

REALISM AND IDEALISM: A DISCOURSE ON THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Kingsley Terhemmen Akange

Department of History & International Studies

Federal University of Lafia

Email: terkingsley@gmail.com

&

Joyce Mugusuur Dooga

Templegate College, Makurdi

Email: doogajoyce@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the theories of realism and idealism as distinct theories of International Relations (IR) based on their propositions. Whereas realism argues that international politics is a struggle for power and a quest for survival which results in a condition of conflict, idealism sees the plausibility of world peace achieved through cooperation and moral suasion. The paper evaluates the contributions of these theories in the understanding and explanation of IR. The paper interrogates how realism and idealism have helped in explaining different world events. It addresses questions regarding how and in what ways these theories have influenced the study of IR. The paper employs a qualitative and exploratory approach to arrive at its conclusion. The paper argues and also demonstrates that despite their shortcomings, both realism and idealism apply to real world scenarios and have helped in widening the scope of IR studies

Keywords: *Realism, Idealism, International Relations, International System, World Peace*

INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of the study of International Relations (IR), scholars differ on the appropriate approach to the study resulting to a lot of heated debates. These debates have resulted in the emergence of two parallel approaches which compete for our attention namely, the classical approach and the scientific approach. The classical approach, derived from philosophy, history and law holds that general propositions cannot be

accorded tentative and inclusive status while the scientific approach aspires to a theory of IR whose propositions are based either upon logical or mathematical proof or upon strict empirical procedure of verification.¹ Consequent upon the scientific approach emphasizes on theorizing, a lot of theoretical constructs have been advanced in explaining international politics beginning from the classical period. It should be noted as Burchill and Linklater have argued that,

One aim of studying a wide variety of International Relations theories is to make international politics more intelligible – to make better sense of the actors, structures, institutions, processes and particular episodes mainly, but not only, in the contemporary world [...]Theories can help the observer to think critically, logically and coherently by sorting these phenomena into manageable categories so that the appropriate units and levels of analysis can be chosen and, where possible, significant connections and patterns of behaviours identified.²

Against this backdrop, this paper is aimed at demonstrating how the theories of realism and idealism have helped our understanding of IR in contemporary period. Giving this as a basis for analysis, the arguments of some scholars of IR which presents the core of realism and idealism are examined. In trying to do this, the paper raises and addresses questions regarding how and in what ways these theories are approached by those who attempted to study IR.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The concept used in this study that deserves clarification is the concept of International Relations and the term “theory”. It is important to explain them in order to provide an illuminating backdrop on the issue under study; first is the concept of International Relations. The basic problem in the study of IR is the understanding of the definitional contexts. In this way, Atime and Akange have argued that there are three basic levels of understanding. These include IR as a course of study, as a situation, and as a principle.³ As a course of study, IR refers to the field or body of knowledge

¹ N.D. Palmer and H.C. Perkins *International Relations: The World Community in Transition, 3rd Revised Edition*, (Delhi, A.I.T.B.S. Publishers, 2007), xviii.

² S. Burchill and A. Linklater “Introduction” in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 15-16.

³ B.M. Atime and K.T. Akange “International Relations in Pre-Colonial Africa South of the Sahara”, *VUNA Journal of History and International Relations*, Vol.6, No.2, (2022), 105 – 106.

that examines the totality of human relations across national boundaries. It is the branch of Political Science that deals with interactions between state and non-state actors in the international system. Such relations transcend the political and governmental. Such non-state actors include Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and Transnational Companies (TNCs) or Multinational Corporations (MNCs), which are not necessarily political in nature.⁴ As a situation, IR describes the state of interaction between two or more actors in separate national boundaries. Put differently, it describes the relationships that take place by members of the international community. These include all or any aspects of their relationship such as war, conflict, dispute, separation, belligerence, settlement, pact, treaties, cooperation, conferences, and organization. As a principle, IR refers to a set of ideas that constitute the public policy that a state makes for the purpose of the external context. It describes the foreign policy of a state, international organization or region, which are articulated, formulated and implemented by an International Department, or a State Department or Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The totality of such policy process is what is sometimes referred to as, for instance, the International Relations of Nigeria, or International Relations of Africa or International Relations of the United Nations.⁵

Elsewhere, IR is explained to mean the relations between groups of major importance in the life of the world at any period of history, and particularly relations among territoriality organized nation states which today are of such importance to designate the studies or disciplines describing, explaining, evaluating, or assisting in the conduct of those relations. It attempts to explain the interactions of states in the global interstate system, and it also attempts to explain the interactions of others whose behaviour originates within one country and is targeted toward members of other countries. In short, the study of international relations is an attempt to explain behaviour that occurs across the boundaries of states, the broader relationships of which such behaviour is a part, and the institutions (private, state, nongovernmental, and intergovernmental) that

⁴ This information is retrieved online from <http://www.universityofcalicut.in/fo/cuonline/exnotif/ex4270.pdf>, accessed on 14/09/2024.

⁵ S. Folarin, "Introduction to International Relations." Lecture Notes in Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University Ota, Ogun State, 5.

oversee those interactions.⁶ It can be viewed and assessed as a situation which describes the state of interaction between two or more actors. For us in this paper however, we conceptualize International Relations, for the purpose of this study to mean a great variety of transitional relationships, at various levels, above and below the level of nation-state, still the main actor in the international community.⁷

Since this study is based on the analysis of theories, it is important that the term theory is briefly examined in order to guide our analysis in this study. A theory is an explanation for how facts relate to one another. IR theory aims to provide a conceptual framework upon which international relations can be analyzed. IR theories act as a pair of colored sunglasses, allowing the wearer to see only the salient events relevant to the theory. Theories of IR allow us to understand and try to make sense of the world around us through various lenses, each of which represents a different theoretical perspective.⁸

A theory provides a framework for systematic and imaginative hypothesizing. It gives order and meaning to mass phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible. It can serve to make more fully explicit the implicit assumptions underlying a research and thus bring out dimensions and implications that might be overlooked. Lastly, a theory is important for understanding not only uniformities and regularities but contingencies and irrationalities as well.⁹ Theories are not optional extras or interesting fashion accessories, they are necessary means of bringing to the subject matter of IR. Theories are needed to conceptualize contemporary events. They reflect on how the world ought to be organized and analyze claims about what the world ultimately consist of.¹⁰ Theories are beacons, lenses or filters that direct us to what is essential for understanding a phenomenon under enquiry as Jack Donnelly¹¹ puts it.

⁶ Retrieved online from <https://polisci.wisc.edu/international-relations>, Accessed on 20/09/2024.

⁷ N.D. Palmer and H.C. Perkins *International Relations: The World Community in Transition, 3rd Revised Edition*...xi.

⁸ D. Gold and S. McGlinchey "International Relations Theory" Retrieved online from <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/09/international-relations-theory>, Accessed on 23/09/2024.

⁹ C.A. McClelland "The Function of Theory in International Relations." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.4, No.3, (1960), 36.

¹⁰ S. Burchill and A. Linklater "Introduction" in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*...12.

¹¹ J. Donnelly "Realism" in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 30.

THE THEORY OF REALISM

Realism is a term that is used in a variety of ways in many different disciplines. In IR, realism is a term, which is used in at least two domains. On the one hand, it refers to the observational theory of international relations that has to find explanations for things like the end of the Cold War. On the other hand, realism refers to a particular foreign policy/security doctrine or strategy, often associated with strategies of containment or military preparedness for war.¹² For us in this study, realism is examined as a theory of IR. Realism in this context is used to mean a tradition of analysis that stresses the imperative states face to pursue power politics of the national interest. Realism, sometimes refer to as *Real politik* or “power politics” is the oldest and most frequently adopted theory of IR. It is the theory which explains politics among nations from the prism of power. According to realists, politics among nations is constrained by human selfishness and lack of international government resulting in the state of anarchy. The conjunction of anarchy and egoism and the resulting imperatives of power politics provide the core of realism. Put differently, rationality and state-centrism are core realist premises.¹³

The theory of realism has long been the preoccupation of many thinkers and scholars of IR. In the history of western political thought, Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes are usually considered realists. Twentieth century figures include George Kennan, Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, Kenneth Waltz and Eric H. Carl.¹⁴ Realists although recognizing that human desires range widely and are remarkably variable, emphasize the limitations which the sordid and selfish aspects of human nature place on the conduct of inter-state relations. To realists, in IR or inter-state relations, anarchy grows and encourages the worst aspect of human nature to be expressed. Statesmanship thus involves mitigating and managing, not eliminating conflict, seeking a less dangerous world rather than a safe, just, or peaceful one. Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to state actions.¹⁵ According to realists, politics gives little or no room for morality or best behaviour. Moreover, man is by

¹² S. Guzzini “Realist Theories and Practice” Danish Institute for International Studies Working Paper 8, (2017), 9.

¹³ J. Donnelly “Realism” in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*...30.

¹⁴ J. Donnelly “Realism” in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*...30.

¹⁵ J. Donnelly “Realism” in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*...31

nature selfish and aggressive, and on a matter that involves the sharing of scarce resources over which all are contending, law and order or moral consciousness would be the last recourse, politics is thus the opposite of morality.¹⁶ Against this backdrop, realists holds that IR and by implication international system have the tendency to be anarchical. This arise as a result of three over-riding issues that characterize inter-state relations namely, national interest, national power and military strategy.

Realists differ in perspectives in the explanation of international politics especially in the pursuit of power. While some emphasize anarchy, the absence of hierarchical political rule, others without denying the centrality of anarchy also emphasize human nature. For example, Hans Morgenthau argues that the social world is but a projection of human nature.¹⁷ Such realists believe that pride, lust and the quest for glory would cause the war of all against all to continue indefinitely. Ultimately, conflict and war are rooted in human nature.¹⁸

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF REALISM TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

One of the first contributions of realism in the understanding of IR especially foreign policies of nations is its emphasis on the pursuit of power politics. In the past especially from 1890 up to the period of end of the Cold War politics, powerful nations of the world tended to be more aggressive in their pursuits of national interest. Even with the emergence of the League of Nations in 1919 and later the United Nations Organizations (UNO) in 1945, international peace and security has constantly been in danger as a result of aggressive foreign policies of some states. For example, that the League of Nations could not stop the outbreak of World War II and the failure of the UNO to prevent the resurgence of Cold War account for the potency of realism in explaining the international system within the prism of politics among nations.

Suffice is to say that since the early 1890 up till 1945 as earlier mentioned, the international system has been in a state of war, or at preparation for war much of the time. Even in the early 2000s, both offensive and defensive foreign policies resulting into wars between nations had

¹⁶ S. Folarin, "Introduction to International Relations"...6.

¹⁷ H. Morgenthau *Politics in the Twentieth Century, I: The Decline of Democratic Politics*, quoted by J. Donnelly "Realism" in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*...31.

¹⁸ J. Donnelly "Realism" in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*...31.

occurred. A good example is United States of America's invasion of Iraq in 2003 under the pretext that Saddam Hussein, Iraqi Prime Minister, was stockpiling weapons of mass destructions. Whether this claim by America was true or not, what is of importance to us here is the fact that America could not consider peaceful diplomatic means such as disarmament and other measures but chose to go to war with Iraq in what it perceived as constituting danger to global peace and security.¹⁹

Apart from this, powerful and undemocratic states pursue and are still in pursuit of aggressive foreign policies both in Europe and beyond; South Korea and Iran arms build-up is a clear example. This is same with the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990 which saw the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, the Kosovo crisis of 1999 perpetrated by Serbia, and Iraqi-Iran war.²⁰ These crises threatened global peace and had almost defiled workable peaceful means at restoring order. It took the effort of the UNO through collective security approach at restoring peace in these countries. It should be stated that even though the UNO resolved these conflicts, its attempt retained elements of power politics by mobilizing soldiers at the war theatre. This and several other examples that cannot be mentioned here underpin the relevance of realism. Through the realist theoretical paradigm, the aggressive posture of the foreign policies of nations and the nature of the international system is clearly articulated.

CONTRADICTIONS OF REALISM

A standard complaint against realism is its inability to comprehend fundamental change in IR. Realism, as argued Donnelly, "is a theory 'tuned' to explaining constancy."²¹ Realists are more impressed by the repeated occurrence of certain patterns across time than the undeniable historical and cultural complexity of actors and interactions in IR which changes across time and space. The failure of realism to account for the end of Cold War which was marked by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, collapse of the Eastern Block, and the end of a bipolar world order validates this claim.

¹⁹ S. Delalić and A. Olovčić, "Politics and War in Historical and Theoretical Perspective. With EU Case Study", *Anuario Español De Derecho Internacional*, Vol. 38, (2022), 161–214.

²⁰ S. Aleksovski, O. Bakreski and M.A.B. Avramovska "Collective Security – The Role of International Organizations – Implications in International Security Order", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.5, No.27, (2014), 277.

²¹ J. Donnelly "Realism" in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*...48.

Again, realists argue against the possibility of morality in foreign policy discussions. They subordinate morality to power and often describe it as the fact of international political life. Accordingly, they opine that the actions of states are determined not by moral principles and legal commitments but by considerations of interest and power.²² To them, states in anarchy cannot afford to be moral; the possibility of morality rests upon the existence of an effective government that can deter and punish illegal actions, lack of it which constitutes conflict. Such claims, however, are obviously not tenable giving the number of events that unfolds in recent times. By the way, just as individuals may behave morally in absence of government enforcement of moral rules, states can and often do act out of moral concerns. Consider for example, the outpouring of aids to Haiti in the wake of earthquake, and other natural and political disasters in Africa. In fact, states sometimes value compliance with ethical and humanitarian norms for reasons that have little or nothing to do with the threat of coercive enforcement.

Furthermore, realists emphasize that a state especially a powerful state, bent on violating a moral norm usually can get away with it, and that when it cannot, it is usually because the power of other states has been mobilized on behalf of moral norm.²³ Nevertheless, states do comply with moral norms both for their own sake and out of consideration of the cost of non-compliance. Take for instance, the case of Nigeria when the country agreed to cede Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon. As a matter of fact, states constantly act morally despite international anarchy. It should be noted that foreign policy is driven by a number of motives some of which are ethical such as spreading democracy, combating preventable diseases and pandemics such as Ebola, COVID-19, etc. Besides, powerful states like America through the UNO, has played significant roles in diffusing interstate and intrastate disputes, responding to humanitarian emergencies, and elaborating norms for human rights. Over the past six decades, the UNO has demonstrated considerable creativity in navigating the constraints of power politics.²⁴

²² H. Morgenthau *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960–70*, quoted by J. Donnelly “Realism” in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*...33.

²³ J. Donnelly “Realism” in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*...49.

²⁴ S. Aleksovski, O. Bakreski and M.A.B. Avramovska “Collective Security – The Role of International Organizations – Implications in International Security Order ...277

THE THEORY OF IDEALISM

The theory of idealism also known as liberalism is the theory which has strongly challenged the realist theory of international politics and provided an alternative school of thought. Unlike realists where power politics is the norm, in liberal theories, cooperation amongst the states is the norm. It regards the relationship that exists between states as one that does not necessarily create disorder and descent into anarchy. The idealist school is premised on the Wilsonian theory that peace and order can reign in an international system of politics, that is, where there are conscious and sustained efforts to maintain order. Man as a social being is thus a moral being, and with law to guide the relations and control boundaries, coupled with education which nourishes and ennobles the soul, as well as the presence of a system of law, man can live without anarchy.²⁵

Idealism as a school of thought gained currency after President Woodrow Wilson of the United States who, after the First World War, presented some ideals that can promote global mutual understanding, peace and order. His 14-point Agenda for global peace was a monumental pathway for the creation of an international organization and an enduring international legal order aimed at minimizing international conflict, promoting cooperation among peoples as well as preventing another global chaos as was the case from 1914 to 1918.²⁶

Idealism has its antecedents as early as the 14th century when the Italian Poet, Dante had written of the “Universality of Man” in which he envisioned a unified world state. Immanuel Kant had also articulated that “doing good” was an end unto itself, an ideal that gave rise to the moral suasion aspect of international relations. The Chinese, during the reign of the Chou dynasty in the ancient times, had attempted to create a world state in the Orient. Ancient and medieval Empires and civilizations such as the Egyptians of North Africa, Assyrians and Persians in the Middle East, Aztecs and Incas of South and Central America, as well as the Roman Empire of Europe, had attempted to establish a world state.²⁷ The Idealist School is thus a fundamental prism to look at international relations. Its core submission is that the international system will ultimately transit from the system that it is

²⁵ E. Giri “POLS 804C - Theories of International Relations Lecture Note”, Department of Political Science, TRIPURA University, (New Delhi, India 2016), 44.

²⁶ L.O. Chukwu, “Woodrow Wilson & the Fourteen Points: The Tragedy of Discontent”, *Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2020), 42-48

²⁷ J. Galtung “What is a culture of peace and what are the obstacles?” TRANSCEND: A Peace and Development Network, TRANSCEND International, March 2, 2003. Retrieved from www.transcend.org/db/, Accessed on October 3rd, 2024

though a community, into an international society. It stresses the central role of international law, international morality and international organization in the transition. It is pertinent to note that, the idealist school is an expanding one, which is attractive to a growing number of IR scholars that believe that the world is, with globalization and order created by the United Nations and the many international institutions springing up to bring peoples and actions together in coordinates, already transiting to a world society.²⁸

As one of the two great philosophical products of the European enlightenment, idealism has had a profound impact on the shape of all modern industrial societies. It has championed limited government and scientific rationality, believing individuals should be free from arbitrary state power, persecution and superstition. It has advocated political freedom, democracy and constitutionality and equality before the law. Idealism has also argued for individual competition in civil society and claimed that market capitalism best promotes the welfare of all by most efficiently allocating scarce resources within society. The projection of liberal democratic principles to the international realm is believed by the idealists to provide the best prospects for peaceful world order because a world made of liberal democracies should have less incentive for war.²⁹ Accordingly, the idealists argue that wars are created by militaristic and undemocratic governments for their own vested interest. Wars are engineered by a warrior class bent on extending their power and wealth through territorial conquest.³⁰

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF IDEALISM TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The collapse of the Soviet communism that marked the end of Cold War at the beginning of 1990s enhanced the influence of idealist theory of international relations within the academy; a theoretical tradition long thought to have been discredited by perspectives which emphasize the recurrent features of IR. With this, it validates the claim that liberal democracies are likely willing to eschew the use of force in their relations with another, a view which rejects the realist contention that the anarchical nature of the international system means states are trapped in a struggle for power and security. The end of cold war helped in discrediting the view by

²⁸S. Burchill *et al* (eds). *Theories of International Relations*, (Palmgrave, MacMillan, 2005), 45.

²⁹S. Burchill “Liberalism” in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 58.

³⁰S. Burchill “Liberalism” in S. Burchill *et al* (eds.) *Theories of International Relations, Third Edition...58*.

realists that the anarchical nature of the international system tends to homogenize foreign policy behaviour by socializing states into the system of power politics. As a matter of fact, the end of cold war signifies that idealism has survived the threat posed by realism. It thus suggests that the best prospect for bringing an end to war between states lies with the spread of liberal democratic governments across the globe which the idealists advocates for.

CONTRADICTIONS OF IDEALISM

The claim by the idealists that liberal democracies evince little interest in conflict with each other does not mean that they are less inclined to make wars with non-democratic states. It is instructive to point out that democracies maintain a healthy appetite for conflicts with authoritarian states as recent conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia have shown. In broad strokes, liberal societies are likely to engage in war with non-liberal outlaw states on grounds of legitimate self-defence or in defence of their legitimate allies. The recent US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq pose significant challenges to the claim that only self-defence and humanitarianism incline liberal democracies to war. However, conflicts in the Balkans, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf and more recently Russia-Ukraine war involving the major industrial powers are a reminder that the post-cold war period remains volatile and suggest that war may not yet have lost its efficacy in international relations. None of these constitutes conflicts between democratic states but they are no less important to the maintenance of world order. These and several other struggles in states such as Afghanistan, Somalia among others highlight the fact that fragmentation of nation-states and civil wars has been the constant feature of international politics. This underpins the contradictions of the idealist school of thought.

Finally and most importantly is the outbreak of terrorism on the global stage. As the number of East Asia and Islamic societies which reject the normative superiority of liberal democracy grows, doubt is cast on the belief that the institutionalization of liberal democracy will engender world peace. This is epitomized in the current wave of anti-Western Islamist terrorist groups such as *al-Qaeda*, *Boko Haram* among other groups. As a matter of fact, the greatest barrier to world peace is the expansion of liberal democracy which is perceived by many countries as constituting little more than domination of western culture over others.

REALISM AND IDEALISM: THE DEBATE

Realism and idealism are strongly opposed to each other. At the core of this opposition is the issue of power in politics. While realism accepts its role and advocates its management, idealism rejects the use of power as an undesirable factor which can and should be eliminated. It instead, emphasizes the value of morality as the basis of all relations among nations. Idealists strongly criticize and reject the realist thesis that struggle for power is natural and hence cannot be eliminated. They reject such a fatalistic orientation of the realists and advocate that power politics is unnatural, abnormal and a passing phase of history. They believe that through conscious efforts involving complete adherence to moral values in behaviour, power struggle and war can be eliminated. The idealists hold the realist support for politics as “the art of the possible” as a sinfully permissive type of philosophical justification in favour of war which justifies the use of power and force for securing one’s interest.³¹

For Aron as cited by Fernandes, it is an illusion to think that one can avoid conflicts, particularly war, and that lasting peace can be achieved through only a diplomacy based on normative considerations of good conduct and principled morals. Idealism is seen by some authors as a deep conviction in total compliance with the rules and legal norms set in conduct among states in order to avoid war.³² Moreover, this belief assumes that all states are interested in maintaining the law and that in the case of aggression against one of them, the others would volunteer to assist the attacked. But these principles of collective security are difficult to implement, because they imply too, from the start, an agreement by States on the definition of who is the aggressor and a shared sentiment about the acts committed. Even if the aggressor State is easily identified, the formation of alliances or coalitions for defence of the attacked State is required, which presupposes that other states are indeed interested and engaged in the maintenance of international order and agree to act in order to punish the offender. In this type of process a whole range of situations can be seen, and depending on the relative strengths of the aggressor state and coalition, several outcomes are possible, from capitulation to total war – results that turn out to be contrary to the objectives intended. Idealist doctrine therefore becomes dangerous with

³¹ This information is excised from “Idealism Vs. Realism (Debate).” Retrieved from <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/debate/idealism-vs-realism-debate/48470>, accessed on 17/10/2024.

³² R. Aron *Paix Et Guerre Entre Les Nations*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 2004, cited by V.R. Fernandes “Idealism and Realism in International Relations: An Ontological Debate.” *e-Journal of International Relations*, Vol.7, No.2, (2016), 15.

respect to the conduct of foreign policy, to the extent that it closes in on itself through the adoption of normative principles.³³

Beside this, Aron³⁴ considers that realism best takes into account and recognizes what the selfishness of States and their interests are compared to idealism. However, when considering power as the ultimate objective of states, realists particularly from North America do not take into account the idea that although the States coexist without the existence of an arbitrator or a supranational politic, they limit their freedom of action through the obligations they incur, namely the signing of agreements and treaties, although they may also resort to armed force to resolve conflicts. Thus, the absence of a sovereign power is not incompatible with the notion that international life cannot be contractually ruled (in the sense of political philosophy), with the existence of rules and norms of conduct, which, however, does not exclude or prevent the use of violence. And it stresses that the realist school is a little set back from traditional European thought, because the obsession of realists with power make them to always see an alternative to law or morality, and ultimately define international politics by power and not by the absence of an arbiter or a politic above States. In reality, in the face of national egoism that prevails in between states in the state of nature, the diplomatic and strategic conduct of states includes the exercise of diplomatic functions of diplomats themselves as well as strategy and war, which are duties of the soldier, should seek to conform to normative principles and ideas and not to what happens to animals in the jungle.³⁵ However, both idealism and realism thinking are considered extreme positions. Idealism, for reasons related to the occurrence of the atrocities of the First World War and its rejection of the importance of power in international relations; and realism, precisely because of its emphasis on power in opposition and reaction to this other school of thought.

CONCLUSION

The debate between realism and idealism can be characterized by two extreme and opposite views on international relations, which results from

³³ R. Aron *Paix Et Guerre Entre Les Nations*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 2004, cited by V.R. Fernandes “Idealism and Realism in International Relations: An Ontological Debate.”...582.

³⁴ R. Aron *Paix Et Guerre Entre Les Nations*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 2004, cited by V.R. Fernandes “Idealism and Realism in International Relations: An Ontological Debate.”...582.

³⁵ V.R. Fernandes, “Idealism and Realism in International Relations: An Ontological Debate”, *e-Journal of International Relations*, Vol.7, No.2, (2016), 22 - 23

different considerations and actions in relation to how States relate in international society. Still, they are not mutually exclusive. We see in all the theories discussed above, and we certainly believe it is essential to engage with all theoretical perspectives from the inside, to see the world from different theoretical vantage-points, to learn from them, to test one's own ideas against them and to think carefully about what others would regard as the vulnerabilities of one's perspective, whatever it may be. In conclusion, it can be deduced from the above analysis that the concern of realism and idealism is to see the issue of whether or not the international politics or political system can be reformed. Nevertheless, realist and idealist have been involved in a major controversy about the forms of political action that is more appropriate in a realm in which the struggle for power and security is pre-eminent. It should be pointed out that both realism and idealism explains or understands all the key structures and dynamics of international politics.

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Listed below is Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points which he hoped would guarantee post-war peace:

1. Open diplomacy with no secret treaties.
2. Freedom of the seas in peace and war.
3. Removal of economic barriers and equality of trade conditions.
4. Reduction of armaments to the lowest level consistent with security.
5. Adjustment of colonial claims based on self-determination.

6. Evacuation of Russian territory and self-determination for Russia.
7. Restoration of Belgian sovereignty.
8. Return of Alsace-Lorraine to France.
9. Readjustment of Italian borders based on nationality.
10. Autonomous development for Austria-Hungary's peoples.
11. Restoration of Balkan states and guarantees of independence.
12. Self-determination for non-Turkish parts of the Ottoman Empire.
13. Establishment of an independent Poland with access to the sea.
14. Creation of the League of Nations for collective security.