

Essay on define idealism and realism comprehensively according to the author's

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The author of the article *An American Foreign Policy That Both Realists and Idealists Should Fall in Love With*, written by Robert Wright discusses realism and idealism as two concepts that seem intertwined. Wright introduces the idea of idealism as being a liberal trait which of late, has come to falter in world where many liberals, in support of neo-conservatism, also supported an Iraq war which “ hasn’t turned out ideally.” He uses the two terms in very literal ways and focuses on the idyllic views of liberals directly in contrast with the ‘ down to Earth’ right-wing –centric policy of the realist. Wright discusses idealism as being fanciful and the theory choice of the “ dangerously naively altruistic” and makes a direct comparison with realists as being the oppositely coined “ chillingly clinical self-interested.” One might consider these two phrases as being directly in contrast with one another; however, Wright goes on to suggest that a cross-over of the two has begun to develop in the form of ‘ progressive realism.’

Progressive realism is a phrase that has been used to capture the essence of new foreign policy which “[reconciles] the humanitarian aims of idealists with the powerful logic of realists” which means, it’s the best of both worlds; eliminating the need to choose between two extremes. The article centres on America’s new take on foreign policy as no longer being suitable to just concern themselves with the realist stance on internal affairs taking precedence, but rather needing to address how external affairs directly affect an increasingly paranoid American social state.

To really examine the term ‘ progressive realism’ we must dissect it and assess its impact on both idealists and realists. The obvious point to make (which Wright also, correctly states) is that the word ‘ progressive’ is likely to

appeal to the idealist liberals whereas the term ‘realism’ is directly relatable to the realist conservatives. As previously stated, in a world where liberals are warming up to the idea of neo-conservatism, it is no great surprise that a concept which meets the two theories halfway, is now gaining in popularity. Wright goes into great detail about the external factors of other countries such as China’s effect on the free market through their electrical developments and nuclear programs in North Korea and Iran; he rightly points out that in a post-9/11 world, America can no longer consider itself an island, separate from the rest of the world. Progressive realism applies the realist view of worrying about America’s internal affairs whilst taking on the liberal assessment of the external factors.

Wright discusses how the Bush administration, in their ill-thought out attempt to “blunt the threat of nuclear technologies”, potentially trampled over a chance for the UN to strengthen their weapons inspection rights. By invading Iraq, Wright states that Bush made it abundantly clear that those who refuse to be transparent in their arms development and who denied the UN the chance to explore this, would be invaded anyway and basically, held to ransom. It is an extreme reaction to a tragic event which made America feel quite insecure in their global position. Progressive realism hints at the idea of learning from these possible mistakes; preserving the realist focus of America’s interests whilst taking the liberal, idealist view of monitoring the world view without controlling it. Progressive realism seems to be attempting to take the best of both realism and idealism and applying it all to a post-9/11 America in need of some reassurance.