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## POLITICAL REALISM & POLITICAL IDEALISM IN FOREIGN POLICY: SIX INTERPRETATIONS

*-David Sidorsky\**

### I. INTRODUCTION

Political theory in the area of the conduct of foreign policy by modern states has included the drawing of a distinction between a theory of Political Realism and a theory of Political Idealism. The basic ground for this distinction is that within a theory of political realism, the foreign policy of any state places primacy upon the protection and defense of the national security interest of the sovereign State while within a theory of political idealism, the foreign policy of any state would assert the primacy of the protection and the furtherance of its values and ideals in the world.

Apart from its appeal to the historical practice of ancient empires and states, as well as its reference to classical literature including the text of Thucydides, the modern theory of Political Realism can trace its roots to the doctrines asserted in Machiavelli's "Prince" of the sixteenth century and to an interpretation of the system of Westphalia of the following century. More recently, a theory of Political Realism can be considered as providing the background basis for the foreign policy of sovereign states that have sought to establish a stable structure of international order including the foreign policy of the United States since the end of the Second World War.

The theory of Political Idealism can trace its roots to inspirational texts that include Biblical eschatological prophecies on world peace and classical literary expressions of the human aspiration for a peaceful and just world, as well as to modern policies aimed at establishing international organizations that will serve as forums for conflict resolution among nation states and to introduce the rule of law in international relations. In the twentieth century, a theory of Political Idealism can be considered as providing a

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\* Professor Emeritus, Department of Philosophy, Columbia University. He can be contacted at [ds25@columbia.edu](mailto:ds25@columbia.edu).

background basis for efforts to establish conventions that limit the behavior of nation states in war, as well as policies to affirm and support various declarations of minority rights and of human rights. Consistent with the theory of Political Idealism, the aims of American foreign policy at the outset of its entry into WW-I were formulated in Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points," and a declaration regarding the aims of the Second World War were formulated by Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain and President Franklin Roosevelt in the declaration of an Atlantic Charter of 1941 in the year preceding American entry into the Second World War.

The distinction between a theory of Political Realism and a theory of Political Idealism in foreign policy has not been an exclusive distinction. Whether declaring itself to be a legitimate, or a just, or a civilized, or a Christian, or a Democratic, or a Socialist, or a Marxist-Leninist state, virtually every modern state has affirmed support in its foreign policy for the furtherance of its ideals and values in the world alongside the effort to protect and defend its national security interests. The recognition of this fusion between the theories Political Realism and Political Idealism does not negate the significance of the distinction between Political Realism and Political Idealism, however, but points to the relevance in the understanding of foreign policy of the clarification of the difference in priority or primacy between support for protection of security interests that is proposed in a theory of Political Realism in contrast with support for furtherance of values and ideals that is proposed in a theory of Political Idealism.

One of several possible points of departure for the theory of Political Realism in the foreign policy of any state would be an account of the originality of Machiavelli. The originality of Machiavelli, according to Isaiah Berlin's essay<sup>1</sup> on that theme, reflects his recognition of the distinction between the principles that are necessary in the education of a prince according to Machiavelli, as contrasted with the elements that were included in traditional studies of the genre on the education of a Christian prince.

For Machiavelli, the concept of a Christian prince was self-contradictory. If a prince were to pursue a Christian ethic in his implementation of the foreign policy of his State, such as turning the other cheek or never telling lies, he would have abdicated his responsibilities and been in violation of his moral duty as a sovereign prince to protect the security interests of the State. On the other hand, if the prince were to carry out actions in protection and defense of the sovereign State, in fulfillment of the responsibilities of his

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<sup>1</sup> ISAIAH BERLIN, THE ORIGINALITY OF MACHIAVELLI (Sansoni, 1972).

office, he could not be a Christian. On this interpretation of Machiavelli, the responsibility of the prince to exercise political power in defense of the security interests of the State is not only a practical or pragmatic imperative, but a moral duty. From this perspective, Political Realism is a moral theory regarding the appropriate exercise of power for protection of the security interests of the State. This morality of prudent exercise of power in protection and defense of security interests does not only contradict the moral precepts of Christianity but is in opposition to the maximization of aggressive power as suggested by the Hobbesian phrase that human nature inclines toward “*a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceases only in death.*” Machiavelli’s formulations of the position of the prince are often characterized by ambiguity in his interpretation of what would constitute the optimal use of political power by the prince. Thus, it has been noted that Machiavelli’s explicit assertion of the policy of the prince as using his power to protect his security interests could represent a violation of the optimal means of protection of these security interests which would be better served under the guise of pursuit by the prince of universal values and high moral ideals. Against the interpretations of Machiavellianism as advocating acquiescence to strategies of immorality and wrongdoing in foreign policy or of amorality in the conduct of foreign policy, Isaiah Berlin identifies the originality of Machiavelli as the recognition of an alternative morality that is justified in the conduct of foreign policy. The justification of alternative moral principles for particular contexts can be understood as part of Berlin’s wider philosophical theory of value pluralism. From this perspective, the distinction between Political Realism and Political Idealism is not to be interpreted as a distinction between a theory which is immoral, non-moral or amoral in opposition to a moral theory of international relations, but as a distinction between two different theories of morality in foreign affairs.

The recognition that a theory of Political Realism, with its noninterventionist approach to the internal affairs of other societies, is a moral theory is confirmed by an examination of the change introduced by the adoption of the Westphalian system in international relations. Whatever be the historical record of the complexities of the treaties of Westphalia in 1648, there subsequently developed an interpretation of the Westphalian system as demonstrating the transition to political Realism among the European states. The Treaty of Westphalia marked the end of thirty years of religious wars in Europe in which Catholic States warred with Protestant States with each seeking to establish its religious rule. One outcome of the emergence of the Westphalia system appears to be a lessening of the importance or the virtual end of the applicability of the theoretical doctrine of a “just war.” In contrast, the sole justification for war is the defense of the sovereign state against aggression. The system of Westphalia, in accord with the theory of

Political Realism, envisioned European sovereign states each of which was ruled by a rational monarch who would protect and defend its national security interests against aggression by another. The security interest of each sovereign state could give rise to mutual security alliances among states, which would guarantee a balance of power or correlation of forces that would potentially be sufficient to protect each sovereign state from aggression and war. In a sense, the general thesis could be argued that the impact of Machiavelli's *Prince* and the system of Westphalia had been to replace an idealistic moral theory of the Christian doctrine of "just war" with a realistic moral theory that no war could be justified except one of defense against aggression.

The proposition that a theory of Political Realism in which the primacy of national security interests in foreign policy is asserted represents a moral approach that can be recognized more clearly when it is contrasted with a foreign policy in which the pursuit of aggression goes beyond the security interests of the nation state. The recognition of this contrast, which supports the morality of Political Realism, however, only takes place in extreme and relatively rare cases of what may be termed as naked aggression or aggression with no strong claim of justification. More often, the morality of Political Realism, as limited to protection and defense of the security interests of a State, has been challenged with claims for justification for resort to military action for a great range of moral or humanitarian reasons. These have included the legitimacy of preemptive war against future aggression, the righting of alleged historical wrongs, the abolition of human sacrifice, the abolition of suttee, and the acceptance of the burden of the Christianizing mission, a civilizing mission, or a burden of transforming the values of an indigenous culture into the standards which are consistent with European culture. A philosophical debate over the issues raised by these forms of intervention would involve the question of the issue of moral universalism versus either moral pluralism or moral relativism. As a broad generalization, Political Idealism would claim that some values are universal values, which should be instituted and protected in all human societies. Again, as a broad generalization, a theory of Political Realism would counter that there is evidence that coercive intervention in the internal affairs of other societies has been counterproductive in its overall consequences. Proponents of Political Realism would also maintain a thesis of moral pluralism or moral relativism such that the values of the indigenous culture are relative to their felt needs and perceptions so that these practices should be reformed within their own social development or by assistance from voluntary agencies rather than by coercive or military intervention.

The complexity of the historical record of war and peace in the modern era since the Treaty of Westphalia belies any simple dualistic account. An analysis of the particularly bellicose events of modern history, including dynastic wars, “wars of empire”, wars of humanitarian intervention, and a variety of nationalistic wars, as an intersection between protection of the security interests of the State and the furtherance of the ideals and values of the State would reach far beyond the scope and focus of this essay. The theories of Political Realism and Political Idealism can be interpreted and examined within the more limited historical context of the foreign policy of the United States in the postwar period and some of its immediate forerunners. Within this context, the clarification of the theories of Political Realism and of Political Idealism can be approached through the development of three differing interpretations of the major characteristics of a theory of Political Realism and by three differing interpretations of the major characteristics of a theory of Political Idealism.

## **II. THREE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE THEORY OF POLITICAL REALISM**

### **(A) THE PRIMACY OF NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS IN SUPPORT OF NON-AGGRESSION AND PEACEFUL RELATIONS**

The theory of Political Realism can be identified, as noted above, with the thesis that the defense and protection of security interests form the primary mission for the foreign policy of any State. The primacy of security interests would mandate, in almost all cases, the military preparedness of the State for war in order to defend against aggression. Thus, a first interpretation of Political Realism holds that an adequate level of military preparation strengthens deterrence against aggression and lessens the probability of war.

According to this interpretation of Political Realism, the primacy of defense and protection of security interests that requires the development of military preparedness does not exclude and can include other means of lessening the threat of aggression from other states. The defense and protection of national security interests are to be carried out in ways that not only avoid intervention in the internal affairs of other societies, but that minimize the risk brought about by the perception of a threat to others that could be caused by the military development of any State. This assurance of nonaggression against other sovereign states in the course of defense or protection of the security interests of one’s own state, can

range from treaties of nonaggression and mutual arms limitation treaties to cooperative ventures in trade and cultural exchange, as well as to specified “confidence building” measures between States.

This first interpretation of a theory of Political Realism is usually, but not always, characterized by the quest for mutual military alliances as strengthening a State’s defense against aggression. The traditional thesis was that the balance of power achieved through such a system of alliances would deter aggression and avoid war while a more recent formulation would replace the term “balance of power” with “correlation of forces” as indicating the possibility of security arrangements among nation-states that are sufficient to deter the possibilities of war.

Political Realism in the foreign policy of the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as explicitly formulated in a speech by John Quincy Adams, the Secretary of State in 1821, did not refer to military alliance as a means of realizing American national security interests, but placed stress upon non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States. A central feature of that speech is its affirmation of American sympathy or empathy with those who struggle for freedom, independence, or democracy abroad while absolutely rejecting any military intervention in support of the principle of freedom, democracy, or independence in foreign countries. Thus, John Quincy Adams adumbrates the Political Realism of American foreign policy in the following passage: “*Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.*”<sup>2</sup> According to Adams, this limitation on foreign intervention by the United States was sufficient to avoid any aggression against the United States. John Quincy Adams does not refer to the potential for war in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century arising from westward or continental expansion nor does he foresee the potential for civil war against succession. Rather, consistent with his emphasis upon non-intervention, Adams argues that, were the United States to pursue a policy that would lead to military intervention in support of freedom or independence of other states, it would risk becoming an imperial state with potential for wars of national self-aggrandizement that would contradict its own right to non-intervention from other nation-states.

As a Political Realist in foreign affairs, Adams also recognized that a non-interventionist America, which exerts its influence only through the example of its free domestic institutions, should pursue security

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<sup>2</sup> John Quincy Adams, *She Goes not Abroad in search of Monsters to Destroy*, THE AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE, (July 04, 2013), <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/repository/she-goes-not-abroad-in-search-of-monsters-to-destroy/>.

without seeking domination in international relations by pursuing development of its capacity and preparedness for war. The speech of John Quincy Adams of 1821 that presaged an “isolationist” foreign policy that rejected foreign alliances and American leadership in international relations, as well as foreign intervention in the internal affairs of other states resulted in the peaceful relationship of the United States with European and Asian powers throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Some supporters of isolationism, like the American historian Charles Beard believed that such an isolationist policy, which focused on “America first” or “fortress America” to the exclusion of intervention in East Asian and European affairs, could have extended the peaceful relationship of the United States with all Asian and European powers through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Critics of this isolationist approach to the protection defense of the national security interest of the United States contend that the United States could not have sustained a non-interventionist position. In their view, American military intervention was unavoidable not only because of the Idealist clash of American values and ideals with Japanese militarism and Nazi oppression, but because of the Realist conflict between American national security interests and Japanese expansionist aggression and the Nazi potential long-term domination of Europe in the 1940s.

Even with reference to the theory of Political Realism, there would be disagreement over the belief of John Quincy Adams, that American isolationism was provided the basis for American national security. Political Realism indicates the need for mutual security alliances, or correlation of forces, that are sufficient to deter war. From the perspective of Political Realism, the isolation that John Quincy Adams believed to be sufficient for protection and defense of the security of the United States could have been augmented by security alliances with nations of shared interests, like Great Britain or France in much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as in the period after the First World War.

The first interpretation of a theory of Political Realism presumes the optimistic premise that the pursuit by each nation-state of defense and protection of its security interests, including mutual security alliances, is not only the best method for realizing peaceful international relationship among nations, but has a high probability of resulting in a peaceful world.

(B). THE PRIMACY OF NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS WITH REALISTIC RECOGNITION OF THE PERENNIAL RISK OF WAR

An alternative or second interpretation of a theory of Political Realism would agree that each nation-state in its quest for security cannot avoid or escape the primacy of protection and defense of its national security interests in its foreign policy while recognizing that pursuit of national security often involves the risk of war as well as achieving victory in the event of war. A significant aspect of that second interpretation of a theory of Political Realism is that the recognition that history reveals a continual waging of war across the ages does not provide any ground for support or faith that there will be a transcendence of history into a new age of perpetual peace.

The second interpretation of a theory of Political Realism in which the negative potential of that theory receives greater emphasis has been justified by a variety of more specific appeals to history. Among such grounds of historical evidence there is the recognition that different motivations for waging war replaced the wars of religion that had been waged before the introduction of the Westphalia system. The presumption of the Westphalia system was that rational states or rational monarchs, each pursuing the protection-defense of national security interests would arrive at a peaceful balance of power after the rejection of religious motives for war. Differing reasons have been cited for the many European wars that followed the Treaty of Westphalia. With reference to the criticism of Political Realism, the question has arisen as to whether the build-up by nation-states of their military forces in preparedness for war in defense of national security interests, bears within itself a potential for aggression. The more powerful military state may decide that its national security interest can be more effectively served by domination of the other State or by elimination of its military potential rather than by a peaceful, deterrent balance of power. Even in the absence of tendencies by one State to commit aggression against another, in the context of each State's pursuit of its security interests there are possibilities of misperception or misunderstanding. The military preparedness of one State may be perceived by another as potentially aggressive with the result of a resort to preemptive aggression or war.

The rationality of the monarchs or emperors who led many European states in the modern period was not sufficient to justify the optimism posited by a theory of Political Realism that presumed the quest for mutual security would result in a peaceful balance or international equilibrium. The true son, or *vrai fils*, of the rationalism of the French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte, was also the agent of the warfare in Spain that resulted in horrific drawings of the disasters of war by Francisco Goya, highlighted by a later drawing titled "*El sueño de la razón*" or "*The sleep or dream of reason produces monsters*". Consistent with the critical second



interpretation of Political Realism, the balance of power that had been established among the European States proved its inadequacy in preventing war in 1914. Each of the major European nation-states that was intent on its security succumbed to the resort to war to protect its security interests with the resulting consequence of mutual self-destruction that led to the decline of Europe from the plateau it had occupied in world leadership before 1914. This critical view of Political Realism, however, does not assert, as previously noted, any possibility of escape or release from the primacy of protection and defense of national security interests in foreign policy, even as it recognizes the potential for war that is implicit in the development by strong nation-states of military preparedness to defend and protect their security interests. As interpretations of the theory of Political Realism, neither the more optimistic interpretation of that theory with its standard presumption of the reliability of a peaceful balance of power, nor the more critical interpretation of Political Realism with its acceptance of the occasional breakdown of mutual security alliances into resort to war by nation-states, consider that it is feasible to establish an international order without national military forces or to develop an international system governed by rule of law with an international police force as the keepers of the peace.

This second interpretation of Political Realism ranges over a number of more specific scenarios that illustrate the severity of the challenge of achieving international peace. The actions that are deemed necessary for the protection defense of national security interests will require the nation-state to develop increased weaponry and new forms of weaponry, such as enhanced missiles and stealth aircraft, which would lead other States to reciprocal countermeasures of arms development. According to this critical account of Political Realism, the mutual escalation, or arms race, often characterizes a reasonable quest for national security. The proponents of Political Realism can accept successful outcomes of reciprocal restraint in military arms, as in the avoidance of the use of poison gas during the Second World War, as well as agreements to arms limitation treaties, and to the international negotiation of various conventions on limits of war while maintaining the priority of deterrence of aggression through military preparedness. Critics of Political Realism insist that the escalation in means of military defense support the metaphor of the balance of power between allied states as a powder keg with a potential for explosion. In general terms, the ongoing criticism of a theory of Political Realism is that the standard of protection and defense of national security interests does not provide enforceable mechanism that permits acceptance of the degree of military preparedness that is necessary for national security and is consistent with peaceful international relations while rejecting or blocking military preparedness which will support aggression or lead to war.

Any interpretation of Political Realism in foreign policy identifies the need for nation-states to recognize and accommodate the legitimate national security interests of other States, while seeking a balance of power that deters aggression. The pursuit of its national security interests by a nation state, can include an effort to minimize the potential for any misunderstanding or breakdown in international relations with its heightened risk of resort to war, even though Political Realism includes the recognition, derived from historical experience, that the complete elimination of war within the constraints of human nature and the realities of nation-states in this era is not likely.

(C). THE PRIMACY OF NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS AND THE STRUCTURE OF INTERNATIONAL STABILITY OR WORLD ORDER

There is a third interpretation of Political Realism that can be derived from an alternative reading of the record of international relations in the last two centuries. This interpretation of Political Realism places greater stress upon the establishment of the stability of the international world order through the exercise of leadership by the most powerful nation state of the world in cooperation with the several States who enter into alliance with it for mutual security.

In accord with this perspective, Great Britain exercised a leading role in maintaining a peaceful international order between the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 and the onset of the First World War in 1914. On this reading of the historical record, the approach of John Quincy Adams does not adequately reflect the element that Great Britain contributed to American security in its support for freedom of navigation, and its exclusion of hostile naval operations that could be directed toward the United States in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans between 1815 and 1914. Subsequent to the war between Great Britain and the United States of 1812, the British decision to achieve a peaceful relationship with the United States formed part of the basis for a stable world order during that century. During the same period, the balance of power within the European continent was tested by several small wars, but while maintaining stability through the absence of major wars, until the breakdown of 1914.

The interpretation of Political Realism, by reference to the maintenance of a stable world order through the exercise of leadership of a major power, did not originate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Supporters of the thesis that Great Britain, as the leading power, contributed to maintaining the stability of the international world order for a century tended to invoke the idea of "Pax Romana." The term "Pax Romana" suggests that a world

power can maintain global peace over a long period of time through its necessary exercise of its power and the general recognition of its latent power. When a theory of Political Realism is related to the historical record of a stable world order, the thesis emerges that the historical framework for international peace has been provided by the exercise of leadership by major world powers in establishing international order. From this perspective, Great Britain maintained the stable world order for the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the United States has fulfilled the responsibility of maintaining a stable world order in the postwar period for the past seventy years.

Accordingly the relevant evidence for the adequacy of a theory of Political Realism would be an evaluation of the way in which the foreign policy of the United States has exercised leadership in achieving a stable world order during the postwar period. Without rehearsing the detailed record of the complex historical data of the postwar period, the main efforts of the foreign policy of the United States to achieve the stability of the international order can be identified.

The starting point for this identification of the main elements for the stabilization of the postwar period is an account of the situation with respect to international peace at the end of the Second World War. Only two victorious nation-states, namely the Soviet Union and the United States, had survived the war in a condition to dominate other states or to maintain the stability of the international order. During the Second World War, and for a short time thereafter, these two States sought to maintain what was termed a “Grand Alliance” between them as their stated foreign policy. By 1947, however, the “Grand Alliance” policy had come to an end. The Soviet Union pursued expansion into Europe beyond the Yalta Agreement on spheres of influence from its borders through all the pre-war States of Eastern and Central Europe to culminate in control of its assigned portion of partitioned Germany in the state of East Germany. This expansion received justification either as reflecting the security interests of the Soviet Union against any repeated invasion from the West, or as the legitimate development of revolutionary Communism following its defeat of the forces of European fascism. The United States responded to Soviet expansion by 1947, either with the justification of containment of the threat of further Soviet expansion into Western Europe or with the justification that it was defending the “free world” against the ideology of totalitarian Communist dictatorship.

The first level of engagement within American foreign policy for international stability was the decision to sustain its position of primacy in nuclear arms and nuclear deterrence. During the entire postwar period, the United States maintained the readiness of its nuclear arsenal which possessed, in any weighting of the balance of power, or the Soviet term that replaced it, as previously noted, “correlation of forces,” nuclear superiority and capacity for nuclear deterrence. Yet, with the exception of the explicit threat of resort to nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, and an implicit reference to nuclear arms during the last phase of the Israeli-Egyptian War in 1973, there had been no rattling of nuclear arms in the execution of American foreign policy.

The second level of engagement involved the application of the doctrine of containment in Europe. The policy of containment was proposed by George Kennan in 1947 as part of a theory of Political Realism in the relationship of the United States toward the Soviet Union in Europe. Containment of Soviet expansion was the stated goal of the Truman Doctrine in defense of the government of Greece during the civil war, and in opposition to guerilla sanctuary in Soviet-dominated Bulgaria. The policy of containment culminated in the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO realized the integration of American forces with the armed forces of several Western European nations, including a restored Germany. In Western Europe, the Soviet challenge was the establishment of a military framework for the Warsaw Pact, seeking to integrate Soviet forces with other military forces of Eastern and Central Europe.

From the perspective of the third interpretation of Political Realism, the American decision to engage its military forces in the long-term shared defense of Western Europe marked a historic departure from American foreign policy which had advanced Realism through the pursuit of American isolation, or “fortress America,” and the rejection of any “entangling” alliances over the long-term beyond its borders.

In the interpretation of Political Realism, as seeking stability in the international order leaves the question open as to the consistency of Political Realism with a policy aimed at liberation of the captive States of Eastern Europe as distinct from a policy aimed at the containment of further Soviet expansion beyond the satellite States into Europe. On the one hand, it could be argued that a liberation policy should be understood as moving beyond Political Realism, with its primacy of security interests, toward Political Idealism in support of political freedom and the advancement of democracy for the States of Eastern Europe. On the other hand, it could be argued that the support of movements for national independence

within those European nation-states that had a pre-war history of national independence was consistent with American security interests. Bertrand Russell, for example, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, advocated a policy in which the United States should threaten the use of its monopoly on nuclear arms to effect Soviet military withdrawal from occupation of East European States to its international borders. The political philosopher James Burnham had advocated during the Eisenhower administration that a policy aimed at liberation was a realistic alternative to a policy of containment that would not increase the risks of war. Yet, Burnham resigned his position in the Eisenhower administration after a short interim and Russell reversed his position on support of the United States in a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. Even with the insurrection of the Hungarian Communist leadership against the Soviet Union in 1956 with the resulting Soviet military incursion into Hungary, and the development of the Prague Spring by the Communist Party leadership of Czechoslovakia with the resulting Soviet military invasion of Prague, the United States sustained its policy of containment rather than replacing containment with activities aimed at liberation.

The theory of Political Realism and the policy of containment did not exclude the possibility of internal erosion within a Soviet system that was blocked from external expansion. A Nixonian policy of *détente* against the Soviet Union included the possibility that over the long term, Soviet capacity to control Eastern European States like Poland would diminish and the internal contradiction between First World military capability of the Soviet Union and its Third World economic realities would weaken its international position. At the same time, this view within the theory of Political Realism of the long-term consequences of *détente* “cum containment,” or what was termed “hardline *détente*,” for the potential internal weakness of the Soviet Union did not foresee the possibility that a Soviet response in seeking to reform its social and economic institutions would result in the short-term in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

A third level of engagement of American foreign policy in the stabilization of the postwar world order was the effort to extend mutual security treaties in other parts of the world outside Western Europe. The peace treaty with Japan involved American assumption of responsibility for the security of Japan in the region. One special area of concern had been the wartime arrangement with the Soviet Union for the occupation of the former Japanese colony of Korea. In accordance with an interpretation of Political Realism, which sought to limit the commitment by the United States of its military power on the landmass of the continent of Asia against the emerging power of Communist China or the Soviet regime of North Korea, Dean

Acheson had declared in January 1950 that Korea was to be outside the defense perimeter of the United States. It remains an unanswered question as to whether this assertion by the US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson was used by the Communist leader of North Korea, Kim II Sung, to receive Stalin's permission to initiate his previously proposed invasion of South Korea in June 1950. Whatever the prior planning of the State department regarding the American defense perimeter in Asia, it was evident that it was contrary to American security interests that its military be expelled by force from its postwar agreed zone of South Korea. The armistice agreement that brought hostile warfare in Korea to an end has been maintained without a subsequent peace treaty since 1953. In consequence of that outcome, North Korea has emerged, through its pursuit of nuclear missile capability, as a potential source of instability in the international world order.

On this third level of engagement, American foreign policy included security protection for Taiwan during a lengthy period aimed at the isolation of Communist China within the international order. The Nixonian détente policy with China also assumed continued containment of Chinese support for Communist expansion in Southeast Asia, whether in Indonesia, Malaysia, or Vietnam. The American policy opening to China was transformed when the Chinese Communist leader Deng Xiaoping introduced economic reforms in 1978 that led to the transformation of the Chinese economy through the introduction of many features of free markets including some privatization of State industry, labor mobility, and promotion of Chinese exports, as well as permission for foreign capital investment in China, and Chinese capital investment abroad.

Included in this third level of engagement, in accord with a theory of Political Realism, there would be included in this third level of engagement American acceptance and support in the postwar period of the emergence of the postcolonial nation-states of Africa, as part of a stable international world order. This support was not augmented by any effort at mutual security agreements with any of these new nation-states, although there were ongoing actions by the United States to exclude Soviet penetration of these States or any Soviet alliance with them.

An important region of the world in which American policy has been directed toward regional stability has been the Middle East. To a significant degree, peace and stability have not been achieved in the Middle East during many phases of the postwar period including the current phase as of 2017. Within the scope of a theory of Political Realism in foreign policy, American policy efforts in the Middle East in the postwar

period beginning in the 1950s sought a mutual security treaty with appropriate partners with shared interests. The first established treaty of this kind was the CENTO treaty, the Central Treaty Organization or Northern Tier, whose membership included three, large, populous, non-Arab, Muslim States, namely, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. Whatever the short-term function of CENTO in maintaining a brake on potential expansion of Soviet influence into the Middle East, the internal instability within each of these three States indicated the long-term difficulty of an American foreign policy of alliance with the States of the Middle East. Unlike the durability of NATO for the past seventy years, various treaty arrangements of support between the United States and several Muslim countries in the Middle East, including the CENTO treaty, were of relatively short duration. On the one hand the shared security interests of States like Turkey, Iran and Pakistan (which have not realized fully democratic governments and whose governments are not free of significant human-rights blemishes) with the United States that provided a basis for a treaty alliance, demonstrates the approach in foreign policy of a Theory of Political Realism. On the other hand, the breakdown of that treaty which was accompanied by changes within the governance of each of those States, as contrasted with the durability of NATO, suggests the relevance of the internal polity of a State for its foreign policy commitments that accords with a theory of Political Idealism.

In any event, Iraq, which was also intended to be a founding member of CENTO, withdrew from a security alliance treaty with the United States. The cause of that withdrawal was the successful coup against the Iraqi monarchical State in 1958, during which the young king was assassinated. As a result of this pro-Soviet coup and the successor coup carried out by Saddam Hussein, Iraqi foreign policy became non-aligned or anti-American.

The disagreements of American foreign policy with Turkey and with Pakistan have risen to the forefront of American foreign policy long after the breakup of CENTO. In the case of Iran, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 transformed Iran's foreign policy from a position of treaty alliance with the United States to one of opposition to the United States' interests throughout the region. In its efforts to achieve regional hegemony with sectarian allies in four States of the Middle East, namely Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, as well as in its national effort to realize nuclear missile capacity, Iran has become a leading power in the opposition to American interest in the stabilization of the international order in the Middle East.

A theory of Political Realism can include a response to the criticism that has been derived from the failure of Middle East alliances that a treaty with non-democratic States that are vulnerable to internal insurrection lacks the durability of treaties among democratic states. That response does not support the abandonment within Political Realism, of the priority of mutual security arrangements with States that are not democratic or have unblemished human-rights records, from countries like Saudi Arabia to South Korea. Rather, within a theory of Political Realism, there would be an agreement that mutual security agreements cannot be successfully developed as “brittle alliances” between transient rulers without an adequate basis in popular support or in the perceived long-term national interest of the State.

Any evaluation of a theory of Political Realism or of a theory of Political Idealism through American foreign policy in the Middle East requires the recognition of the context in which the options for a policy are extremely limited by the historical realities.

A fourth level of engagement of American foreign policy in the postwar period in the realization of stability in the world order has been the effort to assist political, social and economic development in the developing nations of the world. From the perspective of Political Realism, it could be argued that such efforts, which may contain, to a minor degree, a contribution to national security, should be considered as aspects of Political Idealism that would not gain the support of a politically realistic foreign policy. In any event, whether justified within a theory of Political Realism as a national security interest or whether supported by a theory of Political Idealism as a moral imperative in achieving a better world, American foreign policy has included the effort to provide assistance for political, social, and economic development in the postcolonial States and other developing States as part of establishing stability in the international order throughout the postwar period.

From the perspective of an essay on the theories of Political Realism and Political Idealism, the recognition of the long and strong support for programs of social and economic development within Third World countries in American foreign policy across numerous administrations, indicates that American foreign policy has shown a tendency to combine, in practice, some features of a theory of Political Realism with some features of a theory of Political Idealism. This practical coherence of opposing theories is also evident in the way in which advocates of Political Realism have sought to make use of institutions of the United Nations as an institution that represented, to a marked degree, the vision of Political Idealism for fulfillment of American security interests. In the case of the Security Council in the United Nations, such



efforts include the recent success in the unanimous agreement of all members of the Security Council to support an American resolution for increased sanctions against the North Korean regimes. In the case of various UN agencies, the actions and policies some of these, like UNICEF, have represented shared interest of the United States, or interests that are compatible with those of the United States. Other agencies of the United Nations, like UNESCO, have pursued policies, which are opposed to the interests of the United States, or are not compatible with the interests of the United States. In the case of the General Assembly of the United Nations, its early history exhibited several resolutions and decisions, which supported the interests of the United States, including most prominently, the military defense of South Korea in 1950. Throughout most of the past few decades, the decisions and actions of the General Assembly have opposed American interests or not been compatible with American interests to a significant degree. Yet even from the perspective of Political Realism, there would be a harmful effect to the public relations of the foreign policy of the United States in withdrawal from the United Nations, rather than from stoic resignation to any of the negative procedures of the General Assembly, as long as the veto power of American membership in the security council limits the applicability of these verbal decisions.

This survey of a theory of Political Realism in its third interpretation as the direction of foreign policy toward the establishment of a stable world order through an examination of American foreign policy in the postwar period requires an appropriate concluding reference to the end of the bipolar Cold War in the collapse of the Soviet Union. The mostly unpredicted collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, which included liberation from Communist Party domination of all of the captive states of Eastern and Central Europe including East Germany, as well as the independence of fourteen of the former Soviet socialist republics outside the Russian Socialist Republic constituted a major point of inflection for American foreign policy.

Within a theory of Political Realism it is reasonable to speculate whether there was a realistic opportunity between 1991 and 1999 to develop shared interests with the Russian Federation under the leadership of President Boris Yeltsin in political and economic reforms that would result in a relatively democratic and free-market Russian state. In this context, a politically Realist approach to historical events would recognize the significance of the fact that czarist-Russia had been an ally of Great Britain in its 19<sup>th</sup> century war against Napoleon, just as Russia had been the ally of the United States in the First World War, and even Stalin's Soviet Union had been the military ally against Germany in the Second World War. One outcome of such speculation is that American foreign policy missed a great opportunity in not developing a

relationship with a reforming Russian Federation through the 1990's that could have assisted Russian reform and realized mutual security interests. The alternative speculative possibility is that both the character of the framing institutions of Russian society and the characteristics of the Russian population excluded the possibility of the developments of democracy and of capitalism in Russia and made the return to an authoritarian Russian State inevitable.

The ending of the Cold War, with the demise of the Warsaw Pact, could have brought about some move toward the demise of NATO. Instead, in what has been identified as the second level of engagement, that is in NATO in its post-Soviet transitional period, treaty membership was extended to all of the former captive States of Eastern and Central Europe, as well as to the three Baltic, independent, former Soviet republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia that border on Russia. Apart from NATO's continuing function as a deterrent to aggression from the East, i.e. from Russia, NATO was transformed, to a degree, from a regional alliance to a transnational alliance that could be deployed against potential terrorist threats in the Middle East or Afghanistan.

On what has been previously identified in this essay as the first level of engagement, namely nuclear superiority and nuclear deterrence in American policy, there was a post-Soviet period of mutual arms limitation. Until the very recent past, representatives of the U.S. Department of Energy and Russian representatives negotiated sizeable reduction of nuclear warheads from the arsenals of both the former Soviet Union and the United States.

Within the theory of Political Realism, an interpretation of foreign policy as directed toward achieving stability in the international order the challenges that were confronted by containment policy toward the Soviet Union throughout the forty-five years of the Cold War have shifted. The new challenges involve the development of appropriate relationships with adversarial States like Russia and China. A special challenge is the threat to stability by non-state actors like terrorist movements. Perhaps the greatest of the new challenges is to be found in combatting the nuclear proliferation programs that have been advanced by Iran and North Korea as threats to international stability. Verbally, the main elements in confronting the new challenges are readily formulated, although in practical terms the policies often defy pragmatic operationalism.

Thus, in verbal terms, the response to an adversarial Russia includes, like Caesar's analysis of Gaul, to the degree to which there are shared interests with Russia, American foreign policy seeks to develop programs that build upon these shared interests. One example of potentially shared interests could be joint intelligence or joint action against Islamic terrorists, which has threatened Russia, Europe and the United States. To the degree to which Russia pursues its legitimate national security interests, American foreign policy should seek ways of accommodating and compromising with this pursuit. One focus of such concern is the way in which N.A.T.O. can contribute to the security of states which border Russia like Georgia and Ukraine while limiting the potential threat to Russia through participation of these States which were historically aligned with Russia as members of N.A.T.O. To the degree to which Russian foreign policy may be incompatible or hostile to Western security interests, the United States must be prepared to find appropriate ways to defend and protect the security interest of itself and of its allies. Examples of the need for appropriate counter measures to Russian policy may include blocking Russian violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine or Russian support for potential Iranian hegemony in the Middle East.

Within a theory of Political Realism, the same approach can be recognized as a governing policy towards a major potential adversarial power like Communist China.

Verbally, the elements that accord with political realism are readily identifiable and the triad that has been formulated in the case of Russia is similar even though the operational tasks required complex decision making. There is less clarity and great disagreement on the diversity of the means available within a theory of Political Realism for confrontation of the challenges posed by North Korea and Iran in nuclear proliferation. These seem to range from a debate over the unacceptability or acceptability of a Cold War doctrine of mutually assured deterrence between nuclear-armed states, to a debate over the acceptability or non-acceptability of preemptive military action against either or both of these states. The range of options or resolution of the drive for nuclear weapons by Iran and North Korea provide a challenge for the effort within the theory of political realism to achieve a stable or international order

In the case of American policy response toward terrorist movements, there appears to be consensus that there will be some degree of continuation of anti-terrorism actions in the short or immediate term with the hope that terrorism will subside over the long-term. A theory of Political Realism is not limited to military

actions against terrorist groups but can seek to support religious or educational institutions to shrink the ideological base of terrorist groups. A theory of Political Idealism would go against such policy actions, in the belief that, poverty or social injustice or societal injustice are “root causes” of terrorist movements, so that the development programs eradicate poverty and societal injustice as strategic elements in a war against terrorism.

The theory of Political Realism in foreign policy directed towards the stability of the world order as demonstrated through an account of the major elements of American foreign policy in the postwar period reveals the major achievement of seventy years of an international order without any major war while also recognizing for the same period the hard facts of a number of minor wars resulting in victories, stalemates and defeats with the current need for confrontation of ongoing challenges to future international stability. On this record, the advocates of political realism argue that their approach has been justified through the evidence of world history without major wars in contrast to the two great wars of the first half of the twentieth century.

### **III. THREE INTERPRETATIONS OF A THEORY OF POLITICAL IDEALISM IN FOREIGN POLICY**

#### **(A). THE THEORY OF IDEALISM IN FOREIGN POLICY AS SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY**

At the outset of the effort to draw the distinction between a theory of Political Realism and a theory of Political Idealism it should be noted that Political Idealism is not necessarily committed to the denial of the need for and the benefit of the pursuit of security interests by sovereign states. In many instances, the theory of Idealism would argue that the security interests of a state are protected more effectively over the long run when the state interprets its interests to include the protection of its ideals and values rather than the narrower sense of its military risks and benefits. More specifically, a theory of political Idealism would argue that the foreign policy of the democratic state should defend its democratic values and ideals rather than be confined to the protection of its security interests. According to this interpretation of political idealism for the foreign policy of a democracy, it is not only legitimate but required that the democratic state should pursue the goal of supporting democratic states abroad as well as the goal of seeking to transform non-democratic states into political democracies whenever feasible.

One major justification for an emphasis on the support and extension of democracy in the foreign policy of a democratic state is the thesis that the internal policies of a State and its external policies are intrinsically connected. According to this thesis, a democratic State that has achieved the rule of law and is able to carry out a peaceful transfer of power through consent of the governed is more likely to abide by international rules and to pursue peaceful relationships with other states than would non-democratic States. Accordingly, a sharp distinction emerges. A theory of political realism argues that the focus of the foreign policy of a state in its international relations should be restricted to the activities of the other state outside its own borders with the corollary that intervention in the internal affairs of other states is likely to exacerbate or harm peaceful relations between states. A theory of political Idealism, to the contrary, would argue that the foreign policy of a democracy can pursue “regime change” or the effort to transform a non-democratic polity into a democratic polity both because of consistency with its own ideals and because the result would be an improvement in peaceful international relationships.

Historical evidence during the post war period provides limited support on both sides of the issue. On the one hand, the fact that most of the States that were allied to the United States in its major security treaty, that is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, were democratic States would seem to have strengthened the cohesion and coordination of the alliance and enhanced its magnetic appeal to the so called “captive” nations of the Warsaw Pact including the resistance movements that emerged in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. Similarly, the post-war adoption of democracy by Japan and the transition to democratic governments in South Korea and Taiwan appear, to some degree, to provide these allies of the United States with a moral authority that could maintain sympathy among the regional neighbors against the growing power of China.

On the other hand, a theory of Political Realism would emphasize two contrary themes. One of these is the necessity for strategic alliance to include rather than to exclude non-democratic states with shared security interests. In the current major confrontation between American national interests in the Middle East and the apparent Iranian drive for hegemonic domination, the importance of the American relationship with such non-democratic States as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt is evident. A second illustration of the need for the foreign policy of a democratic state to maintain an alliance for mutual security with a non-democratic state was evidenced in the need for the United States to engage in war in

defense of South Korea even though the South Korean government at that time in 1950 fell far short of being a democratic government.

This argument against a theory of Political Idealism as support for only democratic States is connected to the previously mentioned argument regarding intervention in the internal affairs of other states. The pursuit of democracy in foreign policy particularly when the idea of democracy is interpreted in the limited sense of the rule by the majority party after its victory in an election has been shown, in particular cases, to have extremely negative consequences. Thus the support within American foreign policy during the Obama administration that was provided for the duly elected Muslim Brotherhood government had a deleterious effect on the relationship between the United States and several other States in the Middle East that had long opposed the activities of a Muslim brotherhood. Further, this support for the narrowly elected Muslim brotherhood government had a harmful effect on the relationship between the United States and the successor government of General el-Sisi which was pro-American even though it was not democratically elected. The efforts by the United States to intervene in the internal affairs of several Middle Eastern states in order to render them more democratic, particularly in the sense of having governments that have been formed by majority vote, have not necessarily benefited the national interests of the United States. One example of this is American pressure for democratic elections in the Palestinian Territories. These elections resulted in victory by the Hamas party which was opposed to peaceful negotiations and therefore represented a harmful development against the American interests in peace negotiations. Again, American pressure for democratic elections in Iraq after the American military interventions in that country may have been justified as the sole procedure for organizing the American interests of Iraq after the fall of the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein. Yet, it also appears evident that these democratic elections without a Federalist arrangement among the plural groups of Iraq led to the victory of the Shi'ite majority. This victory brought with it the risk of Iranian entry or control of Iraq with extremely harmful consequences for American national interests.

The democratic interpretation of the theory of Political Idealism in foreign policy is often justified by its supporters on the general ground that it is historically or empirically true that democracies do not wage war against other democracies. The verification of that proposed empirical evidence is open to question. It may reflect the brief history of democratic government in contrast to the lengthier history of wars fought by absolutist regimes or other forums of States. Yet, the strongest evidence to the contrary in modern history

is the fact that the “German Workers National Socialist Party” came to power in 1933 through the procedures of democracy and as a consequence of its victory in several contested elections.

Any evaluation of a theory of Political Idealism in terms of the support and extension of the idea of democracy in foreign policy should confront the nature of *Wilsonian Idealism* in American foreign policy. Wilsonian Idealism has been generally recognized as an approach which sought the support and extension of the idea of democracy throughout the world. The explicit formulation of Wilsonian Idealism is identified with his speech of January 1918, known as the “Fourteen Points.” One interpretation of the theory of Political Idealism is that democratic alliances and support for the extension of democracy throughout the world is the primary goal of the foreign policy of a democratic state and Wilsonian Idealism has been considered to be a model of this interpretation of Political Idealism. It is noteworthy however that Wilson’s statement of the “Fourteen Points” refers explicitly to the pursuit of justice and peace in foreign policy rather than to an explicit support for the idea of democracy.

This difference is especially significant in two of the “Fourteen Points.” The second point calls for “*Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war...*” Presumably for Wilson, freedom of navigation represented an ideal for peaceful relations among nations that reflected historic American values and ideals. At the same time it must be recognized that when this idealistic Point is transposed within the framework of Political Realism it represented a policy during the First World War in support of the continued ability of the United States to supply provisions to Great Britain to minimize the threat of starvation while Great Britain carried on a blockade of Germany that increased the probability of starvation for the people of that State. From President Wilson’s perspective this second point did not represent an abandonment of neutrality. From the Wilsonian perspective, the decision of the German military to block American shipping to Great Britain and France represented a violation of freedom of the seas that contributed significantly to Woodrow Wilson’s decision to enter the First World War alongside Britain and France.

Despite the familiar rendering, as noted above, of Wilsonian Idealism, as support for democracy in American foreign policy, Wilson’s sixth point regarding Russia seems to depart from a commitment to democracy. Whether for security interests in preserving the First World War coalition of an alliance between the Western allies and Russia against the Central Powers of Germany and Austria or in

consideration of potential inclusion in the post-World War I international order, Wilson's sixth point represented a foreign policy that welcomed the revolutionary Russian regime into the community of nations. Wilson called for "...a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing...." In sharp contrast to Wilson's sixth point, the American government did not grant diplomatic recognition to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics from 1918-1933.

There are important grounds for justification of an approach to foreign policy by democratic States that supports the idea of democracy and the extension of democratic government. In the post-World War II period the positive strategic value of N.A.T.O. was certainly enhanced by the fact that the participating members of N.A.T.O. were democratic States. The identification of N.A.T.O. as a treaty alliance among democratic States meant that the competition or "stand-off" between N.A.T.O. and the Warsaw Pact could be viewed as transcending a conflict between two military forces but could be interpreted as the struggle between the idea and institutions of democracy against the idea and institutions of dictatorships or totalitarianism. This characterization of the conflict between N.A.T.O. and the Warsaw Pact as not being a conflict between two military coalitions but as a struggle between democratic and dictatorial rule, was significant. It weakened the internal cohesion of the Warsaw Pact nations. Public opinion within the Eastern European nations did not support the thesis that as Communist popular democracies they represented a higher form of democracy but tended to accept the Western view that they were captive States who were denied the opportunity for genuine democracy and national self-determination. Thus, in accordance with a theory of Political Idealism, the development of N.A.T.O. as a coalition of democratic States had a significant role in its ultimate victory in the Cold War against the Soviet Union which can be projected by a correlation of forces between N.A.T.O. as a military alliance and the Warsaw Pact as a military alliance.

Similarly, in the defense of American security interests in Asia, the development of democracy among the States that are allied to the United States has been a major importance. In the conflict over the Korean peninsula, for example, the development of the government of South Korea from dictatorship to democracy has been of importance for the recognition of a moral divide between North Korea and South Korea. The critics of Political Idealism can counter this agreed perception with their realistic argument that



this does not lessen the difficulty and the challenge of coercing the regime in North Korea to abandon the development of its nuclear arms and intercontinental missile potentialities.

There is an ambiguity within the Wilsonian approach that provides the grounds for questioning the thesis that Wilsonian foreign policy would be exclusively committed to the support and extension of democracy. As previously noted, Wilson did not explicitly formulate his “Fourteen Points” in explicit terms of reference to the idea of democracy. Rather in the introduction to the “Fourteen Points,” the relevant statement is that the world be made “...safe for every peace-loving nation, which like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression.” The ambiguity can be found in the difference between Wilson’s support for the ideal of national self-determination and Wilson’s support for the idea of democracy. In several historical cases, as in Wilson’s approach to Czechoslovakia, these two policies coincide. Yet, it is significant that Wilson appeared to support national self-determination when the resulting nation State would not necessarily become a democratic State. Such an interpretation would support his previously cited acceptance of post-Revolutionary Russia into the community of nations as well as his argument for the independence of Poland in his thirteenth points even though Wilson advances no criterion of democracy for Poland and the new Polish nation State might not realize a form of democratic government.

Whether the Wilsonian approach to foreign policy is interpreted with reference to self-determination or with reference to democracy, from the perspective of the analysis of the theories of Political Idealism and Political Realism in this essay, it is relevant to take note of the great distance between President Wilson’s Fourteen Point speech of 1918 and the speech of then Secretary of State John Quincy Adams’s of 1821. This is particularly evident in that Adams had clearly formulated the view that the independence of European States which sought freedom from their imperial rulers would represent the primary issue confronting the United States on its support of its own ideals and values in its foreign policy in the near future. Adams asserted the position that the United States would consider these aspirations for independence and freedom to be justified but would avoid any intervention on behalf of their realization. For Adams, the internal institutions of the United States could function as a beacon for freedom and independence but the external foreign policy of the United States should not intercede in any way for the realization of these ideals abroad. Adams considered such intervention to be analogous to the idealistic hero who goes abroad in search for monsters to destroy rather than stick to the defense of his home and

hearth. To the contrary, Wilsonian affirmation of democracy and national self-determination as goals of American foreign policy at the end of the First World War, led to efforts of active intervention against imperial States like the Austrian-Hungarian empire and the Ottoman empire on behalf of self-determination of several emerging nation States.

Wilsonian Political Idealism is expressed in the introduction to the “Fourteen Points” by Wilson’s declaration that the old order in which nations practiced the pursuit of power and aggrandizement is to be replaced by a new order in which the society of nations will pursue justice and peace. Wilson’s more specific contribution to this species of Political Idealism included his fourth point which called for the reduction of national armaments to “...*the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.*” The continual pursuit of arms limitation agreements including the treaty against nuclear proliferation suggests that the ideal of limitations on arms and the conventions against the use of specified weapons has support not only among political idealists but also within a theory of Political Realism. Wilsonian Idealism was also formulated in his fourteenth point which required that “...*a general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants....*” which would function to keep the peace among nations.<sup>3</sup>

It is truistic to point out that if the contest between theories of Political Idealism and Political Realism were to depend upon the viability of the replacement of the old order of the pursuit of “power and aggrandizement” by a new order of human beings and nation States who would pursue “justice and peace,” then Political Realism would prevail as the practice of the real prevails against the rhetoric of the ideal. More historically or empirically, this is evidenced by the failure of such movements as the movement to outlaw war by international treaty in the 1920’s as well as by the powerless declarations of the League of Nations in the face of aggression in the inter-war period. The defense of the theory of Political Idealism is represented by more limited arguments than the sweeping suggestion of a new order of international relations which had been advanced in conjunction with the claim that the First World War would come to be regarded as “the war to end all wars.” One formulation of a more limited theory of Political Idealism is represented by the efforts of the United Nations Organization to approach the rule of law in international relations through realizing support for universal human rights in all member states.

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<sup>3</sup> See President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/wilson14.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp).

(B). POLITICAL IDEALISM AND THE ADVOCACY OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

The establishment of the United Nations Organization before the conclusion of the Second World War would appear to be *prima facie*, a triumph of Political Idealism, and the resurrection for Woodrow Wilson's previously repudiated support for American participation in the League of Nations. An aspect of that Political Idealism is suggested in President Harry Truman's association with the ideal expressed in Tennyson's poem regarding the potential of such an international organization. The relevant lines of that poem read "...*Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags are furl'd/ In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world....*"

There was strong support within American foreign policy at the end of the Second World War for a robust role for the United Nations in maintaining international peace. Yet proponents of Political Realism can point out that within two years of the end of WW-II, the Trumann doctrine, the explicit American policy of Containment and the founding of the North American Treaty Organization marked a priority on national security in foreign policy that was independent of the United Nations. To a degree, particularly after the 1950's, the summary conclusion could be that the rhetorical policy asserted the importance of the United Nations while the practical necessities recognized the priority of security interests.

It would move this essay far beyond its scope of the comparison of the theory of Political Realism and the theory of Political Idealism in foreign policy for it to attempt to chart the changing relationships between the United States and the United Nations over the decades. Similarly, the evaluation of the record of various international agencies such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization which represent institutions of Political Idealism but which could contribute to the national security interests of American foreign policy within a broad interpretation of Political Realism is beyond the reach of this essay. The more limited focus of its concern is the role of the United Nations in advocacy and support of international human rights as a measure of the theory of Political Idealism.

In the early phase of the United Nations the attention devoted to human rights within the foreign policy agenda of the member States is limited. Within the American delegations to the United Nations, for

example, the advocates of human rights like Eleanor Roosevelt or her successors who were either women or members of minority communities had fulfilled the previously mentioned position of rhetorical lightness in contrast to the other more politically powerful figures of the delegation who carried the primary burden of responsible foreign policy. Thus, when the international declaration of human rights was adopted at the United Nations in 1948, it was initially understood as an expression of intention without any binding force. Over the years, the declaration was reinforced by the development of Conventions on specified human rights which obligated the signatory members to that convention as well as by the appointment of a United Nations High Commissioner for human rights with a specified degree of authority in relationship to member States.

As a consequence of this approach, the United Nations Organization can cite efforts to counteract violations of human rights in various countries. The United Nations can also refer to its activities as an effort to establish the rule of law in international relations. Thus, it has used procedures of the International Criminal Court to carry out trials against political leaders who have been charged with violations of human rights.

With reference to the ongoing contest between a theory of Political Idealism and the theory of Political Realism, the record of the United Nations on human rights must be entered into the ledger. There are two important caveats in the reading of the record of the United Nations with regard to human rights.

The first important caveat is the ambiguity in the understanding of a juridical process as confused with a political process. The operation of UN agencies on human rights such as the International Criminal Court appear to transfer national standards of juridical process to the international arena. In reality this process is often more political than juridical. Unlike the procedures carried out by an Attorney General in a civil society in which all wrong doers are subject to sanction or prosecution, in the international arena some States are immune from sanction or prosecution by any agency of the United Nations while other states are not immune. This is evident in the selectivity that has been exercised in the choice of political leaders who have been charged with violations of human rights or other crimes against humanity in international courts. It is conspicuously evident in the fact that those member States which are chosen by the procedures of the United Nations to be chairman of the committees that supervise the administration of human rights at the United Nations, include States which are notoriously known to be in violation of human rights in their own countries.

The second important caveat relates to the broader feature of the General Assembly of the United Nations. With the expansion of the General Assembly of the United Nations from its approximate fifty member States in the 1940's to the 180 States of the latter decades of the twentieth century, a new majority coalition emerged. This majoritarian coalition was comprised primarily of the Soviet Union and its satellite States combined with the postcolonial countries generally known as the Third World. The agenda of the United Nations to a marked degree was transformed into the agenda of this majoritarian coalition. In the area of human rights, this shift in the agenda involves a greater emphasis on social and economic rights that stress economic development as distinct from political rights that stress individual freedoms. It is a contested issue as to whether this emphasis leads to a focus upon governmental programs for transfer of economic aid rather than programs for the economic development of the private sector.

With reference to human rights a major focus of concern of the majoritarian coalition emerged as the targeting of an individual selected State. Thus, one such target was the colonial Rhodesian government until its transformation into Zimbabwe. After this transformation any subsequent violations of human rights by the Mugabe government in Zimbabwe were ignored. A greater success was achieved in the targeting of the apartheid government of South Africa, which was replaced by the post apartheid government of Nelson Mandela. After Rhodesia and South Africa, the ongoing selected target for violations of human rights within the United Nations has become the State of Israel. It has been the object of an overwhelming number of condemnatory resolutions that charge violations of human rights, most of which have been vetoed by the United States as a member of the Security Council. One highlight within the General Assembly was its adoption of a resolution in 1973 that equated Zionism with Racism. This resolution achieved a degree of notoriety within American public opinion as demonstrating the biased nature of support for human rights within the United Nations.

One significant consequence of the politicization of human rights in the United Nations in the 1970's was the subsequent effort by the Carter Administration to affirm support for human rights as a major feature of American foreign policy. Although concern with the reform of the United Nations so as to realize the apolitical nature of human rights within the United Nations remained on the agenda, the political administration of President Carter also sought to emphasize an American role within its own foreign policy in support of human rights. Thus another aspect or third interpretation of a theory of Political Idealism in

foreign policy is the effort to affirm and practice support for human rights as a central feature of the foreign policy of a single nation State such as the United States.

(C). POLITICAL IDEALISM AND THE SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS AN ELEMENT OF NATIONAL FOREIGN POLICY

Political Realism as it emerged in the foreign policy of nation States of the modern era after the ending of the religious wars with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 also contained an important feature of Political Idealism. Although nation States were barred from the pursuit of war in support of their religious establishment, the right of nation States to pursue various diplomatic measures in support of “co-religionists” and to protect them from persecution in other States was recognized within the Westphalia system. There exists a long diplomatic history that confirms the exercise of these rights by several great powers such as the United States or Great Britain in defense of minority groups and dissident individuals who have needed protection from abuse by their own governments.

The diplomatic history reveals great variations in the range of diplomacy available for the protection of the human rights of co-religionists in accordance with the Westphalia system. These included a tradition of “quiet diplomacy” in which the particular case, which could be viewed as an irritant in harmonious relationships between two countries could be resolved without any injury to the sovereignty or *amour propre* of one of these States. “Quiet diplomacy” was augmented by public declaration which could be increased through discrimination in trade arrangements and include various sorts of diplomatic and economic sanctions. As previously noted, protection of human rights was not considered to be sufficient ground for the declaration or the waging of war in the absence of threatened national security interests. Yet a doctrine of “humanitarian intervention” did justify military action in a State where citizens were threatened by piratical barbarism or threats of genocide as long as such “humanitarian intervention” did not represent a justification for colonial aggrandizement with which it could be co-mingled.

From the genesis of recognized intervention on behalf of coreligionists according to the Westphalia system, they developed such programs as the protection of minority rights through treaty agreements under the Aegis of the League of Nations after WWI as well as the post World War II partial legitimisation of the foreign policy of one State’s intervention in the internal affairs of another State for its violation of the universal human rights of its own citizens. In the recent history of the relationship between the Soviet

Union and the United States there have been numerous examples of the use of advocacy of human rights as an instrument of foreign policy. There have been continual public declarations by the United States, for example, protesting the violation of human rights by the Soviet Union. In the case of support for the right of immigration from the Soviet Union the Jackson-Vanik legislation was passed by the Congress of the United States to deny “Most Favored Nation” arrangement for trade with the Soviet Union until emigration was permitted. An interesting example of sanction diplomacy was the decision by the Carter Administration to boycott American participation in the Olympic Games in the Soviet Union as a protest against the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan. An example of “quiet diplomacy” was the removal of the irritant the success of détente between the Soviet Union and the United States represented by such celebrated dissidence as Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, Anatoly Sharansky, Pavel Litvinoff et al. through permitting their release and emigration from the Soviet Union which were agreed to and arranged as acts of expulsion.

Apart from the judgment of particular cases and precedents, the general question remains as to the place of the theory of Political Idealism which requires or permits the pursuit of human rights as part of a national foreign policy. Several apparent platitudes can be recognized in connection with any attempt to completely exclude Political Idealism from foreign policy on behalf of Political Realism.

One of these is the obvious point that it is not Machiavellian to declare one’s self to Machiavellian in foreign policy. Rather the optimal realistic strategy of Machiavellian method requires that the defense and support of security interests be formulated and expressed under the banner of Idealism and with the rhetoric of morality. Such a banner and such rhetoric can garner support for security interests which would be denied to a candidly expressed defense of national security interests. Along these lines civic support for foreign policy that would not be excited by an argument for national security interests could receive the needed public support if it could be identified with an ideal goal.

Political Realism as defense and support of national security interests may coincide with the ideals and values of a democratic society. For those citizens who believe that the foreign policy of a democracy should support and extend the values and ideals of their democracy such coincidence would not exclude the justification of foreign policy goals with reference to these values and ideals. In this connection, the intuition that is evident in the line of George Santayana’s Sonnet which reads “*It is not wisdom to be only*

*wise...*” could lead to the recognition that it is not realistic to advance a theory of Realism to the complete exclusion of values and ideals. The realistic foreign policy of the United States and the West, which was advanced in the policy of Containment and was heralded by nuclear deterrence and the military organization of NATO, might not have led to the Soviet effort to adopt perestroika and glasnost which resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union, had there not been an element of ideals and values expressed in Western and American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. At the same time, the significant limitations that can occur in a foreign policy of a democratic State when a great emphasis on idealistic theory of support for human rights holds sway. The general argument is that actions of intervention in the internal affairs of other States or in international conflict on grounds of human rights often generate unanticipated consequences in international relations.

One of the more prominent, although contested example relates to the fall of the Shah in Iran and his replacement by the government of the Ayatollah’s. As noted above there was some disappointment and distress during the Carter Administration with the politicization of the human-rights agenda of the United Nations that had taken place during the 1970’s. The administration believed that it could undertake a reparative role by establishing within the United States Department of State, an office of Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and pursuing an agenda in support of human rights including keeping an American score card on the violations of human rights by particular nations.

Accordingly, the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights undertook to oversee the human rights actions of the Iranian government including its suppression of the protest by the Mullahs in Teheran in the late 1970’s. This oversight inhibited the repression of the protests of the Mullahs that had been previously carried out by the Iranian government. From the perspective of the supporters of human rights, the happy outcome of this oversight was realized by the assumption of power by the democratic Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar. With the recognition of unanticipated consequences however, Bakhtiar’s government lasted less than two days and was overthrown by the candidate of the Mullahs, the Ayatollah Khomeini, who had returned from exile in France.

It is always difficult to assess the casual factors that enter into such extreme regime change. There is a direct line in sequential order, however, from the strong American advocacy for human rights against the allied government of the Shah of Iran through the coming to power of the Ayatollah Khomeini.



A less dramatic difficulty can be cited in the same period of the Carter administration regarding its human-rights advocacy which was directed to both the governments of South Korea and of North Korea for their violations of the human rights of their citizens. The proposed juridically impartial consequences of this advocacy were to be reductions and limitations in the transfer of arms to both North Korea and South Korea. The unanticipated political consequence, however, was that the United States, which was the major supplier of arms to South Korea, was required to halt the transfer of arms to South Korea while the Soviet Union, which was then the major arm supplier for North Korea, could and would ignore any such directive for limitations on arms transfer. The less than impartial result that emerges is the weakening of South Korea which is an ally of the United States and the proportional strengthening of North Korea, which is an adversary of the security interests of the United States.

Whatever be the merit of these two examples, they were followed by an effort within the State Department to pull back the priority on human rights within national foreign policy. Thus if the National Security Advisor to the Carter Administration could assert that “*human rights is the soul of our foreign policy*,” the successor administration would argue that without abandoning support for American ideals and values in foreign policy, it could move towards the contrary emphasis that the body of American foreign policy required the priority of national security interests over human-rights advocacy.

The criticisms that have been advanced regarding the priority of human-rights policy such as the support for human rights by the United States in Iran which, arguably, contributed to the accession to power of the regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini, do not necessarily justify the reduction or elimination of the role of human rights in the foreign policy of a democratic country, like the United States. The force and viability of these criticisms leads to the drawing of a different moral. Since the support for human rights in foreign policy is so highly praised as a good intention alone, there may be a tendency to overlook a hardheaded evaluation of the consequences of such good intentions. Yet it is important to insist that it is the consequences of idealistic foreign policy or human-rights advocacy that demand evaluation, rather than its noble intentions.

This point may be a generalisable one but goes beyond the debate between a theory of Realism and a theory of Idealism in foreign policy to a divide in political theory between Conservatism and Liberalism. Thus, in the case of contributions for economic foreign aid to developing nations, there has been a division

between those who stress the importance of foreign aid including philanthropic assistance for economic development and those who stress the primacy of the private sector and free market investment as the optimal path of development for any developing economy. Again, critics of foreign aid and philanthropic assistance like Lord Bauer have suggested that praise for the good intentions of the former methods may distort the analysis of the economic consequences in the many cases where economic development has been realizable primarily through private sector activity and capital investment.

A relevant analogy may be suggested in the difference between projects that have artistic aims and projects whose aim is the box office. The good intentions of the artistic projects cannot negate evaluation of their consequences. This point has been formulated in a witticism attributed to Samuel Goldwin that can be paraphrased in the following sentences. There can be no heartfelt objection to box office even when there is no art. There is an acceptance of the legitimacy of art even when there is no box office. An objection arises when, whatever the original intentions, there has been no art and no box office.

A direct transposition of this commentary to the issue of support for security interests versus advocacy of human rights in foreign policy suggests a particular concern, illustrated in the examples mentioned above, in which the intentions to pursue human rights at the expense of security interests may result in a situation where both security interests and human rights are harmed. Such a cautionary warning is only one aspect of an ongoing debate with many other significant elements in dispute between theories of Realism and theories of Idealism in foreign policy. As of July 31, 2017 the debate is being carried on in the rewriting of the mission statement of the U.S. Department of State regarding its responsibilities. The earlier mission statement that specifically identified the Department of State's mission "*to shape and sustain... a just and democratic world*" is to be replaced by the omission of the terms "just" and the term "democratic" with a reference to leadership "...to shape a safer, more prosperous world." The optimal balance between the theories of Political Realism and the theories of Political Idealism remain contested.

## CONCLUSION

Any delineation of political theories such as Political Realism in foreign policy and Political Idealism in foreign policy raises the background question of the relationship between theory and practice. A general conclusion, which may be platitudinous, is that this relationship is twofold.

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On the one hand the political theory must be connectable and relevant to political practice. Thus in the case of a theory of Political Realism as well as in a theory of Political Idealism, the implementation of practical policies in specific circumstances can be connected or placed within the conceptual framework provided by such theories.

The extraordinary implementation of nuclear arms policy that was identified by U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara as Mutually Assured Destruction, with the obvious acronym M.A.D., can be connected to or placed within the conceptual framework of a theory of Realism which seeks balance of power between two contending States or blocs of States so as to avoid a resort to war by either of the contending parties. Further, the willingness of a State like the United States to station its own troops as trip wires in allied countries that are vulnerable to attack like South Korea or West Germany can be connected to or placed within a theory of Realism that is prepared to risk the waging of limited war in order to avoid a greater war that may have a greater threat to its own security interests. Again, the implementation of both of these policies of American national defense in these particular circumstances can also be connected to or placed within a theory of Realism according to which the goal of a major power is to realize a structure of international stability and world order.

A similar relationship between the practical implementation of specific policies and a theory of Political Idealism can be evidenced. Thus, the specific efforts of the United States military administration in the occupation of Japan to advance the institutions of Japanese democracy which went beyond its security interests can be connected or placed within a theory of Political Idealism according to which the foreign policy of a democratic State requires that State to seek the extension of democratic governments throughout the world. Further, the participation of the United States in the work of the United Nations in the area of human rights is connected to or placed within the conceptual framework of Political Idealism that requires a democratic State to be an active participant in advancing the role of the United Nations in support of universal human rights throughout the world. Again, the practical implementation of specific policies in support of human rights by a democratic State like the United States as in the Jackson-Vanik legislation in support of emigration from the Soviet Union is connected to and placed within the conceptual framework of a theory of Idealism according to which the foreign policy of a democracy should oppose violations of human rights in other nations whether allied or adversarial.

On the other hand the relationship between theory and practice is such that the theory is never determinative of particular policies under specified circumstances. Neither a theory of Realism nor a theory of Idealism can be viewed as a general mathematical rule or governing set of equations under which the assignment of empirical values to the variables in the rule or equation would result in a specified policy for particular circumstances. In an alternative analogy, these theories are not recipes for policy for which the appropriate empirical knowledge of the size of the ingredients to be used indicates the way to realize the product.

Rather these two theories in their diverse interpretations are abstractions which provide conceptual frameworks according to which the goals and limits to be realized in foreign policy and the costs and benefits of different approaches to foreign policy can be evaluated. One interesting illustration of such a comparative evaluation was suggested by Max Weber who identified the theory of Realism with a morality of institutional responsibility and the theory of Idealism with a morality of ultimate ends. The bait could then shift to an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of a morality of institutional responsibility as compared to a morality of ultimate ends.

This survey of the theories of Political Realism and Political Idealism in their diverse interpretations demonstrates as the theory is connected to the practice without being determinative of practice that there can be no foreign policy that would pursue security interests without some concern for the values and ideals of its people just as there would be no foreign policy that could pursue values and ideals while neglecting the security interests of its people. Accordingly, every foreign policy would pursue a fusion of aspects of both of these theories. At the same time the devastation which has been caused by world wars in the twentieth century suggests that in such a fusion or balance the priority of security interests in accordance with a theory of Realism must achieve recognition.