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LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

US FOREIGN POLICY AFTER THE COLD
WAR: REALISM vs. IDEALISM

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THESIS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The structural change in the international system caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union left the United States as the only global superpower, at least militarily, and triggered an idealistic rhetoric of grand designs for a New World Order characterized by the rule of law, peaceful settlement of disputes, collective security, and strong international organizations.

Such idealistic rhetoric uttered, especially by the US administration, carried theoretical and practical similarities to the principles mentioned in Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points after World War I or Franklin Roosevelt's four freedoms after World War II. The resurgence of these major idealist principles accompanied the initiation of a new era in international politics, which followed an era

of real politik where realism governed the formulation of foreign policies as was the case in the cold war international system.¹

Despite the Wilsonian rhetoric uttered by the US administration after the end of the Cold War, scholars were divided as to whether these principles would be applicable to the new world order. Some of them such as Henry Kissinger, the former US Secretary of State, reasserted the necessary application of realist principles to US foreign policy even with the termination of the Soviet threat, arguing that on two previous occasions attempts to establish an international system governed by idealistic principles had failed. The idealism of Wilson, for example, ended with isolationism and Truman's quest for freedoms and democracy was successfully constrained by Stalinist expansionism. Said Kissinger:

For the third time in this century, America thus proclaimed its intention to build a New World order by applying its domestic values to the world at large, and for the third time, America seemed to tower over the international stage. . . . Wilson had been constrained by isolationism at home, Truman had come up against Stalinist expansionism. In the post-Cold War world, the United States is the only remaining superpower with the capacity to intervene in every part of the globe. Yet power has become more diffuse

¹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "What New World Order?" *Foreign Affairs* 71(Spring 1992):83-87.

and the issue to which military force is relevant has diminished.

Victory in the Cold War has propelled America into a world which bears many similarities to the European State system of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to practices which American statesmen and thinkers have consistently questioned. The absence of both an overriding ideological or strategic threat frees nations to pursue foreign policies based increasingly on their immediate national interest. In an international system characterized by perhaps five or six major powers and a multiplicity of smaller states, order will have to emerge much as it did in past centuries form a reconciliation and balancing of competing national interests .²

The best laboratory for a Foreign Affairs student to study the effects of major international relations theories and their role as guidelines to international behavior is to focus on US foreign policy in the post-cold war era.

The US, being the Champion of Liberal principles such as democracy, human rights, and free enterprise, and the only remaining superpower beyond the cold war era, provides for a variety of specialized case studies in which the theoretical components of both realism and idealism can be tested on wide international scale.

² Henry A. Kissinger, Diplomacy (London: Simon & Schuster LTD, 1994), 805.

Relation Between Theory and Practice

In a research based on the theory and practice of international relations, it is important to understand the relationship between both aspects of this study. Reflections on the relationship between policy-makers and scholars enable us to realize the utility of the various theories of international relations to the practical task of making foreign policy and interpreting international behavior.

In recent decades, the increasingly diversified activities of governments prompted statesmen to seek the assistance of intellectual scholars in their task of making policy; Similarly scholars were anxious to make the maximum contributions possible to policy debates as such contributions constituted to some extent a verification of their ideas and theories. This interaction between policy and research in international relations is important especially because the issues involved are usually of high importance to the national interest of states. The politician, while receiving huge amounts of international data, needs theory to interpret these data and make

practical policy choices, otherwise these inputs remain a web of disconnected political events.³

Theory, in the words of Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, is "*nothing but systematic reflection on phenomena, designed to explain them and to show how they are related to each other in a meaningful, intelligent pattern, instead of being merely random items in an incoherent universe.*"⁴

Moreover, two kinds of theories exist in the field of International Relations: comprehensive or grand theories which explain generally a wide range of phenomena, such as the Realist or the Idealist theory of International Relations and partial or middle-range theories which explain a limited range of phenomena with fewer variables, like those theories dealing with the effect of the geographical environment or alliances on international behavior.⁵

In the complex world of international relations there is an essential need to theorize, for theorizing is the only way to classify and

³ Christopher Hill and Pamela Beshoff, ed., Two Worlds of International Relations(London: Routledge, 1994), 3.

⁴ James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Contending Theories of International Relations(New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1997), 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

understand the endless web of data emerging from the foreign policies of different countries.

...we can self consciously rely on the core practices of theory to assist us in bringing a measure of order out of the seeming chaos that confronts us. For it's through theorizing that we can hope to tease meaningful patterns out of the endless details and inordinate complexities that sustain world politics.⁶

Nevertheless, certain political circumstances in past and present times imposed limits on the development of international relations theory. These limits were evident in three broad periods: The first extended from the Middle Ages up to the end of the Napoleonic Wars in the nineteenth century. In this period, the belief that conflicts were an accepted fact of nature beyond the power of man to control constituted a constraint on the ability of man to theorize for the purpose of change or transformation, in other words, the fatalism of the Middle Ages did not provide for an incentive to theorize. In the Enlightenment period which followed, political thinkers believed in the inevitability of change and in the profound impact of reason on this change, consequently they were motivated to theorize in an

⁶ James N. Rosenau and Mary Durfee, Thinking Theory Thoroughly(Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1995), 2.

idealistic fashion calling for the establishment of a new order which would resolve the problems of mankind. This idealism was carried over into the nineteenth and early twentieth century by the Wilsonians who stressed on the "ought" and neglected the "is". This Wilsonian idealism was countered by the political, realists who, contrary to the idealists, stressed on the "is" and neglected the "ought". The rise of totalitarian and fascist regimes in Europe in the early part of the twentieth century served to discredit idealism. Students of international relations who observed the complex relationship between recurrent and unique events in history, that is between historical experiences that repeat themselves and those that happen only once expressed serious reservations about the utility of international theory. They were of the opinion that the best international theory can only point to alternative courses of action which might be possible under particular sets of circumstances. According to this understanding of theory, it can only provide for the identification of contingent factors on political action such as the effect of weather on military campaigns, a problem which continues to persist even in high tech confrontations like the Gulf War or the air campaign against Yugoslavia. According to this conceptualization,

theory serves to identify accidental and contingent realities and determine their impact on political development. Such for example was the relation of Hitler's inability to join the Austrian school of music to the course of history.⁷

Although they compliment each other, academic theory and political-diplomatic practice have basic differences. It is therefore, crucial to study the differences between the scholar, who seeks to achieve a theoretical understanding of phenomena and to formulate generalizations about political behavior based on a high level of probability, and the decision maker (or diplomat), who has to choose a specific course of action in a concrete set of circumstances, in which probability analysis may not be suitable.⁸

Time Perspective

Academics nowadays are able to influence public opinion and thus to influence policy-makers directly through radio and television channels. This academic privilege is a result of the technological

⁷ Kenneth W. Thompson, Fathers of International Thought (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 21.

advances which gave the communication industry a more important role especially in the field of broadcasting direct news reports. While discussing and explaining current events to the media, academicians contribute to a better public awareness and therefore to a more critical public opinion towards foreign policy. Hence, academicians have an undisputed concern for the current issues, but they are careful not to dedicate too much time for such issues in order not to be diverted from their main academic focus on the long-term cumulative perspective that stresses the importance of historical data.⁹

On the other hand, the decision-makers interest in the day-to-day events may serve as an effective catalyst to the advance of theory. For example, the facts about the sufferings in different non-democratic countries provoked the development of human rights theory and other wider theories of international society.¹⁰

⁸ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, Contending Theories, 22.

⁹ Hill and Beshoff, Two Worlds, 212-213.

¹⁰ Ibid., 213.

The paradox here is that theory and practice need to be congruent, but in order to inform practice theory needs to be autonomous and ahead of the practical game, rather than chasing behind it.¹¹

Value Factor

Scholars of academic international affairs are usually motivated by some normative concern, whether a concern for peace, a desire to narrow the gap between North and South, or to understand the functioning of international organizations as a means to achieve one's national interest.¹²

Academicians play an important role in determining how the mass of people understand the world beyond their own experience and beyond the words of politicians, either by supporting or rejecting the "conventional wisdom", or motivational values of a society.¹³

Policy-makers, well aware of this fact, tend to make international relations "a political as well as an academic battleground." that is why

¹¹ Ibid., 214.

¹² Ibid., 11.

¹³ Ibid., 13.

major governments around the world sponsor lectureships, promote research centers and give grants for academic institutions to work on themes of interest to themselves. For example Soviet experts in the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) constituted a major intellectual pillar for the Party and the Foreign Ministry. In Germany the Stiftung fur Wissenschaft und Politik at Ebenhausen operates like an academic institution, except for the fact that it is funded by the Federal Chancellery and Defense Ministry and works on themes of policy-relevance. Moreover, the US Congress has explicitly funded the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the United States Institute of Peace for the purpose of advancing major inputs into scholarly debates on international relations.¹⁴

Moreover, politicians are concerned with the specific details of the political values, forces, and trends involving a particular situation and all its realities, rather than with a universal abstraction or probability.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁵ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, Contending Theories, 22.

Furthermore, policy-makers may find themselves in great need of academic ideas at certain critical intervals in history. The 1990s were a good example, where policy-makers around the world were uncertain as to how the post-Cold War (post-Soviet Union) world was developing. Academicians cannot make new realities, but they can interpret trends in a long time frame and can support concepts which may help to make sense of a huge amount of confusing details.¹⁶

In all the major theoretical developments in international relations, whether over interdependence, international political economy, or human rights, there is a mutual relation between theory evolution and foreign policy practice. The emergence of new theories is also a crucial matter for practitioners. They should know about theoretical developments as well as ongoing events.¹⁷

The development of Human Rights theory, for example, gave some states like the US an excuse to intervene in the domestic affairs of other states on the grounds that their governments have been violating human rights. Such, for example, has been the interventions in South Africa before independence and recently the starking military

¹⁶ Hill and Beshoff, Two Worlds, 14.

intervention in Yugoslavia. Interventions of the sort would have been considered a violation of national sovereignty had it not been for the invocation of human rights. The domestic affairs of states under article two; paragraph seven of the charter of the United Nations cannot be violated as they are regarded to be strictly under the sovereignty of the concerned states.

Similarly, the issue of human rights violations affected the formulation of US policy towards China during the nineties, and the no fly zone imposed in Southern Iraq aimed at protecting the Shiite population of that area.

Conversely, theories may trail behind historical events. One could, for example, regard the development of human rights theory and its saliency as an attempt by the Western powers to use it as an ideological weapon against the communist world in the cold war, and likewise a weapon against third world countries whose radical policies were regarded by the West as unacceptable. The US, for example, evoked the theory of human rights at Helsinki in 1975 where the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was established. The Soviet Union in this Conference made

¹⁷ Ibid., 217.

commitments under Western prodding to observe human rights. These commitments thereafter turned out to be very useful for the West as they provided constraints on Soviet policy. Whenever these rights were violated, the Western states used these violations as another weapon in the cold war against the USSR.

In the third world countries, human rights provided for the justification of Western intervention and justified the black listing of some of those radical states. The black listing of third world states provided for serious constraints on their radical behavior.

Another significant example on the relation of international theoretical evolution and political events was the resurgence of the realist approach to international relations after World War II. The dominant idealist trend collapsed when the League of Nations proved impotent in dealing with the incidents which lead to war.

Professional Integrity

Scholars are always concerned about maintaining their intellectual integrity. The academicians loses his professional independence when he becomes involved too much in the day-to-day politics of his

country that is, when his work is valued according to its compatibility with foreign policy agenda.

In general the powerfully committed do not make the best academics, while in politics, an intellectual passion is the worst. The combination of rigidity and the intellectual capacity for generalization quickly turns politics into the art of the impossible.¹⁸

An effective strategy for academicians to achieve an independent theoretical work is to keep their distance from domestic politics and avoid involvement in the specific foreign policy agenda, unless discussed in a broader inclusive research carried under a long time-perspective with the aim of reaching a theory of international relations.

Academics should provide a pool of ideas and information on which society can draw in various ways, but it is far too limiting if they seek to act as a kind of adjunct planning staff to the foreign policy executive within government.¹⁹

Practical politicians and diplomats, on the other hand, are primarily interested in choosing a specific course of action which is highly

¹⁸ Ibid. 17.

¹⁹ Ibid. 19.

influenced by the day-to-day events. They have no time to extend their knowledge to a wide range of international realities, instead they tend to focus on making the foreign policies of their countries which “requires a nationally specific perspective”.²⁰

Research Question and Objective

When studying US foreign Policy after the Cold War, it is crucial to detect what theory components affected decision making and to do so several questions come to one’s mind; Did the US foreign policy after the Cold War coincide with the Idealist rhetoric uttered by the US administration? And when it did; under what circumstances these principles were adopted? Also, what were the real policy objectives underlying such policy orientation? On the other hand, when Realist principles were chosen; under what conditions and what were the reasons behind such decisions? Finally, is there a certain framework in which we can formulate what course of action (Realist or Idealist) the US policy-maker followed in conducting US policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

²⁰ Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, Contending Theories, 23.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to determine to what extent do the elements of power politics constitute a guideline to US foreign policy as opposed to the well known idealistic principles of the US, mainly democracy and human rights. Such a study evidently cannot be done without reference to facts or case studies.

Methodology

Answering the above mentioned questions and achieving the objectives of this research imposes a certain methodology to be followed in the study of both theoretical approaches and their applicability to US foreign policy in the post-cold war era.

After studying the historical background of both theories, operational definitions shall be given to each one according to the research objective. The characteristic component of each theory shall be determined by the operational definition, then attributes of both theories, Realist and Idealist, are studied and applied to US international behavior. Upon examining the idealist component in US foreign policy such as democracy and human rights, a question is asked as to whether in advocating such idealistic principles, elements

of realism were involved. The research attempts to prove that sometimes the US utilized idealistic principles for pure realistic purposes, that is they were manipulated as instruments of foreign policy to achieve realistic US national interests.

In the Realist theory the components involved and examined are the quest for power in a world conceived as an anarchy which involves the survival of the fittest. The components of the operational definition for the idealist theory shall involve the quest of the US for the establishment of democracy and the realization of human rights. The tendency of the US to strengthen and promote international organizations with the object of introducing some order to international life shall likewise be examined. Also, a contrast between moral elements and the power elements involved in US policy shall be made.

CHAPTER TWO

Realism and Idealism in Cumulative Understanding

International relation as a separate intellectual discipline was first recognized in Britain after World War I and in response to it. At that stage the discipline was of a legalistic idealistic nature which assumed that world peace would be preserved by strengthening the League of Nations and collective security. Although lawyers at that period played an important role in the discipline, it was mainly considered a branch of history especially in Britain and the United States. Idealists held an optimistic view about human nature. This optimism faced with the cruelties of World War II and the events leading to it (the invasion of Manchuria, signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, and the failure of the League of Nations sanctions against Italy), was abandoned in favor of the realist approach to international relations. The realist theory led by E. H. Carr in 1939 and Hans Morgenthau in 1948

dominated the field of international relations after WW II until the 1980s.¹

The following phase in the general evolution of the discipline was characterized by methodological developments due to positivist aspirations to move the subject from its philosophical nature to a science of international relations on the model of the natural sciences.² This change was promoted by disagreements among scholars of international relations, as in all the social sciences, not only on which theory best explains the subject, but also on how to approach the problem of theorizing itself.³ This methodological development led to the development of neorealist and neoliberal institutionalist theories.

¹James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Contending Theories of International Relations(New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1997), 12-13.

²Chris Brown, International Relations Theory, New Normative Approaches(London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 2.

³Michael Nicholson, Causes and Consequences in International Relations. A Conceptual Study(London: Biddles Ltd., 1996), 2.

Historical Background of Realism and Idealism

The best way to devise an operational definition for such concepts as Realism and Idealism is to survey the historical background or evolution of both theories until our present time

Idealism

Idealism, also called Utopianism or Liberalism, assumed that human beings are reasonable, good, and moral. Idealism of the twentieth century, according to E.H. Carr, originated when the Renaissance thinkers substituted the divine authority of the church for the authority of the state.⁴

Utopianism was firmly established by the eighteenth century. It was individualistic; that is, it made human conscience the sole determinant of moral values. It was also rationalist; that is, it assumed that human

conscience is reasonable. Later on, Jeremy Bentham produced a new definition for rational ethics or what should be morally good. He defined what is good as "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". This new formula assumed that public opinion is reasonable and can be relied upon to make the right judgements on any issue if presented rationally, and that it will act in accordance with this right judgement, which is a basic pillar of the liberal doctrine.⁵

Moreover, it was thought that public opinion, if allowed to be effective, will prevent wars because people would then choose representative and republican forms of governments which would act in the best interests of their citizens. Thus, there would be no wars under republican governments.⁶

In the twentieth century, Woodrow Wilson was a proponent of self-determination, liberal democracy, and free trade. The most important reflection on the attempt to introduce utopian principles to international politics was the League of Nations, an institution that was thought to have the ability to change world order and bring about peace through the promotion of liberal principles, such as democracy,

⁴Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939*(New York: ST. Martin's Press, 1962), 22.

⁵Ibid., 23-24.

free trade, and international law. Utopianism assumes that international organizations and international law can establish universal ethical standards to regulate state behavior. Moreover, the nineteenth century belief in the rightness of public opinion and its ability to prevent wars was also introduced to international politics of the twentieth century.⁷ But the invasion of Manchuria in 1931, and therefore, the failure to produce a peaceful world order brought an end to the utopian assumption that international public opinion is enough to prevent war, and an end, likewise, to the idealist era in twentieth century politics.⁸

Realism

The realist approach to world politics can be traced back as far as Thucydides (400 B.C.), who wrote: “the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept.” His interest in the importance of power to alliances and counter-alliances in state

⁶Ibid., 25.

⁷Ibid., 28-31.

⁸Ibid., 36-40.

relations placed Thucydides in the heart of the realist school.⁹ At a later stage came Nicolo Machiavelli (1469-1557) who suggested that politics needed distinct moral standards from those of the individual to ensure the survival of the state. He emphasized power, clash of interests, and a pessimistic view of human nature when describing state relations. Another realist was Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who stressed also the importance of power in human behavior, but he emphasized strong political institutions to manage such power and to prevent conflict. George Hegel (1770-1831) suggested that the ultimate duty of a state is self-preservation. Max Weber (1864-1920) dealt basically with the struggle for power among states as the main characteristic of political relationships. In addition to the struggle for power, Weber was also concerned about the economic struggle for existence.¹⁰

In the modern era, Realism dominated the study of international relations from World War II until the early 80s. This theory holds several assumptions which have their roots in the works of the above mentioned scholars: (1) nation-states are the principal actors in the international system; (2) international politics is characterized with conflict among

⁹James N. Roseneau and Mary Durfee, Thinking Theory Thoroughly(Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1995), 9.

member states who rely on their own capabilities to insure survival in an anarchic system; (3) states exist in a condition of legal sovereignty but having different levels of capabilities, with greater and lesser states as actors; (4) states are unitary actors and domestic politics can be separated from foreign policy; (5) states are assumed also to be rational actors characterized by a decision-making process leading to choices based on maximizing the national interest; and (6) power is considered the most important concept in explaining, as well as predicting, state behavior. The Realist theory came as a critique and an alternative to what was termed "utopian theory" or idealist theory.¹¹

The Utopian-Realist Debate

The debate between realism and idealism, or the "antithesis of utopia and reality" as E. H. Carr called it,¹² is a debate on whether political behavior is essentially a predetermined aspect of the anarchical international system, or an act of free will where states are able to overcome anarchy

¹⁰Dougherty, Contending Theories, 63,65.

¹¹Ibid., 58.

¹²Carr, Twenty Years' Crisis, 11.

and establish a world order based on international cooperation and interdependence.¹³

The first and maybe the most important point of debate between utopianism or the idealist theory of international relations and realism is their point of departure as separate theories in the discipline of international relations. Utopianism started out of a relatively wishful thinking to abolish wars or to reduce their destructiveness in the international system. The tendency towards analyzing facts and means was weak or nonexistent. Utopianism stressed how international relations ought to be conducted; realism, on the other hand, criticized the utopian preference for visionary goals over scientific analysis. Realists are empirical, conservative, suspicious of idealistic principles, and refer to history when attempting to understand current or future events. Also, they usually produce a pessimistic rather than an optimistic view of international politics. They observe facts of international phenomena, analyze them, and reach conclusions out of such facts.¹⁴

Utopians attempted to create universal ethical standards; that is, to produce ethical standards independent of politics and try to make politics

¹³Dougherty, *Contending Theories*, 59,60.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 60,61.

conform to them. Realists refuse to incorporate ethics and values in the study of international politics. They are interested in facts, and therefore, believe that morality is relative and not universal. Ethical standards in international relations should be sought from a political background only.¹⁵

Utopians refused the balance of power politics, national armaments, the use of force in international politics, and the secret treaties of alliance that preceded World War I; In contrast, realist stressed power and national interest in the conduct of international relations. They do not believe in the systemic change suggested by the utopians to bring the possibility of disarmament. On the contrary, realists stressed national security, the need for military force, and balance of power to support diplomacy.¹⁶

Utopians emphasized international law and democracy, a natural harmony of interest in peace as an effective instrument for the preservation of global peace, a great dependence on reason in the conduct of human affairs, and the importance of public opinion in the preservation of peace. At the global level, utopians believe that

¹⁵Carr, Twenty Years Crisis, 21.

¹⁶Dougherty, Contending Theories, 60,61.

international institutions such as the League of Nations or the United Nations can be devised for the purpose of introducing new international norms of conduct which, in turn, will help change the political environment and thus political behavior and establish world peace. Utopians assume that enlightened public opinion is able to make rational decisions and choose representative and democratic forms of government. In Wilsonian terms, an international system based on democracy would necessarily be a peaceful one. A principle utopian proposition, thus, is national self-determination. Realism, in contrast, presupposed that reason and public opinion, as well as the ability of international institutions, namely the League of Nations, to change political behavior, had proved ineffective. For example, they weren't able to preserve peace during the 1930s; they didn't prevent the invasion of Manchuria and Ethiopia. In later decades, also, they didn't prevent the Cold War or regional and ethnic conflicts that occurred after the Cold War.¹⁷

¹⁷Ibid., 60,61.

The Current Debate

The classical realist and utopian theories developed into a modern version of neorealism or structural realism, and neoliberalism or Liberal Institutionalism.

Neoliberalism

The current neoliberal theory passed through three stages of developments before it acquired its present characteristics: functional integration theory in the 1940s and early 60s, neofunctionalism in the 1950s and 1960s, and interdependence theory in the 1970s.

Functionalism by David Mitrany (1888-1975) proposed that the world of the twentieth century is characterized by a number of technical issues which need to be solved, not by politicians, but rather with the help of specialized professionals in isolation of political considerations. Some structures and procedures in the form of international institutions could be devised for the function of solving such technical problems. Moreover, Mitrany believes that a successful cooperation in one issue area would increase the mutual level of trust and therefore provides a

favorable attitude to achieve further cooperation in other fields. This functional cooperation would encourage multilateralism, and therefore, produce international institutions in the form of international organizations and regimes.¹⁸

A further development of Mitrany's theory came in the form of neofunctionalism. The neofunctionalist theory is an attempt to develop,

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... with case studies the functional integration theory.

... in the European Union (EU) and the development of

... it focused on the ability of political parties, interest

... tical elites of these units, to affect the process of

... rnational system.

... eral theories explaining the need for cooperation in

... s is the theory of interdependence. This theory as

... rman Angell's *The Great Illusion* is a theory of

... s which stipulates that national wealth can no more

... and conquest, rather states should follow a peaceful

... oach to insure their national interests. War is no

longer an affordable option because of technological

¹⁸Ibid., 422.

and economic advances which rendered states vulnerable because of the devastating military capabilities and industrial interdependence.¹⁹

The neoliberal institutional theory of international relations calls for the necessity of cooperation in an anarchic international setting, based on the national interests of states. Therefore, when discussing international regimes, neoliberals suggest that states acting as power maximizers in a self help system will opt for joint decision making in the form of international regimes in order to reach optimal results on certain issues. The decision for a joint action arises from the fact that those states will arrive to less favorable results if they work on separate individual basis. This formulation supposes the existence of interdependence; that is, "an actor's returns are a function of others' choices as well as its own. If actors were independent in the sense that their choices affected only their own returns and not others', then there would be no basis for international regimes." Regimes, however, need not be institutionalized in the form of international organizations. For example the United Nations is an international organization that is not a regime because membership to this organization does not put constraints on the

¹⁹ Jurg Martin Gabriel, Worldviews and Theories of International Relations, a Conceptual Study(New York: ST. Martin's Press, Inc., 1994), 65-70.

independent decision making of the state, which is an essential prerequisite in case of a regime. Moreover, it assumes that since structure or the global distribution of power affects the interests of a state, and since regimes are the function of those interests, any change in the distribution of power would trigger a change in states' interests, and therefore would bring a change to the regimes themselves.²⁰

The effects of the neoliberal institutional theory on international behavior in the post-Cold War era are evident in several aspects.

Efforts made by the Clinton Administration to enlarge the sphere of democratic rule, are a good example of the increasing liberal debate on "democratic peace" which meant that democracies don't fight each other. Moreover, liberal institutionalists agree that NATO's highly institutionalized character helps explain why it has been able to survive and adapt, despite the disappearance of its main adversary.²¹

The economic strand of liberalism, suggests that the globalization of world markets and the rise of transnational networks and non-governmental organizations and the rapid spread of global

²⁰ Arthur Stein, Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World, ed. David A. Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 29-53.

²¹ Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," Foreign Policy (Spring 1998): 40.

communication technology, are undermining the power of states and shifting attention away from military security toward economic and social welfare. The basic logic behind this suggestion is that as states become more and more involved in economic and social connections, become very unrewarding for any state to attempt any unilateral action disrupting these ties, especially the use of force. This perspective implies that war will rarely occur among industrialized democracies. This same belief also suggests that involving Russia and China in the interdependent interactions of world capitalism is the best way to promote both prosperity and peace, especially if this process creates a strong middle class in these states and reinforces pressures to democratize. When these nations achieve prosperity, then competition will become exclusively of an economic nature.²²

Neorealism/Structural-Realism

Neorealism, the scientific version of modern realism represents the evolution of the classical philosophical realist theory towards a systematic empirical one. It aims at shaping classical realism by introducing propositions based on "the separation of independent and

²²Ibid., 40.

dependent variables”, and by using comparative analysis in reaching such neorealist theory. Neorealism is supposed to define key concepts in a clearer, more consistent manner and to introduce propositions subject to empirical testing and investigation.²³

In his “theory of international politics”, Kenneth Waltz laid the foundations of the neorealist theory, also called structural realist theory, to reflect its focus on the structure of the international system as the main variable affecting political relationships among member states. The writings of Waltz, as all other neorealist scholars, build on classical realism, especially the writings of Hans Morgenthau. Neorealism still considers power to be a key element, but it is being used as a necessary technique to acquire political objectives, rather than being an objective itself.²⁴ In this manner, Waltz asserts that states do not seek to maximize power but merely to balance it.²⁵

Common Assumptions of Two Strands of Realism

Classical realist and neorealist-structural realist theories have three major

²³Dougherty, *Contending Theories*, 80.

²⁴Ibid., 80.

²⁵Gabriel, *Worldviews and Theories*, 81,82.

assumptions in common: The first assumption is the use of war and diplomacy which are still as important to the present international system as they were to the Greek city-state world 2500 years ago. It is presumed that the nature of relations between states has not changed over the centuries, nor is it likely to change soon. The search for power was and will remain the primary motive for the behavior of states. Nevertheless, classical realism is more open to the possibility of restraint, choice, and even some moral foundations in the sense of prudence, as a source of state behavior. For neorealism, on the other hand, conflict among the members of the international community is the natural conduct of state affairs. Traditional realists focus on the quality of diplomacy and the ability of prudential calculations of interest to stimulate cooperation based on rational cost-benefit calculations.²⁶

The second assumption is that domestic factors do not affect state behavior. Realism pays no attention to the internal structures, histories, and cultures of states. It does not matter whether a state is an authoritarian, non-market, or democratic capitalist one. It is supposed that all states will behave in a similar manner under the same

²⁶Rosenau, *Thinking Theory*, 11.

circumstances; that is, if attacked, they will defend themselves. If one state seems to be growing in power, the other states will either try to reach an equivalent growth or find allies. On the other hand, if some states seek international law to solve a problem, then other states may seize the opportunity of solving the problem by also signing the agreement. Realism of both strands assumes that states are "unitary actors," thus, if a conflict occurs between two departments in a state (e.g., foreign and defense), it will be solved authoritatively and only one policy will be directed to the outside world.²⁷

The third assumption is the rationality of states. In the case of classical realism, a wide range of policy choices is available to states that are consistent with their perceived interests. For neorealists, however, the anarchical international system sets the boundary for choices. Rational decision results from calculations in which states link means and ends in a logical fashion. States also are presumed not to act in any way that might injure their own self-interest.²⁸ States also assume that the preferences of other states are always transitive. Realism suggests that security is more important than economics and economics is more

²⁷Ibid., 12.

²⁸Ibid., 12.

important than human rights. It follows that whenever faced with a choice between their security interests and their human rights concerns, states will choose security. Likewise, they will choose economics over human rights, but security over economic objectives.²⁹

In addition to the neorealist interest in relative and absolute gains, realism also deals with the issue of ethnic conflict. It also offers a realist interpretation of such conflicts. Barry Posen proposed that the breakup of multiethnic states could place rival ethnic groups in an anarchic setting, thereby triggering intense fears and tempting each group to use force to improve its relative position. This problem would be particularly severe when each group's territory contains enclaves inhabited by its ethnic rivals, as in former Yugoslavia, because each side would be tempted to expel those alien minorities and expand to incorporate any others from their ethnic group that lay outside their borders. Moreover, realists cautioned that NATO, with no clear enemy in sight, would likely face increasing pressures, and that expanding its presence eastwards would jeopardize relations with Russia. Other scholars, such as Michael Mastanduno, argued that US foreign policy is generally consistent with realist principles in so far as its actions are still designed to preserve US

²⁹Ibid., 13.

predominance and to shape a post-war order that advances American interests.³⁰

The ongoing preoccupation with power and security that states show, even after the Cold War, is considered by realists a proof that their theory is still the best way to understand international relations. This explains why Asians and Europeans are now eager to preserve and, if possible, to expand US military presence in their regions. Moreover, the US is accused of implementing policies aimed at preserving its leading position in the international system: It has taken advantage of its present superiority to impose its preferences whenever possible, even at the risk of irritating many of its long-standing allies. It has forced several one-sided arms control agreements on Russia, dominated the problematic peace efforts in Bosnia, and lately in Kosovo, and took steps to expand NATO into the former Russian sphere of influence, and became increasingly concerned about the increasing power of China. Also, it has called repeatedly for greater reliance on multilateralism and for larger role of international institutions, but has treated agencies such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization with contempt whenever their actions did not conform to US interests. It refused to join

³⁰Walt, "One World, Many Theories", 35-37.

the rest of the world in signing a treaty that outlaws the production of landmines and was uncooperative at the Kyoto environmental summit.³¹

Balance of Power and Realism

The balance of power is the oldest known theory that regulates state behavior in the international system. The balance of power as a theory of international affairs was associated with the Newtonian conception of universal equilibrium. Realist theorists use the balance of power as the major concept for explaining and predicting the power relations of states. States are supposed to preserve their security through power balancing. As a situation or a condition, balance of power can be defined as “an objective arrangement in which there is a relatively widespread satisfaction with the distribution of power.” Thus, members of the international system will form countervailing coalition if they felt insecure because of the sudden appearance of a disturber to the balance or any power attempting to dominate the system.³²

³¹Ibid., 43.

³²Dougherty, *Contending Theories*, 37,38.

Realist theorists are interested in the structure of the international system (i.e. the distribution of capabilities (power) between the interacting units in an anarchic international system) because they believe it affects state behavior which in turn is expressed through the balance of power mechanism. The structure of the system is said to affect the operation of the balance mechanism, the stability of the international system, and the tendency to make war and peace. Moreover, the balance of power is supposed to serve three purposes: First, "To ensure the continued existence of the state system by preventing universal empire through conquest. In other words, let no one power predominate."³³ Thus, when the balance is threatened because of an increase in the power of one state in the system, a big concerned state in favor of the status quo or the existing balance and which is strong enough interferes to restore the balance. Historically England played this role in the European state-system.³⁴ Second, "to assist, at the regional level, in maintaining the independence of states."³⁵ And third "to facilitate the growth of law and organizations by providing a kind of enforcement by great powers."³⁶

³³Walt, "Thinking Theory", 21.

³⁴Dougherty, *Contending Theory*, 39.

³⁵Walt, "Thinking Theory", 21.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 21.

Thus the balance of power is crucial to maintaining order in international politics. It is one of the methods along with law, war, and diplomacy, that states use to serve the goal of maintaining the state system. Sometimes power may be unable to balance in other instances they may see no reason to do so. For example, China has been the ultimate power in East Asia for centuries. It dominated all other regions so thoroughly that no other state could gain power internally or make enough allies to balance the power of China. Similarly, in the Western Hemisphere, the United States dominated most countries in the region. None of the Latin American states has built enough power or successfully allied with others to counter-balance the United States.³⁷

According to Stephen Walt, states generally enter into alliances in response to threats. When entering an alliance, states may either balance (i.e., ally in opposition to the major source of threat) or bandwagon (i.e., ally with the state that presents the major threat). If balancing is more common than bandwagoning, then states are more secure because aggressors will face combined opposition. Hence, status quo states should avoid encouraging countervailing coalitions by abstaining from any threatening foreign and defense policies. But if bandwagoning is the

³⁷Roseneau. Thinking Theory. 21.

prevailing tendency then security is lacking because aggression would yield positive outcomes and the logical policy choice would be a more hostile foreign policy and a more efficient military force.³⁸

In the post-cold war era a major issue of U.S. security strategy has been to assume a form of equilibrium and, principally to prevent Iraq or Iran from dominating the Persian Gulf or to restrain, if necessary, North Korea in the Korean peninsula and China vis-à-vis Taiwan. Thus the post-Cold War world provides a broad range of examples which apply to the conceptual discussion of the balance of power.³⁹ Most notably, the Persian Gulf War in the 1990 best fits this purpose. President Saddam Hussein built up the military power of Iraq to the point where it became a regional power. This course of action was a response to both Iranian and Israeli power. He also hoped to gain more economic resources using his armed forces. Most of the world ignored his earlier war with Iran but the occupation of Kuwait was a totally different matter. It was a conquest of a sovereign independent state. One of the most important goals of the international society, and one of the major reasons for any balance of power, is to protect the independence of states. Moreover, Kuwait had

³⁸Walt, "One World, Many Theories", 209-210.

³⁹Dougherty, Contending Theories, 41.

oil, a factor critical to the industrial production of many states. If Iraq had gained access to Kuwaiti oil, it would have controlled a large share of the world's petroleum resources. That would mean too much power for Iraq because many states import large quantities of oil and gas from the Gulf. Consequently a thirty-two-nation coalition fought a war to keep the balance by ousting Iraq from Kuwait. Once the war ended, considerable moderation was adopted by the other states with respect to Iraq's independence. Iraq was not destroyed and it still participates in decisions over its future. War was certainly the last choice; months of negotiations occurred before the U.S-led coalition took military action.⁴⁰

Anarchy and Realism

Realism assumes that the international system is characterized with anarchy; that is, the absence of a higher authority. However, anarchy doesn't mean chaos, rather it means that states have to rely on themselves to insure order and obtain the needed resources for survival. The international system, according to this perspective, leads states to engage in "self-help" as a means to enforcing rules and protecting their

⁴⁰Roseneau. Thinking Theory. 23-24.

interests. The main concern of states is to enhance their security from any military threat because sovereignty cannot be maintained without security. The best way to achieve security in an international system based on self-help is through armaments. This implies, in realist terminology that all states face what is called the "security dilemma"; that is, a state, while trying to enhance its security will reduce the security of others.⁴¹ Other states respond by building arms of their own because in a self-help system the level of trust is low. One state cannot be sure that other state's efforts to arm for its own defense are not also intended for offensive purposes. Therefore a margin of safety will be sought in yet additional armaments. This mistrust on both sides will lead ultimately to arms race.⁴² The only way to resolve this problem is through law and diplomacy. Arms control agreements should be accompanied with assurances that all sides to the agreement will comply, or else the cheating state(s) will gain, at least in the short-run, relative power with respect to other parties. This makes the agreement useless; that is why states seek to verify that obligations in such agreements are

⁴¹Ibid., 14.

⁴²Dougherty, Contending Theories, 59.

met. Neorealists suggest that such situations of assurances are rare and do not last very long.⁴³

Traditional realists say that sovereignty also “encourages states to keep each other in business”; that is, to preserve the international system of states and prevent its collapse. Therefore, although sometimes states resort to war if that is the only means through which they can maintain their sovereignty, usually they choose the safer paths of diplomacy, negotiations, and such tactics as economic sanctions when dealing with other states.⁴⁴

The anarchical international system of states has four goals to achieve. It is assumed that these goals encourage states to recognize their mutual and conflicting interests. Also these goals reflect the transitivity requirement of rationality; that is, the first goal is the most important, followed by the second and so on. The first goal, according to Hedely Bull, is the preservation of the system and the society of states itself. Thus, any threat to the security of states in the system will be met decisively by the states. No single power will be allowed to dominate and non-state entities will be given roles secondary to that of states’.

⁴³Roseneau. *Thinking Theory*, 15.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 15.

When non-state entities like the multinational corporations or the UN try to act independently, they will be stopped or regulated by states. The second goal of an anarchical society is also to preserve the independence or the external sovereignty of individual states. Therefore, most states accept and obey international law, hoping that by respecting the independence of other states, others will respect theirs. Nevertheless, since the first goal takes precedence over the second one, some small states may end up destroyed or occupied, because individual states' independence may sometimes be sacrificed to save the existing international order. Examples range from the case of Tibet being absorbed by China, Panama being intervened by the United States, or Chechnia being aggressed by Russia. Neorealism gives little significance to this point while traditional realists consider it a fundamental principle. The third goal is the preservation of peace, on condition that the first two goals are secured. Although war is an ongoing possibility for realists, the day-to-day tasks of states happens in a peaceful fashion and states have developed a large variety of methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The fourth and final goal of states in an anarchic system is "limitation of violence resulting in death or bodily harm, the keeping of promises, and the stabilization of possessions by rules of property." For

example, states make certain rules to protect the lives of some soldiers and civilians during war. Another example is the Law of the Sea Treaty which stipulates how states can claim mining areas in an effort to secure property rights. Also, the international agreement to protect the Ozone layer by banning chlorofluorocarbons, which also includes special provisions to ensure the performance of promises made.⁴⁵

Cooperation and Realism

Although in an anarchic international system self-help is the best means of survival, traditional realists believe that cooperation is possible. The problem of cooperation is approached in two related ways; One approach depends on the balance of power concept, and the other depends on the idea of rationality. Traditional realists argue that prudence should occasionally lead to cooperation. Since it is natural both to dominate and to resist domination, and because uncertainty is a feature of political life, the best conduct for the powerful is to temper the weaker so that they will be less inclined to balance with others against the powerful. Moreover, the possibility of retaliation, itself, is one reason why the

⁴⁵Ibid. 15-16.

balance of power may produce cooperation. But since it is not certain that retaliation will occur and if it happens, what would be the consequence, it is better to follow nonmilitary solutions. In other words, big states should make use of their reputation as superior powers without necessarily using these powers and attempt cooperation approaches to obtain their goals from weaker states. For example, the U.S. restraint in its war against Iraq generated cooperation on the part of other states. President Bush sought the use of the United Nations to “restrain” and “legitimate” the U.S. power in the Gulf and did not ask for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. This sort of “moderation” and “restraint” by a big power is said to have encouraged International cooperation.⁴⁶ Traditional realists and neorealists differ in their conception about this kind of “hegemonic leadership.” Neorealists argue that cooperation, if it ever occurs, would be a mechanism to achieve the objectives of powerful states. Cooperation ceases once these objectives are met or with the descent of that leadership. Traditional realists, as expressed by Morgenthau, believe that hegemonic leadership can exist whereby other states consider the powerful state is acting legitimately. In contrast, a state forcing other states to do things is considered a “coercive

⁴⁶Ibid., 24-26.

leadership"; that is, other states consider the acts of the powerful state to be illegitimate. Thus, Morgenthau suggests that legitimate leadership by a hegemon produce cooperation at a lower cost, while coercive leadership are expensive and may provoke a balance of power mechanism by the coerced states. Walt gives the example of the difficulties which the former Soviet Union had in maintaining its leadership in its bloc compared to the United States. Moreover, hegemonic leaders may be important for the creation of international regimes. For example, the attempts to form an International Trade Organization after World War II failed because the United States changed its mind about the usefulness of the proposed organization. Moreover, the hegemonic state realizes the importance of cooperation and the risk posed by states which may resist control (i.e., may enter a coalition against the hegemon). Therefore, powerful states may cooperate and yield sometimes but for pure power considerations (i.e., for pure realistic purposes). The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was a good example of cooperation by big powers for pure realistic purposes. GATT aimed to reduce tariffs and promote free trade, but during the Cold War the developing countries objected to free trade because of their weak economies and asked for preferential

arrangements which meant that their goods would go easily to the North than the other way around. The United States and other big powers agreed to these demands as a short-term concession for long-term gains. Power considerations which allowed for such concessions are the followings: Britain and France accepted it as a means of assisting and retaining some control over former colonies; the United States, on its side, accepted the idea as a means of keeping these countries out of Soviet control.⁴⁷

For neorealists, international cooperation is possible but the concern with the problem of relative power that the anarchic international setting imposes on states makes it very difficult to achieve. Neorealists propose that states are "positional" which meant that states care for the relative gains that others may achieve when they undergo international cooperation. This belief contradicts the neoliberal-institutionalist belief that states are "atomistic" actors; that is, they are only interested in maximizing their own absolute gains and have no concern for any gains attained by other states. In this manner, states are only concerned about the problem of cheating or compliance to cooperation agreements which, neoliberals believe, could be solved by the help of international

⁴⁷ Ibid., 26-27.

institutions. In contrast, neorealism suggests that although a state may be assured of the compliance of other parties to the cooperation agreement, may still refrain from cooperation if it believes that another partner is achieving relatively greater gains. Neorealists justify their concern with relative gains by the fact that anarchy (lack of ultra-state or global government/authority) makes states vulnerable to the unpredictable intentions of other states; and therefore, rendering survival as the ultimate objective of any state action. In this perspective, the possibility that today's allies may become tomorrow's foes, and the fear that joint gains which benefit an ally in the present may produce a more dangerous potential enemy in the future, leads states to worry about the relative gains of partners.⁴⁸

Therefore, state positionality and the high level of uncertainty in an anarchic system leads states to abstain from cooperation whenever they suspect that a partner is achieving, or is likely to achieve, relatively higher gains. A state will abstain from cooperation even though participation was providing it, or would have provided it, with large absolute gains. Uncertainty about the future intentions of other states in

⁴⁸Joseph M. Grieco. Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the newest Liberal Institutionalism, ed. David A. Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 118.

an international system leads states to worry about how cooperation might increase relative capabilities in the future. This uncertainty is a result of states' inability to predict or control the future leaderships or interests of partners.⁴⁹

The Debate Between Neorealism and Neoliberalism

The debate between neorealist and neoliberal theorists focuses on six fundamental points:

First, *the nature and consequences of anarchy*; that is, both agree on the anarchical character of the international system but disagree on what it means and why it matters. Neoliberals assume that the self-interests of independent states in an anarchic system lead them to form international regimes. They propose that the importance of anarchy have been exaggerated by neorealists at the expense of recognizing the importance of international interdependence. The basic achievement of neorealism is the discovery of some aspects of order in world politics amidst its seeming chaos. Neorealists, on the other hand emphasize the importance of anarchy defined as the absence of government, but argue that this

⁴⁹Ibid., 128.

enduring feature of world politics allows a multitude of patterns of interaction among states. Also, they believe neoliberal institutionalists couldn't realize the importance of worries about survival as motivations for state behavior, which they consider as a necessary consequence of anarchy. Therefore, neorealists view anarchy as placing more restrictions on state behavior than do neoliberals.⁵⁰

The second element of debate is *international cooperation*. Both agree on the possibility of cooperation, but differ on the easiness and prospects of its occurrence. Neorealists believe that international cooperation is harder to attain and uphold, and more dependent on state power. Neoliberals, on the other hand, do not hold such a strict view of cooperation.⁵¹

The third point of debate is *relative versus absolute gains*. Neoliberals stressed absolute gains from international cooperation, while neorealists stressed relative gains. For neorealists, the fear of increasing the capabilities of other states and the uncertainty of future intentions may inhibit cooperation in an anarchic system. Neoliberals believe that self-interest of states would lead them to cooperate in order to maximize their

⁵⁰David A. Baldwin ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*(New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). 5.

⁵¹Ibid., 5.

absolute gains. Neoliberals suggest that states would stress relative gains more in security matters than in economic affairs. On the other hand, neorealists, suggest that the basic objective of a state in any relationship is to prevent others from achieving advances in their relative capabilities.⁵²

Priority of state goals is the fourth element of debate. Both agree that national security and economic welfare are important, but they differ in relative emphasis on these goals. neoliberals believe that international cooperation in economic issue areas is more probable than in the field of military security. Neorealists argue that anarchy encourages states to concentrate on relative power, security, and survival.⁵³

The fifth element is *intentions versus capabilities*. Neorealists believe that uncertainty about future intentions and interests of other states lead statesmen to pay close attention to capabilities, which is the basic factor for their security and independence. However, states are supposed to worry more about relative gains of enemies than of allies. Neoliberals, explain international regimes according to the type of choices made by

⁵²Ibid., 5-6.

⁵³Ibid., 7.

member states. Thus, capabilities are valued only insofar as they affect the choices and intentions of states.⁵⁴

The last point in this debate concerns *institutions and regimes*. Neorealists say that neoliberals exaggerate the extent to which institutions are able to mitigate anarchy's constraining effect on international cooperation.⁵⁵ For neorealists, the anarchic character of the international system limits the ability of international organizations to achieve cooperation. That is why they consider them ineffective and are not encouraged to provide any assistance for such organizations.

This debate between neorealists and neoliberals is best reflected in two current examples: The first concerns the way states should respond to China's increasing powers. For neorealists, the increasing powers of China is a good example of the tendency of rising powers to alter the global balance of power in potentially dangerous ways especially as their growing influence makes them more ambitious. From a liberal point, however, the key to China's future conduct is whether its behavior will be modified by its integration into world markets and by the inevitable spread of democratic principles. Another example is the debate which

⁵⁴Ibid., 7-8.

⁵⁵Ibid., 8.

revolves around NATO's expansion towards the east. From a realist perspective, NATO's expansion is an effort to extend Western influence further towards Eastern Europe, that is, well beyond the traditional sphere of US vital interests. This ongoing attempt during a period of Russian weakness is likely to provoke a harsh response from Moscow. From a liberal perspective, NATO expansion is said to reinforce the young democracies of Central Europe, and extend the alliance's conflict-management mechanism to a potentially turbulent region.⁵⁶

This debate, however, differs from the previous realist-liberal debate in some aspects; that is, it is important to specify what the debate is not about. First, the current debate does not revolve around techniques of statecraft. For example the question of military force as an effective instrument of policy is not a matter for this debate. Also, this is not a debate between "unselfish moralists" (liberals) and "egoistic power calculators" (realists), rather both theorists assume that "states behave like egoistic value maximizers". Moral considerations are insignificant to this debate. Moreover, the question of whether to treat states as the essential actors in international politics is not a valid item to this debate. Although neorealists and neoliberals disagree on the relative importance

⁵⁶Walt, "One World, Many Theories", 29-30.

of non-state actors, both treat states as the primary actors in the international system. Finally, this is not a debate between a theory of conflict and a theory of cooperation. Both, neorealists and neoliberals, agree that the international system contains inherent elements of conflict and cooperation at the same time.⁵⁷

Operational Definition

This section attempts to draw an operational definition to each theory. The object of such definitions is to facilitate the attainment of the research objective by defining the principle attributes of each theory in order to study them with respect to US foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. The definitions of both theories will be twofold; the first aspect pertains to the sole characteristic of the theory itself; and, the second attends to each theory's conception of a world order in the international anarchic setting.

Realism, in this manner, is supposed to be a theory of international relations which describes state relations in terms of power only. The ultimate objective of any international behavior is to increase national

⁵⁷ Baldwin, Neorealism and Neoliberalism, 8-9.

power based on the assumption that survival and secure independence is the only concern for states in an anarchic international setting. This situation of anarchy, moreover, imposes a pessimistic picture of ongoing conflicts among members of the system. Therefore, the realist theory also assumes that orderly relations, and thus cooperation, is difficult to attain because of state positionality and the high level of uncertainty in such an anarchic setting. But cooperation, if achieved, would be a result of a state interest to increase its national capabilities; that is, it will be a result of power politics. From this postulate, realism does not believe in the ability of international institutions or international law to bring order to the international setting and to regulate relations between states based on the absolute gains of all the parties involved.

On the other hand, the definition of idealism in this study depends on the traditional postulate of a rational public opinion which, if given the freedom of choice, would tend to choose a democratic political system. Thus, a major objective of idealism is the spread of democracy which is supposed to bring about peace loving nations, and hence a peaceful international system. Liberal democracy also requires the prerequisites of international law, self-determination, free trade and, human rights. The

latter is considered an inseparable component of any modern liberal democracy.

On the international level, idealism assumes that international institutions and international regimes should be utilized in order to promote and establish these liberal principles. States acting as power maximizers in an anarchic setting, or a self-help system, are supposed to prefer joint decision making or multilateralism, to independent decision making. Thus, self-interest of states in an anarchic system leads them to cooperate in order to reach optimal results on issues of international concern. Cooperation here would be a function of interdependence, rather than state power, which is the case under the realist propositions.

Therefore, although idealism acknowledges the anarchic character of the international setting, it still believes in the ability of international institutions and international law to bring order to state relations and to achieve cooperation among the members of the system, based on the assumption that states will overlook immediate benefits in favor of long term absolute gains for all. Idealism, in this manner, suggests that International institutions and regimes are able to mitigate anarchy's effects, establish international cooperation, and help spread the liberal principles of democracy and human rights.

CHAPTER THREE

Realist Attributes in US foreign Policy

The United States still pursues a realist behavior in its international relations after the Cold War. It imposed one-sided arms control agreements on Russia; sought NATO expansion; dominated peace efforts in Bosnia; resisted the rising power of China; and treated international organization like the United Nations and World Trade Organizations with disdain whenever their actions did not conform to US interests; It didn't join other countries in outlawing landmines, for pure military purposes; and it was uncooperative in the Kyoto environmental summit. Thus, although US leaders use the term "world order" to justify their international behavior, pure self-interest seems to be the underlying motive. Therefore, the end of the cold war didn't bring an end to power politics and realism is likely to remain the best theory to explain international relations.¹

¹ Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World Many Theories," Foreign Policy (Spring 1998): 40.

The Quest for Power

A nation may follow power politics in different ways. A balance of power system is considered a direct display of power politics. It involves military alliances, armaments, and even diplomatic efforts aiming at enhancing one's powers and undermining the capabilities of other states.

One of the major attributes of power in international politics is the balance of power mechanism. The United States in the post-Cold War era still adopts policies that aim at counterbalancing the capabilities of presumed adversaries. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States has focused attention on regions of strategic importance worldwide: Europe, the Middle East, Southwest Asia and Northeast Asia. A major object of US security strategy has been to assure a form of equilibrium in the Gulf region, and especially to forbid Iraq or Iran from dominating the Persian Gulf, thus secure the safe flow of the Gulf oil to the west. For this purpose the US interfered and forced the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in the Second Gulf war. The US moreover, is committed to restrain North Korea in the Korean peninsula. It kept its military presence in South Korea, provided the South Korean government with the necessary arms

supply to defend itself in case of confrontation, and reiterated its reassurances that it will fight beside the South Koreans in case of a North Korean assault. Also, the US tried its best to restrain China vis-à-vis Taiwan and opposed any Chinese attempt to impose political and economic changes into Taiwanese domestic affairs.

A stable balance of power situation can help the promotion of world order. It may prevent any single imperial power from dominating others, provide protection to weaker states, urge the major actors to conduct themselves with greater restraint, and prevent the beginning of war. The accumulation of power, armaments, and alliances eventually leads to a decrease in anarchy rather than its intensification. In contrast, the absence of a balance of power system can be destabilizing. For example, Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990 not only as a result of Saddam Hussein's brutality, but also because the severe weakening of Iran in the Iran-Iraqi war left the Persian Gulf region without a counterbalance to Iraqi power.²

An important expression of US pursuit of realist politics after the Cold War is its ongoing policy of preserving and enhancing military alliances, even though no enemy exists in the foreseen future. US planners are pursuing power politics assuming the possibility of future adversaries.

²Robert J. Lieber, No Common Grounds (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995), 359.

It is certain that the United States has a national interest in preserving peace and stability in Europe, but whether the decision to proceed with NATO enlargement goes in this direction is questionable.

The argument in favor of NATO expansion, as President Bill Clinton claimed in February 1998, was that expansion would "help to erase the cold war dividing line and contribute to our strategic goal of building an undivided, democratic, and peaceful Europe."³ The counter-argument, however, is that the United States and its western allies have advanced towards the East in an effort to fill the power vacuum which was caused by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The US decision to incorporate Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as new members in the alliance, came at a time of Russian weakness, which increased the credibility of the accusations that the United States was actually seeking the promotion of its power position in Europe at the expense of Russia without regard to the prospects of stability in Europe. If perceived in this manner, then NATO's expansion may be identified as a continuation of cold war politics with the mere difference, that of a shift in the dividing line eastwards. Central Europe has traditionally been considered a Russian sphere of influence.⁴

³Johanna Granville, "The Many Paradoxes of NATO Enlargement" Current History, 98, no. 627(April 1992): 165-166.

⁴*Ibid.*, 165-166.

In a typical mentality of political realism the U.S. assumed that by the logic of power an eventual competition between it and Russia was bound to take place even though in the immediate post cold war period Russia was making all the peaceful overture, possible to pacify the U.S. and its NATO allies. According to political realism the peaceful overtures were interpreted as a sign of weakness rather than amity. It was assumed that when Russia recovers from its mess it would try to project its power to the Balkans and Eastern Europe all over again. With such anticipations, the United States quickly moved in to fill the power vacuum in Eastern Europe. Russia was evidently the presumed adversary. Denials of this presumption were rhetorical. A case in point was that when Russia requested membership in NATO its request was denied.

Military alliances may, however, be seen as a means for states to mitigate the degree of anarchy in the international system. For example, the US hegemonic role and the growth of a wide range of institutions in Europe (NATO, European Community, and others) made "anarchy" a weak and inapplicable model to describe relations among the states of Western Europe. This doesn't rule out conflict or even war at the margins, as has been the case between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean Sea. Nor did it eliminate the possibility of involvement in conflicts elsewhere or the need for deterrence, as in the case of western European involvement in the Balkan war (to prevent a spillover effect), or other African conflicts (for

humanitarian or national interest reasons). Nonetheless, this alliance helped regulate relations among European countries and dilute the effects of anarchy on their behaviors.⁵ Such was the order which the United States was trying to bring about, an order which as it seemed was supposed to operate under the auspices of the United States and intended to aggrandize its power.

The realist trend in US foreign policy is also evident in formulating US foreign policy towards the European Union. There is a reasonably accepted concern on relative power gains that result from the union.⁶ International prices are determined by the US dollar so a future Euro increases the relative gains of EU with respect to the US. Whether US policy makers had it in mind or not, an indirect effect of the Balkan war was a decrease in the value of the newly launched Euro with respect to the dollar. This critique of US reservations towards the European Union does not gloss over the fact that the United States formerly during the cold war period encouraged the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) (1950) and, thereafter, the establishment of the European Community (1957).

⁵Lieber. No Common Grounds, 358.

⁶James N. Roseneau and Mary Durfee. Thinking Theory Thoroughly (Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1995), 16.19.

It has all been done in the logic of power. Under the Cold War the European Union was condoned by the US but after the Cold War such union was viewed with reservations. It is in the interest of NATO and the possible reemergence of Russia as a super power that the United States kept its reservations of the European Union within reasonable bounds. Some scholars anticipate that if the United States and the European Union do not arrive on some strategic understanding regarding their mutual relations the two "Titans" are bound to clash in the future.⁷ The resolution of their problems as they arise on ad hoc basis as the practice is at present is not enough to avoid a confrontation.⁸ Already the confrontation between the dollar and the Euro is up in the air.

Although realism typically emphasizes the role of power and force in international relations, it is important to realize that realism also allows a considerable space for diplomacy. For example, Morgenthau stressed the importance of prudence in pursuing national objectives and viewed diplomacy as the best available means for preserving peace, even while acknowledging the serious obstacles to its success. Thus, the US utilized considerable diplomatic effort after the Cold War when it imposed,

⁷ C. Fred Bergeson, "America and Europe: Clash of the Titans?" *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 1999): 20-34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

through diplomatic pressures, one-sided arms control agreements on Russia. In this way the United States used diplomacy and negotiations to attain objectives related to its power politics.⁹

Assuming Anarchy in the World

An important goal of an anarchical international system according to Hedley Bull is "to preserve the system and society of states, one power will not be allowed to dominate. Entities that are not states will be consigned roles secondary to those of states."¹⁰ This implies that international organizations and regimes such as the United Nations (UN) or World Trade Organization (WTO) will not be allowed to acquire any authority that may supercede that of states.

Assuming anarchy in the world order means that the world remains divided among independent states. This reality has certain implications on international relations. States feel an urge to provide for their own security and in doing so they aim for power and for the means to preserve their security the way they understand it. Such a behavior usually makes other states more anxious about their own security, and therefore inclined to increase their defensive capability. In this manner,

⁹Lieber, No Common Grounds, 362.

the quest for power among states is shaped more by the security dilemma, than by an innate desire for power as propagated by Hans Morgenthau, or the original sin of human being as described by Reinhold Niebuhr. Therefore, the anarchic nature of the international system is a result of these basic elements; independent states existing in an international setting without any effective higher or global authority for solving disputes that occur among member states, coupled with the security dilemma and the struggle for power to which this situation gives rise. Although this environment has been identified long ago since Thucydides, the modern system has a different nature of things from that of the Greek city-states 2500 years ago due to the existence of nuclear weapons. Anarchy remains a characteristic of state relations, but the existence of a nuclear component not only represents a penetration of the state; it also promotes the risks of conflict that may threaten the very existence of the state-system in international relations. Thus, nuclear powers have always been cautious in their behavior and in their willingness to risk a major conflict or war. Such a balance of terror had the effect of preserving stability during the Cold War, but with the possibility of nuclear proliferation after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, it is questionable whether nuclear deterrence will have the same effect in

¹⁰Roseneau and Durfee. *Thinking Theory Thoroughly*. 15.

the future as it had during the Cold War period.¹¹

In its quest to reduce the danger arising from nuclear power in a world of anarchy the United States in the post cold war period has opposed the proliferation of nuclear weapons by exerting pressure on reluctant states to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and by using all the leverages at its disposal including the threat or use of force to curb attempts by rogue states to produce nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. Such was for example the case with Iraq, Libya, and North Korea. It is however doubtful that the United States would be able to contain nuclear proliferation.

While, for example, it has been able to pacify Latin American powers with nuclear potentials such as Brazil and Argentina and guarantee the security of European states with nuclear capability such as Germany and non European states such as Japan, it has failed to do so in other parts of the world such as India, Pakistan, and Israel. The limitations of the United States in this respect arise from the fact that even though it is the only superpower in the world it is not in a position to dictate its interest on all others without the active and in some cases tacit participation of other great powers and the coverage of the United Nations and/or the coverage of regional organizations. Such for example was the case when

the US intervened effectively against Iraq in 1991. When the cooperation of other great powers and the necessary international coverage was lacking the United States severance of diplomatic, cultural, and economic relations with Iran did not bring about the desired results.

The world with a superpower that is not the unquestioned master which has to share supremacy with other great powers who still have the capacity to resist, such a world has been described by one of the foremost scholars of political science Samuel Huntington as a uni-multi polar world. Huntington anticipates that the US would not be able to keep its privileged position and that the world would revert to a multi polar world.¹²

Other scholars with the same anticipation have; nevertheless, proceeded to prescribe ways and means to keep America's privileged position. For example, Richard Hass, the Chair in International Security at the Brookings Institution, suggested that the proper goal for American foreign policy is "to encourage a multi polarity characterized by cooperation and concert,"¹³ but it is a concert of which the United States was supposed to be the mystro.¹⁴ Of the articles written about the US position in the post cold war it seems there is an emerging consensus that

¹¹Lieber. No Common Grounds. 356-357.

¹²Samuel Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," Foreign Affairs (March/April 1999), 35-44.

¹³Richard N. Hass. "What to Do With American Primacy," Foreign Affairs (Sept/Oct. 1999), 38.

the United States should recognize a certain degree of the diffusion of power in the world and that realistically the United States in this emerging but qualified multi polar world should conduct itself in a club fashion with the rest or at least some of the Great Powers to rule the world, but the implication has always been that the United States should assume a benign leading role. That, of course, is the epitome of political realism-to recognize the realities of the world and manipulate that reality to optimize the power of the state concerned, in our particular case the United States.

The effects of anarchy on the post-Cold War international environment are further expressed by the neorealist perspective on the failure of the international community, especially the US, to deal effectively with military dictatorship and oppression in Haiti, instability and warlordism in Somalia, and war and shocking human rights violations in Bosnia. Neorealism does so by reasserting the lack of real authority at the international level and the inadequacy of words, resolutions, and good intentions if they were not supported by power.¹⁵

This assumption of anarchy and the necessary reliance on self help for security may explain United States policy with respect to armaments and arms sales, especially in such regions as in the Middle East, the Gulf

¹⁴Ibid., 38-44.

¹⁵Lieber, No Common Grounds, 365.

States, and in the Far East, Japan and South Korea. United States policies with respect to armaments and arms control in those regions also follow a trend of double standards. While stressing its commitments to defend its strategic allies in the Middle East, the US continues to supply Israel with the latest military technology and to sell arms to its Gulf allies. At the same time, it opposes any Russian attempt for arms sale to such Middle Eastern nations as Iran, Syria, or Libya. In the same manner, the US accepts to supply Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea with sophisticated military equipment, but is openly hostile to the possibility of any Chinese acquisition of sophisticated military technology.

Moreover, US attitude with respect to international institutions such as the United Nations may also be explained by the fact that a supranational entity will not be allowed to replace the authority of the state in an anarchic setting.

A good example of such a trend was the way the US shunned UN involvement in the Balkan crisis in order to avoid a veto in the Security Council and to keep US control on decision making over issues considered of vital national interest. Also in the same trend is American

policy not to allow US troops participating in peacekeeping missions to be under non-US control. Another goal of an anarchical system is to maintain the independence or external sovereignty of states, thus in the 1990 Gulf war US President George Bush stressed on the importance of the sovereignty and integrity of Iraqi territories.¹⁶ Also the US opposed the establishment of international authorities which were not subject to state control. Such was, for example, its opposition to the proposed International Criminal Court which was expected to pursue cases of human rights violations without license from the United Nations nor a permit by the involved states.

In a realist approach to international relations the United States assumed anarchy in the world and as such opposed the supervision of international authorities of whatever kind they were when they happened to encroach upon its sovereignty. The ultimate goal as always has been the optimization of American power in a world characterized by anarchy—a typical approach of political realism.

¹⁶Roseneau and Durfee. *Thinking Theory Thoroughly*. 15.

CHAPTER FOUR

Idealist Attributes in US Foreign Policy

The US foreign policy bears a long heritage of idealist rhetoric, its policy-makers are confident in their mission of building a better world based on the equality of men and a trust in scientific progress. President Woodrow Wilson (1917-1919) was a pioneer when he directed American foreign policy in a crusade to make the world safe for democracy and envisioned a League of Nations to replace the power politics system. Later came President Franklin Roosevelt with his four freedoms; freedom of speech, freedom to worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Roosevelt contributed to the establishment of the United Nations as a means to achieve his aspired freedoms. From 1945 until 1976 Democratic and Republican leaders of the American Administration continued this tradition of speaking for freedom while also responding to the practical power considerations which were reflected in the policy of containment during the communist reign and the maintenance of US military alliances in the post-Cold War era. In 1976 President Carter made human rights the basic objective of US foreign policy. But when the Soviet and Iranian regimes made him look "soft", US voters elected Ronald Reagan in 1980

and commenced a twelve years era of Ronald Reagan-George Bush realpolitik. After 1992 President Bill Clinton, who promised a domestic welfare and a foreign human rights politics, resumed the American tradition of advocating an idealist policy within the constraint of US national interests.¹

However, the west has been criticized for using idealist rhetoric for the attainment of realistic objectives. Huntington, for example, believes that the western use of the phrase "world community" aims at giving global legitimacy to actions reflecting the interests of the United States and other western powers.²

Democracy and Human Rights

The issue of human rights and democracy is discussed in one integrated section because democracy in the current understanding is considered inseparable from human rights. A democratic country is a preserver and a promoter of human rights. Democracy is not any more a counting of

¹Walter C. Clemens Jr., Dynamics of International Relations (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998), 17.

²Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" Foreign Affairs (Summer1991): 39.

votes at the ballot, it is a situation whereby we have a representative system and a respect for the fundamental human rights. To have human rights is to have democracy, and therefore to attain a peace loving nation.

Democracy or "people-rule" is a mode of conduct whereby governments allow fair and free elections to choose the officials responsible for policy decisions, with citizens able to organize parties and interest groups independent of governments, without coercion and with non-official sources of information available. A balance between rights and duties is a characteristic feature of the political culture of democracy. It yields to the majority but respect the rights of minorities. It endorses the legal equality of each citizen and the need to promote collective interests. Therefore, it respects the political and civil liberties of citizens. Modern democracies, depend on a strong *civil society*, that is a non-governmental sector composed of independent organized groups for the object of promoting their values and interests as a mechanism to prevent any improper governmental practices. Moreover, such civil society is reinforced by a free market economy in an institutionalized legal setting. A strong economy is said to provide the means which allow the government to achieve its collective good functions and provide the necessary grounds

for the pluralism and autonomy of civil society, elections, and government.³

“Human rights are those elementary rights which are considered to be indispensable for the development of the individual.” The concept of human rights from a Western approach mostly emphasizes individual development, while other non-Western notions stress collective rights and the importance of collective development because they derive their values from the collectivity as such, and thus they were not meant primarily to secure the development of the individual. It is the former concept of which we are concerned about in this paper.⁴

The two most important basic documents on human rights are of Western origin: The Virginia Bill of Rights of 1776 which was incorporated in 1791 in the constitution of the United States, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789. Both documents contained human rights' provisions related to individual liberties, based mainly on the writings of political philosophers such as John Locke, Montesquieu, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In this century, the notion of fundamental human rights was explicitly mentioned in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations. Article 1, paragraph 3 stipulates as one of the

³Clemens, Dynamics of International Relations, 18.

⁴Peter R. Baehr, The Role of Human Rights in Foreign Policy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994). 3.4.

purposes of the United Nations: "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion." This led in 1948 to the adoption by the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was, to a great extent, a response to the atrocities committed by Hitler's Germany between 1933 and 1945. It contained a list of the essential civil and political rights (right to life, liberty, property, freedom of opinion...etc), social and economic rights (the right to work, adequate standard of living, and to education), and cultural rights (right to participate in one's community, to share in scientific advancement...etc.) In 1966 the General Assembly adopted two binding treaties which further elaborated these rights: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Both Covenants mention explicitly in article one the right of all peoples to self-determination.⁵

The universal human rights instruments are based on the assumption that they reflect universally valid norms of conduct. This assumption governed the approval in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human

⁵Ibid.. 5-7.

Rights by the General Assembly. It is also the basis of the two international covenants on human rights which were adopted in 1966.

However this assumption on the universal nature of human rights has not been totally approved by all nations. The Universal Declaration was criticized for three major reasons: First, the majority of third world countries were still under colonial rule when the Declaration was drafted and later on the developing nations incorporated those rights in their national constitutions or in their regional organizations (Organization of American States-OAS, Organization of African Unity-OAU...) under western pressure. Second, the human rights contained in the Declaration are said to reflect western ideological beliefs, rather than non-western values. Finally, the Declaration is criticized for using an individualistic approach to human rights which contradicts with the ideologies of the countries that advocate collective values. Cultural relativism of human rights is based on the fact that domestic or regional cultural traditions in the fields of religion, politics, economics, and law determine the extent of political and civil rights of individuals in a given society. It is also argued that ethical and moral standards differ in different times and places, and that such variations can only be determined with respect to the different cultural settings of which these norms and values are a part. According to this perspective, the notion of universal morality is nonexistent because the world has always been characterized by a variety of cultures. Those

who refuse the universality of human rights because of its western origin have their own opinion on the issue: The Iranian delegation to the United Nations said that in case of conflict between obligations arising from international human rights treaties and the teachings of the Koran, the latter should prevail. A good example on such behavior was the appeal given by the late religious leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khoumeiny, to kill Salman Rushdie, author of the "Satanic Verses", on charges of blasphemy of prophet Mohammed. Other regional conventions also stipulated the protection of human rights; most important are the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950), the American Convention on Human Rights (1969), and the African Charter on Human Rights and People's Rights (1981).⁶

Therefore, the concept of human rights follows different interpretations according to its political and cultural context. In the Cold War era the distinction was made between the communist east and the western democratic states. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the basic division remains between the South and the North; that is, between the poor and underdeveloped, mainly African and Asian states, and the industrialized West European and North American States. The differences between East and West emphasized "the right of society as a

⁶Ibid., 13-14.20.

whole versus individual rights, on economic and social rights versus civil and political rights, and on the protection of national sovereignty versus a strengthening of international supervision. North and South, in turn, differ on the extent of importance given to the right of self-determination, "people's rights in general" and the emphasis that is put, for example in the African Charter for Human Rights and People's Rights, on duties toward society as well as individual rights.⁷

States seeking human rights foreign policies may face conflicting interests. Human rights policy may conflict with the maintenance of friendly relations with foreign governments, especially when such government is responsible for gross human rights violations. Also human rights policy often implies that a government tackles matters that other governments consider as their domestic affairs. This means that a human rights-loving state will have to choose between respecting traditional sovereignty and interference in another's domestic affairs. Therefore, human rights do not always constitute a high priority policy even for those states that are strong advocates of human rights. This is certainly the case if the human rights policy conflicts with security interests of the state. For example, If the human rights violator is a major power like China or Russia, criticism of their human rights record may lead to

⁷ Ibid., 22.

undesired effects on international security. Moreover, regional security arrangements can pose restraints on human rights policies. Turkey, for example, is a traditional gross violator of human rights, but western governments have been reluctant to impose effective pressures on Turkey to change its behavior. This lack of adequate response by western states is related to security considerations because Turkey is an important member of NATO.⁸

US foreign policy has always been a combination of ethical values and national interest considerations. Americans believe they know what is good for the world and want to set an example. This attitude of moral superiority has had opposite implications to US international behavior. At some instances it has meant a policy of non-engagement, or even isolationism; at other periods it has lead to a tendency towards internationalism and an active US role in world politics. For example, the Monroe doctrine in 1823 explicitly limited the involvement of the United States to the American continent. Likewise, an approach of isolationism was adopted in the 1920s and 1930s in this century. When the US opted not to join the League of Nations of which it was a prominent founder and thereafter desisted from an active role in international politics. In contrast there were periods of effective involvement in international

⁸Ibid., 26.29.

politics. President Wilson decided on US entrance in the First World War with the object of making the world safe for democracy. He believed world order would be preserved by means of international arbitration and jurisdiction. In 1941, President Roosevelt formulated his four freedoms: freedom of speech and expression, freedom to worship God, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Thus a number of human rights became explicit goals of American foreign policy. Domestically, however, human rights have always been a principal component of American politics. The Declaration of Independence in 1776 refers to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as inalienable rights of all men." Also, the first ten amendments to the American Constitution, "The Bill of Rights", include a number of basic human rights. Human rights as a basic component in US domestic policy is also reflected in the fight for the abolishment of slavery in the nineteenth century and the civil rights movement for equal rights for the black population and other minorities in the twentieth century.⁹

In the case of US foreign policy, it has always been a combination of idealism and realism. Assuming it will bring good to the world, US foreign policy has always contained a certain amount of ethical and moral values, while it is careful to preserve its national interests. Americans has

⁹Ibid., 81-82.

a tendency to veil foreign policy choices with legal and moralistic arguments. And they tend to believe in their own rhetoric. Although they seem to think in terms of good and bad, there is always an obvious sense of realism, based on "raison d'etat", in US foreign policies. Therefore, emphasizing human rights in US foreign policy has been sometimes of a strong moralistic character; that is, of a genuine idealistic nature, as was the case with President Jimmy Carter. At other times, it has been a mere instrument of foreign policy; that is, of a purely realistic nature, as was the case with the Reagan and Bush Administrations. The ideal situation for US policy makers occurred when both considerations of power politics and moral and ethical obligations coincided. This was the case with US foreign policy towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The US could reveal its concerns over human rights without worrying that this might injure its security interests.¹⁰

United States foreign policy on human rights was strongly criticized by non-governmental organizations. In 1987, "Human Rights Watch" and the "Lawyers Committee for Human Rights" accused the Reagan administration of only paying attention to human rights violations by its

¹⁰Ibid., 82-83.

adversaries, leaving out those by its allies. This was the case with US condemning violations by countries such as the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, and Nicaragua and motionless with respect to violations in Turkey, Indonesia, Kenya, South Africa, and Honduras. In 1992, the Lawyers Committee has repeated its harsh criticism of US foreign policy.¹¹

The US is also accused of following a double standard on human rights policy in the Middle East. While criticizing Iraq on human rights violations with respect to the Kurdish and Shiite communities, it shows indifference to human rights violations committed by the Israeli Army in Palestine and Southern Lebanon.

Although the US was a pioneer in establishing modern international human rights law, the Clinton administration has been criticized for being uncooperative towards the promotion of human rights law. The US put obstacles during the negotiations to ban antipersonnel land mines, to prohibit the use of child soldiers, and to establish an international criminal court. These reservations affected the behavior of the international community which has shown a new willingness to bypass the US when conducting negotiations aimed at strengthening human rights law. In the case of antipersonnel land mines which cause huge

¹¹Ibid., 91.

civilian casualties in such countries as Cambodia, Angola, Somalia, or Bosnia, President Clinton agreed on the "eventual" abolition of landmines but he refused to support an unconditional ban. The US military, it was reasoned, wants to use landmines to defend South Korea for another ten years. One hundred twenty-two countries signed the treaty. The US did not.¹²

The Clinton Administration also opposed a ban on children under age 18 serving as soldiers. Child soldiers are a potent problem especially in countries such as Liberia, Sudan, Uganda, Burundi, Afghanistan, Burma, and Sri Lanka. Three previous treaties already ban the use of children under 15 as soldiers: the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention of 1949. The US has signed all three, but did not ratify any of them. A new protocol has been proposed to the Convention on the Rights of the Child requiring soldiers to be at least 18. The Clinton administration, however, refused an 18-year-old minimum because the US military recruits 17-year-old high school students upon graduation instead of waiting until they reach 18. The US failed lately in endorsing a treaty to establish an international criminal court to try human rights criminals who are accused of genocide,

¹²Kenneth Roth, "Sideline on Human Rights." *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1998): 2.

war crimes, or crimes against humanity, wherever their crimes are committed. The US wants to constrain such a court by prohibiting it from assuming jurisdiction unless it obtains direct permission from the Security Council, therefore reserving its ability to bloc permission through its veto. Such an act will probably politicize the agenda of the court and weaken the court as an institution of international justice. The Clinton administration justifies such a demand by arguing that an independent international criminal court may affect negotiations being undertaken by the Security Council to halt international conflicts. This claim that negotiations may fail if faction leaders fear future prosecution can be negated if one looks to the negotiations which ended the war in the former republic of Yugoslavia. For example, during the Dayton negotiations no amnesty was granted, even though the independent International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia had already indicted Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb political and military leaders at that time. This behavior has lead an increasing number of countries to leave the United States out on matters of international human rights law. For example, during the first phase of the land mine negotiations, consensus on decisions was required and any government could block the process. The US did that and brought negotiations to a deadlock, so Canada and other countries conducted parallel negotiations whereby only those countries favoring unconditional

ban could participate, therefore overcoming the US obstacle. Bypassing the US on other human rights negotiations is becoming a favorable demand for negotiators.¹³

This official conduct towards the issue of human rights stems in opposite direction to the general attitude of the US public. Evidence of such a trend can be seen in the changing policies of the business sector. The US corporations are beginning to accept responsibility for the labor practices and human rights abuses of their foreign subcontractors. US firms are starting to perceive the negative returns upon dealing with abusive suppliers for the purpose of lower-cost labor or lower-cost inputs, because of the bad publicity it produces. This is particularly evident for consumer products firms. For example, when reports appeared that Reebok was purchasing soccer balls stitched by twelve-year-old Pakistani workers, the firm created a new production facility in Pakistan and established a system of independent monitors. In an effort to retain its image as a strong supporter of human rights around the world, Reebok put a "Made without Child Labor" label to its soccer balls. The Gap also responded to public pressure by signing an agreement with the National Labor Committee committing itself to independent third-party monitoring of its overseas suppliers. Levi Strauss, Macy's, Liz Claiborne, and Eddie

¹³Ibid., 2-6.

Bauer all pulled their operations out of Burma because of its bad human rights record. Such behavior probably contradicts the Leninist link between multinational firms and foreign exploitation. Corporations, especially high-profile corporations in open and democratic societies are starting to perceive the commercial benefits of promoting human rights.¹⁴

Therefore, at the domestic level public opinion in the United States is in favor of human rights policies, but on the level of the administration national interest and power politics constrain the promotion of human rights cause. This in effect is most visible in US policies vis-à-vis Turkey, Iraq, and Israel. While dramatizing the Iraqi behavior with respect to the Shiite and Kurdish communities in Iraq as a terrible violation of human rights, the US has been turning its back to the steady persecution of Kurds in Turkey, and to Israeli violations in Palestine and in Southern Lebanon. Human rights as such are used as a weapon to achieve political objectives. Its first use as a weapon was during the Helsinki Conference in 1975. Human rights then was a mechanism utilized by the US to put pressure on the Soviet Union and to move international public opinion in that direction.

Human rights are now an essential part of international politics. They may serve either as a goal (i.e., foreign policies aim at improving human

¹⁴Debra L. Spar. "The Spotlight and the Bottom Line." *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1998): 7-12.

rights) or as an instrument of foreign policy (i.e., foreign policies utilize human rights for other purposes, like strengthening national security). Both views have two aspects: on the one hand to contribute to international human rights standards, on the other hand, to apply those standards in cases of violations of human rights.¹⁵

The Clinton Administration has been strongly criticized by human rights activists for renewing in May 1993 China's most-favorable-nation status in its trade relations with the United States for at least one year. Clinton, however, announced that future renewals would depend on human rights progress in China. Such a policy has a reasonable justification. The US may have opted for a liberal policy towards China by opening its markets to Chinese products and thus allowing the Chinese to feel the benefits of free trade and open markets, for the purpose of promoting democracy and human rights. The economic aspect of the liberal or idealist theory of international relations suggests that as states become more and more involved in a web of economic and social connections, the costs of disrupting these ties will effectively prevent any unilateral state action, especially the use of force. Therefore, China as such is presumed to comply with US demands for a better human rights policy and to respect

¹⁵Baehr. The Role of Human Rights. 158.

international law. China is also supposed to perceive its interest in the ongoing international order, thus it will refrain from disrupting it, which in turn will give the US a better chance to promote its values of democracy and human rights.¹⁶

Moreover, there is substantial empirical evidence, which proves the link between economic freedom and political freedom. Economic freedom help establish the conditions for political freedom by promoting the growth of prosperous middle and working classes. Also, successful market economies are likely to require political freedom as a barrier against anticompetitive and inefficient practices. Open and democratic societies have also shown themselves capable of overcoming economic crisis, which is a possible result of their political and economic legitimacy. Although open societies are not immune to corruption scandals, they have strong instruments for combating fraud and bribery, including a free press, the separation of powers, alterations in power between various political elites, and independent judicial system. Liberal economic change at times leads to liberal political reform, also in some cases liberal political opening leads to economic liberalization. "Opposition to the dominance of the state in economic life is usually

¹⁶Walt. One World, Many Theories. 40.

accompanied by opposition to the dominance of the state in personal life and in the life of civil society.” The growing awareness of this relationship has led to the growing emphasis on democracy promotion in the foreign assistance policies of the advanced industrial democracies and to the stress on issues of good governance and effective anticorruption regimes by multilateral donors like the World Bank.¹⁷

As the process of democratization advanced around the world in the 1980s and early 1990s, that is after the collapse of the Soviet Union, successive US administrations increasingly emphasized support for democracy as a foreign policy goal. This tendency reached its utmost, though rhetorically, when the Clinton administration proclaimed the promotion of democracy to be the successor to the doctrine of containment. This process of promoting democracy, however, soon suffered stagnation and retrenchment, especially in the former Soviet Union, Africa, and the Middle East. For example, in the Middle East, gradual political openings appeared during that period in response to domestic dissatisfaction generated by worsening economies and to democratic change worldwide. However, longtime established

¹⁷ Adrian Karatnycky, “The Decline of Illiberal Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy*, 10, no.1, (January 1999): 122-123.

conservative elites in the region fearful of Islamic fundamentalists have largely terminated nascent liberalization.¹⁸

Although the Clinton administration held out democratic "enlargement" to be the guiding principle of US foreign policy, only in a very limited number of cases was the US able to mobilize enough economic and political resources to have a major impact on the political fate of other countries. The Clinton administration, like the Bush administration before it, has played a moderate active role for the cause of promoting democracy worldwide. In many countries, the political support and economic aid provided by the US to democratic reformers have made a slight effect on the process of democratization. In few countries the US role has been quite significant. American support for Boris Yeltsin since 1991 has helped him survive politically and thus helped Russia keep to the path of reform. US diplomatic and economic support for reformers in the Ukraine has reinforced that country's shaky efforts to establish democracy and capitalism. Also, US intervention in Tahiti, though a response to domestic politics rather than a desire to promote democracy abroad, helped the process of pluralism there. Moreover, Clinton administration's opposition to attempted military coups in Latin America,

¹⁸Thomas Carothers. "Democracy Without Illusions." *Foreign Affairs*, 76, no.1, (Jan/Feb1997): 86-88.

such as those in Guatemala and Paraguay, has helped discourage democratic reversals in that region.¹⁹

The rhetoric uttered by the Clinton administration that the US has an overall interest in the promotion of democracy abroad conflicts with the increasingly cruel realities of world politics in the late 1990s. The post cold war belief that the promotion of democracy would now complement rather than conflict with US national economic and security interests is not applicable to all cases. The US still has friendly relations with authoritarian regimes, such as the Persian Gulf states. Since the 1993 coup in Nigeria, the Clinton administration has stopped pushing democracy there, because Nigeria is a major supplier of oil to the United States and therefore a unilateral US embargo on Nigerian oil would end up benefiting European oil companies and causing little economic harm to Nigeria. In the same manner, the insignificant response to Kazakhstan's move toward authoritarianism reflects recognition of President Nazarbayev's cooperation in making his country nuclear-weapons-free and his support for huge private American investments in the Kazak oilfields. In Croatia, the administration raised little objections to President Franjo Tudjman's repressive ways, at least in part because he has backed up US policy in Bosnia. Moreover, In some countries US policy makers

¹⁹ Ibid., 94-95.

fear that promoting democracy may pose unacceptable risks for the inhabitants. The violence in Rwanda and Burundi shows how disastrous political openings can go in ethnically divided societies. In this latter situation, subordinating the desire for democracy is a better choice because of the risks it may involve. But in other situations, like the Balkans and parts of the former Soviet Union, the US government is favoring friendly tyrants for pure realist purposes, and thus shunning the idealist objectives of promoting democracy and human rights. The occurrence of such situations where national interest does not converge with democracy and human rights policies does not mean that such policies will cease to be an important objective of a post-Cold War US foreign policy. US ideals and interests abroad are often compatible with the objective of promoting democracy, and the United States is now in a much better situation to achieve such objective because it is not anymore engaged in the superpower rivalry.²⁰

However, promoting democracy and human rights has certainly been a problematic matter for US policy makers in the case of the Islamic world in general, and the Arab world in particular. Muslims has an innate tendency to refuse cultural imports from the west. They assume the Koran

²⁰Ibid., 97-99.

to encompass all what they need to know and act in their material as well as their spiritual life.

The US, however, insists that it does not have one such policy for the Muslim world, and that it conducts foreign policies with governments, not with religions. Americans try their best to prove that the US government does not view Islam or Muslims as foes, except those Muslims who are involved in terrorism or seek to undermine US objectives such as the successful sponsoring of the Middle East peace process. Such groups are usually labeled Muslim fundamentalists by the US administration. This does not eliminate the fact that sometimes the US drew charges of extremism to those who simply opposed its policies, especially in the Middle East.²¹

The US in fact has a separate standard for the Middle East when it comes to the promotion of democracy and human rights. This tendency is evident when compared with the US approach to Indonesia and Malaysia, which are Muslim countries also. For example, American diplomats find it difficult to look at Indonesia as a Muslim country, even though it has a population of 185 million Muslims, which is more than the Muslim population of all the Arab countries combined. When Indonesia and Malaysia faced political crisis resulting from the collapse of their

²¹Augustus Richard Norton. "Rethinking United States Policy Towards the Muslim World." Current History. 98. no.625. (Feb1999): 52.

economies in 1998, vice President Al Gore gave a daring speech in Kuala Lumpur before Prime Minister Mahathir in which he linked democracy with economic reform. Al Gore argued that people would accept sacrifice in a democracy because they have had a role in choosing it and because they believe they will benefit from it. The fact that Indonesia and Malaysia are Muslim nations did not deter Al Gore from prescribing democracy to them. In other parts of the world, especially the Middle East, we rarely find such high-level American statements asking for democracy and good government in the region. In contrast to its policy in East Asia, the US policy in the Middle East focuses on stability and control rather than democracy and freedom. For instance, the agreement that took place between Palestinians and Israelis in the Wye Plantation in Maryland on October 1998 reveals no evidence of serious American or Israeli concern for the rule of law among the Palestinians. President Clinton's efforts to achieve this agreement may be less a measure of his commitment to Middle East peace and more an indication of American dedication to pamper its strategic ally in the Middle East. The Wye Memorandum implicitly permits the Palestinian Authority to disregard democratic rule and human rights so long as it constrains the alleged extremists of Hamas, thereby satisfying Israeli demands. Such a differentiation in the policy of democracy and human rights clearly shows that the US adopts double standards on the issue. Another case is the

National Security Document prepared in May 1997; "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," which avoids any link to the idea of democracy and human rights with the Middle East. The document emphasizes United States interest in security in the Middle East, but it doesn't consider the promotion of democracy in the region as a specific objective. Rather, the US objective in the region is defined as "peace and stability." This policy orientation stands in clear contrast to those adopted in other areas such as Africa and Asia, where the promotion of democracy is a main consideration of United States policy. However, this is not a new aspect of US policy. During the 1990-1991 Gulf War, White House press speakers were also instructed to avoid using the word democracy with reference to the Arab World.²²

This argument is carried further in the writings of Samuel Huntington. According to Huntington, Islamic fundamentalism after the Cold War poses a dilemma for US attempts to promote democracy in the Middle East and the Arab states. The US-backed openings that appeared in some Arab political systems during the 90s have only benefited the Islamic movements of those nations. In the Arab world, Huntington asserts, "Western democracy strengthens anti-Western political forces" and he

²²Ibid., 53-54.

cited elections in Jordan, Algeria, and Lebanon where democratic elections enabled Islamic fundamentalists to win a greater number of seats in those parliaments.²³

Therefore, the declared US foreign policy of promoting democracy is reasonably suspended in the case of the Middle East. Washington has frequently been silent on questions of democracy in the Muslim world, especially the Middle East. The US has done nothing more than expressing its concerns even when friendly Muslim states in the Middle East had been clearly contemptuous of democracy. This was the case in December 1995 when President Mubarak's government in Egypt made a mockery of free elections by permitting opposition candidates to win only 14 of 456 parliamentary seats. That election provoked a minor diplomatic criticism to which the Egyptian government paid no attention. Some analysts, moreover, argue that the preconditions for democracy in the Muslim world are significantly lacking. Also, it is thought that there is a need to construct a system of guarantees that will prevent the Islamists, or any other opposition force, from using democratization to seize power and impose a dictatorship. This may be the reason why the US didn't oppose the military coup by the Algerian Army in January 1992. The

²³Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" 32.

Islamic Salvation Army (FIS) was about to seize power in Algeria after winning a vast majority in the parliament. But an opposite view suggests that when Islamist movements were allowed to participate in the democratic process, they adhered to it. Those analysts suggest that the US would have avoided lot of criticism if it had taken a definite stance in advocating a freer, fairer, and more responsive government in the Middle East. Also, by allowing the Islamist parties a role in the system, the US would have reduced the diversities that produce extremism. By tacitly supporting the categorical exclusion of Islamist opposition forces from the political life, the US arouses mistrust and contributes to the weakness, not the solidity, of its Arab allies.²⁴

The US, for the same reason, avoids an active promotion of human rights policy in the region because it may have the effect of further eroding the legitimacy of friendly government. A suitable example may be the impact of President Jimmy Carter's advocacy of human rights on the Shah of Iran, which contributed to his fall after the severe deterioration in the Iranian economy.²⁵

Although the US is genuine about its mission of promoting human rights and democracy, when such idealist goals clash with its national interest

²⁴Norton, "Rethinking US Policy." 53-54,56.

²⁵Ibid., 56.

the US tends to dilute the issue in order to maintain good relations with other countries. The US seems to favor order and stability over justice and freedom in cases where its national interest dictates such tendency.

Striving for a World Order

World order for the idealist theorists can best be attained with the assistance of international institutions and international regimes. Such mechanisms are supposed to regulate relations between sovereign states in the international system. Idealists, contrary to realists, do not conceive international institutions as obstacles to state sovereignty, but instead they perceive those institutions and regimes as devices that can help states accomplish their objectives, and establishing orderly relations among elements of the international system.

Moreover, international institutions and regimes are regarded as the best means to achieve international cooperation, and thus to help promote the idealist principles of democracy and human rights.

The creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) represents one of the ways to institutionalize international justice. Thus, the ICC will be an international institution, which is capable of responding to massive or systematic violations of basic human rights. It is a permanent and independent forum, not related to a specific conflict, in which individual

criminal responsibility for crimes related to human rights can be adjudicated under international law.²⁶

Institutions are supposed to "create the capability for states to cooperate in mutually beneficial ways by reducing the costs of making and enforcing agreements." Institutions in general do not engage themselves in centralized enforcement of agreements, but they do promote the practices of reciprocity, which provides incentives for the parties to keep their part of the agreements to ensure that others do the same. Therefore, international institutions reduce the uncertainty of enforcing agreements, which help states achieve collective gains.²⁷

The basic criticism to the utility of international institutions is the fact that states are the major actors and the only real powers in the international system. Critics emphasize the weakness of international institutions such as the United Nations and the League of Nations to achieve collective security against aggression by great powers, also they cite the important role played by major contributors in international economic organizations. Therefore, critics propose that any influence of

²⁶Naomi Roht-Arriaza, "Institutions of International Justice," *Journal of International Affairs*, 52, no.2, (Spring 1999): 473.

²⁷David Baldwin, "Can Interdependence Work," *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1998): 85-86.

these international institutions is the result of great power participants, like the United States, rather than the institutions themselves. The answer to such criticism is that although big states such as the US exercise huge influence within international institutions, policies that emerge from such institutions differ from those that would have been adopted unilaterally by the US. Policies for specific situations such as those toward Iraq or recipients of IMF loans cannot be taken on ad hoc basis all the time, but must conform to generally applicable rules and principles to be endorsed by multilateral institutions. Even the US finds it feasible to compromise on substance in order to obtain the institutional approval to cover and legitimize its decisions. Thus, the decision-making procedure and general rules of international institutions are important because they influence the substance of policy and the degree to which other states accept it.²⁸

The US, therefore, took the lead in establishing most of the present international institutions like NATO, the United Nations, and other security alliances. After the Cold War the US as a hegemonic power reached an unchallenged status, but it still adheres, and in some cases tries to enlarge, the already established institutions and multilateral alliances. This may be perplexing because the US is actually trying to

²⁸Ibid., 87.

promote an institutionalized international order that would limit its autonomy and tie it to other industrialized democracies. This is basically reasoned by the fact that an institutionalized order, both limits and preserves American power. The US is presumed to give up some of its freedom in the use of its power in exchange of a durable and predictable order that will preserve its interests in the future. By promoting a web of international institutions, the US has been able to secure other states to the "American order." To gain the compliance and cooperation of other states, the US had to be engaged in "strategic restraint"; that is, the US receives commitment from other states to participate in the present international order, and in return it limits the exercise of its own power. Thus, weaker states do not fear domination or abandonment, and hence reduce the incentives to balance, and the US in turn does not need to use its power assets to enforce order and compliance. Therefore, international institutions do not merely serve to facilitate international transactions and solve collective problems, but they also serve the purpose of locking states into an ongoing and predictable course of action.²⁹

Samuel Huntington criticized the US use of idealist terms and principles to promote its own interests. While referring to the US war on Iraq and to

²⁹G. John Ikenberry, "American Liberal Hegemony," *Current History*, 98, no.624, (January 1999):26-27.

its ongoing military presence even after the end of the war, Huntington asserts that the west is actually utilizing international institutions, military power, and economic resources in such ways that will maintain western predominance, protect western interests, and promote western economic and political values.

Despite its utility to the US, and to the world order in general, the UN certainly derives great support from the United States, but it is also hampered by it. When the UN decides to do something important for the World order, the United States will often support it but it will not pay for it. The US is a billion and a half dollars behind in paying its dues. There is a general feeling in the rest of the world that the United Nations is highly dominated by the United States, and that the US is not being fair in requiring other countries to pay for actions that it endorses. This certainly contradicts the idealist rhetoric of the US and its outspoken interest in promoting multilateralism and international cooperation.³⁰

Americans are showing signs of dissatisfaction with UN performance despite the end of the cold war and a general Russian-American agreement on security issues. This may be a result of the failure of peacekeeping operations in Haiti and Somalia. Requests by Democrats to

³⁰Jimmy Carter. "Beyond the Presidency: International Influence and the Pursuit of Justice," *Journal of International Affairs*, 52, no.2 (Spring 1999):432.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The United States policies in the post-Cold War era certainly retain some aspects of power politics. While striving to preserve the New World Order, the US is forced to undertake power arrangements in an effort to prevent any expansionist power from destabilizing the system. This is especially the case when it comes to maintaining stability in the Middle East or in East Asia. The US also maintains its military alliances especially NATO, which it seeks to enlarge towards the east in an effort to fill the power vacuum left by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the United States still conceives the international system on the realist anarchic assumption; that is, it still believes in the policy of self-help and armaments as the best means to achieve security. Although international institutions are useful means to dilute the effects of anarchy and to help cooperation on limited issue areas, they are still considered inadequate mechanisms for preserving the security and survival of the state. Therefore, the US perceives no alternative for the international system of states and tries to preserve its continuation in the best means available. However, this superpower policy as the preserver of the system does not mean a total reliance on realism and power politics. The US has

an innate idealistic component which is a pillar of the American ideology itself.

The United States appears to have a genuine interest in promoting idealist objectives such as human rights and democracy; that is to export its own domestic ideals and create as much states as possible holding the US political system. The US also has a missionary zeal to produce a new world order encompassing like-minded states, or at least controlled and regulated with norms and values compatible with the western democratic tradition, which is supposed to bring justice and security for all.

This innate interest to bring changes to the international system and to its constituent elements that will produce peace-loving nations is often faced with the cruel realities of international politics and state interests. Such obstacles enforce a deviation from the aspired idealistic objectives and lead the US to follow policies characteristic of political realism where power politics and state-centric considerations become the basis of decision making.

The promotion of democracy and human rights is therefore subject to national interest considerations. When these policies do not interfere with national interest considerations, they will be pursued as an objective themselves. On the other hand, if policies of human rights and democracy

may endanger some state interest like threatening the peaceful relations with a friendly nation or help creating a potential foe, such policies will most probably be abandoned in favor of other more practical (realistic) policies. Idealist objectives will be substituted for policies that will ensure the security of the state, which is the ultimate objective in every international behavior.

The US practically has a national interest in promoting international institutions and regimes. It has been a keen supporter to such arrangements, especially when they adopt policies compatible with US objectives. It has also been on the opposite side when faced with multilateral agreements that it perceived threatening to US security or economic interests.

The necessity of establishing international institutions and regimes is not only their function as regulatory mechanisms to the behavior of states, but their utility in providing international forums for the promotion of US-backed policies. These institutions do not only serve as preservers of the international order, but through implementing policies favored by the United States, they provide a legitimate cover for US-backed decisions, and therefore help secure greater compliance from other states.

On the other hand, international institutions and regimes which have been created to serve the interests of a state at some point in time, could be

abandoned if states perceive such arrangements as a threat to state sovereignty. This is especially the case when the orientation of such institutions and regimes follows a trend contradictory to the policies of that state and in turn viewed as posing a possible threat to the security and existence of that state. In this case a state may refrain from backing decisions implemented by an international institution or regime. It may also choose to withdraw totally from such an arrangement.

Such idealist principles may also seem to non-western civilizations as imports from hegemonic and imperial powers, ideals that may contradict with the norms and values of non-western civilizations. This perception of western ideals may trap the US in a more carefully planned course while trying to promote principles like democracy or human rights.

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