

5-11-2011

Prospects for World Peace and Security

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Smith, Andrew P., "Prospects for World Peace and Security" (2011). *Honors Theses*. Paper 7.
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Memorandum

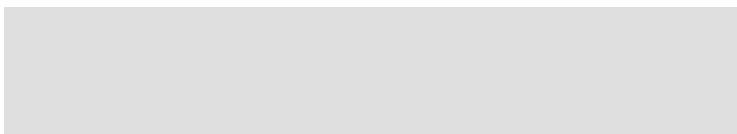
To: President Barack Obama

From: Andrew P. Smith

Date: Spring 2011

Prospect for World Peace and Security

The following analysis will assess the prospects for global conflict or security using both traditionalist and modernist theory of international relations.



June 8, 2011

Prospects for World Peace and Security

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May 2011

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“The life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” The words of Thomas Hobbes in *The Leviathan* capture the essence of political realist theory and the image of the world through the eyes of a traditionalist. Political realism suggests that the world is a place of violent anarchy with no central authority or genuine consensus as a community. Realist theory prioritizes national security and national interests over ideology, social constructs, and moral values. The traditionalist’s nightmare is the vision that anarchy is the true state of nature that has been covered up by various irrelevant constructs. Realists acknowledge that the world is the way it is, yet they do not necessarily like it. It seems as if they are simply being “real” about the world by refusing to hide behind social constructs and ideology. Also, one subscribing to this political philosophy would recognize that there is some level of cooperation yet this cooperation is not genuine since it is simply a means for survival and security. “For the realists, the central problem of international politics is war and the use of force, and the central actors are states.” (Nye p.4) This theory also implies that man is an instinctive animal with the objective of surviving and procreating and states are formed as a means for cooperative competition for survival. Humans are not seen as intelligent beings with the ability to reason past instincts and use ideology to create a higher standard of living. According to realism, man is cutthroat in the state of nature and the fear of not surviving by means of natural selection is the driving force behind his competitive motives. Power politics, the appropriately rendered moniker for realism, emphasizes the idea that power is the ultimate goal yet because of the harsh and competitive nature of man, power does not

ensure complete safety. This caveat of realism played a key role in the creation of states and explains why states are in existence. Man's fear of life's brutal competitiveness led to the congregation of individuals with similar goals as a means for group security and strength in numbers. Realists recognize a "Hobbesian state of nature", the harsh and brutal competitiveness, on the individual level and on the international level because of the dog-eat-dog condition of a world with no consensus. On the state level realists recognize a degree of cooperation, yet this cooperation is explained by realists as a method of hedging in the competitive natural state. National security and national interests take priority over ideology and social constructs. In summation, traditionalist theory explains the world as a bleak, grim, and vicious arena of violent competitiveness for individual survival and procreation.

Using this image created by realism, an analysis of modern issues can be conducted and prospects for the future can be educationally formulated. A traditionalist thinker would see the modern world as a dangerous place with vulnerability to competitive attack amongst the states. The lack of isolation and individual selfishness for power among states in 2010 and the coming years undermines realist theory severely. The anti-competitive and modernist policy surrounding international relations today is something that realists would criticize heavily. There are many specific issues that exemplify this undermining more than others and are worthy of discussion when analyzing modern world peace. Through the eyes of a realist, the most prominent issue facing world peace and security in current times is

nuclear war. The current and future possibility of nuclear war is the most dangerous, competitive, and aggressive issue regarding world peace and security. The amount of states that have nuclear weapons and the amount of weapons that some states have is a frightening notion for traditionalists. In a Hobbesian state of nature such as the one we live in, the destructiveness of nuclear weapons gives power to whoever has the most and the best weapons. Realists would argue that because nine nations have nuclear weapons currently, there are essentially eight threats to our existence as a competitor. Our existence as a nation is extremely threatened by states such as China and North Korea who have weapons that can easily reach our land. A realist would believe that there is no room for ideology or logical reasoning as a form of cooperation between adversaries when there is as much at stake as there is in modern times. Again, realism prioritizes national security and national interests over ideology and moral constructs.

Another reason why realists would see poor prospects world peace is the threatening increases that other nations are having in regards to the realist characteristics of state power. Realists assess state power through quantitatively and qualitatively analyzing a nation's territory, people, natural resources, government and sovereignty. One threat coming from this analysis would be the extremely large and increasing population of China. Realists would recognize this as a possible threat in terms of military numbers in a potential war between the U.S. and China. Regardless of the relationship between us and China, a traditionalist would see this as a possible threat from our competition. Although the quality

of life in China is less than stellar, the magnitude of the population issue would be seen as a threat to realists. What we see here is the harsh and brutal perception of the world embedded in realist theory.

Traditionalists would be especially critical of the level of sovereignty that states have in modern times and where that level is going. Realists believe that states are unchecked by any higher authority in the Hobbesian state of nature. In modern times, international cooperation and international law are major issues being aggressively worked on. The idea of possibly having at least some “world law” in the near future is something that realists cringe over. Realists believe that the world should have no rules and the harsh state of man is to be unrestricted by any state-higher authority. World law is a concept that brutally undermines realist theory on so many levels. Current realists see awful prospects for world peace and security because of massive amounts of vulnerability to competitive attack resulting from anti-competitive relations between the major actors of international politics. Realists see a level of sovereignty held by states that is restricted because of international ties that limit the authority of states. Here is where we see the contrasting ideals of realism and modernism as political philosophies.

As made obvious in the previous analysis, realism is an intense explanation of human existence and the objective of beings in their natural state. For realists, nothing is sugar coated or watered-down. Life consists of competitive aggression as means for surviving and

procreating. Another form of realism exists in which the ideas of realism are expanded upon slightly. This theory is called “offensive realism”. Offensive realism suggests that states are not satisfied with a given amount of power and seek hegemony within the international system. According to offensive realism, the maximization of the state’s share of power is the means by which security and survival are achieved. Hegemony is something that has been historically frowned upon within international relations under the philosophy of realism, and under many other political philosophies as well. Since the Westphalian states were established in 1648, the primary international concern has been the balance of power amongst the states. Balance of power is a concept demanding that no single state or coalition of states be in domination of the rest. Hegemony has always been seen as something that will cause failure within the international system. It is quite interesting to analyze the balance of power in modern times since it is very arguable that the United States is a hegemonic nation. Why is the US allowed to be so overwhelmingly powerful if an international balance of power is paramount for political sustainment? Offensive realists would argue that the US is doing exactly what they should do to ensure survival and procreation. Contrarily, realists would suggest that the US be balanced by another powerful state or coalition of states in order to secure a balanced international system.

According to Edward Vose Goulich, the author of *Europe’s Classical Balance of Power*, explicitly provides a formal system for analyzing a political system and determining

the balance of power. Since this system is timeless, one can analyze the balance of power at any time in history including the present international status. To begin an analysis of the modern balance of power, Goulich suggests that the general framework of international politics be examined. Modern international relations can be explained as a large group of actors with influence beyond their state that are acting from all over the globe. Unlike Europe in the 1700's, states are far away from one another yet their international relationships are intact and eventful. Goulich's next step in analyzing the balance of power is to take a look at the major and minor powers that play a role in international relations. Major powers in 2010 would consist of the U.S., China, the UK, India, Russia, Brazil. Secondary powers would be composed of Japan, Australia, Canada, Middle Eastern nations, Mexico etc. Recognizing the major and minor powers within the international system is essential for understanding how the power is balanced or unbalanced. Furthermore, relative homogeneity of these states is important to analyze as a way to judge the consistency of the international system. Homogeneity is the degree to which nations have similar qualities. To analyze modern homogeneity, it is important to recognize any revolutionary nations that have intentions of interrupting the global system. In modern times, it is arguable that there are no states that are objectively attempting to overthrow the international system and dominate world power. Contrarily, many believe that the US is in fact doing this. Needless to say, there is no state with drastic enough intentions to be labeled as a "revolutionary state". Additionally, the governmental and economic systems of different nations will speak to the

homogeneity of international relations. In terms of government, democracy seems to be the dominating form amongst the states in the system. With the exception of China, liberal democracy seems to be the consistent mode for governing states. On the other hand, the economic system can be viewed as having many different forms amongst the states. Capitalism has made its presence known yet the existence of communism in Asia and socialism in Europe make the economic homogeneity relatively low. In general, it is arguable that the relative homogeneity of the current international system is low. Next, the means by which power is calculated and assigned to a state is something that is ever-changing and always important. Knowing how much power a country has is a key element in analyzing the homogeneity of the international system. In modern times, calculating power is more distinct and abstract than it's ever been. Unlike the balance of power during the pre-WWI era in which power was based on military size and speed, power can be assessed through examining a state's technology, intelligence capability, and military power. Technology is something that has drastically changed politics and the world in general and it will continue to advance the international system for years to come. The advancements made with information transferring and communication ability have altered the balance of power exponentially. When calculating power in the modern international system, military, technology, and communications are the basis for this process. Finally, an examination of the flexibility or rigidity of the international system is extremely important for determining the balance of power. A flexible system such as the years between WWI and WWII can

create little conflict and war while a rigid system like that of the pre-WWI era can create stress and clash amongst players. It is apparent that realists would view the modern international system as one that is very rigid and restricting upon state's interests and power. The amount of political, financial, and economic strain that has been created by international interdependence would be the focal point of a realist's criticism of what they believe is a poor international structure.

Now that the analysis of current balance of power characteristics has been conducted, it is appropriate to compare and contrast the present system with past systems. This further analysis allows for enhanced projections of future events based on established theory. To first compare our current balance of power system with a past system, the period of time ranging from 1815 to 1871 is notable. This period of time is known as the concert of Europe. During the concert of Europe, there was very little war and conflict since the common goal of the European nations at this time was to collaborate as a means for preventing European dominance that was exemplified by Napoleon in prior years. This period of time is similar to the current balance of power in the sense that both of these eras are themed by cooperation and international interdependence. A common goal of balancing the power was a motive for different states to enter into agreements regarding European power stability. Currently, there is very many similar agreements between states that are intended to achieve that same goal. From a realist's perspective, the similarity major

similarity between these two eras that ties them together would be the existence of interdependence contracts that constrain the national interests of states. Thanks to the traditionalist criticism of these two eras, a comparison can be drawn linking the concert of Europe and the present balance of power system.

To further this comparative analysis, studying a contrasting time period to the current can offer insight for future projections in a contradicting form. Since our current balance of power system is one consisting of global interdependence resulting in limitations on state objectives, it is obvious that modern times are not at all similar to the Westphalian Era. The Westphalian Era is the period of time characterized by the official emergence of states after the end of the 30 Years War in Europe. In 1648, the states established were France, England, Prussia, Russia, and Austria. These states emerged as authoritative nations with the intentions of competing against each other for sovereignty and power. The next 100 years or so were full of short and sharp wars between these five states with very widely accepted “rules of war”. During these wars, every dog in the fight was a loan soldier with national goals being the only driving force for competition. This is the hobbesian state of nature in which realists believe man naturally exists. This time period is most contrasting of the current time period for obvious reasons. Once again, realist theory has facilitated the discovery of a major contrasting idea between the two time periods at hand.

Based on the comparative analysis above, it is logical to construct future predictions based on the historical events following the examined time periods. To begin once again with the similar era, The Concert of Europe ended in 1854 and was followed by time period characterized by minor wars and conflict with a relatively stable balance of power. However, it was not long after 1854 that pre-WWI issues began to emerge. Since history tends to repeat itself, it is rational to predict a stable and balanced power system in the coming years. To further support this prediction, it is evident that the Westphalian Era was followed by a time of low stability and unbalanced power with Napoleon ruling over France and ultimately all of Europe. Since our current international system is least similar to a time period that was followed by unbalanced power, it is once again logical to predict that we will see a stable and even balance of power in the near future.

Although historical events can help predict future occurrences, things can happen that may alter the outcome of current times. While it is fairly predicted that the coming years will be characterized by stability and balanced power, there are many events and policies that may actually throw off that prediction. For example, the current situation in the Korea's seems to be a recipe for disaster. Although there is cooperation and international agreement amongst all the role players in that situation, the recent disturbance that has occurred between these two countries may signal a coming conflict. Contrary to the prior predictions, escalation of the conflict between North and South Korea may potentially create war in the

next ten years. This recent disruption of peace in Korea is an example of an event that may actually create instability in the future.

“Most people would agree that the state is the most important actor in the international system, although realists and liberals would disagree about the relative importance of other actors.” (Nye, p.34) Nye is highlighting the fact that realists fail to recognize non-state factors that can influence international relations. Because of this attribute of realism, the predictions made are now even more questionable. The possibility of instability resulting from non-state factors such as financial disaster, disease, or terrorism is extremely possible. Events such as those stated are very realistic threats to the stability of power on the international level.

Through all of this negative discussion questioning the balance of power in the coming years, there are some events that show hope for a stable balance of power on the way. For example, the acceptance and success of international organizations such as the World Bank, the UN, and others show great possibility for global cooperation and political stability. These organizations are evidence that international relations can consist of harmonious cooperation as a means for a stable balance of power. Just as it is with any future predictions, there is always room for policy and events that may alter the outcome and possibly contradict predictions.

June 8, 2011

Political Modernism is a school of political philosophy that places heavy emphasis on the importance of globalization through the use of institutions. Interdependence among states is something that modernists believe is paramount for the survival and advancement of society and the maximization of peace. Traditionalist and modernist theory of international relations differ from one another in very specific and important ways that make the two ideologies opposites.

One way in which the two sets of ideals collide lies within the fundamentals of each philosophy. Realism suggests that states be selfish and oriented toward national interests and national security. Modernism says just the opposite by stressing the importance of international cooperation and interdependence through institutionalization. According to Nye, "Modernism is based off of classic liberalism". (Nye) Classic liberalism is the belief made famous by Locke that people are inherently inclined to work together and live happily in collaboration. Realism and modernism have conflicting ideas about how man is prone to behave in a state of nature. Modernist theory suggests that man will instinctively cooperate and team together to enhance the standard of living.

Another major difference between realism and modernist theory is the recognition of an entity as a factor in the international system. Realists strictly believe that states are the only actors on the international stage. Modernists accept non-state actors into the international system such as terrorist groups, financial influences, disease threats and international organizations. All of these things are unexplainable as threats to international

relations when using realist theory. Modernism acknowledges that these factors are very big threats to the global community and that they should receive recognition as do states.

Thirdly, the two ideologies differ with their recognition of power that these actors can acquire in various forms. Realism appreciates power solely on the military level while modernism identifies power outside of military such as social, economic, financial, environmental and technological. These new recognitions of power forms allows for the application of modernist theory in a more accurate way than realist theory. Theory is only as good as its explanations and future predictions. Neoliberal institutionalism is widely accepted much because of the theory's sophisticated recognition of power that applies to modern times.

Finally, realism and modernism conflict in each theory's characterizations of states. Realism characterizes a state as an unrestricted sovereign. In other words, the state is the unruled ruler that has the ultimate power over the entire state. Neoliberal institutionalism entertains the modern concept that states are in fact restrained by higher authority within the global web of interdependent coalition. Because of things like treaties, trade agreements, world organizations, and environmental organizations, states have constraints placed upon them that imply that there is some form of international "law" or "rules". For example, the world trade body has recently dropped a law that protects the endangered sea turtle because it was agreed that the law restricted free trade. This is an interesting example since it ties in both environmental and economic influences when explaining why the law was dropped.

This reading shows the importance of international relations and interdependence through institutions such as free trade and environmental protection. The idea of structures like the world trade body that combine leaders from various states and decide on important issues is a concept that modernist indulge and realists ignore.

“Increasing cross-fertilization of ideas and precedents among constitutional judges around the world is gradually giving rise to increasingly visible international consensus on various issues.” (Slaughter, p.78) In her book *A New World Order*, modernist Anne-Marie Slaughter expresses her strong belief that the world is slowly but surely developing a global jurisprudence through international consensus on judicial issues. This concept exemplifies neoliberal institutionalism perfectly in its highest and heaviest degree; international law. According to Slaughter and most modernists, prospects for world peace and security are high and exciting. Discussion of global consensus regarding international issues can only signal good things to come in the eyes of a modernist. Institutionalizing world law could arguably have similarly effects to those it had for trade, which were groundbreaking. Furthermore, it would be logical that the United States national security would be amplified with the emergence of new global networks. If the United States has some of the best agencies and organizations that exist today, why wouldn't new global institutions model themselves after the US? This can do nothing but excite the United States for obvious security implications. Consequently, modernist theory seems to explain and predict peace and security in a comforting way, especially for the US.

It seems as if the United States may be faltering a bit in terms of global perceptions. While all this talk of modern international institutions and global cooperation seems to show a bright future for the US, it is important to examine these issues from an opposing perspective. What Americans are known for is being selfish and closed minded about differing ideas and cultures. This may be an explanation of why the US has been heavily viewed as a bully on the international “playground” for decades. The ultimate criticism of US foreign policy is that the United States needs to mind their own business and stop acting like the world’s police force. Although most Americans deny it, the US makes it very obvious that there is a conflict of interest between national and international interests. The USA is notorious for making their personal interests into global interests and covering it up like there was a genuine necessity as a motive. Many argue that oil is the only reason for the United States’ involvement in the Middle East yet they continuously insist that there are intrinsic reasons for the struggle for peace. Examining global perceptions and understanding the criticisms of the United States as a superpower is crucial for a conducting a fair and just analysis of world politics.

Through the eyes of a modernist, future peace relies upon the strength of the international system and its institutions. One way that modernists would strengthen the system to ensure global peace and security is through regimes. For example, the world trade regime that is currently in place does a phenomenal job of regulating international trade. On the other hand, the current international finance regime is quite weak. Modernists would see

this as a window of opportunity to strengthen international relations through institutionalization. Another area of interest for modernists would be increasing the certainty of peace by creating and expanding the networks of states especially focusing on the smaller and weaker nations with growing societies or corrupt leadership. The early establishment and intervention of institutional networks between developing countries and major powers can enhance the likelihood that the international system will remain intact and efficient with as many players involved as possible. For modernists, the world is a giant web of interdependence that is constantly growing and becoming more complex, almost to the extent that it is out of control. These two concepts are areas worthy of improvements that will advance prospects for peace and security.

This web of interconnection that modernists see around the world is an example of this new phenomenon of hard and soft power. Power has always been a plain and simple topic according to the realists, yet modernists recognize the concept of soft power as a result of this web of interdependency. Hard power, as we have previously discussed is the ability to influence outcomes through threat of physical force or violence. Modernists have brought in a twist on this concept that gives birth to the appropriately named “soft power”. Since Modernists recognize non-state groups, as well as states, as actors in international politics, there is a new concept involved that suggests the ability to influence outcomes without the threat of force or physical violence. Joseph Nye offers some excellent examples and explanations of soft power in modern politics in his newest book entitled *The Future of Power*. Nye describes in his work the relationship between the United States and China. As

many realist political scientists such as John Mearsheimer believe, China is a large state with power characteristics worthy of being the world largest power. While China may fit the realist mold for being a world dominator, the modernist though process see's China as a power that is checked and balanced by interdependency. Nye describes in his book that the United States and China should have very little interest in battling one another for world dominance in a physical setting like war. Nye says that a war between these two powers will not occur because of the complex relationship that the two nations have. According to Nye, the idea of China and the US taking realists perspectives on the situation and battling one another would essentially produce poor outcomes for both nations regardless of who wins. The modern day web of interdependence that modernist theory describes has brought the US and China into a relationship that has valuable ties politically and especially economically that will simply eliminate any thought of physical war by either nation. The manufacturing industry that thrives in China is reliant upon the consumer spending in the US and vice versa. This relationship is the result of interdependence between the US and China and places a restraint on each country's sovereignty. These powers are restrained in a way that limits the ability of each nation to wage war because of economic ties and social responsibility. This abstract concept of international relations represents the very essential difference between realist political theory and modernist political theory. Fortunately, in this sector of international relations, modernist political theory suggests that prospects for world peace are promising between the US and China. (Nye, *The Future of Power*)

Contrarily, modernists would recognize some global situations that may have negative influences on prospects for peace and security. For example, Russia's strong yet

decreasing level of nationalism and pride has seemed to limit their involvement in the international system. Modernists are concerned that such a large power is not enthusiastically involved in the many international institutions in existence in present times. Prospects for peace and security would be much better made by modernists with the established involvement of Russia in the international system. Also, modernists would see the trouble with international finance as a cause for concern. Although this is an area with opportunity for system strengthening, it must also be viewed as a tragic flaw on the system. If the international finance regime is not revised and modified in ways like the world trade regime was, a global financial disaster could burden the entire human race. There are already some frightening signs of financial Armageddon with the talk of bankruptcy in Greece and Spain. Prospects for global peace and security will be severely diminished if these two areas are neglected on the international level.

I personally believe that realist theory is an outdated political philosophy that was very respectable as a building block ideology. Realism seems to be the most genuine outlook on human existence since it is so blunt with its concepts yet the amount of loopholes and flaws within the philosophy leave it open for brutal criticism. Realism fails to acknowledge non-state actors in the international system in a time when the biggest threat to all is in fact a non-state entity, terrorism. Also, I disagree with and am offended by the claim that realists make stating that man is an instinctive animal whose goal is to survive and procreate. The

most advanced brain on the planet does not belong to a creature that acts on instinct only to secure existence. I believe that it is important to mind realism and use realism when analyzing international relations yet having realism as a primary ideology is ludicrous. On the other hand, I am personally very fond of the ideas and beliefs of modernists. Global cooperation and interdependence is essential for our continued existence as a race. We are all citizens of one common state and that state is the earth. Each and every one of us has a personal responsibility to our planet and international networking has and will promote globalization. I also agree with modernists in the sense that technology enables communication that this world has never seen before. Outdated realist theory would be too ignorant to appreciate and utilize the networking capabilities that we have today because of technological developments.

My personal beliefs, which were probably made evident above, are very much similar to those of neoliberal institutionalists. I believe that things like environment, culture, trade, finance, disease, terrorism, and many others are well handled by international institutionalization. I appreciate and respect the ideas of realism and refer to them very much when analyzing politics yet I can't help but feel that realism is outdated and unfit for standing alone as a political ideology.

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 5/6/2011

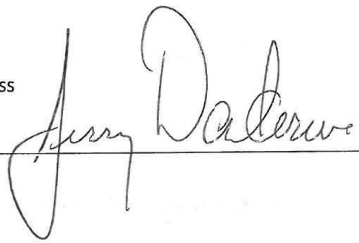
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June 8, 2011

June 8, 2011