

# [Hans in earlier writings dating back to antecedents](https://assignbuster.com/hans-in-earlier-writings-dating-back-to-antecedents/)

Hans Joachim Morgenthau is a renowned 20thcentury figure in the field of international politics. His works are widelyknown to belong to the tradition of realism in international relations theoryand is known to be one of the three leading American realists of the post Worldwar 2 era alongside George Kennan and Reinhold Nierbuhr. These are examples ofmodern political theorists whereas Hobbes and Machiavelli are an illustrationof historic founders of classical realists.

His book ‘ Politics among Nations: The struggle for power and peace’ gave way the statement of “ politics is astruggle for power” published in 1948. In pursuance to understand Morgenthau’soutlook on power one must understand the ‘ power’ that he regards as thepreeminent part of International politics. This is because it is very broadtopic to talk about and it can range from many different factors including aman’s power over self-control or a man’s power over production. In this essayit will be discussed and explored how Morgenthau’s statement is debated among criticalideologies such as Marxism and Constructivism as well as his own ideology, realism and we will also see why Morgenthau statement is true/false comparinghis view with other distinguished scholars and thinkers. Realism is a school of thought in international relationstheory and although it didn’t formally start up until after the second worldwar its primary assumptions have been expressed in earlier writings dating backto antecedents such as Niccolo Machiavelli. “ For realists, the internationalpolitical sphere is one of necessity, regularity and danger, wholly unsuitablefor the moral philosopher” (1). The international political sphere isadministrated by power.

Morgenthau defines the word power he uses as “ When we speak of power we mean man’s controlover the minds and actions of other men. By political power we refer to themutual relations of control among the holders of public authority and betweenthe latter and the people at large.” (2) This means we knowMorgenthau is talking about relations of power between nation state authorities. His thought, steered by classical realism, does not only view Internationalpolitics as a struggle for power, but it also shares the realist pessimisticview of human nature. His original statement made in 1965 and linked withclassical realism is the thought that “ men and women are by nature politicalanimals, born to pursue power and to enjoy the fruits of power” (3) Morgenthauthinks this because the craving for power dictates a search not only forrelative advantage but also for a secure political territory meaning tomaintain oneself free from the political dictates of others (4) For example itis mostly agreed that the outbreak of the Second World war was, by manyhistorians, the fault of Nazi Germany’s Hitler. The policy of appeasement byNeville Chamberlin did not help and Hitler’s greed for power using territoryfirst Austria, the Sudetenland and then Poland led to the start of the war. This example therefore proves that Morgenthau is correct when he describeshuman nature in his own words: “ Political realism believes that politics, likesociety in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots inhuman nature” (5) Therefore if international relations/politics isself-interested then there will forever be a struggle for power that will liein the heart of political relations. In my view world wars take place becauseof countries seeking more powers.

They compete for limited resources as well asterritory explaining why conflicts appear and every state is concerned about theirvery own ‘ self-interest’. Furthermore, there is a similarity when it comes to humannature from Morgenthau’s point of view and Thomas Hobbes’. Thomas Hobbes was anenlightenment philosopher who lived in England during the 16th and17th century.

He provides a platform for modern political theory intodays day and age. Hobbes was notably similarly negative on the topic of humannature, just like Morgenthau. He refers to humans being selfish and explains howusing his state of nature.

This is a hypothetical scenario on what life waslike before societies, government and order came into existence. Hobbes usesthis in my view, to relate to human selfishness which is why he was an admirerof strong government (6). This would mean Hobbes agreed with Morgenthau’sstatement. Niccolo Machiavelli ultimately shaped both Hobbes’ and Morgenthau’sideology through his political treatise ‘ The Prince’ that he published in the1500s. Machiavelli’s thoughts on power highlighted struggles for power at everylevel; from the common citizen struggling in the cooperate world to worldleaders trying to figure out strategies on behalf of its states nationalinterest. Regarding human nature that leads to power according to Hobbes andMorgenthau, Machiavelli thinks that humans instead are driven by two principalsthat ultimately give way to power and that is love and fear (7) In my view Ithink that there is a disagreement between Machiavelli and Hobbes/Morgenthaubecause the latter has more of a dismissive approach to human nature. However, it can be largely agreed that all three theorists do sympathise with the viewthat Human nature ultimately shapes power and this is evidence thatinternational politics like all politics is a struggle for power because comparedto human nature we struggle in our daily lives. This is essentially a classicalrealist point of view that was first mentioned by Thucydides’ representation ofpower politics as a law of human behaviour.

The neorealist argument would compromise that Internationalpolitics is a struggle for power however they would disagree with Morgenthauand focus upon the structure of the anarchic state system and not human natureitself. “ Insteadstructural realists attribute security competition and inter-state conflict tothe lack of an overarching authority above states and the relative distributionof power in the international system.” (8) This can be tied withoffensive realism; a theory first postulated by John Mearsheimer and holds theinternational system accountable for aggressive state behaviour ininternational politics due to its anarchy.

While Mearsheimer’s offensiverealism theory does repeat, follow and build upon certain aspects elaborated byclassical realists, it parts ways completely from the latter branch by usingpositivism as a philosophy of science. Not only this but it brings in asystem-centric approach to the study of state behaviour in global politicswhich is based upon the structure of the international system. Because of Waltz’ advancedposition in his book ‘ Man, the state and war’ neorealists are fundamentallycausal structuralists in that they believe, on the grounds that the majority ofcontent in the international politics is due to the international system.

AlthoughWaltz did take some elements of classical realism as a starting point (9) manystructural/neo realists including himself, believed that within the internationalpolitical system, power will be used to acquire security. This is evident as itis mentioned in a book he contributed to called ‘ The origin and prevention ofmajor wars’ stating “ in crucialsituations, however, the ultimate concern of states is not for power but forsecurity”(10). This means Waltz and Morgenthau did not see eye toeye as the latter viewed politics as a means to gain power. This concludes mypoint about realism, that politics can be viewed as the process by which tomaintain a position of security rather than it being seen as just a strugglefor power. As a consequence, and in my view Waltz disagreed with Morgenthau’sstatement because of this. However, despite how both Waltz and Morgenthau’sopinions differ, ultimately it is still about self-interest to a much largerextent.   Althougha much more modern theory compared to Realism and Liberalism, Marxism is acritical theory to understand as well as engage in. Founded in the 1800s byKarl Marx himself and Friedrich Engels it represents in many ways a fundamentalcritique of economic liberalism and it is a leading theory that has influencedthe rise of communism in many states.

However, the big key difference in thispoint is although economic liberals view the economy as a positive sum gamewith benefits for all, Marx took a fundamentally more distinctive approach (11). Instead he saw the economy as a site of human exploitation and classinequality. In terms of power, which is the main debate of this essay, Marxapplies this to relations of classes rather than to relation of states. It canbe argued that in terms of power, Marx saw economic power first beforepolitical power. He blamed financial “ crises’ as caused by internal laws ofmotion of the capitalist mode of production” (12). It’s fairly simple howMarxists take the position that the capitalist economy under the higher class(the bourgeoisie) owns solely its means of production and argues that theproletariat (the lower class) owns its labour power that it sells to the bourgeoisie, suggesting that the higher class abuse their power.

This means, as a result, thelabour put in by the proletariat, is much greater than what they get in return. Therefore, this results in capitalist profit and it is purely derived fromLabour exploitation. Althoughthere is no mention of state this is relevant because of the fact that Marxspoke on behalf of all the lower classes all over the world. And with thisbeing a theory so closely associated with international political economy it iseasy to see why this argument can be equally related to Morgenthau’s statement. This brings us to the Marxist framework for the study of international global politicaleconomy. The contrast between Marxist and realist study is an interestinganalysis.

Both visions sympathise that there are perennial clashes andconflicts between nation states. Realists explain this by highlighting the viewthat existence of independent states are in a condition of anarchy thus hintingthe struggle between nation states that has been on-going for thousands ofyears ever since the development of nation states. The corresponding argumentfrom Marxists is that they reject the latter’s argument because Marxists viewit as historical and false. This is because they point out that there is nospecific evidence that the social forces (process of capitalist production)actually maintain conflict between states (13) However Marxists believe thatthe only solution to fix this so called ‘ anarchy’ that exists is through whatwe would call socialism.

Considering the matter Marx states that feudalism isdestroyed under capitalism, it can only pave way to a socialist revolutionwhere the means of production (power) would therefore be placed under the socialcontrol of the vast majority, the proletariat itself. Because Marx lived beforeMorgenthau and they both lived in completely different periods it is fair tosay that Marx would agree to some extent that International politics like allpolitics is a struggle for power but this is only existent through the capitalistruling classes as they sought control and strive for international dominanceover everybody. Historically structures are identified at three differentlevels which are said to be social forces, forms of state and world orders. Additionally, current Marxist thinking has developed this viewfurther through Robert Cox who is a prominent neo-Marxist analyst of worldpolitics as well as political economy. Cox moves away from the traditionalMarxist prominence on materialism.

Heuses the three different levels of historical structure and theorises a complexinterplay between politics and economics. As regards to the social forces of capitalism, they are presently participating in a severe method of economic globalisation. As regards to forms of state there is a variation between nation states becausethey link into the global political economy in different ways. States competefor advantage meaning this can be compared to ‘ states struggle for power’ supportingMorgenthau’s statement. However, in my view I would argue that Morgenthau’sstatement and the struggle for power sounds more territorial or militaristic. Coxargues a completely antithetical assertation that non-territorial power isbecoming more important for states now as they compete for markets and economicopportunities across the globe.

This would include transnational corporationsand civil society organisations operating across continents and borders. Coxwould debate that non-government organisations are becoming increasinglyimportant, perhaps to subdue conflicts between nation states (14). In my opinionthese non-government organisations suppress Morgenthau’s statement of ‘ internationalpolitics is a struggle for power’. Final point on Marxism is another major neo Marxist analysis from ImmanuelWallerstein on his concept of world systems theory.

Countries are divided intothree categories on core, semi-periphery and periphery (15). Each categoryrepresents a country’s power; its wealth, dominance and influence. The conceptties economics and politics together and in my view adapting Wallerstein’sconcept and Morgenthau’s statement together, depending on which categoriesnation states fit into, international politics is a struggle for power to alarge extent with the existence of hegemony’s. However as stated before, non-governmentorganisations are active in each category meaning power of states are subdued.

“ Whathappens to countries very much depends on their position in the system” (16). Another critical theory that needs to be explored is thetheory in international relations of constructivism. The main focus of constructivismis to inform the actors of ideas and beliefs on the international scene (17). NicholasOnuf who was an American scholar is usually considered the founder of the term’constructivism’ to describe theories that stress the socially constructedcharacter of international politics (18). Also known as social constructivismit is a claim that significant aspects of international relations are sociallyas well as historically constructed rather than what Morgenthau would believe, inevitable consequences of human nature (19). This would mean social constructivismwould disagree with Morgenthau’s statement. Because of its layout socialconstructivism has become one of the major schools of thought withinInternational relations since the late 1980s and early 1990s. Due to the factthat Neorealism was the most dominant discourse during its opening period muchof its work is based on challenging basic neorealist assumptions and argumentswhich makes this debate far more advantageous to compare both realism andconstructivism.

Alexander Wendt lays out the foundations of socialconstructivism and the bottom line of his argument is the denial of theneorealist position, according to which anarchy must necessarily point toself-help. It is true that constructivists such as Wendt do believe in anarchyon an international scale however this can somehow bring nation states closer together. This all relies upon the action between states and during these processes theidentities and interests of states are laid out. For neorealists however, identities and interests are already known because states know who they are aspeople and what they want, long before interaction with other states.

In his groundbreaking 1992 article, “ Anarchy is what states make of it: The socialconstruction of power politics”, Wendt revolves around the state of anarchy. Asmentioned, the state of anarchy is a huge fundamental part that is played inRealisms ideology. Wendt argues that there are three major ideal types ofcultures of anarchy that can exist and ultimately these cultures eventuallydefine types of relations between nation states (20). The first being theHobbesian culture, named after Thomas Hobbes. States view each other as enemiesdue to the fact that it is based on the logic of Hobbesian Anarchy, a state of’war of all against all’. States are opponents and wars are omnipresent becauseviolent conflict is a way of survival. According to Wendt, Hobbesian anarchydominated the state systems globally to a much larger extent up until theseventeenth century (21) perhaps because there were no signs of anyinternational society of states. The next culture of anarchy mentioned by Wendtis the Lockean culture.

States consider each other opponents however there isalso restraint unlike the Hobbesian culture. This time round, states recogniseeach other and therefore do not seek to eliminate one another. This is becausethey acknowledge the right of sovereignty. This fits well with Locke’s quote “ allmen are free to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions andpersons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature”. (22) It isvital to notice the difference and to recognise how John Locke had a morepositive view on the state of nature.

After all, Locke is considered to be aLiberal. Finally, the third culture of anarchy is known as the Kantian culturewhere states view each other as friends and companions while settling disputespeacefully, as well as supporting each other in the case of warning of harm bya third party. They recognise and respect two rules; rule of non-violence andrule of mutual aid. This is an important culture of anarchy because it isadapted and consolidated by Liberal thinkers applying this to Liberaldemocracies since the end of the second world war. In conclusion and to summarise it is understandable that thereis a struggle for power in international politics.

However, this statement alsodeclares that all other politics is a struggle for power. For realists it is mutuallyagreed that politics in general, whether state level or on an internationalscale, is a struggle for power. The reasoning it is a struggle for power is wherephilosophers and scholars debate on. Classical realists would blame humannature where as neorealists and structural realists would blame the structureof the state system and how the international system is set up. Marxists turnto the class hierarchy as it determines each and every individual thereforeinfluencing what actions it takes. This paves the way for Marxists to agree uponthe higher class of the bourgeoise to exploit the lower classes meaning thereis anarchy but no real clear struggle for power suggesting Marxists in generaldisagree with Morgenthau’s statement. However, under Cox, his Marxist agendamoves more towards Morgenthau’s statement compared to Marx, perhaps because itis a more modernised and it is more clear view on international politics.

Onthe constructivist side and from Wendt’s point of view he would disagree withMorgenthau partly because the latter does not believe non-government organisationsare important. Wendt’s argument of ‘ Anarchy is what states make of it’ proveshe further disagrees with realists especially Morgenthau because in the end itis about how anarchy is dealt with. In general conclusion I think Morgenthau’s statementof ‘ International politics like all politics is a struggle for power’ is partlycorrect namely because I adopt the realist thinking that humans are greedy forpower however non-government organisations play a fundamental part on howinternational politics can perish through anarchy and keeping every nationstate within arm’s reach.

Not only this but I agree with Wendt’s argument thatanarchy is what states make of it and it is up to the people to find a solution. If the people make the problem they are also able to find the solution.