

Correspondence concerning "Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm (Or Was Anybody Ever a Realist?)," *International Security* 25:1 (Summer 2000), pp. 165-193.

Peter Feaver

Feaver argues that realism is broader than Moravcsik and Legro (henceforth "M-L") allow. Realism is really about the consequences of behavior -- states may act in all kinds of different ways, but the key test is whether those that ignore the distribution of power are worse off than those that do not. This is why realists can allow that domestic politics and ideas affect foreign policy.

Three important tasks for realism remain:

- 1) Operationalizing how the system punishes states that ignore the balance of power to admit more careful empirical tests of this causal mechanism;
- 2) Addressing the democratic efficiency argument -- democracies outperform non-democracies in many aspects of international relations. Specifically, the possibility that democracies are either better at responding to system constraints, or that they consistently flout these constraints but are not punished for it, are problems for realist theories.
- 3) Resolving a lingering paradox within most realist theories -- if states can behave in non-realist ways, then it is possible in a given system that most states will flout realist principles, creating problems for the "systemic punishment" argument.

Gunther Hellman

Hellman makes two main points. First, M-L's argument is to some extent just an exercise in rhetoric -- it does not really matter how we label the work of these scholars as long as they are advancing our understanding of international relations in the areas in which they work. Second, very few scholars consistently hew to a fixed set of assumptions and thus qualify as model paradigmatisms as M-L would have them. Scholars of the same school do not share a fixed set of assumptions but rather a looser set of "family resemblances." To ask for more than that is quixotic, in his view.

Randall Schweller

Schweller has a view of realism that is similar to Feaver's. He says, "the most basic realist proposition is that states must recognize and respond to shifts in relative power; things often go terribly wrong when leaders ignore power realities." The basic premises of realism do not preclude the consideration of additional elements, such as domestic politics, as long as these do not violate realism's basic tenets (e.g., they do not assert that states can ignore the balance of power and get away with it).

Schweller holds that his allowing state interests to vary does not violate realism, and cites Morgenthau concerning the possibility of varying aims of states. Kissinger, Carr, Wolfers and others also distinguished between revisionist and status quo tendencies among states.

Schweller takes issue with the M-L definition of "liberal" theory as well, arguing that the true liberal paradigm is considerably broader than Moravcsik's formulation of it. He does not see

why "liberals" should enjoy a monopoly on preference-variation theorizing. He thus seems more comfortable characterizing liberalism and realism in the traditional intellectual-history ways, rather than in reformulated systematic ways that make them more amenable to social scientific research (OK, that was a bit editorial.).

Jeffrey Taliaferro

Taliaferro devotes most of his argument to criticizing the paradigm put forth by M-L. First, he argues that M-L contradict themselves by arguing that attempts to define realism by appealing to intellectual history are flawed and then defining it in terms of the writings of Morgenthau, Carr, and Waltz. (So were they supposed to ignore the "realist" canon when distilling its essence?) Second, he challenges the coherence of the paradigmatic divisions that they establish, saying that they do not meet Lakatos' criteria for coherent and distinct research programs. Third, he argues that the paradigmatic division ignores the historical connections between liberalism and institutionalism, and suggests that they share certain assumptions (without specifying what they are). Lastly, he calls into question the "epistemic" paradigm in particular -- it just seems like a catch-all category to him.

Notably, Taliaferro seems to depart from the systemic theoretical approach that Feaver (and Waltz) espouse. Instead, Taliaferro treats realism as a theory of foreign policy, rather than a systemic theory. He says realists "do reject the notion that a state's domestic politics and ideology are the primary determinants of its foreign policy." Domestic politics can play a role, but just a limited one. This stands in contrast to the systemic realist view, which simply holds that states can do whatever they want, but if they ignore the balance of power they will be punished for it.

William Wohlforth

Wohlforth makes two main points. First, he argues that M-L have departed from a detached assessment of the field of international relations and engaged in something much closer to advocacy. He suggests that the appraisal of realism should have been made with a standard in mind other than their particular proposal for reorganizing the field. Second, he does not agree with their characterization of his work, which in his view is not about making perceptions of power into an exogenous variable. Rather, it is about causally connecting changes in the distribution of power with changed behavior by examining the national net assessment process (which he argues is a better assessment of actual power realities than political scientists' measurements).

Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik

M-L note that none of the responses to their article challenges their central claim about the lack of theoretical limitations on concrete mid-range explanations that recent realists advance. All of the responses (with the exception of Hellman) agree that paradigms are defined by a set of core assumptions and that the assumptions that M-L set forth are indeed appropriately seen as assumptions of realism. All of the responses, however, hold that it is better to view realism as an intellectual tradition so that it can include all of the people we traditionally think of as realists, rather than limiting it as M-L do.

With respect to the work of Schweller and Wohlforth, M-L say that the reader must be the final judge. If variation in preferences and interests documented by these two scholars is driven mainly by power, rather than collective beliefs, institutions, or domestic politics, then they should be exempted from their criticism.

M-L conclude by arguing that international relations will be better served by coherent paradigms rather than a collection of incoherent intellectual traditions. Of the five responses, only Hellman challenges them on this point, and they are unconvinced by his arguments. Indeed, they argue that the lack of coherent paradigms invalidates the claim that international relations theorists are social scientists. Reliance on intellectual history also makes structuring academic debates problematic since the participants cannot agree on which theories belong to which paradigm -- using coherent paradigms makes the divisions clearer.

As an alternative to the categories that M-L develop, they note that one might argue that only two coherent paradigms can be discerned in international relations -- rationalist and sociological. But if one embraces such an approach, the use of the term "realist" should be abandoned.