

Moderator's introduction to the workshop

Since the White House released its Interim National Security Strategic Guidance and Antony Blinken made his first speech on foreign policy as Secretary of State in March, the Biden administration's foreign policy has received broad attention. Unlike the Trump administration which practiced "principled realism" in foreign affairs, Biden may return to idealist diplomacy to some extent. As two "opposing" traditions in foreign policy, realism and idealism have been a part of American foreign policy and diplomatic practice since the country was founded and have jointly shaped its approach to foreign policy. The workshop discussed idealism and realism with a focus on their meanings, roots, interaction with each other, their roles in history, and their potential influences on current and future US foreign policies.

According to the participating scholars, idealism has its root in the national characteristics, cultural traditions and domestic society of the US, which makes it lasting and recurrent. Though idealism could also be an element in other countries' foreign policies, it is generally believed that typical idealist foreign policies and behaviors in history have been predominantly proposed and promoted by the US. And what sets the US apart from other countries is that it has been upholding idealism since its birth, a time when it was still a fledgling power.

While idealist goals in American foreign policy are, in some cases, a ploy used by policymakers and politicians to claim legitimacy for their policies and a disguise to interfere in internal affairs of other countries, in other cases, they are a product from the pressure of civil societies and interest groups, and have public opinion on their side for the sincerity they convey.

In the view of the participating scholars, American foreign policy is often a result of the intertwining of and the competition and integration between realism and idealism. Whenever moral goals jeopardize the country's practical interests, idealism yields to realism, leading to double standards and hypocrisy in its foreign policy.

Therefore, it is important to gain an in-depth understanding of the rationale behind the American idealist and realist foreign policy and identify the defects and limitations of its slogans on human rights and democracy, instead of simply condemning its policies. Only in this way, can we make relevant criticism and reach the foreign audience with convincing arguments.

Wang Lixin

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Idealism and Realism in American Foreign Policy
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Since the White House released its Interim National Security Strategic Guidance and Antony Blinken made his first speech on foreign policy as Secretary of State in March, the Biden administration's foreign policy has received broad attention. Unlike the Trump administration, which practiced "principled realism" in foreign policy, Biden may return to idealist foreign policy to some extent. As two "opposing" traditions in foreign policy, realism and idealism have been a part of American foreign policy and diplomatic practice since it was founded and have jointly shaped the American approach to foreign policy. The workshop, themed around "Idealism and Realism in American Foreign Policy," brought together 12 scholars and experts from Peking University, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Tsinghua University, Jilin University, Renmin University of China, Xiamen University, Beijing Foreign Studies University and Capital Normal University to discuss the meanings and roots of the two concepts, their interaction with each other, their roles in history, and their potential influences on current and future US foreign policies.

Prof. Yu Tiejun from PKU's School of International Studies gave a speech titled "The US Foreign-Strategy Dilemma in the Eyes of Realists: Manifestations, Causes and Countermeasures."

Yu Tiejun reviewed the conclusions that Wang Jisi drew in late 1980s from his analysis of the foreign policies of previous US presidents, especially their policies toward China. According to Wang Jisi, the contradiction between idealism and realism in diplomatic thinking in the US does not necessarily mean there is a clear-cut division to set apart American policies and ideas in different periods into two types or its decision-makers into two factions. Although the struggle between the two approaches or two sets of criteria is ubiquitous, they are often intertwined with each other. In reality, American leaders had to strike a balance between ideological goals and practical interests to pursue their own policy. Yu Tiejun agrees with this view and believes that certain contradictions might exist in the short run, that is, a policy might have a bias one way or the other in certain context, but in the long run, the two approaches will reconcile to form a unity.

Yu Tiejun then summarized the views of three contemporary realist scholars on the dilemma, causes and countermeasures of American foreign strategy.

In *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, John Mearsheimer defines liberalism, nationalism and realism from the perspective of ideological history of international relations. In his opinion, from the end of the Cold War to 2016, a series of mistakes and even disasters happened to the foreign policies under three presidents. For example, the

disastrous Greater Middle East Initiative; a sudden downturn in the relationship with major powers such as Russia and China; and the fact that the world is not going where the US would like it to. This liberal hegemony has not only failed to bring peace to the world, but also undermined the liberal atmosphere at home with its military aggressiveness abroad. Since Trump became the president, the situation has turned even more chaotic.

Mearsheimer analyzes the causes from the perspectives of ideological history, the fundamental concepts and inherent defects of liberalism. In his view, liberalists, recognizing people's natural rights and the difference from each other, believe that personal freedom outweighs social contracts, and advocate "tolerance" and "national authority" as means to address the difference in values and the pursuit of rights at home. However, since there is no such authority in the international context, promoting liberalism, as opposed to nationalism or realism which emphasizes group loyalty rather than individualism, as a principle for foreign policy is set to fail.

According to Mearsheimer, the US should pursue a realist self-restraint policy. Since the US does not have infinite power, it should adopt retrenchment strategy on regional issues that do not affect its core interests. But Mearsheimer is equally pessimistic in believing that American foreign policy elites are too deeply influenced by idealism to change their course to retrenchment.

Stephen M. Walt basically shares Mearsheimer's view on the dilemma that American foreign policy faces, but he attributes the dilemma to those irresponsible American foreign policy elites who keep repeating their mistakes without changing their minds. For countermeasures, Walt emphasizes offshore balance-building, avoiding regime changes and national reconstruction, as well as abandoning the obsession with liberal hegemony. But Walt finds it difficult to change, too.

Henry Alfred Kissinger's realism is of European origin, instead of American origin. In his view, Americans' faith in democracy, a belief that peace is the normal state of the world and that democracy can solve all problems, is not changeable. The uniquely advantageous geographical conditions free the country from any survival threats or national security challenges, making it difficult for Americans to change their optimistic thinking.

Prof. Wu Zhengyu from Renmin University of China gave a speech titled "From Classical Approach to Scientific Approach: The Development and Main Problems of Realist Theory of the Post-war US."

The classical approach and the scientific approach, which involve the second debate in the history of IR theory, that is, the debate between scientific behaviorism and traditionalism, are essentially two different approaches to theorizing IR practice in reality. The distinction between the two approaches involves the

nature of IR theory, that is, what kind of theories should be constructed and what kind of knowledge should they provide. According to Hedley Bull, a British expert in international relations, the classical approach is “the approach to theorizing that derives from philosophy, history and law, and that is characterized above all by explicit reliance upon the exercise of judgment and by (a series of) assumptions”; in contrast, theories constructed upon the “scientific approach” have propositions that are “based either upon logical or mathematical proof, or upon strict, empirical procedures of verification.” In the field of international relations, the most outstanding representative of the classical approach is classical realism, while the most representative of the scientific approach is Kenneth Waltz’s structural realism.

Two realist IR theories emerged in the US after World War II – classical realism and structural realism. The dominance of structural realism since the behaviorist revolution in the 1950s until the 1970s when Waltz’s works were published has brought a severe consequence – the near complete disconnection between realist theory and policy. What’s more, the neoclassical economics that Waltz adopts represents a penetration of economics into the research in international relations. His theory has an inherent flaw in that it is essentially based on analogical reasoning, which is characterized by the lack of two dimensions --- time and space, and has nothing to do with specific policies.

The offensive realism and defensive realism that have been extended from here have become increasingly degraded in interpretation of standpoints. By Waltz's standard, neoclassical realism, which incorporates state-level variables into the system, does not make any substantial progress either. The exclusion of classical realism from realism after World War II can be attributed to a great extent to the tendency toward scientific approach in IR theory.

According to Wu Zhengyu, the potential of classic realism lies in two aspects -- theory construction and policy research. The scientific approach is not successful in theory construction due to two major problems. First, it is difficult to separate the subject from the object. Studying human society with one's own prejudices makes it difficult to create the so-called scientific laws. Second, the complete disconnection between scientification of core IR theories and other disciplines has led to little progress in IR theory. The classic approach can be complementary in these two aspects. In policy research, while the most important standard of a theory using scientific approach is certainty and controllability, the field itself is full of uncertainties, making it more important to learn to think than to provide doctrines. The classic approach is meaningful for its impact on people. It teaches you how to think about a war, rather than giving you a manual for fighting a war.

Prof. Niu Ke from the Department of History, Peking

University spoke on “Strategic Prudence and National Security Power Group”.

Niu Ke holds the view that “strategic prudence” is an epistemological attitude and ideological quality, which can also be viewed as a kind of political quality and virtue. Signs of “strategic prudence” are often seen in American political history, but it is difficult to handle in research. “Strategic prudence” is a reverse mechanism, designed to restrain and mitigate something, to counteract rather than strengthen or advance something. It is a restriction on some spontaneous, persistent and powerful trends. In the US, the post-WWII strategic prudence aimed at restraining the tendency of strategic over-expansion that had emerged with the rapid rise of its position in the world and its military strength, especially the tendency of American militarism. In fiscal terms, “strategic prudence” also manifested itself in the country’s continuous efforts to refrain from over-investing in the military for the sake of international competition. Therefore, the basic situation is that during most time of the Cold War, the share of US military expenditure and spending in national security in its gross national product (GNP) and government expenditures had been declining for a long time. In contrast, the Soviet Union’s military expenditure as a proportion of its GNP was about two to three times, or even higher, as much as that of the US.

Niu Ke approaches the American strategic prudence from

historical and cultural perspectives by analyzing the characteristics of power groups in the US. In his view, a relatively compact, well-defined, and highly homogeneous foreign policy elite group started to emerge in the US in the late 19th or early 20th century, which was later known as the national security elite group. Largely based in Wall Street, most members of the group were lawyers and managers related to international business in the East Coast. Historically, they were descendants of the New England cultural elites in the 19th century, as well as the new commercial forces grown out of the industrialization movement in the 19th century, including forces from new specialized social sciences. This class possessed sophisticated ideological elements, including managerialism, scientism, and moderate approaches to state building that originated from progressive movements; at the same time, they were intellectually and culturally inclusive to some extent. In comparison with the next generation of policy elites --- the generation of highly ideological social scientists who emerged around the Vietnam War, this foreign policy elite group had some key distinctions including a strong leaning toward Americentrism and ideological obsessions. However, rather than an overly rigid, extreme, teleological Whiggish ideology, theirs were composed of more complex, diversified, and multi-factor intellectual elements. This situation is an important dimension for understanding the prudent foreign policy this elite group

advocated during the Cold War.

Prof. Wang Lixin from PKU's Department of History gave a speech titled "The Tradition and Origin of Idealism in American Foreign policy."

Wang Lixin believes that idealism in American foreign relations refers to the thoughts, policies, and actions that transform the international and domestic orders in accordance with US values and ideals. The idealist diplomacy put forward by US President Woodrow Wilson, the most important speaker for American idealist diplomacy, in a series of speeches toward the end of World War I includes five major aspects. First, it does not agree with the view that international relations were in an anarchical or natural state, but believes that the rule of law and orderliness in international relations were being pursued. Second, it opposes the principle of balance of power prevailing in Europe and advocates collective security. Third, it opposes the mercantilism prevailing in Europe and advocates free trade. Fourth, it opposes authoritarian regimes and tangible empires, that is, the colonial empires dominated by Europe, and advocates self-determination, (Western) democracy and human rights. Fifth, it opposes Machiavellianism in the conduct of international relations, and believes that ethical norms governing interpersonal relations in civil society should be applied to international relations to pursue moralization of diplomatic behavior and international relations.

American idealist diplomacy has three roots. First, the US has a unique nation-building principle and national identity. It was not built on common blood, common ancestors, or common historical experience, instead, it was built on the common belief in classical liberalism. This determines that the US has to defend the liberalist ideology in its foreign relations, otherwise the ideology would be greatly compromised in its effectiveness and attractiveness, and America's national spirit could diminish or even disappear. Second, its superior geographical location guarantees its security without the need to establish a balance of power. Therefore, since the time it was founded until it participated in WWII, the US had been lacking in geopolitical understanding and experience in balance-of-power diplomacy, as well as in national security and intelligence agencies. In fact, its national security agencies were not established until the rise of the Cold War toward the end of WWII. Third, the US has a unique foreign policy making process. Its foreign policy decisions, like internal affairs, are in many cases made through an open democratic process, in which the Congress has great powers over foreign affairs, making it impossible for the US to pursue secret diplomacy like Europe. In history, the idealism in American foreign affairs has been represented by Wilson's diplomacy, as well as the postwar transformation of Germany and Japan by the US.

According to Wang Lixin, idealism in American foreign

affairs has also been restricted by many factors, leading to its double standards and hypocrisy. First is the logic of international politics, which demands that national security must come first in an anarchical state. Second is the influence of the pragmatism tradition. In the process of westward expansion, the US established a strong tradition of pragmatism, by which it would not stubbornly abide by its creed, but would handle its foreign relations flexibly. Third is the opposition of realists. The US has a powerful realist foreign policy elite base, who strongly oppose American idealist diplomacy. Fourth is the national strength of the US. What idealism brings is not strategic prudence, but strategic impulse and excessive expansion. However, given limited strength of a nation, ordinary people do not endorse investing national strength in transforming other countries, which poses a strong restriction on idealism. Therefore, idealism only prevailed in the US when it had super strong national strength after the victories in WWI and WWII, while in most of the time, the idealist tradition is under restraints. Hence, American diplomacy has been handled with a high degree of flexibility, with its moral and ethical goals and slogans on human rights and democracy from idealist tradition often seen as means to its ends only.

In Wang Lixin's conclusion, American diplomacy is a fusion of idealism and realism. Different policy approaches have been adopted in different historical contexts which had seen

their contradictions and conflicts. However, there should be no denying of the existence of idealist tradition in American diplomacy. With strong support of public opinion in the US, idealist diplomacy serves more purposes than a disguise or an excuse, and it will come back from time to time.

Prof. Zhou Guiyin from Xiamen University's Research School for Southeast Asian Studies gave a speech titled "The Impact of Liberal Internationalism on American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: Taking International Relations Theory as an Example."

Zhou Guiyin first introduced the genealogy of the neoliberal internationalism IR theory in the post-Cold War era. Liberalism generally consists of classical liberalism and neoliberalism, the latter including neoclassical liberalism and neoliberal internationalism. Since the 1980s, neoliberal internationalism has developed three important sub-theories, namely democratic peace theory, interdependence and trade peace theory, and neoliberal institutionalism, including the conception of a democratic security community represented by G. John Ikenberry, a branch theory that has the greatest impact on the Obama and Biden administrations, and advocates the establishment of a democratic security community led by the US or co-led by the US and Europe.

Neoliberal internationalists have formed a foreign policy circle, which belongs to the branch of the eastern power bloc in

the traditional sense. Their biggest consensus is to promote liberal hegemony. The core purpose is to establish and consolidate the US-led world order. It can be divided into moderates and hardliners.

Moderates, the majority of neoliberal internationalism, hold the following core propositions: first, they take a pluralist stance; second, they emphasize the recognition of the post-war international order based on the UN Charter; third, they have made attempts to transform the world by categorizing major players into democracies and non-democracies. Fourth, they believe the interaction between internal affairs and foreign affairs is a two-way and complex process, thus they advocate the principle of inclusive engagement and connection, limited intervention, and dialogue-based global governance, upon which the Clinton and Obama administrations have built most of their foreign policies to establish a universal and non-exclusive world order.

Hardliners, the minority of neoliberal internationalism, or sometimes known as interventionists, hold the following core propositions: First, they take a monistic stance, or the Western universalism; second, taking the liberal world order dominated by the US and the West as the center, they classify countries as democracies, non-democracies, or illegitimate regimes, and believe that liberal countries have the responsibility to exclusively engage with, contain, or even militarily intervene

against non-democracies and illegitimate regimes based on American and European standards of politics and civilization; third, they emphasize borderless global governance, with an aim to promote republican democracy on a global scale and establish a homogeneous world order.

Liberal internationalists exert their influence over policy practice mainly through the revolving door mechanism. They are not only scholars, but also policy advisors at think tanks who have long been involved in the formulation and execution of government's foreign policy. Take three examples, in the first representative example of such kind, Robert. O. Keohane, Anne-Marie Slaughter, and G. John Ikenberry --- the "Three Musketeers of Princeton" --- proposed the advisory report of "Forging A World of Liberty Under Law: US National Security in the 21st Century" during the Bush administration in 2006; in the second example, the Atlantic Council hosted the Project for a United and Strong America in 2013, and its follow-up report advocated maintaining American hegemony based on democracy and values; in the third, Antony Blinken, Kurt Campbell and other representative figures of the Center for A New American Security (CNAS), a think tank that brings together foreign policy brainpowers of the Democratic Party, have successively presented several reports that reflect the foreign policy propositions of the current US government.

Zhou Guiyin contends that moderate liberal

internationalists, who have dominated the Biden administration, are steadfast in their ideals on one hand, but pragmatic on practical matters on the other hand, taking a firm and unwavering stance. In terms of strategic vision, experience and capabilities, the new administration has certain advantage in dealing with China.

The Biden administration's foreign policy road map covers four aspects: First, to build a stronger and more cohesive security alliance. Second, to focus on domestic economic and technological development and develop a "secure industrial chain" among the US and its allies and partners. Third, to carry out value-based diplomacy in a more resolute and coordinated manner, but with a lower profile. Lastly, to concentrate on agenda- and result-oriented global governance. To sum up, the new liberal internationalism is dualistic in nature and always take a two-pronged approach, by which the US would only adjust the degree of "engagement" and "coercion" based on specific circumstances, rather than choosing one or the other. The overall trend is likely to be toward maintaining and enhancing a small but highly efficient US-led security alliance among Western democracies.

Assistant Research Fellow Wang Wei from the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences presented his paper titled "Between Ideals and Reality: Eclecticism in Diplomatic Practices of the US."

Wang Wei argues that policy, similar to theory, is a mixture of normative and descriptive principles. Under normative principles, realist theories – whether it be hegemonic stability theory, balance of power theory, or Kenneth Neal Waltz’s bipolar and multipolar balance theory – focus on peace under power, whereas liberalism stresses systemic peace and rules-based order while structuralism emphasizes norms. Under descriptive principles, however, a different set of questions are asked: Realpolitik asks about who maintains the order, liberalism about who makes the rules and structuralism about whose norms work the best.

In Peter Katzenstein’s point of view, real-life scenarios are an “eclectic” mixture of the above three schools of thought; the reality is pluralistic rather than an ideal pursuit of simplicity at the cost of alternative perspectives on issues. Eclectic norms apply well when analyzing American foreign policy. For example, restrictive descriptions that imply a tone of reservation are often seen in reference to idealism or realism, such as the “principled realism” of George H. W. Bush or Donald Trump’s policy, the “liberal imperialism” of Thomas Jefferson, or even the “higher realism” of Woodrow Wilson. As for the Biden administration, it is believed that it will follow a “flexible liberalism.”

Wang Wei believes that American foreign policy traditions are the cumulative result of an explorative process. According to

Myres McDougal's classification, the 19th century saw the formation of the tenets of domestic regionalism in the US, whereas the 20th century witnessed the emergence of internationalism. The latter can be further divided into two schools: the Wilsonian tradition of liberal internationalism and the Rooseveltian tradition of hard-core realism. The foreign policies of both Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, as well as the US presidents after them, have all been influenced by these two traditions alternatively.

Wang Wei concluded his speech with a comparison between the foreign policy of the Biden administration and that of the Trump Administration. He argues that the difference between the two mainly lies in prioritizing political agendas and fields to invest in. Priorities of the Biden administration include restoring the US economy, re-establishing the US leadership in international affairs, spreading US values, exercising US military power with moderation, and revitalizing its alliance system. Under the Trump administration, however, "border control" and "sovereign rights and interests" were among the keywords, whereas "international system" and "alliance system" weren't. Furthermore, some topics of common interest have been given different priorities on the Biden administration's agenda from that of his predecessor's. In addition, the Biden administration's China policy has taken on the following new directions: first, instead of targeting only at China, it now links

China issue with that of Russia and other countries. Second, it ceased to devote fully to competition with China; rather, it states that it sees the relations between the two as strategic competition and does not rule out the possibility for cooperation, and it welcomes dialogue and cooperation with China and Russia. Third, it shifts the focus back to domestic issues and endeavors to invest in the US economy and rebuild American democracy.

Zhang Fan, a research fellow at the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, presented his paper titled “Idealism, Realism and the National View on Intelligence of the US.”

Zhang Fan highlighted the fact that the US State Department, the US Navy and the US Army all have their own intelligence agencies, but there is no intelligence agency at the national level. Compared to other countries, it is more difficult for the US to establish a permanent intelligence agency at the national level during peaceful time periods. Since the beginning of the Cold War, the intelligence circle or the national security circle in the US have always had to answer two questions from its public: Why does the US need a national intelligence agency during peaceful time? How does this agency provide quality intelligence to serve national security decision-making?

There are two reasons that lead to the above questions. First, since idealism is deeply rooted in the US society, realist concepts such as intelligence are hard to take roots in the US.

Second, the anti-statist sentiment has always been high in the US society. The US public would even question and oppose to the federal government's proposal to establish national agencies. As for the idea of a national intelligence agency, the US public claim that they do not need a "Gestapo."

Therefore, the US government defended its proposal from two perspectives when it advocated establishing a national intelligence agency. In realist terms, as its opponents had become more unethical, the US must have its own intelligence and means to counter them in competition and confrontation. In idealist terms, the US national intelligence and national security shared the same goals, which was to serve the advancement of American democracy and to defeat the so-called authoritarianism and despotism. Since then, similar sets of logic have been applied in different time periods. After the Cold War, the US set the spreading of democracy as its main strategic goal, which the US national intelligence agency was established to serve. After the September 11 terrorist attack, public criticism over national intelligence shifted from the necessity of its existence to its understaffed status. Today, the competition between major powers is not only about the different models of governance, but also about the underlying ideologies. Faced with more powerful intelligence networks of China and Russia, the US believes that the existence of a national intelligence agency is still necessary. Such an agency's goal is imbued with

realist elements.

The conflict between idealism and realism is even more serious on the issue of how to acquire intelligence, as national security essentially emphasizes secrecy and efficiency more than legitimate means. The US was well aware of the disagreement that might arise when it first decided to establish a national intelligence agency, and so it solved the problem with legislation. The National Security Act of 1947 (the CIA Act) not only prescribed the establishment of an intelligence agency, but also defined a series of intelligence activities and concepts. Each administration of the US government had its own legal advisors to check if an activity was compliant with the law, and by doing so they won the public support as well as the support from the Congress. Moreover, the US attempted to circumvent ethical risks in collecting intelligence with technological measures. During the Cold War, the US broke through the Soviet land blockade with air intelligence and managed to collect intelligence without contacting people. However, whether it is lawful to use technology is another question.

In practice, the US is restrained by more factors than other countries, and it always endeavors to strike a balance between ethics and means, and between ideals and reality. According to Zhang Fan, the US intelligence circle has in place an idealist accountability system which emphasizes the rule of law and subjects intelligence agencies to supervision by the Congress.

After the September 11 terrorist attack, the US intelligence circle has become more transparent, with intelligence officers appearing more frequently on the media to answer questions from the public. The mentioned features of intelligence thoughts and practice that set the US apart from other countries can all be partially explained from realist and idealist perspectives.

Associate Professor Zhai Tao from the School of History at Beijing Normal University gave a speech titled “Idealism and Realism in the US Propaganda Campaign.”

Zhai Tao believes that the US propaganda campaign has both a realist and an idealist dimension. In the realist aspect, realism is used as a tool for diplomatic and military struggles, or psychological warfare in its simplest form. One such example is the airborne leaflet propaganda during the Korean War to defeat the enemy’s morale. In the idealist aspect, idealism serves as cultural means to transform a rival or countries of interest to the US, examples of which include the “cultural experiments” carried out in China by Wilma Fairbank, the wife of John King Fairbank, and the Fulbright Program; it could also manifest as a cultural expression of national identity, such as the “American Dream” promoted in the 1950s and 1960s which depicted the prosperity in the US, and the Kitchen Debate between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev. Instead of advocating political values or ideology, it seeks to advertise the high quality of material life in the US for two purposes: one is to appeal to its

opponents with the capitalist way of life as an alternative approach to win the fight against its rivals; the other and the more important purpose is to convince itself and define itself with economic superiority and material abundance while projecting such an image in its propaganda campaign.

In Zhai Tao's view, idealism and realism could co-exist in the same propaganda campaign. Take the US liberation policy toward the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as an example, during the Hungarian Uprising in 1956, Radio Free Europe, Voice of America and Liberation Radio incited people of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to "revolt" and overthrow the communist regimes. Such act had four implications, including idealist and realist ones. First, the liberation strategy was a tool in the Cold War. Second, the strategy itself was also an American foreign policy. As nuclear deterrence had made a hot war impossible, psychological warfare thus became the only way of deterrence, which made the American propaganda and psychological warfare as effective as the Cold War itself. Third, from an idealist perspective, the US propaganda that targeted the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe could be seen as a continuation of a century's impulsion of US missionaries and educators to culturally transform Russia. Fourth, the liberation propaganda toward the Soviet Union was also a cultural expression of the American national identity in the 1950s. By attacking the weaknesses of the Soviet government and politics

using the Orientalist rhetoric of “you are autocratic while I am democratic; you are totalitarian while I am liberal”, the US was unconsciously expressing its own national identity.

Zhai Tao believes that idealism and realism continue to coexist in the current propaganda campaign of the US. First, Donald Trump has something in common with Woodrow Wilson. Trump’s propaganda attacks and practical sanctions against China drew a distinction between the Chinese government and the Chinese people – the government is evil, whereas the people are good – and its sanctions were aimed at “ousting the Chinese Communist Party from its leadership position in China”. This is very similar to what Wilson believed 100 years ago – he distinguished the people from the government and saw people as all good and only the autocratic government as evil. Second, Vice President Mike Pence also shared some of Dean Acheson’s ideas. Pence attacked the Chinese Communist Party in his speech in May 2018 for being “ungrateful” while at the same time advocated for China-US friendship, which used the exact same wording, paragraphing and examples as Acheson did in his White Paper on China in 1948, both revolving around the central point that the tradition of China-US friendship runs long and that the CCP is “ungrateful” and does not represent the Chinese people. This is not to say that Donald Trump and Mike Pence are idealists or hold some sort of goodwill. Rather, it could well be an inheritance of diplomatic discourse and mindset, which

Trump and Pence unknowingly inherited from the legacy of idealism in American foreign policy traditions or the Wilsonian mindset of internationalist diplomacy.

Zhai Tao concluded that American idealism manifested in cultural transformation and cultural expression in its international propaganda campaigns is as crucial as realism serving as a tool for its military purpose, which makes its true propaganda or policy intentions hard to identify. Therefore, only with an in-depth understanding of and importance attached to the specific historical contexts of American idealist diplomacy, can we really understand the content and real motives of American propaganda without misinterpreting it.

Prof. Xie Tao from the School of International Relations and Diplomacy of Beijing Foreign Studies University gave a speech on “Exceptionalism and Non-exceptionalism in the US Foreign Affairs.”

According to Xie Tao, diplomacy of any country is a product of the interaction between three key factors: values, domestic politics and international environment, and the US is no exception. Idealism, though closely reflected in American diplomatic values, is greatly restrained by two practical factors --- domestic party politics and security dilemma in international relations. Many so-called exceptional actions in its history were not exceptional.

For example, Peter Trubowitz argues in *Politics and*

Strategy that the US national strategy can be explained by two variables --- the threat to its national security and the policy position of the ruling coalition. His theory does not involve American values, but basically explains the national strategies of 12 presidents in the US history.

Xie Tao also argues that, among the four major diplomatic traditions that Walter Russell Mead put forward in his book *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*, only Wilsonianism can represent the US idealist tradition, while the other three traditions reveal more of its non-exceptionality: Hamiltonism advocates mercantilism and state capitalism; Jacksonism preaches nationalism and racism; Jeffersonianism is typical physiocracy, which emphasizes a weak government.

In Xie Tao's view, every country has its myth of "being exceptional." Only the US has managed to spread its ideals across the world with its unique founding history, the strongest comprehensive national strength, extraordinary propaganda network, as well as incomparable discourse construction capabilities. However, it is hard to say for sure to what extent idealism is reflected in American diplomacy, although it might be empirically verified with data.

"Exceptionalism" is obviously ideological and puts the US on a moral high ground, and creates a sense of superiority, which consequently makes it offensive. However, this should

not be the reason for denying the great contribution the US has made to world peace and prosperity. Today, when criticizing “exceptionalism” of the US, people often deny the country itself all together. In today’s strategic competition and ideological struggle between China and the US, scholars should objectively make sense of the exceptionalism and non-exceptionalism of the US.

Xie Tao ended his speech with a summary of the five key factors influencing the Biden administration’s China policy. First, domestic political environment, in which the biggest concern for American politicians is still how to address elections and needs of the ruling coalition. Second, international security environment it faces. At present, it is facing a difficult external environment amid the rise of China, chaos in the Middle East and threat from Russia, so it is moving toward strategic retrenchment. Third, the legacy of Trump’s China policy. Fourth, American values, or its “exceptionalism” tradition. Fifth, China’s international and domestic behaviors and policy toward the US.

Associate Professor Xing Yue from the Institute of International Studies (IIS) of Tsinghua University gave a speech titled “What Is Special about US Foreign Policy.”

At the beginning of her speech, Xing Yue distinguished two concepts, diplomacy and foreign policy. In international relations, “diplomacy” refers to the actions that a sovereign state

takes and the process it goes through to deal with international relations and affairs in a peaceful way, in contrast to the use of force or deterrence with force, while “foreign policy” refers to a country’s strategic policy of handling foreign relations and affairs, including objectives of and means to execute its foreign policy. Given that diplomacy and force are both means to carry out foreign policy, diplomacy is a part of foreign policy.

Xing Yue believes that any country’s foreign policy has two dimensions --- morality and interests. For great powers, morality is especially essential, because national interests include survival, freedom, development and dignity, and the way a country gains dignity is by being moral. Small nations gain dignity from the equal status in international relations they are granted by complying with laws and regulations, while major powers establish their charisma and leadership by upholding justice in the international community and establishing and maintaining a just and reasonable international order.

Xing Yue elaborated on the particularity of American foreign policy with three questions. The first question is to what extent does the US pursue morality? In her opinion, the US arguably emphasizes morality more than any other countries in the world. First, the US believes that its moral strength sets it apart from other countries, and its foreign policy is not aimed at destroying its enemy with military force, but transforming them with American values.

Second, among all national interests, a country's national dignity may conflict with its interests in survival and security, the two most fundamental interests. When a country faces threats to its survival or security, it has no choice but to give up its pursuit of moral goals. In the case of the US, it has been a strong power since it stepped onto the world stage, without experiencing real threat to its survival or security. Consequently, different from other countries, the US has always placed morality at the core of its national interests.

Third, from the perspective of economic interests, the US is so strong that it generally does not put economic interests ahead of moral interests, unless the pursuit of moral goals seriously harm its economic interests. The US has never had a foreign policy that is primarily aimed at economic gains. However, it often integrates economic interests with morality in a way that its foreign policy can uphold morality and promote economic interests at the same time.

Lastly, American foreign policy is restricted by public opinion. It is difficult for a foreign policy lacking in moral goals to be recognized and accepted by the public. For this reason, politicians in the US history who are known for their realist diplomacy are rarely respected or praised by its own people, as they believe that the country could be reduced to the point where it is no different from other countries.

The second question is what moral principles does the US

pursue? Prof. Wang Lixin elaborated in his presentation that American morality is its idealism. The US is committed to promoting democracy, market economy and free trade as well as establishing a collective security mechanism in the world, while at the same time, it opposes dictatorship, government monopoly of the economy and radical revolution.

The third question is how does the US live up to its moral principles? At home, it leads by example and emphasizes underpinning its leadership in the world with moral strength and military might. Externally, the US adopts a pragmatic philosophy, being unscrupulous in its efforts to achieve its goals. This is because the US is a Christian country where Christian ethics judge an action by its motive, and emphasize practice and results. Therefore, the US attaches great importance to the effectiveness and feasibility of ideas and means in its foreign policy.

A foreign policy is legitimate only when it has a moral goal. However, when being executed, if it goes beyond the capabilities of the US or deviates too far from practical national interests, it would be regarded as a mistake and lose its legitimacy, thus preventing potential damages that a morality-based foreign policy could do to practical interests of the US.

According to Prof. Xing Yue, the particularity of American foreign policy lies in the fact that it combines moral goals with

practical means and assessment methods. As Henry Kissinger once admitted that no country can be more pragmatic than the US in diplomatic activities; however, neither can any country be more idealistic than the US in the pursuit of moral goals inherited from the past.

Prof. Zhang Xiaoming from the School of International Studies of Peking University gave a speech titled “Why Is US Diplomacy Always a Mixture of Idealism and Realism.”

According to Zhang Xiaoming, US diplomacy has always been a mixture of idealism and realism. The boundary between the two is defined primarily by theorists, while those engaged in practical diplomatic work generally would not hold such dichotomous views. On one hand, the US is a very idealist country, perhaps the most idealist among all major powers in the world. This is related to the fact that the US was founded on colonies first established by Puritans in North America. Therefore, the religious influence has always been very strong, and so is the idealist influence in its diplomatic affairs.

On the other hand, the US is a highly realist country that advocates power and pursues its own interests in the international arena. In modern times, international politics has been regarded as power politics or strength politics, which has been the theme or fundamental logic of international politics in Europe, and which was later adopted in other parts of the world. As a derivative of Europe, the US naturally inherited this

European tradition, making the two in agreement with each other in foreign affairs.

As a result, American diplomacy has always been a mixture of idealism and realism. Is this unique in the world? Zhang Xiaoming agrees more with the view that, the most distinct feature of American diplomacy lies in the fact that, among all major powers in the world, only the US is both highly confident of its foreign policy being just (idealism) and proud of its own strength, especially material strength (realism). The combination makes the US a superpower in the international arena, which has the power to build and to destroy. A nation's diplomacy would not work by being only idealistic, and cannot go far by being only realistic.

For a more detailed analysis of how idealism and realism mix in American diplomacy, Zhang Xiaoming raised the following four questions.

First, which approach is a bigger component in American diplomacy, idealism or realism? It is difficult to measure and make a scientific analysis of the proportion, since each president has his own focus in different historical period. Generally speaking, Republican presidents are more realistic and Democratic presidents more idealistic, but this may not always be true.

Second, to what extent does idealist discourse reflect the true motives of American diplomacy? US politicians tend to use

idealist language when making diplomatic statements, such as those about freedom, democracy and the fight against tyranny. President Biden's foreign policy statement is in fact a continuation of the Truman Doctrine speech. Idealist discourse contains both motive and means, making it hard to distinguish.

Third, are idealism and realism the opposite of each other? Not necessarily. They could overlap and coexist. In other words, it is hard to separate national interests completely from ideology and morality. For example, American national interests include security and prosperity, which also involve its ideological and moral goals, such as maintaining stable political and economic systems, protecting people's way of life from being compromised, and achieving capitalist economic and cultural prosperity.

Fourth, is this mixture of idealism and realism a unique feature of American diplomacy? This may not be unique to the US, but shared by all countries, which may be due to the duality of human nature. Man is self-contradictory in that he instinctively pursues self-survival and individual interest on one hand, and morality and rationality on the other. Similarly, nations, which are made up of people, have dual motives in their actions too. Diplomacy of all nations is generally a mixture of realism and idealism, and only this may be especially typical in the US.

Prof. Liu Debin from the Institute of International Studies

of Jilin University gave a speech themed “Return of History and End of Ideals: New Realities of US Diplomacy.”

According to him, while the topic of “changes in a century” was under heated discussion among Chinese scholars, relevant debates are also going on among scholars in the US and other Western countries, although they are not as “optimistic” as scholars in China, and did not adopt the concept of “changes in a century.” In brief, the academic discussions in the US and the West, which started from Francis Fukuyama’s “End of History” in 1989 and continued to Robert Kagan’s “Return of History” in 2008, have come a long way since then.

In contrast to Chinese scholars who see the “rising East and falling West,” or the rise of China and other non-Western countries, American and Western scholars see the “return of barbarism,” “return of Cold War,” “return of great escape” and “return of a jungle world,” etc. Chinese academia should pay attention to the view of “return of history,” because it has already had an impact on domestic and foreign policies of the US and other Western countries. The “reversal” of Sino-US relations and the consensus of the Republican and Democratic parties on “hardline” foreign policy toward China are both, to a great extent, a result of the influence of the view.

Liu Debin shared several thoughts on the world situation from the perspective of historical change of the world structure. First, the decline of the West can be attributed to a lot of reasons,

including the “rise of the EU,” the “Muslimization of Europe,” the “rise of China,” the “loss of Western traditional advantage,” and “Western geostrategic mistakes.” Second, the “rise of other countries,” including China, Russia, India, Turkey, and Iran. Third, the changing world structure, which has seen its center expanding and periphery shrinking, with non-Western countries entering the center. At the same time, many developed and developing countries have seen increasing wealth disparity between regions and classes, making “re-structuring” a task to address for all countries in the world.

Fourth, “a world without the West” is taking shape. Asia has established increasingly closer economic ties with Africa and Latin America. Southern countries have also developed new central and peripheral relationships to some extent. For example, the economic ties between Asia and Africa have surpassed that between Africa and Europe and the US, and Dubai has become the most important hub of exchanges and cooperation between Asia and Africa.

Fifth, a super world landscape consisting of super cities and global industrial chains is reshaping the foundation of geoeconomics and geopolitics. As Strange observed over 20 years ago, the Western system has failed in global financial management, environmental protection and maintaining a balance between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak.

In Liu Debin’s view, the US is facing a new reality in its

foreign affairs: first, it is frustrated by and angry about the fact that China did not evolve into a “democracy” as the “Engagement” proponents expected, and that the US has suffered a historic and strategic setback. Second, the US is trying to make a shift by reshaping the system of division of labor that China has established over the past four decades and the interdependent relationship with China, particularly by “isolating” China in the high-tech field, but it remains to be seen as to how far the Sino-US “decoupling” in trade and economy could go. Third, regardless of the changing tide in Sino-US relationship, the economic “dependence” between China and the Western allies of the US still exists. The interests that these countries seek from their relations with China are not exactly the same as that of the US. Fourth, Trump’s behavior has almost totally consumed the “moral advantage” of the US. Though the Biden administration is working hard to mend it, still the US can no longer claim to be a “model” democracy, or “give orders” as it did in the past. Fifth, the relationship between the US and its Western allies. According to Liu Debin, the Western alliance in the modern sense was established after 1945 and has been on the brink of collapse since the end of the Cold War. As the Trump administration has accelerated this process, the West desperately need a new common “threat” to unite them again, and the rise of China seems to provide an option. Sixth, the deepening wealth disparity and inequality in American society over the past four

decades, and the shrinking of its middle class have made national and social “re-construction” a top priority, a purpose which the US foreign policy has to serve. Finally, what is the point of the Sino-US competition? Competing for the world’s No. 1 only? Can the US accept being the “second” in the world? Liu Debin does not believe there is an easy answer to this question. Regardless of what we call the relationship between the two countries in the new era, it seems to be an inevitable trend that China and the US are heading for an all-round competition, which may far exceed the “Cold War” between the US and the Soviet Union in scope and depth. It is hard to say for now whether the world is shifting to a unipolar, bi-polar, multi-polar or regionalized international system amid the Sino-US competition, but for China, the key question is what else can China bring to the world after being its production powerhouse and market?

Liu Debin ended his speech by borrowing Zbigniew Brzezinski’s advice to the US: the world needs an America that is economically vital, socially appealing and responsibly powerful, an America that becomes more strategically deliberate and historically enlightened in its global engagement with the new East. Liu Debin believes that this is what every major power in the world should live up to. He emphasized that Sino-US competition is as much a challenge as an opportunity for China. This new rivalry between China and the US marks a

new era that China has risen to.

During the Q&A session, the scholars present exchanged their ideas over the presentations above.

Xing Yue: From the perspective of international relations theory, realism and idealism are completely different in their logical starting points and world views. Realism believes that the world is an anarchic system where states have irreconcilable interests, and that international politics is essentially about power struggle, and there is no permanent peace in the world. Idealism, though also recognizing the anarchic status of the world, argues that the interests of nations can be reconciled, and world peace and international order can be achieved through international laws, free trade, international cooperation, and democratic systems. However, the two approaches we are discussing today are obviously different from IR theories. In my understanding, the discussion of idealism should focus on the values, morality, and ideologies of American foreign policy, while that of realism should focus on the economic, military, strategic, and security considerations in American foreign policy, and we should observe how a country combines and coordinates these two dimensions. In fact, all country has both realist and idealist considerations in its foreign policy. The point of our discussion today is not to conclude that the US has both realism and idealism, but to find out the differences in American foreign policies, such as the proportions of the two approaches, or their

relationship.

Wu Zhengyu: We should not mix up theories with reality. In reality, it is hard to find a pure realist or a pure idealist --- the distinction itself is problematic. The three major schools of thought mentioned by Xing Yue are creations with Chinese characteristics. Do they have anything in common? By what criteria are they categorized? These are all questions to answer.

Yu Tiejun: Do the concepts such as realism and idealism really work well as analysis frameworks for Chinese scholars? In my opinion, if we could not find a better tool for causal explanations, these concepts are acceptable.

We need to be more specific in our research and analysis, because it is impossible to analyze the evolution of American foreign policy with two simple labels of realism and idealism. For example, how the conservative Republican foreign policy could be integrated with the centrist Democratic ideology, as this integration could form a force to drive the US foreign policy.

Wang Lixin: This workshop is intended for a discussion of realism and idealism in American foreign policy and practice, not that in international political theories. But still, they are closely related in the sense that IR theories have impacted policies, and theoretical generalizations are based on American diplomatic practice. Therefore, when discussing the realism and idealism in American diplomatic practice, it is important to be aware that American foreign policies are formulated in specific

historical contexts, while theoretical concepts are not contextual, but are simply analysis tools proposed by scholars.

Niu Ke: How should we evaluate the role that American IR theories play in its foreign policy?

Zhou Guiyin: Senior officials of the National Security Council, the US Department of State, and the Department of Defense are directly or indirectly connected with think tanks and universities. For example, Robert Kahn, who has not served as a high-ranking official, has a very strong network of relationship through which his control of and influence over American think tanks and mainstream media are seen everywhere. Mearsheimer's influence might not be that powerful and is only confined to the academia or certain small circles. Nonetheless, both neo-conservative moderates and liberal moderates have ubiquitous influence over the government.

Niu Ke: Do highly formalized and theoretical theories like that of Waltz have an impact on policy thinking?

Zhou Guiyin: Hardly any. Major impact comes from the practice school. Nonetheless, we can't ignore the fact that the practice school received systematic education during college studies, which was precisely based on the ideas and theories of Hans J. Morgenthau, Kenneth Neal Waltz, and Ikenberry. Slaughter and Richard Falk, who have been teaching in colleges and universities for a long time, and have trained a lot of students, have significant influence in the field of global

governance.

Wang Wei: Pure theories seek to explain the laws of the world, and would impact people's thinking, while policy making is a process of solving practical problems, so the two are not the same. Theorists can devise a perfect scheme, but they may not be able to take all practical constraints into consideration, which would limit their role in guiding the practice. However, if a theorist is measured by his/her influence over policy making, it would take years, or decades or even centuries before people can really appreciate his/her contributions.

Qian Chengdan: Realism and idealism are taking the same attitude toward China at this stage, so in what sense do they really differ from each other?

Yu Tiejun: Though the US is currently highly divided, it has reached a rare strategic consensus on countering China, a consensus that has extended across the Senate and the House of Representatives, across party lines, and across different classes, and has been reflected in its hardline policies toward China, which is not to our advantage.

Xing Yue: Although the three mainstream theories in international relations have drawn the same conclusion in the analysis of Sino-US relations, they each have their own logic. Realism believes that from the perspective of power struggle, warfare or conflict between a hegemonic power and a rising power is inevitable. Liberalism believes that since China has not

been a part of the liberal international order and does not accept the ideals of freedom and democracy, it is a threat to the current US-led world order. Constructivism, from an ideological point of view, believes that, after so many years of engagement and exchange, China and the US have not reached any ideological consensus, but instead, they are increasingly confronting each other in values and political systems. Americans believe that a world dominated by China is unacceptable to them, and therefore they fear China's rise. In this sense, although the three theories come to the same conclusion that China is a challenge to the US and the US cannot afford waiting any longer, most Americans do not agree with the logic of realism, but are more willing to accept the logic of liberalism and constructivism.

Wang Lixin: In the fields of diplomacy and security, the US is undoubtedly still under the influence of the basic laws and logic of international relations which believe that international politics is in anarchic state and countries are responsible for their own national security, and is pursuing practical national interests. We should also see that American diplomacy has certain particularities, though not necessarily exceptionalities, which I would like to call it a special diplomatic style or a unique approach to international relations. This unique style is a combination of idealism and realism, and the most typical idealist actions and policies have mainly been implemented by the US.

Xie Tao: I think the uniqueness of the American diplomatic style is firstly reflected in the transparency of diplomatic decision-making, including internal discussions in Congress, discussions in administrative agencies, and the release of national strategies. Such high-level transparency is hardly seen in other countries. Second, the diversity of diplomatic decision-making shows that the US government and the American people are different.

Xing Yue: While all countries pursue moral goals and practical interests in their foreign policies, the US is special in the sense that its pursuit of morality is in its DNA, and the pursuit of interests is only a compromise it has to make when the pursuit of moral goals suffer setbacks. The reason is that the US is the most religious country in the West, founded by the most pious believers after the Reformation movement in Europe. Today, despite the diverse religious beliefs in the US, still 80 percent of its people believe in God. This should be the basis on which we build our understanding of the internal and foreign affairs of the US.

Wang Lixin: The US is unique for two reasons. One is that its idealist goals or means were not a set of discourse invented after it became a great power or a major power, nor did they emerge as statecraft only, instead, they were proposed as ideals and goals when it was founded, the goal being to “build a new world” as Thomas Paine said. Second, American idealism has a

solid foundation at home, that is to say, it is based on domestic political culture and practice, and it is often the public that urge the American government to pursue idealist goals, which lends certain credibility to idealism. In addition, idealism is a lasting and enduring undertaking in the US, instead of a short-lived phenomenon. It might wane or disappear when conditions are not favorable, but will otherwise recur.

Therefore, we should not oversimplify the idealist diplomatic behavior of the US as a disguise or tool, and ignore its sound foundation at home and its lastingness. Otherwise, we might misread its moves, which might affect our ability to make effective response to the US strategies toward China. By recognizing the idealism in American diplomatic tradition, we do not intend to praise idealism and criticize realism. In fact, idealism has played both positive and negative roles in history and used to bring disasters to the US and even the entire world, and so did realism. Therefore, when using the pair of concepts, we should be aware that they are simply descriptive and analytical concepts, and do not imply any moral judgment of American diplomatic actions.