

**BOOK REVIEW: Georg Schild "Between Ideology and Realpolitik: Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1921"**

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**Өгүүллийн товч агуулга:** Энэ өгүүлэлд АНУ-ын эрдэмтэн Георг Шильдийн 1995 онд зохиосон "Between Ideology and Realpolitik: Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1921" /"Үзэл суртал, реалполитикийн завсар: Вудро Вильсон ба Оросын хувьсгал, 1917-1921"/ номонд дэвшүүлсэн гол асуудлыг олон улсын харилцааны судлаач Роберт О. Козйн, Жүдит Голдстин нарын 1993 онд бичсэн "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework" /"Үзэл санаа ба гадаад бодлого"/ өгүүллийн онолын гаргалгааг ашиглан тайлбарлахыг оролдов. Орос оронд 1917 онд гарсан хувьсгалын дараа АНУ, Их Британи зэрэг Өрнөдийн орнууд интервенци хийсэн явдлыг хувьсгалыг дарах гэсэн оролдлого мэтээр тайлбарлаж ирсэн марксист түүх бичлэгийн уламжлалыг Шильд үгүйсгэж байна. Түүнийхээр, интервенцийн гол шалтгаан нь Зөвлөлт Орос Улс Германтай Брестийн салангид гэрээ байгуулж Дэлхийн нэгдүгээр дайнаас дангаараа гарснаараа холбоотны үүргээсээ няцсан төдийгүй Германд ашигтай нөхцөл бүрдүүлж өгсөн хэмээн үзэж байсантай холбоотой ажээ. Шильд эл бүтээлдээ АНУ-ын Ерөнхийлөгч Вудро Вильсоны засаг захиргаа Оросын талаар баримтлах бодлогоо тодорхойлж чадалгүйгээр барагүй хугацаа алдсан болохыг түүхэн баримтад түшиглэн дэлгэрэнгүй харуулсан ба Вильсон бодлогын "хоёрдмол байдал"-д хэрхэн орсон тухай өгүүлдэг. Үүнд нэг талаас, либерал ардчилсан үзэлтэй Вильсон үндэстнүүдийн өөртөө засах эрхийг хөхиүлэн дэмжигч нэгэн байсан бөгөөд иймээс бусад улсын /тухайлбал, Оросын/ дотоод хэрэгт хөндлөнгөөс оролцохыг хувьдаа сайшаахгүй байсан, гэвч нөгөө талаас холбоотны өмнө хүлээсэн үүрэг нь түүнийг эцэст нь интервенци хийх шийдвэр гаргахад хүргэсэн тухай өгүүлж байна. Гэхдээ Шильдийн энэхүү бүтээл нь гадаад бодлогын шийдвэр гаргахад удирдагчийн үзэл санаа, тухайн үеийн бодит нөхцөл байдал хоёр хэрхэн нөлөөлдөг, тэдгээр нь харшилсан тохиолдолд шийдлийн ямар гарц байж болдог талаар онолын дүгнэлт гаргаагүй тул Голдстин, Козйн нарын өгүүлэлд дэвшүүлсэн санаанд тулгуурлан Вильсонд тулгарч байсан бодлогын сонголтууд, түүний эцсийн шийдэл зэргийг тайлбарлаж болохоор байна.

**Түлхүүр үгс:** Бодлогын эквилибриум, үзэл санаа, реалполитик, шийдвэр гаргалт, интервенци, Оросын хувьсгал, Вильсоны дипломат бодлого.

The policy and decisions of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson with regards to the Russian Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and consequent installation of the Communist regime in Soviet Russia is portrayed in Georg Schild's book *Between Ideology and Realpolitik: Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1921* (Greenwood Press), which offers a detailed study on how Wilson's ideas have shaped, and in some cases, failed to shape his foreign policy agenda regarding Russia.

Wilson faced an enormous dilemma deciding whether to order a military intervention to overthrow the Communist government of Russia. Interchanged with considerations of the U.S. interests as the Allied Power during the First World War, his policy underwent drastic changes and, in some cases, even inconsistency. He began with opposing the intervention in the early stages of Bolshevik regime,<sup>1</sup> and then in 1918 he agreed to the intervention,<sup>2</sup> and finally, a year later, in 1919, "he sought to maintain Russian territorial unity at the Paris Peace Conference,"<sup>3</sup> and decided to withdraw

<sup>1</sup> Schild, Georg (1995): *Between Ideology and Realpolitik: Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*, Greenwood Press, pp. 60-62.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

from action. From a purely rationalist point of view, this difference in policy within three consecutive years can be seen as necessary outcomes dictated by the systemic environment. But as we see, Wilson's decisions were largely led by his idealist-humanist approach toward international relations; the ideas of self-determination of nations, peace and democracy were the standing elements in his agenda. First, it was Wilson's strong belief in self-determination that forced him to favor the scheme of staying out of Russia at most times; but also it was his strong anti-Bolshevism as a devout liberal democrat, that caused him to take any action necessary to undermine the emerging dictatorship in Europe's major power, which potentially could threaten the security and peace in Europe.

Let us examine where ideas impacted the U.S. administration's policy and where its interests did. In 1918 the U.S. administration had to intervene to support the anti-Bolshevik fractions embedded into disunity largely due to persistent pressures from its Allies – Britain and France, and chiefly because the Soviet Russia, their former ally, signed a separate peace treaty with Imperial Germany, which was “nothing short of disaster.”<sup>4</sup> With this regard, it can be referred to as prevalence of national interests, i.e., the responsibility before its Allies, over the ideals of its chief executive. However, Wilson never trusted vigorous White Russian leaders, as Admiral Kolchak and General Denikin. In his view, Kolchak and others were far from presenting themselves as protectors of democracy and human rights and almost no less ideological adversaries than Lenin.<sup>5</sup> As the situation progressed and Kolchak and others were no longer seen as potential rivals to the Red regime, Wilson's administration started to launch its original anti-interventionist policy that contrasted what the Allies sought American involvement should be. By as early as 1918, Wilson began to urge to withdraw the military intervention from a position that was very idealistic: “In his Fourteen Points speech of January 1918, President Wilson defined his goals of his Russian policy as restoring Russian unity and safeguarding the Russian people's right of national self-determination. Wilson understood self-determination to mean the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Russia and the establishment of a single democratic government there.”<sup>6</sup>

From a purely realist point of view, stepping out from Russia and assisting in maintaining its territorial unity would only help consolidating the Communist regime as potential rival power that would challenge not only the geopolitical interests of the U.S. and its Western European allies, but, given rising popularity of radical leftist ideas in the 1910s, also the ideological foundation of Western democracies. Establishment of a democratic government without foreign intervention in a country with centuries-long autocratic traditions, which have just fallen under a new type of dictatorship, must have been almost absurd. Therefore, a realist approach would attribute the necessity for active intervention to overthrow the Bolshevik government to whatever president of the United States, because the systemic environment forced him to do so. However, in the current case, Wilson's idealism played a huge role in shaping his foreign policy agenda.

A more theoretical interpretation of Wilson's dilemma and policy choices can be traced from the article “Ideas and Foreign Policy” by Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, who challenge the traditional realist approach to policy-making with strict adherence to foreign policy as an outcome of a rational choice of states as unitary actors based upon their interests. At the same time, the authors also challenge the

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 110, 112.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

reflectivist approach of attributing the policy outcome exclusively to ideas without examining them empirically. In sum, they describe their proposition as "... ideas matter for policy, even when human beings behave rationally to achieve their ends."<sup>7</sup>

In other words, despite the existence of an anarchic international system, where each state is a unitary actor behaving with a purpose of maximizing its power defined as interest, at the decision-making stage foreign policy is also influenced by a set of ideas and beliefs, shared by a certain constituency domestically and internationally. Goldstein and Keohane put the question "Do ideas have an impact on political outcomes, and if so, under what conditions?"<sup>8</sup> Their arguments supporting and explaining the above-mentioned question is that first, ideas, classified by their scope as world views (exemplar case – major religions), principled beliefs (human rights) and causal beliefs (monetary theory), "serve as switchmen, not only by turning action onto certain tracks rather than others, but also by obscuring the other tracks from the agent's view."<sup>9</sup> Second, they suggest that there are "three causal pathways through which ideas can hold the potential of influencing policy outcomes"<sup>10</sup> – ideas as road maps, ideas as focal points and glue, and ideas institutionalized. Among these, the first case presents ideas as normative or causal set of focused beliefs that arise from "conditions of uncertainties about the actors' interests and how to maximize them."<sup>11</sup> In the second case the ideas are portrayed as coordinator serving as "key to a game's outcome," ... that "alleviates coordination problems arising from the absence of unique equilibrium solutions."<sup>12</sup> Finally, the third case shows that ideas can have a lasting influence on politics "when institutions intervene,"<sup>13</sup> and that these institutions are often shaped and socially constructed under the impact of ideas. In sum, the authors say, "policy changes can be influenced by ideas both because new ideas emerge and as a result of changes in underlying conditions affecting the impact of existing ideas."<sup>14</sup>

Proposition of the influence of ideas on foreign policy, although recognizing the importance of the system environment in decision making (the authors do not deny the existence of the self-help system and rationality of actors' behavior as a basis of international relations), nevertheless identifies ideas as important factor that can influence the policy. Ideas, regardless of their origin and scope (i.e. major world religions or domestic political view), does not effect the system but the state, especially its various constituencies, including the leaders. Therefore, the proposition is put at the domestic (pathways direction and institutionalization), as well as the individual (pathway of policy coordination) levels of analysis.

With regards to the variables, I would like to start with an assumption that policy outcomes are presented here as the dependent variable. Consequently, the authors' conclusion: "Ideas matter, as a result of a system of interacting causes of which they are a part"<sup>15</sup> might lead to an understanding that ideas are presented as the independent, i.e., the causal variable. Furthermore, the statement that ideas have

<sup>7</sup> Goldstein, Judith and Keohane, Robert O., "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework" in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, ed. (1993): *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, Cornell University Press, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

lasting influence on policy "when institutions intervene,"<sup>16</sup> also leads to defining institutions as the intervening variable in this proposition. This logic can also be derived from reading "... ultimately we wish to shed light on the impact of ideas on policy, a task that requires some effort ... at causal inference."<sup>17</sup> Institutions here indeed serve as the intervening variable, but not the only one; its causal effect is limited to only one of the three pathways through which ideas influence policy.

On the other hand, Goldstein and Keohane, by challenging not only rationalist approach, but also reflectivism as well, seem to not portraying ideas as the causal variable, instead presenting as the intervening variable to the independent variable, which are the states' interests. This reasoning comes from the repeated usage of the terms "influence" and "impact" when describing the pattern how ideas matter. Moreover, the hypothesis those ideas serve as three different pathways to policy outcome, also lead to this conclusion.

However, a careful reading of the article reveals that it is much likely that Goldstein and Keohane meant the ideas to be the independent variable, not the solely one, but interchangeable with interests. If the centerpiece of this research were the interest, then we can talk of them as the independent variable while looking at ideas as the intervening one. Nevertheless, here the center of research is the ideas and the pathways of their impact on policy. By denying the functional approach that argues "ideas themselves do not play a causal role,"<sup>18</sup> and by suggesting that "ideas as well as interests have causal weight in explanations of human action,"<sup>19</sup> Goldstein and Keohane present ideas as the independent variable. Thus, institutions (as a key element shaping the longevity of an idea), equilibrium (presence or absence of a single equilibrium that influences the impact of an idea) and domestic situation (depressions, wars, the decline of a political party, and/or the overthrow of a government) are viewed as the intervening variables. Policy outcomes (in our case, foreign policy outcomes), therefore, as stated earlier, are portrayed as the dependent variable.

Historical case presented by Schild confirms Goldstein's and Keohane's theoretical proposition about the impact that ideas can have over policy at the domestic and individual levels. In this case, Wilson's ideas served in all three pathways. As the pathway of road map, his overall belief in securing peace and stability worldwide and in Europe focused the U.S. policy approach to maintain territorial unity of Russia. As of the policy choice when no single equilibrium present, in the situation where various interests, as those of the allies and of the United States, began to contradict, the Wilsonian idealism provided the optimal choice of withdrawal. Finally, the establishment of the League of Nations, although not supported in the United States, institutionalized the postwar world order and set forth the practice of recognizing the territorial unity of sovereign states.

In addition, to make sure that Goldstein's and Keohane's proposition that ideas "as well as interests" define the policy outcome<sup>20</sup> meets this exemplar case we can acknowledge that in the decision to intervene Wilson acted under the interchangeable impact of both realist interests and his personal beliefs.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 4.



However, there is an aspect of this theoretical proposition that is disconfirmed by this case. Wilson's idea of guaranteeing peace and security in Europe by maintaining territorial unity of the nation-states under single democratic governments shaped only his policy toward Russia but not toward the former Central Powers, such as the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Even when it was possible to transform both states as republics with some degree of democratic practice in government, Wilsonian diplomacy preferred their disintegration and creation of a multitude of sovereign nation-states in East and Central Europe. Is this a contradiction to his ideas and to the proposition that ideas influence policy or is the explanation of this phenomenon must be found in the nature of a presented idea? This case seems to disconfirm Goldstein's and Keohane's proposition only when we take the idea of maintenance of territorial integrity as a separate and whole causal belief. In fact, it is just a part of Wilson's broad worldview of national self-determination with complexity dilemma within its theoretical basis. Does guaranteeing the national self-determination mean securing the existing boundaries or does it mean assisting in secession of various ethno-national groups and creation of new states? This is such a contradictory issue that remains a major problem these days for great powers. (For example, the question might be put as "Should the U.S. government consider the Chechen rebels freedom fighters or should it recognize the sovereign right of Russia to use force within its territory?") In this case, the Wilsonian diplomacy acted on ideal basis but with different interpretations of it. As discussed above, it is not the issue of dilemma between ideas and interests, because they can interchangeably influence the policy outcome, but is the issue of contradiction within a set of beliefs that cause different applications based upon the same idea. Accordingly, Wilson might have decided (this was still considered an option) to carve out parts of the former Russian Empire as separate nation-states, and thus might have succeeded in weakening the Communist power base that could ultimately cause its fast collapse.

Inability to differentiate various possible pathways in applying one idea is, this far, the greatest shortcoming of this proposition. Its very strong explanatory power in interpreting the cases otherwise absurd from the realist point of view, involving the domestic consensus on, and personal conviction of certain ideas is the proposition's greatest achievement. Also, this proposition provides clear explanation under which circumstances ideas have greater impact on policy outcomes yet fails to clarify which conditions cause interests to prevail over ideas. Therefore I propose the following modification to Goldstein's and Keohane's proposition that would clarify both of its above-mentioned weaknesses:

The U.S. administration's decision to intervene to overthrow Russia's Bolshevik government despite its ideal opposition to that action had two major streams of causes: first, the prevalence of interests (such as, responsibility to meet the demands of its allies) over ideas; second, the contradicting interpretations of one broad worldview as two opposite causal beliefs; (i.e. whether to advocate the idea of national self-determination by assisting Russia's minorities to separate or by not hindering Russia in preserving its unity) and third, the contradicting implications of a principled belief in democracy. (i.e. whether democracy is best achieved and protected by intervention or non-intervention) Thus the personal worldview of President Wilson, shared by many Americans, when it comes to decision-making, created a dilemma, or the absence of single idea equilibrium. Therefore the choice was not among these varying implications of an idea, but one based upon the interest – in the case of intervention it was the Allied pressure, in the case of withdrawal it was the inability of the leaders of the White movement to take over the power in Russia. (meaning inadequacy of the U.S. involvement)

Thus, my modification to Goldstein's and Keohane's proposition, based on the study of Wilsonian foreign policy toward revolutionary Russia is that one broad worldview can create an absence of single idea equilibrium due to its varying interpretation and implication when its parts are narrowed down as principled and causal beliefs; in this situation, interest is the factor defining the choice in policy making. Overall, this modification should not contradict the author's proposition that "ideas, as well as interests, have causal weight in explanations of human action."<sup>21</sup>

**References:**

1. Goldstein, Judith and Keohane, Robert O., "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework" in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, ed. (1993): *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, Cornell University Press.
2. Schild, Georg (1995): *Between Ideology and Realpolitik: Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*, Greenwood Press.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 4.