

# The paradigm that dare not speak its name: Canadian Foreign Policy's uneasy relationship with realist IR theory

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## Abstract

This article examines the place that “realism” occupies in the debates over International Relations theory and Canadian Foreign Policy. Argued here is the claim that realism is far from being a dominant paradigm in the Canadian academy, which in itself is hardly a surprising finding. However, realism’s relative absence from the scholarship on Canadian Foreign Policy disguises a more important finding: there has been a fairly longstanding Canadian approach to foreign policy analysis bearing many of the hallmarks of structural-realist formulations, an approach that puts great emphasis on Canada’s “relative capability” as a “middle power” in the international system. Although few in the country would embrace the realist label explicitly, many have heeded the structural-realist injunction that foreign policy analysis should start with an assessment of the country’s relative standing in the international pecking order. In the Canadian case, this empirical emphasis on relative capability has become suffused with normative significance of a decidedly “non-realist” kidney, summed up in the disputed concept “middlepower-manship.” The article concludes that, to the extent realism is to continue to be a presence in Canadian Foreign Policy scholarship, it will likely be the non-structural variant known today as “neoclassical realism,” in no small measure due to the logical inconsistencies of the earlier, structuralist, paradigm.

## Keywords

Realism, constructivism, middle power, soft balancing

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It is not difficult to caricature International Relations (IR) realism, regarded by many scholars (and not just in Canada) as representing the closest brush that any member of the academy might ever have with devil worship.<sup>1</sup> Judging from a recent authoritative survey of political scientists in the IR/Canadian Foreign Policy (CFP) community, realism—no matter how it happens to be packaged<sup>2</sup>—is in a distinctly minoritarian position when it comes to the stated paradigmatic orientations of this country's professors. Data periodically assembled by the Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) survey testify to the non-dominance of what, not so long ago, was believed by some to be a "hegemonic" if not totemic fixture on the international (though never the Canadian) epistemological scene.<sup>3</sup> The most recent TRIP data, from 2014, reveal slightly more than 12 percent of Canadian respondents self-identifying as realist, a figure substantially lower than the share (more than 25 percent) professing to be constructivists. Nor is it only in Canada that constructivism beats out realism as paradigm of choice for scholarly practitioners; even in the US, the erstwhile hearthstead of realism, its adherents (at 17.7 percent) have been in retreat, and are now in the clear minority, albeit not as far behind constructivists as they are in Canada.<sup>4</sup> This is nothing new; a decade or so ago, TRIP analysts found only 15 percent of self-identified realists teaching in Canada's universities, and not that much greater a percentage at US universities.<sup>5</sup>

This retreat from realism also shows up when Canada-based scholars are asked to list names of those they consider to be "influential world scholars": only two of the 10 names reported by IR professors in Canada, and this irrespective of whether one samples the so-called "BMT" cohort alone (for UBC, McGill, and Toronto) or the entire set of the country's universities, are known to be realists of one stripe or other: for the BMT cohort, the selected pair were Stephen Walt and Kenneth Waltz, while for their "non-BMT" colleagues, the duo were John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Waltz. By contrast, twice that number of realists populated the top 10 of US-based IR professors (Mearsheimer, Waltz, Walt, and Samuel Huntington), although even in the US sample realists are still in the minority—a minority that would be smaller yet if Huntington were classified as what he really was, a

1. See my article with Tudor Onea, "Sympathy for the devil: Neoclassical realism and myth in Canadian Foreign Policy," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 53–66.
2. For a succinct catalogue of the many faces of realism, see Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt, "Realism," in John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens, eds., *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., 99–112 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Curiously, this same source insists that "[r]ealism is the dominant theory of international relations" (99), notwithstanding much evidence to the contrary.
3. These surveys are conducted under the auspices of the Institute for the Theory and Practice of International Relations, at the College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.
4. See Stephen M. Saideman, "Canadian scholarship on international relations: Unified, divided or diverse?" *International Journal* 71, no. 2 (June 2016): 193–213, citing from Table 3, 200.
5. See Michael Lipson, Daniel Maliniak, Amy Oakes, Susan Peterson, and Michael J. Tierney, "Divided discipline? Comparing views of US and Canadian IR scholars," *International Journal* 62, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 327–343, at 332.

comparativist rather than an IR specialist.<sup>6</sup> Remarking on this trend, John Mearsheimer was heard to lament wryly at the Toronto International Studies Association conference in March 2014 that he considered himself to be a member of an endangered species just about everywhere on earth—with the important exception of China. Of that country’s inhabitants, and especially of its IR community, Mearsheimer exclaimed, not entirely facetiously, “those are *my* people!”<sup>7</sup>

Truth to tell, as my colleague Kim Nossal and others have demonstrated so well, the Canadian academy had never really been chock-full of self-declared realists, not even when the Cold War was raging and when it might have been assumed that, as was the case in the neighbouring US, realism would be given a respectful place in the halls of academe. For sure, policy analysts working in government in Ottawa, then as well as now, could be found to harbour a favourable sentiment or two about realism, if only because one of the paradigm’s variants, classical realism, had for some time been seen to vaunt as its *raison d’être* the identification of something known as the “national interest,” and since it was and remains the business of policy analysts working in certain state entities (e.g. defence and foreign affairs ministries) to discern and to promote that interest, it followed that a paradigm promising to make their jobs easier could hardly be an unwelcome one.<sup>8</sup> But in the academy, things were different, and those scholars (not inconsiderable in number) whose psychological and intellectual profiles might otherwise have inclined them in the direction of classical realism, chose instead to self-identify with cognate paradigms such as the “English school”<sup>9</sup> or to skip pigeon-holing themselves altogether, this latter coming more easily to diplomatic historians (who have made up a substantial, if now diminishing, share of the CFP scholarly community) than it did to political scientists.

So how is it that I came to find intellectual succour in realism, so much so that I can without evident embarrassment confess, in these pages and elsewhere, to being a realist? Since the editors of this special issue have invited contributors to reflect on matters biographical, and since in my case one of the salient features of my biography is that I am from the US originally (though more of my life has been passed in Canada than there), and—to continue this conjunctural thread—since it is so widely and stubbornly (but ultimately erroneously) believed that realism *is* an American concoction, it would follow that this introspective portion of my article should be a short one. Why? Well, what else needs to be said to explain the failings

6. Saideman, “Canadian scholarship,” Table 5, 203.

7. Author’s notes, roundtable on Mearsheimer’s contributions to the discipline, 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Toronto, 27 March 2014.

8. Old habits die hard, in this case fortunately. To see how intellectual practices formed in the policy community can make their way into the scholarly one, we need go no further than to consult the cogent article published by one analyst-turned-academic, Thomas Juneau, “The civil war in Syria and Canada’s containment policy,” *International Journal* 70, no. 3 (September 2015): 471–488. This is an exemplary, rare, and unapologetic application of classical realism to Canadian Foreign Policy analysis.

9. See Richard Little, “The English School vs. American Realism: A meeting of minds or divided by a common language?” *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (July 2003): 443–460.

of someone prepared to embrace realism, other than that he (in my case) was born into the cult, and could no more resist its malign blandishments than any self-respecting “pure laine” Canadian academic could be found to disparage multilateralism or the UN.

The problem, however, with attempting to root my preference for realism in the soil of my native land is that the kind of realism upon which I battered during my doctoral studies (Johns Hopkins SAIS, in Washington) in the early to mid 1970s was universally considered to be a “foreign” paradigm, an import from the debased Old World associated with names such as Carr, Morgenthau, Spykman, Strausz-Hupé, and Aron—non-Americans, all. I found this paradigm, with its emphasis on the human tragedy and its not-so-veiled invitations to prudence in thought and behaviour, to be a refreshing change from an American conceit (well, *North American*, really, because Canada also veered in this direction) of exceptionalism founded on an assumption of superior values and virtues associated with what Antonello Gerbi once referred to as the “dispute” of the New World.<sup>10</sup> It helped, in my case that I had been an undergrad in the turbulence that was American campus life during the 1960s, and as a result developed a contrarian outlook that, to me at least, meshed well with the epistemological and philosophical bases of the kind of realism (classical) that I would come to embrace, as an antidote to both the nostrums of the “exceptionalists” and the equally banal critiques of the “revisionists,” who could agree on little save that American Foreign Policy really was *sui generis*—great in the case of the former, rotten for the latter.

Imagine, therefore, my surprise that once I began to learn a lot more than I once knew about Canadian Foreign Policy, I started to detect an unspoken *Geist* in the academy, one that was congenial to the spirit though not the letter of a variant of realism that, by the 1980s, seemed to have captured the paradigm—the variant that initially bore the label “structural realism,” but would subsequently become more familiarly known as “neo-realism.” Notwithstanding the legions of Canadian political science colleagues who were as likely to embrace realism as Count Dracula was the crucifix, I found a surprising amount of “realist” epistemology showing up in their scholarship, even if despite themselves. They may have hated the sinner, but they appeared eager enough to embrace the sin. And in what follows in this brief article, I will demonstrate how it was that realist modes of thinking got smuggled into what was otherwise a non- or, even better, an *anti*-realist scholarly community. I will also discuss some recent developments in IR theory, in a bid to assess the likelihood of the realist paradigm’s being able, if not to stage a “comeback,” at least to prevent its further decline among Canadian scholars.

10. Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750–1900*, trans. Jeremy Moyle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

## Embracing the sin: The allure of structural realism *avant la lettre*

It is with *structural* realism that the pages in this section are concerned—structural realism that is properly understood as an attempt to invest the international “system” with superordinate ability to constrain states and to structure interstate relationships. This system’s wonder-working properties were to be found in both its ordering principle (of anarchy) and its abiding concern for the relative distribution of capability. It turns out that structural realism à la Kenneth Waltz has had a longer and more distinguished career in the Canadian academy than many realize, and this notwithstanding that few if any of its adherents would choose to call themselves realists, much less structural realists. You could even say that in Canada, structural realism predated Waltz. And what exactly was the sin that had such pull upon this community of the righteous? It was, in the first instance, an insistence on the conditioning role that structural position played in the shaping of Canadian Foreign Policy. This shaping manifested itself both empirically and normatively, and over time this *sotto voce* realism would end up generating policy preferences widely derided—and not only by self-proclaimed realists—as idealistic or ideological mush.

The master concept to which structural thinking gave rise in the study of Canadian Foreign Policy was, of course, the familiar construct of “middle power.” This construct had two dimensions. One of these was empirical. The other was normative. The empirical dimension was noted for the manner in which so much scholarship on Canadian Foreign Policy began, just as structural realists insist it should begin, by taking stock of the country’s ranking in the international hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> As applied during the Cold War by its adherents, the empirical variant of structuralism paid a great deal of attention, again as structural-realist theorists say should be done, to the phenomenon of power and its balancing. And this, in turn, gave rise to a school of analysis for which resort to the metaphor of “counterweight” proved irresistible.<sup>12</sup> Since the “counterweighters,” whatever else they were, hardly remained indifferent to Cold War dynamics, it might have been thought the focus of their balancing exhortations would have been the Soviet Union. And, indeed, the counterweighters were not oblivious of the Soviet challenge to global security, for they were keen supporters, in the main, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—one of them, Escott Reid, letting it be known to anyone willing to lend him an ear that he had been one of the alliance’s chief architects.<sup>13</sup> But it was really not the “hard” balancing required to contain the

11. See especially Maureen Appel Molot, “Where do we, or should we, or can we sit? A review of Canadian Foreign Policy literature,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 1–2 (Spring/Fall 1990): 77–96.

12. I have discussed this metaphor at some length in *The North Atlantic Triangle Revisited: Canadian Grand Strategy at Century’s End*, Contemporary Affairs 4 (Toronto: Irwin, 2000).

13. See my chapter with Stéphane Roussel, “Escott Reid, the North Atlantic Treaty, and Canadian strategic culture,” in Greg Donaghy and Stéphane Roussel, eds., *Escott Reid: Diplomat and Scholar*, 44–66 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004).

Soviet Union that motivated the counterweighters; rather it was the US, which they believed needed a good dose of “soft balancing,” that served to animate their scholarly and policy-oriented work.

To achieve such soft balancing, Canadian counterweighters emphasized Western Europe, seen for a few decades as being somehow capable of lessening Canadian dependence on the United States at a time when Canada (and other allies) were, paradoxically perhaps, becoming more militarily engaged than they had ever been with the US. So the “balance” sought by the counterweighters was less to be found in the realm of physical security than it was in that of either (or both of) economic security and “ontological” security (viz. “identity” preservation and enhancement). But it was balancing of a kind, nonetheless, that motivated these undeclared structural realists.

In the end, counterweight logic proved to be extremely difficult to operationalize, all the more so precisely because its main theatre of operation was Western Europe during the Cold War. Indeed, to the extent that making the counterweight work required Canada to increase its military contributions to the defence of the Western Europeans (and the latter regularly implored Canada to do more “for them” during those years), it became hard for many sentient observers to see how Ottawa’s doing *exactly* what Washington, Bonn, and other Cold War NATO capitals were urging it to do could possibly constitute balancing of the US in anything other than the most Pickwickian sense.

Nor were things very different with the economic aspect of counterweight advocacy. For a time, seeking greater involvement with the Europeans did seem to be an attractive and even easy economic option, insofar as policy analysts and those policymakers who had the counterweight bug were concerned. Again, though, the problem was how to scratch this particular itch in an effective way. Dealing with the Europeans in matters relating to trade and investment was never a frictionless pastime, not even during the Cold War. The vaunted “Third Option” of Pierre Trudeau was probably doomed from the start, because as one analyst pithily observed during that era, it constituted “an attempt to secure the triumph of politics over geography.”<sup>14</sup> Geography won this tussle, with the creation of, first, the Canada–US Free Trade Agreement and, subsequently, NAFTA. Additionally, there was the above-mentioned flaw in a Europe-focused strategy of soft balancing: to say again, the Europeans were expecting a greater Canadian military contribution to their defence in exchange for their undertaking to provide enhanced access (of a sort) to a market that in economic terms could never be demonstrated to be more beneficial for Canada than was the American market. Ultimately, the economic costs of a counterweight strategy came to far outweigh the putative gains of such a strategy.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Robert Bothwell, “‘The Canadian connection’: Canada and Europe,” in Norman Hillmer and Garth Stevenson, eds., *Foremost Nation: Canadian Foreign Policy and a Changing World*, 24–36, at 35 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975).

15. The best discussion of the rise and demise of counterweight logic in CFP is Roy Rempel, *Counterweights: The Failure of Canada’s German and European Policy, 1955–1995* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996).

Packed as it was with logical contradictions, middle power's empirical dimension was to prove less controversial than its normative one. Ethical garments could be made to hang only in a most slovenly manner on structural mannequins, for reasons to which I now turn.

### The blemished charms of “middlepowermanship”

Realists who are knowledgeable about Canadian Foreign Policy have been known to gnash their teeth (or worse) when they contemplate the behaviour of a country that, at times, confuses itself with Sweden and starts to strut its stuff as a “moral superpower”<sup>16</sup> on the world stage. Truth to tell, the habit is not an easy one for Canadian governments to break, the current one being no exception. Realists will harrumph that it is simply preposterous for a small country like Canada to set its sights on the ethical empyrean when it has such a limited footing here on earth. Yet what many realists (and others) fail to appreciate is just how much the sense of morality to which they object is *itself* a legacy of the unspoken tradition of Canadian structural realism. How so?

To answer this requires continuing our etymological expedition into the career of that very structural category known as the middle power. The category, it will come as a surprise to no one, has been defined in various and often conflicting ways, testifying to the ubiquitousness of what W.B. Gallie so memorably termed “essentially contested concepts”—a commodity with which political science is more than abundantly endowed.<sup>17</sup> What *is* a surprise, though, is how much, at the outset of its terminological career, middle power owed to structural considerations related to the apple of many a structural-realist's eye, namely, the distribution of relative capabilities in the international system. Unlike “human security,” which so many analysts wrongly think was a concept invented by and for Canadians, the middle-power notion really does deserve to be branded as “clearly Canadian.”<sup>18</sup> For when Canadian diplomats sat down with colleagues from elsewhere in the victorious anti-totalitarian coalition that was planning a new and better postwar order in 1945, their thoughts turned to some eminently “defensive-positional” objectives, the most important of which was to secure for Canada a seat at the table in the new world body (the United Nations) that was close to, and ideally above, the salt. In short, sensing that Canada would be unlikely to secure the status of great power and all that pertained thereto (especially a permanent presence on the UN Security

16. For a skilful skewering of Swedish moral posturing, by a Swedish scholar, see Ann-Sofie Dahl, “The myth of Swedish neutrality,” in Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser, eds., *Haunted by History: Myths in International Relations*, 28–40 (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1998).
17. W.B. Gallie, “Essentially contested concepts,” in Max Black, ed., *The Importance of Language*, 121–146 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962). Also see William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), chapter 1.
18. For a skeptical view of the Canadian claim to human security's naming rights, see my article with Jennifer N. Ross, “La Sécurité humaine sur le champ de bataille: un point de vue ‘shakespearean’ sur l'évolution paradoxale d'une doctrine canadienne,” in Jean-François Rioux, ed., *La Sécurité humaine: une nouvelle conception des relations internationales*, 283–300 (Paris: Harmattan, 2002).

Council, with its coveted veto), Canadian officials made a determined effort to position the country as near to the big powers and as far away from the small powers as could be arranged. For their argument to gain traction, it was helpful to have a persuasive device to bolster its validity. Thus was born the concept of the middle power, which in its infancy was very much a structural-realist contrivance, even though no one could possibly have so advertised it at the time.

The concept might have been brand-new following the Second World War, but it rendered homage to an older tradition in International Relations, known as the “functional principle.” There was absolutely nothing especially Canadian about the functional principle, which had its roots in nineteenth-century international-organizational theoretical seedbeds; but the principle did begin to assume a Canadian flowerage during the first half of the twentieth century, initially in the early interwar years, when governments in Ottawa (and not only those presided by Liberals) would invoke it as a means of buttressing a claim to special (i.e. “functional”) consideration within the newly named British Commonwealth<sup>19</sup> in respect of matters involving the Americans—a folk whom Canadians, sometimes to the irritation of the British, claimed to have peculiarly refined capacities to understand and interpret. Although deployed at the start of the 1920s for defensive-positionalist purposes, in a bid (successful) to get Britain to scrap its bilateral alliance with Japan, the functional principle is most remembered for its second manifestation, during and following the Second World War, when Ottawa insisted that voice and status should be commensurate with each ally’s contribution to the war effort and to the building of postwar order. Canada, at that time, was eager not to be lumped in with the Uruguays and Belgiums of the world. It may not have been possible to secure for it the status of a United States, a Soviet Union, or a Great Britain, but prestige demanded it be located just below the big powers, and at a considerable distance from the small ones. This gap was said to represent the “middle,” though it hardly could be considered midrange on anyone’s international scale of relative capability.

How was it that such a structuralist and even egotistical concept as middle power could have been so transmogrified as to make everyone forget what it once represented, and realists in particular to lament what it had become? This is puzzling, given that Canada’s unveiling of the middle-power notion was not noticeably idealistic, intended from the get-go, as we have just seen, to confer advantage upon it in a world in which the middle power deserved to reside far from the midst of the pack, and instead was seen to be worthy of inhabiting a notch below the great power(s), and like them to be entitled, on the basis of the functional principle, to privileges and ranks not enjoyed by the vast majority of states. In sum, middle power, instead of connoting the politics of selflessness, was a claim to preference when originally promoted by Canadian policymakers during and immediately following the Second World War.<sup>20</sup>

19. In late 1921, with the Anglo-Irish treaty ending the two years of fighting between Britain and what would become the Irish Free State (and in the late 1930s the Republic of Ireland).

20. See R.A. MacKay, “The Canadian doctrine of the middle powers,” in J.L. Granatstein, ed., *Towards a New World: Readings in the History of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 65–75 (Toronto:

As the Royal Military College of Canada's Tony Miller explained, the functional principle was distinct conceptually from the doctrine of *functionalism*, with the former expressive of possession goals of policy, and the latter milieu goals.<sup>21</sup> The former appealed to the aggrandizing of Canadian interests and thus to the enhancing of Canadian influence, while the latter constituted a path toward the construction of a more peaceful world, in the event through international economic and social cooperation—helpful to Canada, to be sure, but only in the most diffuse way:

In 1945 two functionalist traditions, analytically distinct, coexisted in Canada. They subsequently merged, so that the functional principle acquired a connotation of disinterested internationalism that it has not subsequently shed . . . The fusion of the functional principle with functionalism helps sustain the conviction that what is good for Canada is good for humanity.<sup>22</sup>

Canada, it transpired, could do well by doing good. And although functionalism as a doctrine may have emphasized first and foremost social and economic cooperation, it was in the military sphere of peacekeeping that Canada would, for a time, earn its highest accolades in functionalism, as a good international citizen.

The peacekeeping tradition, in its turn, led quite a few observers to assume that Canada was more or less a “neutral” country, committed to the peaceful and judicious (the “impartial”) resolution of conflict, and thus very unlike certain countries unnecessary to be named, which were possessed of more hawkish proclivities—countries said to be in thrall to realism and all its perversions.<sup>23</sup> Thus did the “middle” get invested in Canada with a significant *normative* content, to the extent of connoting a degree of rectitude held to be lacking in the diplomacy of “greater” (and therefore axiomatically debased) powers, such that what John Holmes lampooned as “middlepowermanship” could to its adherents bespeak a blissfully selfless, and decidedly superior, orientation toward the world, founded on the assertion that virtue and power could be and were inversely related.<sup>24</sup> For those embracing middlepowermanship, Canada's natural allies and the target of its diplomacy should be those similarly “sized” countries who, by dint of their power

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Copp Clark Pitman, 1992); and especially Adam Chapnick, *The Middle Power Project: Canada and the Founding of the United Nations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

21. Here the reference is to Wolfers' familiar distinction between the two kinds of self-interested ends, “possession goals” being explicitly self-serving, and “milieu goals” rather less so; the distinction can alternatively be expressed by referring to “narrow” as opposed to “enlightened” self-interest. See Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962).
22. A.J. Miller, “The functional principle in Canada's external relations,” *International Journal* 35, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 309–328, quoting from 321 and 328.
23. A thesis saturating the pages of Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012).
24. See John W. Holmes, “Most safely in the middle,” in *Towards a New World*, 90–105.

standing, constituted a priori what one wag labelled the “GGG,” or the “group of good guys.”<sup>25</sup>

Middlepowermanship did not just exercise the ire (and irony) of critics who sensed in it an advanced degree of sanctimoniousness that reeked much more of cant than of Kant. The more normative version of middle-power diplomacy could also be dismissed as a category error based on a fundamentally flawed application of structuralism, stemming from beliefs about Canada’s relative standing in the international hierarchy. Or as the above-mentioned wag reminded everyone tempted to postulate an inverse relationship between virtue and power, it was fundamentally wrong-headed to try to “secure by empirical means . . . an independent foundation for a normative dedication to the pursuit abroad of the collective international good.”<sup>26</sup>

### Up off the mat? Realism and CFP in coming years

It is never easy—in fact, it may even be impossible—to say anything intelligent about future trends, for the good reason that we have absolutely no knowledge about the years yet to unfold, including those of a proximate temporal location we sometimes collectively (if recklessly) refer to as the “foreseeable future.” Still, there are two *current* trends in IR theory that might be expected to ensure realism’s continued existence among the Canadian professoriate, even if only in attenuated form. Realism in Canada should not be expected by anyone to surge to paradigmatic dominance in the future, all the more because, as we have seen, it hardly possesses such dominance today—not in Canada, and not even in the US (despite a strange suspicion on the part of many that in the latter country it does, and therefore needs to be the target of their variously configured theoretical sallies).<sup>27</sup> Nor did it have much dominance in the past in Canada, at least under the explicitly realist label.

But if it continues, as I believe it will, to have a toehold in the Canadian academy, it will be a function of interesting developments in two epistemological realms. The first of these, ironically, involves realism’s pre-eminent (again, according to TRIP data) challenger, constructivism. The second comes from within realism itself, and is represented by the recent flurry of interest in “neoclassical realism.” Let us take these in turn.

It might seem odd to suggest that realism’s partial rebound could come as a result of its teaming up with the paradigm that has been so responsible for flipping it to the mat in the first place. Just because something might work in the physical

25. The wag was Denis Stairs, who made this observation in his rapporteur’s notes presented to the first National Forum on Canada’s International Relations, Ottawa, 22 March 1994.

26. Denis Stairs, “Will and circumstance and the postwar study of Canada’s foreign policy,” *International Journal* 50, no. 1 (Winter 1994–95): 9–39, at 17.

27. For instance, see Wayne Cox and Kim Nossal, “The ‘Crimson World’: The Anglo core, the post-imperial non-core, and the hegemony of American IR,” in Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Wæver, eds., *International Relations Scholarship around the World*, 287–305 (New York: Routledge, 2009).

sport of judo does not mean it has promise for the more metaphysical arts of scholarly jujitsu. Nevertheless, there could be potential for the synergy I am implying here, although I am certainly not the first person to suggest points of commonality between at least one variant of realism (the classical one) and constructivism.<sup>28</sup> Whether one prefers calling this epistemological hybrid “constructivist-realism” or “realist-constructivism”<sup>29</sup> should not be allowed to obscure the way in which constructivism can invigorate classical realism. For however much the latter might part company from constructivism, there is one element on which they could be said to be welded at the hip, and that is the importance of “identity” to “interest.” After all, no less a realist than the comparativist Samuel Huntington himself paid tribute to the constructivists’ core structuring principle when, in the last book he ever wrote, he insisted that “[w]e have to know who we are before we can know what our interests are.”<sup>30</sup>

Recent trends in CFP analysis, stimulated in no small measure by a research program mounted a dozen or so years ago by Stéphane Roussel, have included attempts to employ “strategic culture” in a bid to understand and possibly even explain Canadian foreign and security policy.<sup>31</sup> While it is probably safe to say that most “strategic culturalists” take their epistemological nourishment more from constructivism than from realism, it is apparent that at least a few (classical) realist sheep have been known to graze alongside the constructivist horses in this conceptual paddock. And why should they not, in light of the growing scholarly interest that foreign policy analysts everywhere have been evincing in identity? This latter concept may not be particularly compelling from the point of view of structural realists (unless, of course, they seek, as did their Canadian “predecessors” discussed earlier, to extract social-psychological significance from assessments of relative power),<sup>32</sup> but it certainly has its appeal to realists who find second-image analyses to be much more revealing than third-image ones, when it comes to the business of trying to make sense of a country’s foreign policy.<sup>33</sup>

Given that identity can be and is a category held by constructivist and classical realist alike to endow meaning to “interest,” including and especially (for the realists) the “national interest,” it is hardly a surprise to discover that theoretical trends in IR subsequent to the ending of the Cold War—and with it, the demise of the much-commented “bipolar” era that had provided such sustenance to Waltz’s

28. See especially J. Samuel Barkin, *Realist Constructivism: Rethinking International Relations Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

29. See Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon, “Constructivist Realism or Realist-Constructivism?” *International Studies Review* 6, no. 2 (June 2004): 337-41.

30. Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 8.

31. See the special theme issue Roussel guest-edited on “Canada’s Grand Strategy and Strategic Culture,” *International Journal* 49, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 481-595.

32. As is done so skilfully in William C. Wohlforth, “Unipolarity, status competition, and Great Power war,” *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009): 28-57.

33. For an instance of realist-constructivist collaboration, see my article with Justin Massie, “Southern (over) exposure? Quebec and the evolution of Canada’s grand strategy, 2002-2012,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 46, no. 2 (June 2016): 233-253.

own structural-realist theorizing—should have led many scholars of an avowedly realist kidney to concentrate more on second- and even first-image levels of analysis than on the structuralists' nepenthe of the third image. Whether or not the field of IR is becoming more congenial to “post-structuralism” than it used to be, it is hard to deny that for the subfield of Foreign Policy Analysis, trends certainly look to be heading in a post-structural direction, and in the process doing so to the advantage of classical realism over structural realism.<sup>34</sup>

What the post-structural “turn” has done is to give a fillip to the use of history by political scientists working in foreign policy analysis. It is not that analysis in this area of IR has ever been profoundly “ahistorical,” but there are some recent developments worth highlighting here, as they do suggest a continuing presence of realism in CFP. Historians have been known to look askance at political scientists who dare to encroach on their *chasse gardée*, all the more so if these historians are adherents to a Rankean tradition that regards the archives as the one and only repository of truth. And it is fair to say that some political scientists have been known to act like marauding Vikings when they devoted their energies to historical research, particularly those whose quantitative appetite could and did at times lead them to “ransack” the past for useful “data points,” and little else.<sup>35</sup> It is probably, and regrettably, true that for an earlier generation of IR scholars steeped in a political science epistemology patterned too closely on some “hard” sciences like physics and not enough on other sciences like geology,<sup>36</sup> ransacking did figure as a principal *modus operandi*. But times have changed, and increasingly scholars of international security have been turning to history for different philosophical, epistemological, and methodological purposes.<sup>37</sup> Especially is this true for security analysts whose focus is on foreign policy, and who are said to be working from a perspective dubbed “neoclassical realism.”<sup>38</sup>

It is, of course, far from obvious what “neoclassical realism” is supposed to mean. Some scholars will tell you that it is a kissing cousin of structural realism, and this because its theoretical and analytical starting point is, for both, the same third (systemic) image.<sup>39</sup> Others, however, see this newest blossom on the realist plant

34. As has been argued in Adrian Hyde-Price and Lisbeth Aggestam, “Conclusion: Exploring the new agenda,” in Lisbeth Aggestam and Adrian Hyde-Price, eds., *Security and Identity in Europe: Exploring the New Agenda*, 234–262 (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

35. See Paul Gordon Lauren, “Diplomacy, theory, and policy,” in Gordon Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, 3–18, at 5 (New York: Free Press, 1979).

36. For this criticism, see John Lewis Gaddis, “History, theory, and common ground,” *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 75–85, citing from 78–79.

37. See Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, “Diplomatic history and international relations theory: Respecting difference and crossing boundaries,” *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 5–21.

38. See Steven Lobell, Norrin Ripsman, and Jeffrey Taliaferro, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

39. An argument forcefully made in Brian Rathbun, “A rose by any other name: Neoclassical realism as the logical and necessary extension of structural realism,” *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (May 2008): 294–321.

to represent a throwback to the earlier tradition of classical realism—to some a virtual synonym for it.<sup>40</sup> No matter which version is a closer fit (and I confess to plumping for the argument that the neoclassical label speaks more to classical than to structural realism) the implication is the same: political scientists had better get serious about incorporating history into their scholarship, if they do not already do so.

And this means that as long as political scientists who study Canadian Foreign Policy believe that history can and should play a central part in their work, classical realism will remain an approach with appeal, irrespective of whether status anxieties or other ontological considerations might prevent these scholars from uttering the name of their preferred paradigm.

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40. For instance, Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, when they observe that there are two contemporary streams of IR theorizing that testify to a rapprochement between certain political scientists and diplomatic historians, with the IR pair consisting of “constructivism and classical or neoclassical realism.” See their “Introduction: Negotiating international history and politics,” in Elman and Elman, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations*, 1–36, at 33 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001). For an especially thoughtful analysis of the varieties of neoclassical realism, see Tudor Onea, “Putting the ‘classical’ in neoclassical realism: Neoclassical realist theories and US expansion in the post-Cold War,” *International Relations* 26, no. 2 (June 2012): 139–164.