

Hans in earlier  
writings dating back  
to antecedents



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Hans Joachim Morgenthau is a renowned 20th century figure in the field of international politics. His works are widely known to belong to the tradition of realism in international relations theory and is known to be one of the three leading American realists of the post Worldwar 2 era alongside George Kennan and Reinhold Niebuhr. These are examples of modern political theorists whereas Hobbes and Machiavelli are an illustration of historic founders of classical realists.

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

Morgenthau defines the word power he uses as “ When we speak of power we mean man’s control over the minds and actions of other men. By political power we refer to the mutual relations of control among the holders of public authority and between the latter and the people at large.” (2) This means we know Morgenthau is talking about relations of power between nation state authorities. His thought, steered by classical realism, does not only view International politics as a struggle for power, but it also shares the realist pessimistic view of human nature. His original statement made in 1965 and linked with classical realism is the thought that “ men and women are by nature political animals, born to pursue power and to enjoy the fruits of power” (3) Morgenthau thinks this because the craving for power dictates a search not only for relative advantage but also for a secure political territory meaning to maintain oneself free from the political dictates of others (4) For example it is mostly agreed that the outbreak of the Second World war was, by many historians, the fault of Nazi Germany’s Hitler. The policy of appeasement by Neville Chamberlain did not help and Hitler’s greed for power using territory first Austria, the Sudetenland and then Poland led to the start of the war. This example therefore proves that Morgenthau is correct when he describes human nature in his own words: “ Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature” (5) Therefore if international relations/politics is self-interested then there will forever be a struggle for power that will lie in the heart of political relations. In my view world wars take place because of countries seeking more powers.

They compete for limited resources as well as territory explaining why conflicts appear and every state is concerned about their very own 'self-interest'. Furthermore, there is a similarity when it comes to human nature from Morgenthau's point of view and Thomas Hobbes'. Thomas Hobbes was an enlightenment philosopher who lived in England during the 16th and 17th century.

He provides a platform for modern political theory in today's day and age. Hobbes was notably similarly negative on the topic of human nature, just like Morgenthau. He refers to humans being selfish and explains how using his state of nature.

This is a hypothetical scenario on what life was like before societies, government and order came into existence. Hobbes uses this in my view, to relate to human selfishness which is why he was an admirer of strong government (6). This would mean Hobbes agreed with Morgenthau's statement. Niccolo Machiavelli ultimately shaped both Hobbes' and Morgenthau's ideology through his political treatise 'The Prince' that he published in the 1500s. Machiavelli's thoughts on power highlighted struggles for power at every level; from the common citizen struggling in the cooperative world to world leaders trying to figure out strategies on behalf of its state's national interest. Regarding human nature that leads to power according to Hobbes and Morgenthau, Machiavelli thinks that humans instead are driven by two principal things that ultimately give way to power and that is love and fear (7) In my view I think that there is a disagreement between Machiavelli and Hobbes/Morgenthau because 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 view that Human nature ultimately shapes power and this is evidence that international politics like all politics is a struggle for power because compared to human nature we struggle in our daily lives. This is essentially a classical realist point of view that was first mentioned by Thucydides' representation of power politics as a law of human behaviour.

The neorealist argument would compromise that International politics is a struggle for power however they would disagree with Morgenthau and focus upon the structure of the anarchic state system and not human nature itself. " Instead structural realists attribute security competition and inter-state conflict to the lack of an overarching authority above states and the relative distribution of power in the international system." (8) This can be tied with offensive realism; a theory first postulated by John Mearsheimer and holds the international system accountable for aggressive state behaviour in international politics due to its anarchy.

While Mearsheimer's offensiverealism theory does repeat, follow and build upon certain aspects elaborated by classical realists, it parts ways completely from the latter branch by using positivism as a philosophy of science. Not only this but it brings in a system-centric approach to the study of state behaviour in global politics which is based upon the structure of the international system. Because of Waltz' advanced position in his book ' Man, the state and war' neorealists are fundamentally causal structuralists in that they believe, on the grounds that the majority of content in the international politics is due to the international system.

Although Waltz did take some elements of classical realism as a starting point (9) many structural/neo realists including himself, believed that within the international political system, power will be used to acquire security. This is evident as it is mentioned in a book he contributed to called 'The origin and prevention of major wars' stating "in crucial situations, however, the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security" (10). This means Waltz and Morgenthau did not see eye to eye as the latter viewed politics as a means to gain power. This concludes my point about realism, that politics can be viewed as the process by which to maintain a position of security rather than it being seen as just a struggle for power. As a consequence, and in my view Waltz disagreed with Morgenthau's statement because of this. However, despite how both Waltz and Morgenthau's opinions differ, ultimately it is still about self-interest to a much larger extent. Although a much more modern theory compared to Realism and Liberalism, Marxism is a critical theory to understand as well as engage in. Founded in the 1800s by Karl Marx himself and Friedrich Engels it represents in many ways a fundamental critique of economic liberalism and it is a leading theory that has influenced the rise of communism in many states.

However, the big key difference in this point is although economic liberals view the economy as a positive sum game with benefits for all, Marx took a fundamentally more distinctive approach (11). Instead he saw the economy as a site of human exploitation and class inequality. In terms of power, which is the main debate of this essay, Marx applies this to relations of classes rather than to relation of states. It can be argued that in terms of power, Marx saw economic power first before political power. He blamed financial "crises"

as caused by internal laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production” (12). It’s fairly simple how Marxists take the position that the capitalist economy under the higher class (the bourgeoisie) owns solely its means of production and argues that the proletariat (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, the labour 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 from Labour exploitation. Although there is no mention of state this is relevant because of the fact that Marx spoke on behalf of all the lower classes all over the world. And with this being a theory so closely associated with international political economy it is easy 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 political economy. The contrast between Marxist and realist study is an interesting analysis.

Both visions sympathise that there are perennial clashes and conflicts between nation states. Realists explain this by highlighting the view that existence of independent states are in a condition of anarchy thus hinting the struggle between nation states that has been on-going for thousands of years ever since the development of nation states. The corresponding argument from Marxists is that they reject the latter’s argument because Marxists view it as historical and false. This is because they point out that there is no specific evidence that the social forces (process of capitalist production) actually maintain conflict between states (13) However Marxists

believe that the only solution to fix this so called 'anarchy' that exists is through what we would call socialism.

Considering the matter Marx states that feudalism is destroyed under capitalism, it can only pave way to a socialist revolution where the means of production (power) would therefore be placed under the social control of the vast majority, the proletariat itself. Because Marx lived before Morgenthau and they both lived in completely different periods it is fair to say that Marx would agree to some extent that International politics like all politics is a struggle for power but this is only existent through the capitalist ruling classes as they sought control and strive for international dominance over everybody. Historically structures are identified at three different levels which are said to be social forces, forms of state and world orders. Additionally, current Marxist thinking has developed this view further through Robert Cox who is a prominent neo-Marxist analyst of world politics as well as political economy. Cox moves away from the traditional Marxist prominence on materialism.

He uses the three different levels of historical structure and theorises a complex interplay 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 because they link into the global political economy in different ways. States compete for advantage meaning this can be compared to 'states struggle for power' supporting Morgenthau's statement. However, in my view I would argue that Morgenthau's statement and the struggle for power sounds more territorial or militaristic. Cox argues a completely



antithetical assertion that non-territorial power is becoming more important for states now as they compete for markets and economic opportunities across the globe.

This would include transnational corporations and civil society organisations operating across continents and borders. Cox would debate that non-government organisations are becoming increasingly important, perhaps to subdue conflicts between nation states (14). In my opinion these non-government organisations suppress Morgenthau's statement of 'international politics is a struggle for power'. Final point on Marxism is another major neo Marxist analysis from Immanuel Wallerstein on his concept of world systems theory.

Countries are divided into three categories on core, semi-periphery and periphery (15). Each category represents a country's power; its wealth, dominance and influence. The concept ties economics and politics together and in my view adapting Wallerstein's concept and Morgenthau's statement together, depending on which categories nation states fit into, international politics is a struggle for power to a large extent with the existence of hegemony's. However as stated before, non-government organisations are active in each category meaning power of states are subdued.

"What happens to countries very much depends on their position in the system" (16). Another critical theory that needs to be explored is the theory in international relations of constructivism. The main focus of constructivism is to inform the actors of ideas and beliefs on the international scene (17). Nicholas Onuf who was an American scholar is usually considered

the founder of the term 'constructivism' to describe theories that stress the socially constructed character of international politics (18). Also known as social constructivism it is a claim that significant aspects of international relations are socially as well as historically constructed rather than what Morgenthau would believe, inevitable consequences of human nature (19). This would mean social constructivism would disagree with Morgenthau's statement. Because of its layout social constructivism has become one of the major schools of thought within International relations since the late 1980s and early 1990s. Due to the fact that Neorealism was the most dominant discourse during its opening period much of its work is based on challenging basic neorealist assumptions and arguments which makes this debate far more advantageous to compare both realism and constructivism.

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

In his groundbreaking 1992 article, "Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics", Wendt revolves around the state of anarchy. As mentioned, the state of anarchy is a huge fundamental part that is played in Realism's ideology. Wendt argues that there are three major ideal

types of cultures of anarchy that can exist and ultimately these cultures eventually define types of relations between nation states (20). The first being the Hobbesian culture, named after Thomas Hobbes. States view each other as enemies due 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 because violent conflict is a way of survival. According to Wendt, Hobbesian anarchy dominated the state systems globally to a much larger extent up until the seventeenth century (21) perhaps because there were no signs of any international society of states. The next culture of anarchy mentioned by Wendt is the Lockean culture.

States consider each other opponents however there is also restraint unlike the Hobbesian culture. This time round, states recognise each other and therefore do not seek to eliminate one another. This is because they acknowledge the right of sovereignty. This fits well with Locke's quote "all men are free to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature". (22) It is vital to notice the difference and to recognise how John Locke had a more positive view on the state of nature.

After all, Locke is considered to be a Liberal. Finally, the third culture of anarchy is known as the Kantian culture where states view each other as friends and companions while settling disputes peacefully, as well as supporting each other in the case of warning of harm by a third party. They recognise and respect two rules; rule of non-violence and rule of mutual aid. This is an important culture of anarchy because it is adapted and consolidated by Liberal thinkers applying this to Liberal democracies since

the end of the second world war. In conclusion and to summarise it is understandable that there is a struggle for power in international politics.

However, this statement also declares that all other politics is a struggle for power. For realists it is mutually agreed that politics in general, whether state level or on an international scale, is a struggle for power. The reasoning it is a struggle for power is where philosophers and scholars debate on. Classical realists would blame human nature where as neorealists and structural realists would blame the structure of the state system and how the international system is set up. Marxists turn to the class hierarchy as it determines each and every individual therefore influencing what actions it takes. This paves the way for Marxists to agree upon the higher class of the bourgeoisie to exploit the lower classes meaning there is anarchy but no real clear struggle for power suggesting Marxists in general disagree with Morgenthau's statement. However, under Cox, his Marxist agenda moves more towards Morgenthau's statement compared to Marx, perhaps because it is a more modernised and it is more clear view on international politics.

On the constructivist side and from Wendt's point of view he would disagree with Morgenthau partly because the latter does not believe non-government organisations are important. Wendt's argument of 'Anarchy is what states make of it' proves he further disagrees with realists especially Morgenthau because in the end it is about how anarchy is dealt with. In general conclusion I think Morgenthau's statement of 'International politics like all politics is a struggle for power' is partly correct namely because I adopt the realist thinking that humans are greedy for power however non-government

organisations play a fundamental part on how international politics can perish through anarchy and keeping every nationstate within arm's reach.

Not only this but I agree with Wendt's argument that anarchy 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.