NO ONE’S DISCIPLE:
The American Academy’s Reaction
to the Works of Susan Strange

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Susan Strange’s body of work defies easy classification, so it is not surprising that the diverse American and European reactions to her work—both sympathetic and critical—also fail to fit neatly into concise categories.¹ Perhaps this is because Professor Strange’s scholarship crossed numerous scholastic boundaries, with the inevitable disquietude it would cause a disciplinary culture that values conservatism as an epistemological tenet. Strange eschewed what she considered simplistic boundaries of academic disciplines and disparaged cliquish researchers. This iconoclasm once led her to write of her former department head at the London School of Economics, “I found [him] an entertaining lecturer but I couldn’t agree with some of his rather simplistic ideas, nor did I want to be anybody’s disciple” (1989: 430). The confines she sought to transcend were not only epistemological and disciplinary, however; they were sociocultural and national as well. Originally a journalist who detested social science jargon, subsequently a self-taught academician without a doctorate or even a formal disciplinary affiliation who argued with economists, an empirical positivist who criticized the social implications of abstract theories, a British citizen who participated actively in the debates of American scholars, and an intellectual who urged her colleagues to provide scholarship that was relevant to policy makers, she was an articulate scholar with deep convictions and utterly lacking in pretense.

Again not surprising, many of her arguments were paradoxical: she urged colleagues to make normative judgments but criticized those who called for a curtailment

₁For favorable comments, see Fahey (1971) and Willett (1979). For critical comments see Minsky (1987).
of American international commitments; she argued that the power of markets and extra-
governmental authority has eroded the capacities of states to manage their own future, but
at the same time contended that the U.S.’s capacity to manage the international system is
predominant and not declining (1987, 1998). Present in the various paradoxes, however,
is a rejection of the utility of the traditional disciplinary boundaries of academia: between
positivist and critical theory, between economics and political science, between European
and American philosophical traditions, and between the academy and the state. These are
boundaries with which many American scholars are not only comfortable, but ones upon
which they depend for their claims of scientific knowledge. With Strange’s attempts to
transcend these confines, it is understandable that American many scholars have been
dubious about the value of her work.

It is important to stress at the outset that in evaluating American reactions to
Strange's work we are fully aware of the dangers of excessive generalization. The word
“many” in the two previous sentences suggests a central tendency, but we have made no
attempts to quantify the extent to which members of the IR community in the United
States are dubious about and uncomfortable with her perspectives and conclusions.
Indeed, there are numerous members of the community who are not described by the
ensuing analysis, who have no quarrels with and benefited from the corpus of her
writings.

Our task of assessing reactions to Strange’s written work is made all the more
difficult by the different perspectives that the authors bring to this paper. One of us is an
established international relations theorist, the other is a doctoral candidate only recently
introduced to Professor Strange’s body of work. One of us was a close friend of
Strange’s for three decades, the other never encountered her. These differences in perspectives are no less profound than the academic divides Professor Strange sought to transcend, since—as much as we in the profession like to claim otherwise—our personal relations can and do affect our judgment of the scholarly work of others. We suspect, for instance, that most if not all the members of the International Studies Association audience assembled to commemorate Professor Strange knew her personally or observed her in action. Given these differences in our perspectives, and given our daunting and sad task of commemorating the life’s work of a departed colleague, we find simple categorizations of Strange’s diverse works to be elusive. Undoubtedly, were Professor Strange here, she would take vociferous exception to our analysis.

Nonetheless, we find some common themes in the arguments and criticisms which American scholars directed toward Professor Strange. Fundamentally, those scholars’ objections to Professor Strange's work reflect a broader epistemological schism between U.S. academics and Strange’s views about the societal role of the academy and the social responsibility of international relations (IR) theorists. Strange argued that American scholars have failed to understand their complicity in the prevarication of American governmental leaders and its unfortunate consequences for international economic order. In this sense, much as she would have objected to being categorized, Strange fundamentally was a critical thinker, if not a critical theorist.\(^2\) Her well-known criticism of hegemonic stability theory was larger than an empirical disagreement about the scope of American power, despite the readiness of American theorists to portray it as such. She regarded the theoretical debate about hegemonic decline as serving to excuse

\(^2\)This argument is elaborated by Cutler (forthcoming 2000).
American policy makers from the responsibilities of their hegemony. In this sense, Strange believed that by hiding behind the positivist prohibition of making normative judgments, American “declinists,” as she called them, ironically were in part responsible for the instability about which American scholars fretted. In this sense, Strange was a critical theorist who deliberately took exception to the epistemological canons of American scholarship. We find her work received a lukewarm response from IR scholars in the U.S. precisely because her critics addressed her from a positivist position that failed to debate Strange on her terms.

Our analysis focuses on four academic “boundaries” which Professor Strange, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, sought to transcend: the disciplinary boundary between economics and political science; the cultural boundary between American and European scholarship; and two epistemological boundaries, one between non-normative political science and normative political theory, the other between positivist and critical theory. The four boundaries are admittedly artificial categories that are in fact closely interrelated; for example, she argued that the divide between the study of economics and politics persists because of a hidden assumption peculiar to American economists that efficiency is the primary criterion for the analysis of markets. The analysis presumes, furthermore, that her effort to span these four boundaries was rooted in her beliefs about the role of IR as a social and political enterprise. “For only when the study of international relations once again allows, and even encourages scholars to pass fundamentally moral judgments, however subjective these may be, on the issues of international public policy will the discipline regain some of its lost appeal,” Strange wrote nearly two decades ago (1981: 220). The heart of her disagreement with American
scholars is their failure to pass such “fundamentally moral judgments” about the insufficiency of American leadership in the international economic order; the heart of American displeasure with Strange's criticism thus lies in a broader disciplinary debate about the propriety of IR theorists making such judgments.

**The First Divide: Economics and Politics**

As a leading advocate of the interdisciplinary study of international political economy (IPE), Professor Strange was profoundly critical of economics as a discipline, of economists in particular but also of business schools, for not reaching beyond their disciplinary boundaries. Nor did she spare political scientists in this regard: “Although both address the who-gets-what questions, most business schools and most departments of politics carry on in ignorance and indifference to the other,” she wrote recently (1998: 709). While she was especially bothered by the formal models of economists, Strange was hardly less critical of political scientists for failing to consider extra-governmental forms of authority and the concentration of political power in markets (1994). She felt the disciplinary divide between international economics and international relations—what she once called an academic “enclosure movement” (1984: xi)—“results in theories that are out of touch with global changes,” as her students phrased it (Guzzini et. al. 1993: 9). Despite a long and deep commitment to the International Studies Association and its British counterpart, she faulted them for narrowly defining the boundaries of their foci: “they are not associations of people engaged in international studies but of people engaged in international relations” (1989: 435). Strange viewed IPE as a way to transcend the shortcomings of existing disciplinary approaches to the “who-gets-what”
question. The goal of the study of IPE, she argued, is to integrate the discipline of IR with international economics and ultimately to supersede both:

The whole point of studying international political economy rather than international relations is to extend more widely the conventional limits of the study of politics, and the conventional concepts of who engages in politics, and of how and by whom power is exercised to influence outcomes. Far from being a subdiscipline of international relations, IPE should claim that international relations are a subdiscipline of IPE. (1994: 218)

Strange's frustration with the disciplinary divide found voice in many of her works, often in acerbic form. One reviewer of Casino Capitalism (1986) noted that she “can at times scarcely disguise her irritation with economists and their way of proposing economic policy,” (Bliss 1987: 779) an observation apparent in her comment that:

Prescribing the wrong remedy through diagnosing the wrong problem is far more excusable as a genuinely understandable mistake than prescribing remedies that are—and are known to be—quite out of the patient’s reach. The doctors do the first all the time. . . . But at least the medical profession does not indulge so often as the academic profession in the other error of ‘discovering’ a solution that experience has already shown to be unattainable. (1986: 148)

Such caustic criticism did little, however, to persuade economists of the value of IPE. One economist dismissed Casino Capitalism because it was symptomatic of a British tendency to blame the United States for the world’s ills (Minsky 1987). Another noted that “. . . one of the reasons why political economy analysis stands in relatively low repute among many economists is that many so-called political economists have a tendency to practice facile overgeneralizations. At the extreme some such analysis has carried little more scholarly content than does a typical political speech” (Willett 1979: 376–77).

Given such skepticism among economists about the IPE enterprise, her attempts
to transcend the boundaries of the academy satisfied few. Reviewing Strange's *Rival States, Rival Firms* (1991), which she co-authored with business school professor John M. Stopford, David Yoffie found “... the joint venture has left the analysis between disciplines. It is neither rigorous political science nor business scholarship” (Yoffie 1993: 1463). Even complimentary reviewers found that her work was “not altogether convincing” (Fahey 1971: 997), that “it tries to cover too much ground, so that it sometimes reads like a student’s lecture notes” (Bliss 1987: 779). Because she was in vanguard of the interdisciplinary study of the international economy, she faced understandable criticism from American scholars who were unimpressed with this developing method of analysis. Her critics appear persuaded that IPE as an enterprise largely has failed to achieve the integrative goals to which Strange aspired. To some degree, their criticism of Professor Strange's work reflects the shortcomings of a fledgling method of analysis, for which she can be forgiven. Despite this pervasive skepticism, however, a few economists saw merit in her advocacy of the inclusion of politics in economic models (Willett 1979: 375).

Strange’s advocacy of IPE reflects her conviction that the disciplinary boundary between economics and politics is stultifying. Though her criticism of this divide could at times be quite caustic, most critics seemed less bothered by her rhetoric than with the inadequacies of an interdisciplinary approach to political economy—the “it’s neither political science nor economics” criticism. Such a criticism misses the point, however, since Strange (and other IPE practitioners) have never claimed that the discipline is political science or economics. It is unclear, in other words, whether or not the critics of such an interdisciplinary approach ever engaged Strange on the terms and goals she laid
out for the interdisciplinary study of political science and economics. Ironically, to
criticize Strange’s approach to IPE as neither one nor the other is both (unintentionally)
to affirm and to ignore her larger criticism.

The Second Divide: American and European Scholarship

Professor Strange frequently criticized not only American foreign policy but the
practices of American IR theorists with her usual tenacity and biting wit. In part she
embedded these criticisms within her larger critique of the hegemonic-decline school of
American IR theorists (1987). This was unfortunate because her critics often failed to
recognize her general critique of American scholarship within this theoretical debate.
And, as often occurred, her harsh words obscured her deeper intentions. We suspect this
was by no means coincidental, since Strange cited the objections of American IR
theorists as proof of her critique. She recognized, for example, that her criticism of U.S.
foreign policy rankled her American colleagues:

From outside the United States, it seems fairly clear to non-Americans why this sort of explanation [of policy instability] is not
very palatable to American academics—and even less so to American policymakers. It is not easy for either to admit that the
conduct of American policy toward the rest of the world has been
inconsistent, fickle, and unpredictable, and that United States administrations have often acted in flat contradiction to their own
rhetoric. (1987: 573)

Such barbed comments drew equally pointed retaliation from many of her book
reviewers. One cited her work as evidence of a “common British addiction, which is to
blame the United States for all that goes wrong, at the same time never holding it
responsible for things going well” (Minsky 1987: 1884). Such analysis overlooks,
however, Strange’s deeper concern with the real-world implications of American scholarly practices.

It is clear that Professor Strange saw such intellectual finger-pointing as symptomatic of a broader underlying failure of American scholarship that transcended any particular theoretical debate. She cited three particular failures of American IR theorists. First, Strange regularly attacked what she perceived as a common American practice of laying the blame for international disorder at the door of others abroad: as her students noted, “if something went wrong, it was because of Vietnam, US generosity toward its allies, the liquidity need of the Bretton Woods system, the oil shocks, and so on” (Guzzini et. al. 1993: 10) Second, she perceived a growing “trend to parochialism” in American IR theory (1994: 209):

Books or articles in foreign languages are almost never read or cited. Only a few non-American writers, even in English, are regularly assigned to students in U.S. universities. American awareness of how others see the failure of international cooperation in relation to the continuing power of the United States is actually less now than it might have been a generation ago. (1987: 574)

Third, she criticized American scholars’ ahistoricism: “Europeans generally, I would venture to say, are more serious in the attention they pay to historical evidence and more sensitive to the possibilities of divergent interpretations of ‘facts’” (1983: 339). Such parochialism and ahistoricism infused American scholarship not only with an inability to appreciate the perspectives of non-U.S. researchers, but with value-laden theories that rested on implicit and unexamined assumptions. Throughout her writings she regularly questioned such assumptions. One reviewer of her *International Monetary Relations* (1976) noted that it:

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³For a discussion of this theme of her work, see Guzzini, Leander, Lorentzen, and Morgan (1993).
. . . is intensely European in outlook. That is, its judgments about American motives and behavior vis à vis the international economic system are based neither on enlightened responsibility characteristic of most American writing on the subject, nor on the passionate rejection of that assumption, which characterizes the views of radical revisionists, but rather on a somewhat wary—and perhaps weary—skepticism. Even more important, the study is characterized by a profound agnosticism regarding two American articles of faith: the primacy of efficiency as a criterion for judgments of economic issues, and of universal (nondiscriminatory) legalism as a desirable basis for the conduct of international economic relations. (Whitman 1977: 132)

Strange argued such unexamined and distinctly American assumptions had dangerous potential consequences for the international system. Not only did the American faith in efficiency and nondiscrimination serve as a barrier to dialogue with other states about the management of the international economy, but American intellectual insularity only reinforced such misunderstandings. When combined with the “myth” of hegemonic decline and a readiness to blame others abroad for the United States’ troubles, Strange saw an intellectual community that was closed to debate, that was incapable of objective criticism of U.S. economic policy, and that contributed to the mismanagement of the international economic system. As she wryly stated it, for American scholars the United States was becoming “a little old country much like any other” (1987: 552).

Strange believed the culture of American scholarship was as much responsible for the instability of the international system as was any supposed decline in American power. She was an unforgiving critic of this culture and its practitioners. Together with her critique of the academic “enclosure movement” that divided politics and economics—two “disciplines” which, not coincidentally, most European universities...
teach as a unified body—Strange found an insularity in American thought that had indirect but nonetheless profound consequences for U.S. leadership in the international system. Such accusations of insularity found, understandably, little favor among her colleagues in the United States. But the persistence of the divide between American and European IR theorists underscores, for Strange, the degree to which IR theories have tangible consequences for everyday social and political life. Theorists on both sides of the Atlantic contest the meaning of this intellectual divide precisely because the debate has implications for the maintenance of international order.

The Third Divide: “Normative” and “Positive” Social Science

Professor Strange’s call for IR scholars to make “fundamentally moral judgments” seems at odds with the logical positivist epistemology that characterizes most American IR theory. If positive knowledge requires researchers to avoid making value-laden judgments about their subject matter, then scholars must reserve judgment on questions of public policy. Professor Strange, and perhaps more than a few American IR theorists, would find such an extreme interpretation of positivism to be objectionable; after all, many positivist scholars argue that researchers can and should make judgments about policy issues provided they do not bias their research designs. Strange’s criticism of the prohibition against normative judgments went further than this, however, perhaps explaining why American IR theorists were uncomfortable with her position. For Strange, the solution of social problems should be the point of departure, not the terminus, for the theory-building enterprise:

The mismatch between, on the one hand, the increasingly global problems and their bitterly needed solutions, and on the other, the
incapacity of both academics and politicians to understand and live up to this challenge, is the starting point for Strange's theoretical work. Theory is conceived as the necessary bridge between the understanding of the “real world” and the possibility of changing it. (Guzzini et. al. 1993: 9)

To study politics is, for Strange, “to clarify where power is located, and how it restricts the art of the possible” (Guzzini et. al. 1993: 7). Stated in another way, politics is inseparable from values, since political actors use authority to resolve value conflicts. The mere act of theorizing, by implicitly ignoring some value conflicts at the expense of others, only serves to perpetuate these conflicts of authority. For this reason, scholars who study politics, be it domestic or international, must make value judgments—indeed, they cannot avoid doing so—before undertaking their analyses, not after.

Accordingly, Strange took exception with theories that removed choice and agency from political processes long before it became fashionable in American political science to do so. She viewed choice as always possible; deterministic “theories” merely serve to obscure power in the international economy rather than to illuminate it, and absolve actors from blame or responsibility (Guzzini et. al. 1993). She was consequently critical of two different deterministic theories: rational-choice theory on the one hand—which she labeled “phony science, not social science” (1994: 217)—and Marxism on the other. Given the pervasiveness of rational choice analysis in American political science and economics (not to mention an interest in Marxism on the part of more than a few analysts), her criticism took broad aim at these disciplines. It is little wonder that her message was so unappealing to many American IR theorists.

However, the schism between Strange and many American researchers is broader than this critique of power and values. Strange sees values infusing political analysis in
more ways than one. Normative judgments can enlighten researchers and bridge the gap between the real world and its needed changes, or it can obscure power, disguise injustices and perpetuate inequalities and political conflict. It was the prevalence of deterministic theories in American scholarship that persuaded Strange that American academics often disguised morally objectionable political relationships with theories that absolved political actors from their responsibilities. And for Strange, it is the positivist cannon against drawing moral conclusions that enables American scholars to ignore their broader complicity in perpetuating certain power relationships. In this way, Strange argued that American “non-normative” social science was fundamentally conservative, itself a normative orientation favoring the continuity of existing power relationships (Guzzini et. al. 1993: 6).

The Fourth Divide: Positive and Critical Theory

It is this concern with power relationships that infuses Professor Strange's criticism of hegemonic-decline theory, a debate in which we find that Strange and her critics largely talked past each other. Strange's argument focused not only on the empirical question of the United States power, but more fundamentally upon the discourse of American academics—what she called the “sociology” of the hegemonic decline myth (1987: 551)—and its role in obscuring important questions of political power. Her critics focused, by contrast, solely on empirical questions. This failure to address Strange’s full argument reflects a broader divide between the American positivist tradition and a critical theory tradition which informed much of Strange's scholarship.

As usual, Strange's discursive style bluntly singles out American theorists:
. . . today, the myth of lost hegemony is apt to induce in everybody only pessimism, despair, and the conviction that, in these inauspicious circumstances, the only thing to do is to ignore everyone else and look after your own individual or national interests. Thus, some of the same American contributors to *International Organization* who are personally persuaded of the benefits of more international cooperation and conflict resolution, may paradoxically be contributing to a *less* cooperative environment by subscribing to and perpetuating the myth of lost American power. (1987: 552)

Not only has the misapplication of the United States’ hegemonic power been an important cause of instability in the global economic order, but “it is much easier for Americans to assert with Keohane, Fred Bergsten, and others that the decline of American power means that collective goals require collective collaboration and that, if this is elusive, there is nothing more the United States can do” (1987: 574). She bluntly asserts that IR theory in the United States has excused policymakers from the responsibilities of leadership: “American theorising has thus become an elaborate ideology to resist sharing American monetary power with the Europeans and Japanese, let alone the oil producing states or the Group of 77” (Calleo and Strange 1984: 114). Regime theory and its attendant explanations for instability are “the ideology of non-territorial imperialism” and are “biased in favour of the rich and powerful and their agenda” (Guzzini et. al. 1993: 10). American research is little more than a “technical obligato” for the misguided foreign policies of the U.S. government (Calleo and Strange 1984: 117; Guzzini et. al. 1993: 10).

These arguments are essentially those of a critical theorist (Cutler 2000). Strange infused her works with equal concern for not only the genesis of current political
relations but a concern for the possibility of change in those relations. Strange also sought such insights into academic discourses other than the hegemonic-decline myth: she is similarly critical of those theorists who dismiss as exaggerations the fundamental changes in the global economy:

> By denying any tendency whatsoever towards convergence of corporate behaviour, and assuming that because firms retain national characteristics, their commitment to serving the national interest is undiminished, the argument justifies US policies on trade and investment that are essentially mercantilist and self-serving. Browbeating and punishing Japan, therefore, is OK. So is arm-twisting China or India to open up their economies to U.S. firms. (1998: 707)

“If there has been no change [in international markets],” she continues, “there's no need to do anything. Music to corporate ears, and to all the privatizing, deregulating neoliberal ideologues” (1998: 708). These quotes suggest a continuous strand of critical scholarship in her works, one that infused her analysis of the broad spectrum of issues in the international system. Throughout her career, Strange focused on the power relationships that undergird intellectual debates and sought to illuminate how such discourses obscure possibilities for change: “. . . Strange cautions against a rhetoric of reason and reality put up as a conservative defence” (Guzzini et. al. 1993: 6).

Strange clearly addressed questions about American scholarship and power broader than those of the hegemonic decline debate, yet we find that her American critics tended to focus more on the empirical question of whether or not the United States remains a hegemon. Ironically, Strange conceded the point that the United States has

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4 We borrow this definition of critical theory from Cox (1995) p. 32.
6 Here she is criticizing P. Hirst and G. Thompson, Globalization in Question (London: Polity
experienced an erosion of its authority: “the error of the declinist school of American scholars,” she contended, “lies in assuming that if the US has lost power, some other state must have gained it. . . . The facts suggest this zero-sum idea is far too simple” (1994: 213). Yet the “myth” of decline is so prevalent in American literature that many of her American reviewers simply assert it without elaboration (Minsky 1987: 1885). In his review of *Rival Capital, Rival Firms*, for example, Richard Rosecrance even argues that the United States was so weak that it could soon expect special treatment from other states:

In fact, the world economy today is still largely politically dominated and controlled, not by a hegemonic power but by an oligopoly of states. Each member needs to maintain its market share, but none wants to risk a game of ruin with others—depressing the world price and threatening its own productive future. Thus, each is forced to respond to others when trade or financial flows become too imbalanced. In this sense, losers are occasionally compensated by winners and helped to regain their footing. Russia is, or soon will be, the beneficiary of others’ indulgence. And before long, the American turn will come; for the United States boasts the largest trade imbalance and the highest degree of indebtedness of any country. The United States will demand, and probably receive, special treatment, contingent upon its own domestic economic reform. (Rosecrance 1993: 812)

By focusing too much on the empirical question of American power, however, these criticisms of her work ignore Strange's stress on the myth American scholars perpetuate. In this sense her American critics failed to engage her argument on its terms, undoubtedly to her continued frustration.

One of the most confounding puzzles is why American scholars failed to engage Strange’s work in this way. Some might argue Strange was fundamentally anti-American in her arguments, though her apologists assert “It is not prejudices against the
US, but the acute awareness of the location of power that inspires Strange's repeated call to US responsibility” (Guzzini et. al. 1993: 12). Indeed, Strange’s concern with the location of power led her to be equally critical of the British class system and the “Establishment” (1989: 432). Another possibility is that American scholarship reflects a broader ideological and cultural schism in American society. She writes, for example, that “there is—and always has been—an inherent and unresolved conflict between the two sets of ideas that have influenced American policymakers ever since the end of World War II—between the liberalism preached by neoclassical economists and by internationalist political scientists and the realism practiced by the U.S. Departments of State and Defense” (1987: 574). In this sense, the hegemonic decline myth both reflects the rise of some academic amalgam of isolationism and post-Cold War internationalism, and perpetuates international instability by providing convenient excuses for American political coalitions that favor a withdrawal from international commitments.

Finally, it is worth reiterating our suspicion that this disconnect in Strange’s debates with her American colleagues is the product of the schism between critical academic traditions in Europe and, to a lesser degree, Canada, and the positivist tradition in the United States. Given the relative paucity of critical theorists in American universities, perhaps the schism is not surprising, but such an interpretation merely begs the questions about academia’s role in perpetuating power relationships that Professor Strange sought to illuminate. One can only conclude that American scholars either disliked the implications of Strange’s argument, or found talking across the positivist-

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critical divide to be unproductive.

**Conclusions for an Unfinished Dialogue**

The late 1990s witnessed an ironic trend in the world’s political economy: increased American economic prosperity coupled with continued systemic instability. While the volume of overall of trade and capital flows has increased, the Thai and Indonesian economic collapses in 1997 and its collateral effect on Asian economies demonstrate the persistence of instability in the world’s political economy; the periodic bailouts of Russia’s and Brazil’s economy and continued U.S. dithering in the administration of IMF loans to Russia only reinforce the point. These trends raise important questions: how have these trends affected the hegemonic decline school of which Professor Strange was so critical? Have American IR scholars abandoned the “myth” of hegemonic decline?\(^8\) And if so, does such a abandonment represent a vindication of her ideas and critique of American scholarship?

If it is the case, as we believe, that hegemonic decline is no longer a preoccupation in U.S. academic circles, such a demise only serves as further proof of Professor Strange's accusations against American IR scholars. As she often pointed out, our theories rise and fall on the tides of American economic prosperity. In these days of growth, the residue of our intellectual concern with hegemonic decline seems silly and misplaced. Strange would call this not scholarship but an “ideology,” a theory which we

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\(^8\) Aside from those U.S. analysts who early on shared her doubts about the validity of the hegemonic decline hypothesis, see, for example, Bruce Russett, “The Mysterious Case of Vanishing Hegemony: or Is Mark Twain Really Dead?” *International Organization* v. 39 (Spring, 1985); and Henry R. Nau, *The Myth of America’s Decline: Leading the World Economy into the 1990s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
espouse when others criticize American leadership and which we discard when American leadership succeeds (or at least does not contribute to disorder). To put it another way, Strange would cite the demise of the hegemonic decline thesis—and perhaps the intellectual propinquity of the globalization thesis—as further proof of the degree to which US scholars remain complicit in the instability of the international system.

It is easy to dismiss Strange’s body of work as simply an indictment of American policy rather than a broader criticism of American scholarship. Such a dismissal is misleading, however, since Strange believed our theorizing cannot be disconnected from its practical consequences for society. This is why she sought to transcend the boundaries that typify American IR theory, even though it resulted in her often taking paradoxical intellectual positions. She was comfortable, for example, arguing that scholars should make moral judgments about policy issues, and equally comfortable criticizing those moral judgments that she felt to be wrong. Such criticism rested not in an objection to the idea of taking a moral stance; rather it rested upon her interpretation of the implications of those judgments for everyday life. Likewise, Strange was comfortable arguing simultaneously that global markets eroded the authority of states and that only the United States could assure a degree of stability and continuity in the international system. Again, this paradox arises from what she foresaw as the real-world consequences of a globalization debate isolated from its human consequences. Ultimately, the boundary Susan Strange sought to span was neither disciplinary, socio-cultural, or epistemological; it was the real-world boundary between IR theory and its practical effects on the allocation of welfare among the world’s people. She focused on such issues passionately, in a manner that her American colleagues often misunderstood.
She passed away before she and her American colleagues could conclude this debate. We can only hope that the American academy will revisit her ground-breaking scholarship now that she is no longer here to sling the verbal barbs which, to Americans, so often detracted from her deeper criticisms.
Works Cited


