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Geostrategic Dissonance and Hyperrealism: A Methodological Proposal for the Analysis of Contradiction in International Politics

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We live in a time when classical dialectical oppositions have become insufficient to describe the mechanisms of the real practice of states. The expansion of information flows and the improvement of discursive manipulation techniques have installed a structural paradox. The true can be simultaneously denied and confirmed, while the false can acquire legitimacy under forms of institutional correctness and rhetoric. What unfolds is a form of contradiction that is not an accident, but a device of power, the same statement can be true for some, and unacceptable for others, and one of the consequences of this dynamic is the progressive exhaustion of traditional analytical models to capture this dissonance. Analysis, which is based on stable oppositions based on the exclusion of the contradictory, begins to crack in the face of phenomena that simultaneously exhibit features of truth and falsehood, of legality and illegitimacy, transparency and opacity, where contradiction is constitutive and functional. The result is not a void of meaning, but the consolidation of new forms of power that use paradox as a strategic resource, govern through ambiguity, persuade through controlled incoherence, and legitimize decisions through narratives that simultaneously combine certainty and doubt.

It is not a question of passing anomalies, but of the structural condition of a world where paradox has become the key to decoding a confused, contradictory and sometimes incomprehensible language. In this way, the contradiction ceases to be an error to be corrected and becomes the very terrain on which discourses and strategies are built. For this reason, if there is no method capable of recognizing, disaggregating, and projecting its effects, the analysis runs the risk of becoming myopic in the face of subtle logics of manipulation of power and political action.

Then, when explanatory structures begin to collapse under the weight of fabricated paradoxes, the need for a new model emerges, for the understanding of “a new form.” These antecedents are what have led us to observe a feature of the political form that transcends the traditional categories of realism, and for this reason less evident aspects are hidden in traditional analysis. That is why we propose the concept of “Hyper Realism”, to characterize a behavior that navigates on a diffuse edge of explanatory models, and causes the need for a new methodological tool for its observation.

In accordance with the above, the seminal questions that arose for the construction of the concept “Geostrategic Dissonance” were; (i) What does “coherence” mean in foreign policy when discourse and action pursue different objectives?, (ii) Can a state maintain its international legitimacy while acting contrary to its stated commitments?, (iii) When does dissonance cease to be a mistake and become a deliberate strategy? and, iv) Is it possible to measure the degree of this dissonance in a different way, and complementary to traditional analyses?

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Equivalently, the seminal questions regarding the concept of “Hyperrealism” were; i) What happens when a state not only applies realism, but takes it further, setting a new standard?, ii) How to analyze phenomena in which the contradiction between discourse and action is a deliberate tool of power?, iii) Can systematic contradiction become part of an actor’s strategic identity?, and iv) Is it possible that the exaggeration of realism, moving between ambiguity and contradiction, constitutes in itself a new form of realism; Hyperrealism?

In this context, we propose the concept of geostrategic dissonance, understood as the degree of divergence, contradiction or ambiguity observable between the international normative discourse of a State and its effective strategic actions. This phenomenon, far from being a failure, constitutes a key to understanding contemporary foreign policy. To grasp it analytically, we introduce a complementary category: hyperrealism, which designates a type of state behavior that not only follows realist canons, but takes them to the extreme, transforming contradiction into a structural part of its strategic identity.

Geostrategic Dissonance. A Review of Pre-existing Conceptual Referents

The term “Geostrategic Dissonance” is not found as a formal concept in the classic bibliography of International Relations. However, the recent literature has begun to recognize that the apparent incoherence between discourse and practice does not necessarily constitute a weakness, but can become a deliberate strategic resource. One text (Wang 2018, 215), analyzes China’s role in the liberal international order through what it calls strategic inconsistency. According to the author, far from representing a failure or a credibility deficit, the combination of selective support and punctual rejection of multilateral norms becomes a form of strategic signal. This approach is of special relevance for the present work, as it confirms the need to have analytical categories capable of capturing the divergence between normative discourse and practical action. Wang’s notion of strategic inconsistency is close to what we call geostrategic dissonance here, but it differs on one crucial point: Wang lacks a methodological framework that allows this gap to be operationalized and comparatively measured.

In studies on the post-Cold War period in the United States, strategic dissonance has been spoken of when referring to conflicts between national strategies such as multilateral cooperation and selective engagement, as causes of incoherence between declared objectives and diplomatic or military actions. Spencer, J. (2018)’s analysis of US foreign policy in the immediate post-Cold War period highlights a strategic dissonance, despite aspiring to consolidate a US-led world order. The Bush Sr. and Clinton administrations lacked a coherent strategy, alternating between cooperative security, primacy, and selective engagement without articulating them into a unified vision (Spencer, 2018). This lack of coherence, Spencer argues, put both the nation’s legitimacy and strategic goals at risk, by failing to effectively discipline and maximize the use of its diplomatic, military, and economic power.

This case serves as an essential empirical support to strengthen the notion of geostrategic dissonance that we propose. It reinforces the idea that the dissonance between discourse and action is not only a modern phenomenon or of emerging actors, as in the case of China (Wang 2018, 215), but also crosses fundamental moments in the history of the great powers, reflecting structural gaps in the alignment of their normative doctrines with their strategic practices. In addition, the post-Cold War U.S. experience demonstrates the need to move toward analytical tools capable of measuring strategic incoherence in a rigorous and comparative manner.

A paper on Europe and the US, which discusses the potential for a “transatlantic strategic dissonance” in alliances and shared security, (Herd and Forsberg 2008, 370), introduces the concept of Constructive Transatlantic Strategic Dissonance by analysing how US coercion in Iraq (2002–2003), supported by only 16 of NATO’s 26 members, and not because of the alliance as a whole, it deepened already existing divisions within the transatlantic community. Despite sharing perceptions of threats such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the United States and Europe exhibited significant conceptual differences, resulting from different political approaches, capabilities, and structural limitations. According to the authors, this strategic dissonance was not entirely destabilizing but rather became a persistent transatlantic condition that can generate both paralysis of action and constructive potential if properly managed.

This case powerfully reinforces our theoretical proposal, as it demonstrates that the dissonance between discourse

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and strategic action can produce functional consequences, fracturing alliances, realigning political identities and, eventually, catalyzing strategic renewals. In this sense, the present work proposes the concept of geostrategic dissonance, to characterize facts that move the frontier of known realism towards a new form that we will henceforth call "Hyper Realism", as well as proposes an analytical model aimed at its operationalization through a theoretical-methodological instrument, based on non-traditional logic, to measure this new dimension, through an indicator that we will hereinafter call the Hyper Realism Index (IHR).

Unlike descriptive frameworks such as Herd and Forsberg's, the IHR allows quantifying degrees of coherence, contradiction and uncertainty using paraconsistent logic. This opens the possibility of analyzing in a comparative way how different strategic dissonances impact the legitimacy, stability and transformation of international relations.

Dissonance in Political Science and Diplomacy

Although it does not appear under that exact name, in political science there are conceptually similar concepts. "Conceptual dissonance" has also been used in peacebuilding studies to refer to differences in the understanding of key concepts between researchers and communities. In this regard (Carver, Zech, & Tohow 2023, 5) present a valuable analysis of the methodological challenges that arise when studying diverse communities. The authors highlight the incidence of conceptual dissonance, understood as "divergences in the understanding of key terms such as "peace", "peacebuilding" and "leadership".

This phenomenon is closely analogous to our proposal for evaluating the phenomenon that we have called "Hyper Realism" and "geostrategic dissonance", insofar as both concepts are based on the recognition of the multiple coexistence of narratives and realities, discursive and practical, without attempting to neutralize the contradiction. The use of the term conceptual dissonance illuminates how dissonance can be inherent in the processes of meaning-making, and not necessarily a communicative failure, in political, strategic, or social contexts, where inconsistencies can be functional, strategic, or reflect dissimilar interpretive contexts.

In studies of international perceptions between great powers such as the "Thucydides trap", there is talk of misalignments or dissonances between state perceptions that lead to unwanted escalations. In his analysis for The Japan Times (Nagy 2023,3). describes the current dynamic between the U.S. and China as marked by poor communication, deep mistrust, and persistent strategic dissonance. This state of relations offers a context where political discourses and practical actions diverge, generating a vicious circle that could trigger an unintentional military conflict. China, on the one hand, denounces what it perceives as a systematic threat from the Western international order, aimed at destabilizing its political system. At the same time, it proclaims principles such as "peaceful coexistence", defense of sovereignty, or the construction of a community of a common destiny of Humanity, contrast with practices such as its rejection of the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the South China Sea, or its policies in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, generating a notable discrepancy between the normative and the effective. while carrying out policies contradictory to the international order, or abstaining from key treaties, which reflects inconsistencies between its declared principles and actual actions. These cases amplify the relevance of the concept of geostrategic dissonance and show that the gap between norm and practice is not only typical of emerging powers, but even permeates relations between major hegemonic powers.

Dissonance and International Law

In the legal field, the term does not appear formally, but, in comparative international law, the dissonance between legal obligations and state practices can be interpreted as a form of strategic dissonance or legal inconsistency, especially when a state subscribes to norms, but acts otherwise, as is the case in the South China Sea. A recent analysis published in The Uncertainty Project (2023) reflects on the ideal balance between clarity and ambiguity in the communication of strategies within organizations. This approach illuminates a key aspect of the geostrategic dissonance and hyperrealism we propose; The divergence between discourse and action can be calculated and functional. As in organizational contexts, states can use ambiguity as a deliberate tool to; Maintain strategic flexibility in changing environments; Manage rival or contradictory perceptions without compromising the overall coherence of their narrative, and preserve tactical leeway while maintaining a coherent normative discourse.

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On the other hand, (Finnemore 2009, 59-85) puts forward a solid thesis on the limits of unipolar power, stating that, although a hegemonic state possesses material predominance, its effectiveness depends strongly on social legitimacy, which resides to a large extent in the recognition of other actors. To sustain power, the unipole usually institutionalizes it, which implies a partial delegation of its authority. This dynamic generates incentives for calculated hypocrisy, a behavior that, although it undermines legitimacy if it is excessive, can be functional if ideals and strategic objectives are balanced.

Geostrategic Dissonance and International Studies

The concepts of “Strategic Dissonance” and “Hyper Realism” emerge as a response to conceptual gaps derived from the intersection between the complexity of the reconfiguration of the international scenario, and the need to analytically represent with greater clarity a reality in transformation, in a context marked by the growing complexity and mutability of international phenomena.

Powers such as; The United States, or the People’s Republic of China, maintain a normative discourse aligned with principles of universal vocation, appealing to respect for Public International Law, and the norms of the United Nations, but act strategically contradicting this discourse. While classical realism describes this phenomenon, it fails to capture the “performative” and strategic tension between actions and statements.

We will define “performative tension” as: “the distance between what is said or done (Dissonance), with a determined intention that generates a contradictory or problematic effect, in relation to the norms, the institutional frameworks that intervene, or cultural expectations”. The idea of the concept of performativity that we will use for this conceptual construction comes from (Austin 1962, 4), who proposed that statements not only describe a reality, but also perform an action that constitutes it. The consequence of this phenomenon is a society of manufactured paradox, in which traditional structures of analysis collapse in the face of increasingly acute contradictions. Classical analytical instruments, based on stable dichotomies and the exclusion of the contradictory, lose their effectiveness in describing and anticipating social and political dynamics.

In this scenario, the contradiction ceases to be an anomaly to be corrected and becomes a strategic resource of power. States, corporations and social actors operate by producing controlled ambiguity, designing scenarios where what seems incoherent fulfills the function of opening margins of maneuver and neutralizing oppositions. Hence the need for a new method of analysis, one that does not seek to deny contradiction, but to integrate and manage it as a constituent part of contemporary reality. The paraconsistent model responds to this need, offering a framework for observing, measuring and understanding the logic of a world that does not allow itself to be reduced to the binary categories of tradition.

Theoretical Framework Hyper Realism

The creation of the IHR index, and its associated concepts; “Hyper Realism” and “Geostrategic Dissonance” do not arise in a vacuum, these concepts are irrigated from various currents; i) Classical realism and neorealism as the basis that explains politics as a struggle for power and security, on the one hand, and political philosophy, on the other. Realism in the discipline of International Studies is a rich and multifaceted theoretical tradition, whose origins can be traced back to thinkers such as Niccolò Machiavelli, who emphasized the centrality of power, political astuteness and pragmatic efficiency in state management, marking an early departure from moralistic idealism (Machiavelli 1532, 7). Hobbes deepened this vision by conceptualizing the natural state as a scenario of anarchy and perpetual conflict, justifying the need for a strong central power to guarantee survival and security, foundations that permeated later realist thought.

In the twentieth century (Carr 1939, 11) he revitalized realism by criticizing idealism and underscoring the tension between power and morality in international politics, arguing that politics is irremediably marked by the struggle for power and the pursuit of national interests. Morgenthau (1948, 21) formalized these ideas by defining the national interest in terms of power, proposing prudence as a guide for state action in a competitive international system. The realism represented by this author focuses on conflictive human nature and the constant search for power,

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emphasizing the national interest and prudence in foreign policy, as well as the balance of power as a fundamental mechanism for international stability. Its analysis, although profound, does not systematically address the discursive dimension of power, seeing it more as an instrument than as an autonomous strategic component, this current tends to systematically ignore the performative dimension of power, that is, the strategic function of discourse and norm in international politics. Hyperrealism, on the other hand, shows the performativity of contradiction, invisible to classical realism and neorealism.

On the other hand, structural realism or neorealism, developed in the 1970s and 1980s by authors such as Waltz (1979, 38) and Mearsheimer (2001, 29), focuses its analysis on the anarchic international system, the distribution of capabilities and security understood as a structural rather than a moral function. This perspective, while rigorous in its emphasis on structures and capacities, neglects narrative as a strategic tool. In this respect, Hyperrealism (HR) can show the way in which the “performativity” of legitimization strategies remains invisible to pure neorealism.

The relevance for the construction of the concepts “Hyperrealism and Geostrategic Dissonance” lies in the fact that they allow us to explain how States normatively justify their actions (discourse) but act according to their interest and power (practice). Although this difference is established in neorealism, it does not disaggregate the space of observation between the discursive dimension and the practical dimension in which more subtle and difficult to detect variables are deployed. Realism corresponds to a theoretical antecedent that allows us to advance in a proposal capable of measuring the contradictions evidenced in realist analysis. Indeed, in Morgenthau’s analytic theoretical framework, the dissonance between normative discourse and strategic practice may exist, but it is not the central analytic focus, since; i) The theory assumes that discourse is instrumental. And ii) The emphasis is on the action and its effects on the distribution of power, but not on the space it unfolds between the two.

Waltz, for his part, shifts the focus of the analysis of the behavior of states to the structure of the international system. In *Theory of International Politics*, he argues that the anarchy of the international system forces states to seek security through the accumulation and balance of power. Structure, defined by the distribution of capabilities, determines state behavior rather than human nature or moral considerations. Although this approach gives analytical solidity to the system, it limits the study of discursive elements, since it considers material power and structures as the essential variables.

These authors complement and enrich the original realist tradition, providing a greater sensitivity to the normative, social and perceptual dimension of power. However, Hyperrealism advances by proposing an analytical tool that disaggregates, classifies, and quantifies the dissonance between discourse and strategic practice, overcoming the traditional separation between material power and normative discourse by integrating them into a dynamic and operational analysis.

Conceptual Proposal for The Construction of the Hyper Realism Index

At this point, a methodological shift becomes unavoidable, it is not enough to denounce manipulation, nor to verify the paradox, a way of thinking capable of integrating contradiction as part of the very structure of the phenomenon is required. If contradiction has become a structural feature of world politics, then the analytic task is not to deny or conceal it, but to develop tools capable of grasping its logic.

Traditional theories, based on binary distinctions, crumble when faced with cases in which legality and illegality, truth and falsehood, cooperation and conflict coexist in the same act. A methodological innovation is required that treats contradiction not as an error, but as a datum, not as a failure, but as a mode of operation. The Hyperrealism Index (IHR) was conceived precisely to address this challenge, based on a system of non-traditional or classical logic, called “paraconsistent logic”, since, unlike other models, it does not reduce the contradictory to mere error, but incorporates it as a legitimate analytical category.

Paraconsistent Logic as a Foundation

The IHR is based on the framework of paraconsistent logic, since, unlike classical logic, which crumbles under the

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principle of non-contradiction, paraconsistent logic accepts that statements can be simultaneously true and false without necessarily degenerating into incoherence. (Da Costa and French 2003, 28). This makes it particularly suitable for the analysis of international politics, where discourse and practice often diverge, overlap or conflict. Paraconsistent logic offers a way to address these contradictions analytically rather than dismissing them as anomalies.

The power of contemporary actors lies not in clarity, but in their ability to operate in spaces of ambiguity. It is with respect to this diffuse analytic space that paraconsistent logic provides an epistemological basis for making observable the diffuse spectrum that opens in ambiguity. Para consistency appears, then, not as a logical curiosity, but as the indispensable methodological response to interpret an era that is no longer organized around absolute certainties, but around strategically performed and managed contradictions.

On this basis, the Hyperrealism Index (IHR) is built, as a model designed to observe and measure these tensions, between favorable and unfavorable evidence, identifying levels of certainty, contradiction and uncertainty, which shape strategic decision-making. The IHR does not seek to restore the purity of opposites, but to show how, in practice, actors move in scenarios where the true and the false, the coherent and the contradictory, are intertwined and confused. In other words, the IHR is not a corrector of disorder, but an instrument for deciphering the logic of a world that feeds on paradox.

Operationalization of the IHR Hyperrealism Index

Geostrategic dissonance is understood as the gap that opens between what a state says it will do in the international arena and what it actually does when it acts in foreign policy and security. It can be observed, on the one hand, in the discursive dimension, where governments commit themselves to treaties, solemn declarations and doctrines that seem to mark a coherent path towards peace, cooperation or stability. On the other hand, in the practical dimension, where military deployments, sanctions, breaches of agreement or even silent maneuvers that contradict those promises to come into play. The key to this method is to observe how these two dimensions dialogue, or collide, and to measure the level of dissonance that arises from that interaction. This level is not something absolute, but a continuum that goes from full consistency, where word and action coincide, to flagrant contradiction, where discourse is almost a disguise for the opposite. The usefulness of this proposal lies in the fact that it does not remain in abstract criticism, but offers a concrete tool for comparative analysis, applicable both to different States and to different historical moments.

Key elements:

Discursive dimension: Declared commitments, treaties, doctrines.

Practical dimensions: Strategic actions, deployments, sanctions or non-compliance.

Level of dissonance: Measurable in a continuum that goes from consistency (low dissonance) to blatant contradiction (high dissonance).

Using the IHR, it is possible to quantify the dissonance and represent it clearly in radar plots or in logical matrices that show tensions, ambiguities and contradictions in a visual and intuitive way. The innovative thing about this approach is that it not only picks up the tradition of international security, but crosses it with a logical-formal model, capable of capturing what is usually hidden, the gap between word and action. Thus, what might seem like a technical debate is transformed into an accessible lens to better understand the strategic behavior of states in a world where discourse and practice rarely coincide.

The model for calculating geostrategic dissonance is based on a simple idea: to measure how much the words and actions of a state coincide with, or clash with, foreign policy and security. To do this, we use two basic inputs:

Discursive evidence (μ): How strong and clear the declared commitments are: signed treaties, doctrines, official

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Practical evidence (λ) How forceful the actual actions are: compliance or non-compliance with treaties, sanctions applied, military deployments, strategic changes.

Each dimension (μ, λ) is assigned a value between 0 and 1. A value close to 1 means high evidence (e.g., a ratified binding treaty or a massive military deployment), while a value close to 0 indicates low evidence. With these two inputs, a paraconsistent matrix is constructed, which allows the calculation of three derived indicators: i) C (Contradiction) which measures the direct clash between what is said and what is done. S (Certainty) that shows the cases in which both dimensions coincide clearly, and U (Uncertainty) that reveals the ambiguous spaces, where it is not clear if there is compliance or contradiction.

These values are combined with parameters (α, β, γ) that allow the analysis to be adjusted according to the researcher's interest. For example, if we want to highlight open contradictions, we give greater weight to α ; if we are interested in revealing the gray areas, we increase β ; and if we seek to confirm coherence, we reinforce γ .

In short, the model does not limit itself to describing discourses or actions separately but offers a systematic measure of the distance between the two, with the added value of being able to visualize and compare it.

Proposed Formula for the Evaluation of the Final Value by Dimension

Next, we require a value that reflects the degrees of Dissonance between the values of the system, we will call it Δ , to indicate the "Dissonance", or "aggregate variation of the values;" pure truth", consistency, contradiction, uncertainty and pure falsehood. The value Δ will reflect the degree of Hyper Realism, understood as the degrees of dissonance or contradiction between discourse and practice.

The definition of the variable is proposed as follows: " Δ "

$$\Delta_i = (\alpha \cdot C_i + \beta \cdot U_i + \gamma \cdot S_i)$$

Where α, β, γ , are weighers, which reflect the relative weight, or importance of contradiction, uncertainty, and consistency, respectively. Since Hyperrealism is more associated with contradiction and uncertainty, we can assign, on a scale; (high 0.75, medium 0.5, low 0.25).

The final IHR is obtained by averaging the scores of the dimensions, with a sum of the weighted scores and dimensions.

$IHR = \sum$ (Score of the dimensions (Falsehood, Contradiction, consistency, uncertainty, falsehood), by a relative weighting according to the degree of intensity of the dimension observed.

Therefore, the aggregate index of Hyper Realism IHC: Sum of the weighted values, with "n", equal to the total number of cases, dimensions or indicators to be evaluated, such that $IHR =$

$$IHR = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \Delta_i$$

Q.E.D.

Conclusion

We are not witnessing a change in the coordinate axis, we are rather witnessing a change in a coordinate system, where the purpose of this proposal is to contribute to the clarification of the paradox that this implies.

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Gustavo A. Báez Castillo obtained the degree of Doctor in American Studies from the University of Santiago de Chile, in the specialty of International Studies in 2024. Dr. Báez has developed his academic activity committed to an approach focused on the rigor of his work, the analysis of sources, the critical analysis of texts and the application of rigorous methodological work available to the understanding of complex emerging problems. He is currently working on the development of new analytical models, as well as their socialization, mediating the formation of academic networks.