Jervis, 1991–1992:46). Until agreement is reached about the answers, adjusting our theoretical compass presents a formidable challenge. It may be premature to judge whether realism's paradigmatic axioms no longer fit new and unfolding circumstances.

For this reason, perhaps, realism remains popular in many quarters. New circumstances tempt us to reaffirm familiar concepts and reject new ones without first demonstrating either the advantages of the old or the inadequacies of the new. We must resist that temptation and confront the question of whether the issues and cleavages that define today's global agenda require us to revise traditional realpolitik's world view.

Realism's Eroding Power?

Turbulent times stimulate reexamination of orthodox theory and invigorate the search for reconstructed principles to guide thinking. We are now in such a turbulent time. Has the time arrived to revise, reconstruct, or, more boldly, reject orthodox realism?

The post-Cold War world no longer has ideological fissures and an unrestrained arms race to preoccupy its attention and encourage a fixation on power politics. The vacuum has opened a window that exposes a view of world politics which realism largely ignores. The afterglow of the Cold War still flickers, but in its dwindling light are visible the outlines of a potentially new system in which the questions realism asks (and the answers it provides) may become increasingly less relevant. Instead, increasingly applicable and appropriate may be an image of world politics remarkably consistent with that portrayed by Woodrow Wilson seventy-five years ago.

In many ways, Wilson was a visionary. At the end of World War I he responded to the opportunity and challenge to establish a peace. Yet in his endeavors Wilson conceived of a world that did not yet exist—that was still in its incipient stage of development (Knock, 1992). Consequently, Wilson was regarded by his contemporaries as quixotic about the prospects for international cooperation and change and was dismissed by a subsequent generation of realists who thought him naive. Looking back, Wilson's quest to "stiffen . . . moral purpose with a sense of responsibility for the practical consequences of ideals" (Osgood, 1953: 295) was arguably premature.

But now the world may be in the throes of a fundamental transformation. As will be suggested below, its character may be a far more inviting home for the principles Wilson advocated to guide international conduct. In place of realism, there is today a visibly enthusiastic resurgence of interest in the Wilsonian program. In fact, his philosophy defines the issues that have risen to the top of the agenda in theoretical and policy discourse and the questions that now occupy our field's research activity. The long-term trajectories in world affairs appear to have converged to create a profoundly altered international system in which his ideas and ideals now appear less unrealistic and more compelling.

Indicators abound that realism is losing its grip on the imagination of those writing in our field and on policymakers' thinking. Our professional journals now frequently take "neo-Wilsonian" idealism (Fukuyama, 1992b), "idealpolitik" (Kober, 1990), "neo-idealism" (Kegley, 1988), and "neoliberalism" (Nye, 1988; Grieco, 1988, 1990) seriously; whereas attacks on "the poverty of realism" (Krauthammer, 1986), the "poverty of neorealism" (Ashley, 1984), and the dangers of realpolitik-based policies (Hitchens, 1991) have become a growth industry. Even the leading journal dedicated to policy analysis from a realist perspective, *The National Interest*, has found it necessary to explore whether realism is still relevant (Tucker, 1992-1993; Zakaria, 1992-1993). Realism, in short, is increasingly perceived to have "become an anachronism that has lost much of its explanatory and prescriptive power . . ." (Holsti, 1991:84). "The approach of classical realism," Robert Jervis (1992:266) predicts, "will not be an adequate guide for the future of international politics. . . ."

The roots of contemporary dissatisfaction with realism also, it should be acknowledged, derive from forces well beyond the pull of external events and global trends. Context and environment are potent catalysts, but it would be hyperbolic to imply that the theoretical revolution potentially unfolding has been determined by such changes alone. Today's criticism derives from intellectual antecedents. Well before the Cold War began to thaw—in the period when realism appeared applicable and accurate—many scholars warned that realism was incomplete, misdirected,

nonrigorous, inconsistent with scientific evidence, conceptually confused, and incapable of accounting for international behavior in all issue-areas including even controversies surrounding the high politics of conflict, war, and peace. The current wave of complaint is indebted to these pioneering attacks on the "power of politics" (Vasquez, 1983: 216ff.) and "the costs of realism" (Rothstein, 1972), and to those who then argued that realism's basic premises should be abandoned in favor of a truly different paradigm (e.g., Deutsch et al., 1957; Keohane and Nye, 1971; Burton, Groom, Mitchell, and Dereuck, 1974; Mansbach and Vasquez, 1981). The important contributions within this invisible college undoubtedly paved the way for the advent of an intellectual climate that is receptive to consideration of a new paradigm constructed on neo-Wilsonian premises.

We can observe the culmination of these intellectual antecedents in current theoretical and policy discourse. Many now urge that *realpolitik* not be just "revisited" (e.g., Jensen and Faulkner, 1992), but fundamentally reformulated. These contemporary calls range from espousal of a "reconstructed" realism from a feminist perspective (Tickner, 1991) to pleas for its reconstruction (Diehl and Wayman, 1993) through rigorous analysis (e.g., Cusack and Stoll, 1990, 1992). To some degree, asking "What's the matter with realism?" (Rosenberg, 1990) and calling for the discovery of "the real realism" (Griffiths, 1992), concomitant with reawakened interest in the Wilsonian world view (Shimko, 1992; Tucker, 1992), indicates that our profession has responded to John Lewis Gaddis's (1990:58) challenge that we give Wilson's vision "the fair test it has never received."

Consider the questions and puzzles that now dominate our field's research and theoretical agenda at this defining moment in world history, and the efforts to test unorthodox propositions that until recently were regarded as unrealistic. They read like they were lifted from Wilson's "Fourteen Points" speech to the U.S. Senate on January 22, 1917.

- Item: the march of democracy, its causes and consequences, has been rediscovered (Doyle, 1986; Fuller, 1991; Huntington, 1991; Lake, 1992; Morgan and Schwebach, 1992; Chan, 1993) and has stimulated moving theoretical endeavors "toward a muscular libertarianism" (Robbins, 1991) and toward evaluation of democratization's "consequences for neorealist thought" (Sørensen, 1992). Much of this analysis has centered on Wilson's proposition that making the world safe for democracy would make "the world fit and safe to live in."

Extensive research has strengthened confidence in his expectation that democracies promote peace, as the evidence (Ray, 1994) that democracies rarely wage war against each other even when conflicts arise is "as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations" (Levy, 1989:270). These results expose "the fallacy of realism" (Nincic, 1992) and support the validity of Wilsonian idealism, rooted in Kantian liberalism, by suggesting that "domestic politics play a much larger role in national security policy than is generally believed by realists and neorealist theorists" (Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller, 1992:638).

- Item: the economic underpinnings of world politics are now receiving increasing emphasis (e.g., Sorensen, 1992). This conforms to Wilson's vision, not to *realpolitik*. More specifically, attention to the consequences for economic growth and for international peace of market-oriented systems and free trade through the abolition of protective tariffs (Fukuyama, 1992b) follows Wilson's (Point III) belief, itself inspired by Immanuel Kant, that

peace could be fostered by “the removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.”

- Item: support for, adherence to, and advocacy of strengthening international law has grown visibly (e.g., Moynihan, 1990). Despite the realist assertions that international law is merely a tool for the strong to exploit the weak (Morgenthau, 1985) and that states use international law to get what they can and justify what they have obtained (Wright, 1953), the evidence that most states voluntarily adhere to international law even in circumstances where compliance runs counter to their immediate self-interests (Jones, 1991; Joyner, 1992) contradicts this claim. Peace through international law, as well, is consistent with Wilson’s program, as captured (Point I) by his plea for “open covenants, openly arrived at” and his emphasis (Point VIII) on the importance of restoring “confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for . . . their relations with one another.”
- Item: the role of international organizations in the preservation of peace has today, as in the aftermath of previous general wars (see Wallace and Singer, 1970), been rediscovered. Freed from Cold War paralysis, the United Nations has begun to flex its muscle, and substantial enthusiasm has grown about its capacity (and that of other IGOs) to preserve peace in the new millennium (Rochester, 1993). Note that this is anathema to the realist dictum that states should “constrain actors who subscribe to supranational organizational principles” (Kaplan, 1957:23). But instead, we hear today many who agree with President Bill Clinton that “multilateral action holds promise as never before” and that there exists an opportunity “to reinvent the institutions of collective security” (in Brooks, 1992:A12).

Such proposals, like those during World War I on behalf of a “league to enforce peace” and a “steadfast concert for peace,” are today informed by theories and evidence about the demonstrable pacific influence of concerts and other collective security mechanisms (Kupchan and Kupchan, 1992; Rosecrance, 1992). Here again, we detect a loud echo of Wilson’s contention (Point XIV) that “a general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity of great and small states alike.”

- Item: arms control has ceased to be a mere slogan and has instead gained recognition as a viable path to common security, and the formerly unimaginable has begun to occur as disarmament agreements have been negotiated and implemented. This arms race in reverse is inconceivable to realist dictums. The two most powerful states did what realists claimed they could not, and cautioned they must not, do: they agreed voluntarily to diminish their military power. By accepting deep cuts in their strategic arsenals, Russia and the United States violated the realist’s first rule that states should always increase their military capabilities and “fight rather than fail to increase capabilities” (Kaplan, 1957:23).

The reasons for this epic reversal of an entrenched arms race are unclear, and, accordingly, the causes and consequences of arms races and disarmament have become in the post Cold War a compelling research topic (e.g.,

Hammond, 1993). Scholars and leaders now question the assumption that the power to destroy equals the power to control, and have made the inverse correlation between military expenditures and economic growth (e.g., Kennedy, 1987) and national security (e.g., Johansen, 1991) a topic of serious debate. The costs of arms races and their contribution to the security dilemma (Herz, 1950; Wallace, 1979) are no longer regarded as liberal propositions unworthy of rigorous treatment. Whatever the circumstantial sources for this change in thinking, its intellectual roots are deep. Proposals to take arms control and disarmament seriously stem from many antecedents, but were given vocal expression in Wilson's conviction (Point IV) that "the programme of the world's peace" requires that "adequate guarantees [be] given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety."

- Item: the power of the people, and their right to assert their power to rule, has gained momentum and made the troublesome principle of self-determination, long neglected, once again a topic of searching scrutiny. Realism's worship of the nation-state as the only legitimate political authority on the world's stage, to which all other supranational and subnational units are subservient, has been undercut by recent trends. Rather than acquiring power and then expanding it, since 1989 many sovereign governments have released their grip on their authority in response to public challenges to their legitimacy (see Rosenau, 1990).

This development, too, was anticipated by Wilson. He had important things to say not only about the conflict then raging in the Balkans but, more generally (Point V), about "the principle that, in determining all such questions of sovereignty, the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined."

This timely advice speaks to today's realities—even if it is unclear whether self-determination constructively reduces or destructively encourages the quest of grievance groups for national independence. On this principle Wilson may yet prove to have been most misguided, for self-determination rationalizes the disintegrating fragmentation so prevalent today (Moynihan, 1993). What is clear is the underlying premise—that people matter and, as evidence shows, public opinion counts (see Russett, 1990; Wittkopf, 1990), perhaps more than ever in our age of instantaneous communications. Governments are not untouchable, and sovereignty, once established, is neither sacred nor permanent. "The realists have been consistently surprised over the past generation as one seemingly immutable tyranny after another has self-destructed" (Fukuyama, 1992a:24). Politics did not stop at the water's edge; the state-centric model of structural realism to the contrary, what has happened *within* countries has powerfully shaped their conduct beyond their borders. The best illustration of the inadequacy of realism's billiard-ball model is the Soviet Union, whose empire arguably collapsed abroad largely because its system of government failed at home. The USSR did not crumble simply because of the intimidating military capabilities of its external adversaries, as many realists claim.

- Item: as Wilson predicted, but realists denied, the motives that animate the goals of states are not immutable. They *can* change. Most states long ago lost

their appetite for territorial conquest and colonialism. The realists' beliefs about the inexorable lust for power and imperialism as the state's primary and permanent goals neglect history. "In general, such Realist accounts accept superficially plausible reasons given by imperial policymakers for strategies of security through expansion . . ." (Snyder, 1991:12). "There are many precedents for countries with long histories of imperialism giving up their empires . . . more or less voluntarily. And all of them did so in the twentieth century, which places the burden of proof in those who suggest that Russia will prove the exception to the general modern pattern of imperial divestment" (Fukuyama, 1992a:27).

There is less to realism than meets the eye. Realism did not account for the peaceful collapse of the communist movement and the Soviet Union's retreat from power and competition. As John Lewis Gaddis (1992:A44) put it, the Soviet Union did what many realists claimed was impossible: "The second most 'powerful' state on the face of the earth did voluntarily give up power, despite the insistence of international relations theory that this could never happen." Moreover, realism failed to appreciate the extent to which states could see their interests served by the pooling of their sovereignty and the integration of their economies—an anomaly in Europe that reduces confidence in some realists' contention that competition will always supersede cooperation in an anarchic system (Kegley, 1991). "Hyper-realism, in other words, is not terribly realistic about the changing nature of modern states and the kinds of aspirations they entertain" (Fukuyama, 1992a:28).

- Item: humanitarian responses to repression have reinvigorated interest in concern about human rights. This reaction—as attested by the world's disgust in the post Cold War with the growing persecution of minorities—has made the League of Nations' machinery for the protection of minorities, according to U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a viable precedent for the kind of institutional approach that is now needed. Offering guarantees to minorities, once a radical prescription that sanctions interventionism for humanitarian purposes, long discredited by realists, has found reinvigorated voice in a system where the violation of human rights poses a security threat to the entire international community.

To claim that international mechanisms are needed to resolve ethnic conflicts and alleviate human suffering is to rediscover an approach that Wilson proposed to confront the ethnic and religious strife and structural violence that plagues the post-colonial, post-Cold War world. And it is to restore a place for morality in foreign policy, a place long ridiculed by "the realist approach [that] opens the door to a purely amoral foreign policy" (Gordis, 1984:36), indeed, that "holds international politics to be beyond the concern of morality" (Suganami, 1983:35). Instead, "the power of principle in a pluralistic world" (Kegley, 1992) and the long-repudiated idea of "moral progress" (Ray, 1989) have begun to receive renewed respect.

Sadly, Wilson's program did not prescribe principles that fit the times in which he lived. But, given enough time for long cycles to materialize (as they must, if a sufficiently longer period of observation is adopted), there is truth in the cliché that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Wilson's ideas were at odds with the deeper realities of his time, yet they speak directly to many of the

new realities of our post–Cold War world. It is ironic that, as the world breaks from the grip of the past, his vision has at last begun to come into fashion. Today, “there are good reasons for examining aspects of the liberal international legacy once again” (Fukuyama, 1992a:28).

Yet we must not rush prematurely into acceptance of a rediscovered theory. As noted, many recent developments do not fit the world Wilson visualized, and it is too early to tell if the emerging world will be cast more in the Wilsonian than the realist image. Like realism, Wilsonian idealism rests on suspect empirical foundations, and it is a possibility but not a certainty that the world will develop in a way that does not fit with the realist paradigm. Some trends suggest that realism may remain a useful guide for the future. In this context, consider that

- the collapse of Balkan order raises questions about (1) the end of history, (2) the growth of public support for nonviolence, and (3) the eroding strength of sovereign powers. These problems are **not** limited to the Balkans; indeed, they have emerged in several regions within the successor states of the former Soviet Union. There is a possibility that much of Eurasia will confront similar convulsions. This need not undermine faith in the Wilsonian argument, but it demands that its postulates be treated warily until evidence supports them more convincingly.
- the European Community’s recent hesitation in its drive for union, its impotence over management of the Yugoslavian breakup, and its continuing conflicts over economic coordination suggest a slowing of momentum toward Euro-integration. Many of the ambitious objectives of the Maastricht Accords are likely to remain the subject of intense criticism among various publics, which could slow the integration wave.
- macroeconomic trends point toward free markets *within* regional blocs (including that now established in North America), but also toward continuing if not intensifying protectionism *among* them (Thurow, 1992). The impasses apparent in the ongoing GATT negotiations and at the recent G-7 economic summits are troublesome exceptions to the more general trends noted.
- the capacity of the great powers to avoid war with each other for the longest period in modern history and the implication that major warfare itself will become obsolete (Mueller, 1989) notwithstanding, these promising trends do not necessarily presage “that traditional considerations of *Machtpolitik* will lose or have lost their primacy; that force, in other words, is finished” (Cohen, 1992:34). True, “realist thought and practice depend on the possibility, if not the threat or actuality, of war. If it recedes far into the background among the developed countries, much new thinking will be required” (Jervis, 1992:266–267). But we have no assurance, if past history remains a guide to the future, that great-power war will recede into oblivion. Should we witness the advent of a new multipolar system, renewed conflict and even war is likely, and realism will remain the most compelling framework to assess the dynamics that will surround the great powers’ probable interactions (Kegley and Raymond, 1994). The behavior of Russia and the United States since the Berlin Wall fell attests to the abiding usefulness of realism to account for great-power conduct. Both continue to pursue power and rely on military might. Indeed, Boris Yeltsin’s conduct conformed to realist predictions in this sphere; he renounced communism, but neither sovereignty nor military power.

These countervailing developments suggest the need, not for the complete replacement of realism with a liberalist approach, but for a melding of the two. Still, scholars in the International Studies Association can do far worse than to define our research agendas by giving the hypotheses that Wilson championed increased attention. The new international realities may create a setting in which his program for peace might, at long last, become realistic. If so, is it not realistic to heed the advice of realism's critics, consider moving beyond narrow realist assumptions, and evaluate with even greater intensity the paths to peace and prosperity suggested by the idealist tradition? If these are ideas whose time perhaps has finally come, then a reintegration of liberalism with realism may be warranted.

International Relations after the Cold War: Are There Paradigmatic Imperatives?

"Great things are achieved," Mazzini noted in 1910, "by guessing the direction of one's century." Yet prediction is most perilous, and only the foolhardy would presume to forecast confidently the shape of the world to come. These are hard times for prophets; whether traditionalists or adherents of the behavioral persuasion, political pundits are not doing well these days (Gaddis, 1992), given the cascade of events since 1989 unforeseen by *either* scholarly tradition.

How, then, might we visualize the future, given the difficulty of identifying long-term secular trends and distinguishing them from short-term, temporary perturbations? Winston Churchill advised that "the farther backward you look, the farther forward you are likely to see." We are well advised to heed his dictum, for, as Lord Halifax (George Saville) counselled, "The most important qualification of a prophet is to have a good memory."

Although trend is not destiny, we can engage in "persistence forecasting" by extrapolation. Based on the assumption that current trends will continue, we can project that the international system is likely to be shaped by the cumulative and collective effect of six salient long-term developments: (1) the dispersion of power among the most powerful states and potential reemergence of a multipolar system; (2) the growing political influence of non-state actors such as multinational corporations; (3) the resurgence of hypernationalism alongside the vigorous pursuit of independence by minority nationalities that presages a new wave of national disintegration; (4) the continuing internationalization of national economies; (5) the widening gap between the world's rich and poor; and (6) the unabated deterioration of the global ecosystem.

Thus, persistence forecasting leads to the prediction that the new international system is likely to be increasingly multipolar at the top, but more hierarchically stratified; its units will be less homogeneous and unified and more interdependent. Every global actor is likely to depend economically and politically to increasing degrees on others, and the scope for unilateral national action is likely to diminish at an accelerating rate.

Moreover, different problems are likely to replace the threat of East-West ideological discord and military aggression which heretofore has preoccupied leaders' attention (see Kegley and Wittkopf, 1993, for one recent inventory). Among the emergent problems on the global agenda are acid rain; the AIDS epidemic; international drug trafficking; the depletion of the earth's finite resources and destruction of its protective ozone layer; global warming propelled by the greenhouse effect and deforestation; exponential population growth alongside the diminishing capacity of agricultural systems to provide food sufficiency; the pollution of the oceans and atmosphere; chronic international debt; the specter of

another worldwide economic recession or depression fostered by a wave of neomercantilistic protectionism; and the widening disparity between the affluent and the impoverished and the suffering, injustice, and aggression thereby created.

Simply put, the global agenda has expanded since the Cold War ended, as has the need for collaboration among both state and non-state actors to manage these new issues. It is thus probable that “welfare, not warfare, will shape the rules [and] global threats like ozone holes and pollution will dictate the agenda” (Joffe, 1992:35). For, “the distinction between high politics (vital interests affecting national security) and low politics (petty questions of economic dispute and rivalry among states) may be disappearing, [and] low politics is becoming high politics” (Moran, 1992:337). Do these ascendant nonmilitary issues collectively threaten political chaos as did imperialist conquest only recently, or rather is it that “the problem . . . today is not new challengers for hegemony; it is the new challenge of transnational interdependence” (Nye, 1992:318)?

Realism, rooted in the experience of World War II and the Cold War, is undergoing a crisis of confidence largely because the lessons adduced do not convincingly apply directly to these new realities. The broadened global agenda goes beyond what realism can realistically be expected to address.

Yet, if we religiously worship an increasingly outmoded paradigm and thereby concoct new rationales for old theoretical practices, there is a risk that our ability to speak to these new issues will diminish. Reliance on an unreconstructed realism is also likely to reduce our capacity to predict developments in world affairs. When conditions change, a prevailing paradigm can function like a badly warped piano; the players tend to hit dead keys. Worse still, if policymakers steadfastly adhere to realist precepts, they will have to navigate the uncharted seas of the post-Cold War disorder with a Cold War cartography, and blind devotion to realism could compromise their ability to prescribe paths to a more orderly and just global system.

“Surprise,” the philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce noted, “is our only teacher.” Having been constantly surprised by events since 1989, our field has been taught a lesson and given powerful reasons to reexamine our theoretical propensities. The emerging post-Cold War system is populated by many problems that cannot be adequately accounted for by realism. If emergent problems necessitate working collectively to achieve common objectives, a refashioned realism will be needed. Necessity can be the mother of (re)invention. To paraphrase what John F. Kennedy said about the advent of nuclear weapons, the end of Cold War competition “changes all the answers and all the questions.”

Theoretical Departures: Rediscovering Liberalism?

The landscape of international experience need not be painted in a single color—realpolitik—showing only the dark *animus dominandi*, the lust for power. The diverse threats to global order call for a reconstructed theoretical framework predicated on the hope for—even the expectation of—international cooperation.

Realist pessimism maintains that history is a record of preparations for war, the conduct of war, and recovery from war (Morgenthau, 1985). But recent history suggests hope that this cycle can be broken. We often pejoratively label this hope idealism, or liberalism, but it is a rich tradition which deserves a new hearing. Idealism draws on the Enlightenment belief that maladaptive behavior is a product of counterproductive institutions and practices that can be changed by reforming the system that produces it, and that human nature—classical realism to the contrary—is subject to modification and not permanently governed by an ineradicable lust for power.

Is this kind of progress possible? Perhaps not. But change can occur when conditions make formerly improbable behaviors rewarding, altering the preexisting relationship between circumstance and choice in state practice (see Stein, 1991). And we may be at such a “defining moment” today.

Note that some versions of realism itself are not incompatible with such a reoriented world view inspired by neoliberal idealism (see Warren, 1988; Rosenthal, 1991) as the efforts to integrate liberal and realist theory by neorealist institutionalist writers attest. The realist tradition is richer and more varied than the preceding characterizations have implied. In fact, the realist principle of the national interest is not inconsistent with the pursuit of cooperation, and can in fact help to explain why international cooperation occurs. As Grotius observed centuries ago, the voluntary sacrifice of sovereignty for collaborative problem solving does not require a state to sacrifice its interests; it requires leaders to conceive of transnational cooperation as compatible with their national interests, recognize that each state’s national interests are entangled in a web with those of other nations, and perceive parochial opportunism as a cause of, not a cure for, the ultimately unrewarding struggle for power. Our colleagues in political economy and rational choice have seized on this principle embedded in realist *and* idealist thought to explain how cooperation can occur under anarchy, and, instructively, their application has proven rewarding.

Four decades ago John Herz (1951) suggested that idealism was realism—that cooperation was advantageous and served national interests. Principled behavior and moral purpose can enhance a nation’s power and competitive advantage—they are compatible and need not be in tension. The post-Cold War challenges scholars to resume the search for that hybrid combination of both realist and idealist concepts around which a neoidealist paradigm might be organized, and attempt to construct, to borrow a phrase, a “realism with a human face” (Putnam, 1990). Because a concern for justice arguably would serve states’ interest, should not this principle serve as a springboard for the redirection of theory building in the post-Cold War?

However, the assumptions underlying Wilsonian idealism, like those from which realism springs, should not be accepted blindly, on faith. Closure is not warranted; systematic analysis *is*. The timely but controversial propositions being advanced today in the neo-Wilsonian dialogue beg for empirical inquiry.

Although it is difficult to verify the adequacy of a grand theory, the failure of its basic axioms—those underlying assumptions which structure its vision—to correspond to reality would cast serious doubt on its veracity (Kuhn, 1962; Lakatos, 1978). This incongruity is especially salient to those conclusions reached in realist and neorealist accounts that idealist-inspired theories reject. Though liberalism is an awkward bedfellow to power politics, a close relationship has developed between liberal principles and state practice (for inventories, see Vasquez, 1983, and Kegley, 1988). The existence of that relationship throws doubt on the realist world view and correspondingly justifies treating liberal-idealist postulates with greater respect.

In order to draw inferences about the principles with which international behavior in the 1990s has begun to conform, empirical evidence about the patterns now characterizing that behavior must be examined. For this, positivist social science has a contribution to make—indeed, it is indispensable. The realist-idealist dialogue can be informed by the insights generated through scientific investigation without requiring acceptance of the logical positivists’ most extreme claims about the possibility of an objective social science. Scholars can creatively build new theories and refine old ones on the basis of concrete evidence and deduction.

If anomalies in realist theories—areas where reproducible evidence contradicts realist theoretical expectations—continue to surface, an empirical basis will have been uncovered for questioning the validity of the realist formulation, regarding a

neoidealist formulation with commensurately greater confidence, and building a new paradigm that combines the most valid properties of both intellectual traditions. Research needs to tease out those Dworkinian (1986) “contested concepts” in which realist policy prescriptions are realistic, and discover the areas where realism and idealism converge. From such a research agenda it will be possible to judge the question to which this essay has been directed: whether the time has arrived to revise and reconstruct classical realism, and build a refashioned paradigm inspired by Wilsonian idealism.

In didactically suggesting that this question be pursued, I have, in the interest of being provocative, found it necessary to attack a popular and vibrant theoretical tradition that has survived for centuries (for some very compelling reasons, as Gilpin, 1984, reminds us). In so doing, by advocating development of a principled realism emphasizing liberal ideals, I have also purposely recommended a controversial theoretical departure based on an idealist tradition that remains outside the dominant realist paradigm—indeed, that remains unpopular. I do not expect to be thanked for my trouble; generating expressions of appreciation has not been my purpose. My purpose has been heuristic. If my comments stimulate thoughtful discussion about the future direction of international relations theorizing and help to identify the research questions that will command our attention, they will have succeeded in their primary goal.

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