HANS J. MORGENTHAU'S VERSION OF REALPOLITIK


PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

More so perhaps than any American student of international relations and foreign policy during the past generation, Hans J. Morgenthau has emerged as the spokesman for the Realpolitik approach to international political behavior. Morgenthau's conception of political realism has several distinguishing hallmarks. A basic presupposition is the idea that, "there exists an objective and universally valid truth about matters political, [and] that this truth is accessible to human reason..." ¹ The realist also believes that, "Politics . . . is governed by objective laws that have their roots

in human nature." The operation of these laws is "impervious to our preferences...." 2 Or, as Morgenthau said (concerning America's political miscalculations during World War II), there was a failure to understand "the war as part of a historic continuum ... subject to historic laws, which are of the timeless essence of politics itself and for whose disregard a nation must pay a heavy price." 3

The realist also believes that politics forms an "autonomous" field of behavior and inquiry. Just as economics, theology, and other fields have their own distinctive methodologies and concepts, so also does politics, whose central idea (to which we shall return at a later stage) is the concept of power. 4 For political realists, the nature, pursuit, and application of power is the paramount concern of political science. The realist views political relationship as entailing "an unending struggle for interests and power." 5 This assertion underscores three ideas basic to Morgenthau's conception of political realism. First, political life is envisioned essentially as a "struggle": various kinds and modes of conflict form its substance and are intrinsic to it. Second, this struggle is "unending": it is perpetual, recurrent, and integral to life itself. Conflicts, therefore, can never be eliminated from the political process; they can only be attenuated, temporarily resolved with partial solutions, contained, or otherwise endured. Third, the object of this unending struggle is power. As we shall see, irrespective of the proclaimed and ostensible goals of political actors (embodied in what Morgenthau usually refers to derisively as ideologies) the pursuit of power is the real objective, to which all other goals are subordinate. 6

The political realism identified with Hans J. Morgenthau contains elements central to two familiar philosophical schools—conservatism and pragmatism. That Morgenthau conceives of realism

2 Ibid., p. 4.
3 See Morgenthau's contrast between British Prime Minister Churchill's political wisdom versus President Roosevelt's lack of it, in his review article, "Foreign Policy: The Conservative School," World Politics 7 (January, 1955), p. 290.
4 Ibid., p. 11.
5 Principles and Problems of International Politics, p. 34.
6 Thus, Morgenthau introduces a lengthy discussion of the role of ideology in international politics by saying that in all politics, "its basic manifestations do not appear as what they actually are—manifestations of a struggle for power." Quoting Hamlet, Morgenthau states that ideologies serve as a "flattering unction" to conceal power ambitions. Politics Among Nations, p. 83. The idea of an American "mission" to less fortunate people on the earth is similarly "a rationalization and justification of policies" undertaken for egocentric reasons. A New Foreign Policy for the United States, p. 80.
and political conservatism as intimately related (if not in some respect synonymous) schools of thought is apparent from his un concealed admiration for conservative thinkers like Edmund Burke, Alexander Hamilton, and John Quincy Adams, and by the frequent coincidence of his own viewpoints with the major tenets of the conservative political philosophy. For example, he derives the egocentric and power-seeking impulses of human behavior from "forces inherent in human nature"; he accepts the conservative idea that human society is imperfect, and he is certain that it will always remain so; and he asserts that when political actors must make decisions in a political environment of "opposing interests and of conflict among them"-they ought to strive for a "balancing of interests" and seek the "ever precarious settlement of conflict," rather than their elimination.

In company with most conservative thinkers, Morgenthau is sanguine neither about the present human condition nor about its prospects for fundamental improvement in the future. He rejects the liberal premise that advances in education, culture, and technology enhance the prospects for peace and international stability. Ongoing technological progress has in fact rendered the possibility for achieving these goals increasingly remote. Merely because modern science and technology know no national boundaries does not mean that the nations are becoming "One World" politically. In fact, politically they are less unified today than in earlier eras. Nor can mankind rely upon the growth of "international understanding," modern communications media, cultural exchange programs, and the like, to create a more orderly and benign world. Morgenthau is equally skeptical about the notion that progress in democratizing national domestic political systems (which is itself an uncertain prospect) will produce a more peaceful and stable global environment.

One other aspect of Morgenthau's conception of conservatism is important in understanding his frequent prescriptions for remedy-

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7 See, for example, Morgenthau's essay on "Barry Goldwater: The Romantic Regression" (1964), in Truth and Power, pp. 127-132; and his "Introduction" to The Restoration of American Politics, pp. 1-3.
8 The Purpose of American Politics, pp. 296-297.
9 Scientific Man vs. Power Politics, pp. 216-217.
10 Ibid., p. 86.
ing the defects of recent American foreign policy: Morgenthau acknowledges that historically; conservatism has "had no place in the American tradition of politics." Americans have traditionally rejected the idea of defending a particular domestic status quo. Conversely, he interprets American history as a continuous effort to create a new status quo internally. Morgenthau finds that American experience has in reality been conservative and revolutionary at the same time! It has been conservative "in philosophy and method," while being "revolutionary in purpose."  

The other philosophical tradition which is conspicuous in Morgenthau's political thought is pragmatism. Thus, Morgenthau offers a "theory of international politics" the validity of which must be tested not by "a priori and abstract criteria" but by those that are "empirical and pragmatic." Morgenthau has repeatedly extolled the empirical approach to the study of political phenomena, contrasting it with systems of abstract and comprehensive political thought which seek to re-order society on a grand scale. As an example, the English political tradition—which was, in Morgenthau's views, "unrivaled in any other civilization"—achieved its unique level of greatness because it developed "not in comprehensive systematic efforts but in a series of debates concerned with the practical merits of limited, concrete issues." As a general principle, Morgenthau is persuaded that, "No great political deed has been accomplished on the basis of a great vision of what the future would hold.... "

Yet, Morgenthau's preference for pragmatism is in no sense unqualified: The question may be legitimately raised in fact whether his avowed preference for eclecticism can be reconciled with certain other philosophical and methodological principles expressed in his thought. For example, Morgenthau informs us that:

The great political philosophers, from Plato onward, have been moved by the defects of the existing political order toward thinking about the nature of politics and of the right political order.  

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12 The Purpose of American Politics, pp. 296-297.  
13 Politics Among Nations, p. 3.  
Again, he asserts that:

Without the grand design, informed by historic experience and seeking what is politically possible, foreign policy is blind; it moves without knowing where it is going.\(^\text{17}\)

Morgenthau also believes that "a mature political science must combine utopian and realistic thought, purpose and analysis, ethics and politics."\(^\text{18}\) In his view, "political thinking is action" designed ultimately to change the existing political order, bringing it more into conformity with the political actor's conception of ultimate good.

According to Morgenthau, a scientific examination of political phenomena must be grounded upon and reflect "philosophic propositions" about "the nature of man and society and of science itself." In his view,

Political science is of necessity based upon, and permeated by, a total world view-religious, poetic as well as philosophic in nature -the validity of which it must take for granted.\(^\text{19}\)

What is Morgenthau's own "world view" and upon what philosophical and epistemological foundations does he erect the structure of his realistic political thought? Taking initially his conception of scientific inquiry, throughout this writings Morgenthau repeatedly refers to the "science of politics."\(^\text{20}\) Yet on other occasions he variously describes politics as an "art"; as an endeavor which demands above all "practical wisdom" and "common sense"; and (in reference to the challenge confronting the statesman) as an enterprise which is "more akin to the gambler's than to the scientist's."\(^\text{21}\) In some contradiction to one of the basic tenets of his avowed polit-


\(^{20}\) "The Commitments of Political Science" (1955), in *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, p. 41.

\(^{21}\) For example, see "Thought and Action in Politics," p. 624, where he refers to "a science of politics" which "seeks to understand political reality .... " In an earlier publication, he referred to the fact that, "The science of international politics... is still in its infancy." See *Principles and Problems of International Politics*, p. 3.

\(^{22}\) For Morgenthau's description of politics as "an art and not a science," see *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, p. 10. In a severe criticism of intellectuals, Mor-
ical realism—the idea that the statesman's actions can and must be in accordance with the historically-derived "universal laws" governing political behavior—Morgenthau also informs us that, "Political wisdom, understood as sound political judgment, cannot be learned; it is a gift of nature . . . ."

To Morgenthau's mind, scientific inquiry is synonymous with "scholarship, comprising the natural, social, and humanistic sciences"; he conceives of science as, "the attempt to make experience conscious in reason in a theoretically valid, systematic way." Or, as he defined science even more broadly on another occasion: true science is "thinking toward what is philosophically and empirically essential in a particular period of history." 24

In a number of key respects, Morgenthau's conception of scientific inquiry differs from the model prevalent among modern social scientists, especially those of a "behavioral" orientation. Morgenthau rejects the idea that the methodological principles of natural science, supplemented by statistical techniques and computer technology, can usefully be applied to the study of political (or more broadly, human) behavior. The behaviorally-oriented social scientist—this "nothing-but-scientific man"—has become the "true dogmatist" of modern history. 26 Behavioralists have not only failed in their attempts to make the study of political phenomena "scientific" (in the sense of advancing meaningful theories and laws governing political relationships, and of achieving their long-sought objective of accurately "predicting" political behavior), but Morgenthau is persuaded that such failure is inherent in their reliance upon the methodologies of natural science. "The science of international law and the social sciences in general are still awaiting their Newton, their Leibnitz, their Faraday. . . . In all likelihood, they are waiting in

genthau lamented their lack of "practical wisdom" in dealing with political questions. See his essay on "John F. Kennedy" (1961), in Truth and Power, p. 143. Then, testifying before a legislative committee earlier, Morgenthau called for greater congressional involvement in the foreign policy process, since this was not a "secret art like, let us say, nuclear physics, but something which anybody can understand who has sufficient common sense, say, to get himself elected to Congress." See his testimony in U. S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Hearings on What Is Wrong With Our Foreign Policy. 86th Cong., 1st Sess., April 15, 1959, p. 19. And for his equation of the statesman's position with that of the gambler, see Scientific Man vs. Power Politics, p. 22.

24 Science: Servant or Master?, pp. 1-2 and 27.
25 Scientific Man vs. Power Politics, p. 220.
vain.\footnote{International Law} But more than failure is the result of such an approach to the study of political phenomena. Much of the current writing and research in social science is irrelevant to mankind's deepest concerns—a fact which in turn contributes to the alienation of American youth toward academic institutions.\footnote{See the "Introduction" to The Restoration of American Politics, p. 2; and Politics Among Nations, pp. vii-viii.}

Two aspects of Morgenthau's conception of legitimate scientific inquiry are of singular importance. First, in his frequent references to the "science of politics," he means an approach to the study of political behavior which meets a dual standard: it is \textit{grounded in an empirical study of history}; and it reflects \textit{a clear philosophy of historical experience}, which seeks to identify the "universal laws of human nature," in order that they then may be applied to the solution of society's problems.\footnote{The Influence of Reinhold Niebuhr in American Political Life and Thought," pp. 100-101; and Scientific Man vs. Power Politics, p. 32.}

The "science of history" entails something more than the mere accumulation of historical data or (as Morgenthau accuses the behavioralists of promoting) the amassing of "theoretical knowledge." A genuinely scientific investigation of political relationships must explicitly incorporate \textit{philosophical principles}. Instead of the "quantitative" methodologies and judgments derived from them which are fashionable among contemporary social scientists, Morgenthau calls for "qualitative" judgments about human relationships derived from the application of the lessons of history to present-day human problems.\footnote{"Common Sense and Theories" (1967), in Truth and Power, p. 245.}

In reviewing the work of E. H. Carr, another devotee of \textit{Realpolitik}, Morgenthau asserted: "It is a dangerous thing to be a Machiavelli. It is a disastrous thing to be a Machiavelli without \textit{virtit}."\footnote{"The Surrender to the Immanence of Power: E. H. Carr" (1948), in The Restoration of American Politics, p. 43.} To Morgenthau's mind, scientific inquiry is inescapably concerned with \textit{virtit} or normative values. He explicitly rejects the principle that science is or can be "value free." Today, as in the past, scientists are implicitly involved with moral-ethical decisions, even when they deny the fact.\footnote{See, for example, his criticisms of the political role of scientists in the contemporary period in "Modern Science and Political Power" (1964), in Truth and Power, pp. 215-241. Thus, scientists who inject themselves into controversies over
If scientific inquiry cannot avoid being concerned with values, what normative tests should an authentically scientific study of political behavior satisfy? Morgenthau's thought emphasizes four central ideas. First, as we have noted, the social scientist should try to discern and identify historic and universally valid "laws" of political behavior, derived from an empirical study of history. Second, the insights offered by the social scientist should be relevant to existing political problems and experiences. They should not (as Morgenthau labels the orientation of much current social science research) be nothing more than a modern form of "scholasticism," involving "an intellectual exercise . . . of very limited and cognitive value and practical use."  

Third, scientific investigations of political behavior ought to be avowedly judgmental. Morgenthau has defined the main function of a theory of international relations as confronting,  

.. what governments do, and what governments and peoples think, about international relations with independent and prudential judgment and with truth, however dimly perceived and tenuously approximated.  

Fourth, scientific inquiry in the political realm must be oriented toward political "action" or problem-solving. The logical corollary of Morgenthau's conviction that "True science is thinking toward what is philosophically and empirically essential in a particular period of history," is his assertion that,  

Theoretical [i.e., scientific] thinking about politics is by necessary implication also thinking for politics. It is meaningful only if it is relevant for political action.  

Upon what underlying ethical and metaphysical foundations does national security policy and disarmament are in reality often perpetuating the status quo. Such scientific elites often "end up by rationalizing and justifying [established] political interests by dint of their possession of esoteric knowledge" -and to that extent, they impair the operation of the democratic principle. Ibid., p. 232.  

34 Science: Servant or Master?, p. 42. Italicics inserted. Citing British Prime Minister Churchill as a commendable example of a modern-day political realist, Morgenthau asserted that he thought "with a purpose which transcends thought. His purpose as thinker is that of a man of action .... " "Foreign Policy: the Conservative School," pp. 286-287.
Morgenthau build his distinctive conception of the proper role of social scientists? In contrast to many other contemporary political scientists, he is genuinely concerned about the moral-ethical dimensions of political behavior.\textsuperscript{35} Morgenthau ranks the field of moral-ethical values ahead of all others. In his scheme of values, "Morality is not just another branch of human activity . . . such as politics or economics." Rather, it is "superimposed on them, limiting the choice of ends and means and delineating the legitimate sphere of a particular branch of action altogether." He has defined a major responsibility of political science by saying:

When the reality of power is being lost sight of over its moral and legal limitations, it must point to that reality. When law and morality are judged as nothing, it must assign them their rightful place.\textsuperscript{37}

Morgenthau is highly critical of those "scientists" who endeavor to set "the political sphere apart from the private one for purposes of ethical evaluation." He is convinced that modern man will not accept a sharp dichotomy between public and private morality.\textsuperscript{38} Alluding to the "lust for power" which lies at the heart of the political process, Morgenthau refers to the "immorality" and the "stigma of guilt" which inevitably accompanies political behavior.\textsuperscript{39} Again, he asserts that: "To the degree in which the essence and aim of politics is power over man, politics is evil . . . the corruption of political action is indeed the paradigm and the prototype of all possible corruption."\textsuperscript{40}

A number of specific moral-ethical goals may be identified in Morgenthau's thought. His influential textbook, \textit{Politics Among Na-}

\textsuperscript{35} See Morgenthau's discussion of the "moral crisis" posed by the conflict between "theoretical knowledge and pragmatic action," in "Thought and Action in Politics," p. 620. With regard to American failures in the Vietnam War, Morgenthau attributed them chiefly to "defects of moral standards" which brought about "this persistence in a losing undertaking." See \textit{A New Foreign Policy for the United States}, p. 150. For further discussion of the moral importance of scientific inquiry, see \textit{Science: Servant or Master?}, p. 10. And for the moral requirements of political action, see \textit{In Defense of the National Interest}, pp. 230-231.

\textsuperscript{37} "The Commitments of Political Science" (1955), in \textit{The Decline of Democratic Politics}, pp. 325-326.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Scientific Man vs. Power Politics}, pp. 175-177.

\textsuperscript{39} "The Commitments of Political Science," p. 47.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Scientific Man vs. Power Politics}, p. 195.
tions, was written to prevent "the threat and actuality of totalitarianism and war." 41 Political scientists must also be concerned with the realization of justice and with the relationship between ends and means in political behavior. 42 The contemporary political scientist cannot be indifferent to the problems like war and human misery, which to Morgenthau's mind are a result of "purposeful human action which ... has turned against man, his freedom and his life." 43 Morgenthau commends the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr because it reflects "a general philosophy (which is of universal applicability), elaborating the worth and dignity of the individual.... " 44 In a highly laudatory analysis of Pope John XXIII's encyclical Pacem in Terris (1963), Morgenthau stated that it reflected the Pope's "moral authority," which was "susceptible of being translated into political attitudes, opinions, and actions." Pacem in Terris was especially significant because it recognized the "obsolescence of war and of the nation-state." 45 Morgenthau's judgments on postwar American foreign policy have more often than not reflected moral-ethical values, as when he characterized America's involvement in the Vietnam War as primarily a moral failure and when he defined America's "national purpose" as bestowing "the happiness of equality in freedom" upon both its own citizens and upon peoples outside its own borders. 46

If, as Morgenthau informs us, true scientific inquiry "derives from a generally implicit and unarticulated system of values," a logical question becomes: From what metaphysical and philosophical sources does Morgenthau derive his system of values? On this question, Morgenthau's thought tends to be fragmentary, ambiguous, and contradictory. At various times; Morgenthau derives his moral-ethical values from four different sources. First, he identifies the nation-state as the "strongest moral force" in the contemporary world and as "the highest moral unit on earth.... " 47 Second, he

41 Politics Among Nations, p. xi.
42 "The Integrity of Political Action" (n.d.), in The Decline of Democratic Politics, p. 359.
43 "Thought and Action in Politics," p. 621.
46 A New Foreign Policy for the United States, p. 150; and The Purpose of American Politics, pp. 99-100.
47 "The Commitments of a Theory of Political Science," p. 60. See also his
draws the moral and ethical principles which ought to regulate political action from "the standards of our [i.e., Western] civilization...." Third, and more broadly, Morgenthau derives his moral-ethical precepts from the values of civilization common to mankind. He asserts that,

... philosophically the similarities of standards are considerable throughout the world-most political philosophies agree in their valuation of the common good, of law, peace, and order, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness . . . .

It should be noted, however, that on some occasions Morgenthau himself suggests the contrary.

Fourth, Morgenthau's thought reflects acceptance and approval of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition as a major source of his moral-ethical precepts. Earlier, we noted his judgment that Reinhold Niebuhr's thought possessed "universal significance"; Niebuhr of course was one of the modern world's most eminent Christian thinkers. Morgenthau refers to the "conflict between the demands of Christian ethics and the way man must live"-a conflict which is "foreordained in the nature of Christian ethics and the nature of man." Only by depending upon "the grace of God" can man resolve this conflict.

As a carefully reasoned and consistent body of thought, the metaphysical and philosophical foundations supporting Morgenthau's conception of political realism seem unsystematic and logically vulnerable. His derivation of moral-ethical precepts from a variety of more or less compatible sources seems the epitome of eclecticism and subjectivity. Nowhere does Morgenthau deal with (or even recognize) the problem posed by the dissimilarity of these

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49 In Defense of the National Interest, p. 211, italics inserted. Yet in Politics Among Nations, Morgenthau denies that a universal moral-ethical code exists, which would giving meaning to "world public opinion." See pp. 252-253.
50 See, for example, Morgenthau's assertion that international society "is far from one world in terms of the moral values which actually move men to political action on the international scene." "A Reassessment of United States Foreign Policy" (1958), in The Impasse of American Foreign Policy, p. 61.
souces and of their fundamental disagreement on a number of basic questions, such as the nature and destiny of man or the problem of the relationship between the ends and means of political action. Morgenthau's reasons for alternatively deriving moral-ethical principles from now the nation-state, and now the common values of civilized society, and now the Judeo-Christian tradition are never clearly explained. On other key issues—such as whether moral restraints upon political behavior are stronger or weaker today than in earlier periods of history—Morgenthau has given diametrically opposed answers. But judged from the perspective of the validity of political realism, the answer—whether experience indicates that moral principles do or do not in fact restrain political conduct—seems altogether crucial.53

Nor is it clear from Morgenthau's writings whether political actors are actually capable of being guided by moral-ethical considerations in their decision-making. If they are not—as his emphasis upon the need to conform to the "laws" governing political behavior implies—then the question of the relationship of morality to political conduct becomes irrelevant and pointless. If they are, it is still unclear from Morgenthau's thought whether political actors ought to observe moral-ethical requirements because adherence to them is demanded in response to Divine Will or some other metaphysical and philosophical compulsion, or because such adherence merely contributes to "successful" political results. If moral-ethical principles are important chiefly for the latter reason, and under any given set of conditions it could be shown that disregarding them would promote political "success," then presumably political actors are free to violate them with impunity. The fundamental question, to which Morgenthau never addresses himself directly and in detail, is whether moral-ethical postulates must be complied with because of their own intrinsic importance and superior claims upon man's loyalties, or whether they are merely one among several variables likely to affect the results of political action.54

53 Thus, at one point Morgenthau (quoting the views of Roscoe Pound) informs us that a moral order among states was closer to realization in the eighteenth century than today. See Politics Among Nations, p. 241. At another point, he asserts that "statesmen and diplomats" are not as inclined today as in an earlier age to be motivated by purely power objectives; the choice of the means available to political actors is also much more limited now than in earlier periods of history. See ibid., p. 225.

54 See, for example, Morgenthau's assertion that, "... strong nations can no
POWER AND BALANCE OF POWER

Among the ideas integral to the philosophy of Realpolitik-by many criteria, perhaps its pivotal idea-is the concept of power. For it is from the realist's understanding of the nature and role of power in political life that collateral concepts, like balance of power and national interest, are largely derived. "When we speak of power," Morgenthau asserts, "we mean control over the minds and actions of other men." Morgenthau's views on power are essentially Hobbesian. The power-seeking propensity of individuals, and hence of nations, has its origins in man's intrinsically egocentric nature and stems ultimately from his instinct toward self-preservation. After gaining the latter end, man continues to pursue power in order to improve his condition. Because of the centrality of power, conflict is thus a normal and ineradicable part of political life. Inescapably, in his political relationships, man treats others as means and not ends, making the political process inherently evil.

At the international level, "politics is of necessity power politics"; political theory as applied to international relations "is the theory of survival." The power positions of nations "do not yield to arguments, but only to superior power." Morgenthau finds that, among the causes subject to human control, the decline of once powerful nations can largely be attributed to "the lack of correct evaluation of the power of one's own nation as over against the power of other nations." Although its use is inherently evil, Morgenthau believes that, "... in international affairs power is as indispensable to the righteous as it is to the wicked."

Once these assessments of the nature and role of power in political life are accepted, another major tenet of Realpolitik follows longer use their power at will without incurring moral reprobation and risking in consequence a loss of prestige and influence." "The Impotence of American Power" (1963), in Truth and Power, p. 327. The evident sense of this statement is that nations are expected to engage in moral behavior, otherwise they impair their power.

57 Politics Among Nations, p. 29; and "Common Sense and Theories" (1967), in Truth and Power, p. 250.
58 "Prologue" to Truth and Power, p. 5.
60 In Defense of the National Interest, p. 112.
logically. Ideologies and normative philosophical principles merely conceal and legitimize the universal urge for power. To Morgenthau's mind, the main function of ideologies is "to keep aspirations for power within socially tolerable bounds."\(^{61}\) Since ideologies and normative principles are merely instruments of the underlying power struggle, it devolves upon intellectuals to confront power with "truth." Morgenthau believes that, "truth threatens power, and power threatens truth.... " Accordingly, it becomes the intellectual's function to put "power on the intellectual and moral defensive" and to question the purposes and procedures of those who exercise power.\(^{2}\) Why the intellectuals within a society escape involvement in the "universal" power struggle—or why the moral-ethical professions of intellectuals do not also conceal an egocentric quest for power—are questions which Morgenthau never clarifies.) Yet Morgenthau is not sanguine about the outcome of the contest between power and rival principles, like truth or justice. In the contest between power and justice, for example, "power gets the better of justice." Rather uncharacteristically for an advocate of Realpolitik, Morgenthau holds that only love is capable of overcoming power.\(^{63}\)

Following the customary classification, Morgenthau recognizes two categories of factors—tangible and intangible—determining the power positions of nations. Foremost among the former are geography, natural resources, military preparedness, and population. The principal intangible elements are: national character, national morale, the quality of diplomacy, and the quality of government.\(^{64}\) With the passage of time, Morgenthau has accorded relatively greater importance to the intangible components of national power. He warns us, for example, that the role of military force or material strength in determining national power is often over-emphasized. Conversely, he has singled out the "quality of diplomacy" as perhaps the most decisive element determining a nation's power abroad.\(^{65}\) More recently, his judgment upon America's role in the Vietnam War was that the United States, "squandered that most pre-

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\(^{61}\) Politics Among Nations, pp. 219-220.


\(^{63}\) "On Trying to Be Just" (1963), in Truth and Power, p. 67.

\(^{64}\) Politics Among Nations, pp. 106-144.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., pp. ix and 135.
cious and uniquely American asset, the moral attractiveness of America."

Despite the tendency of political realists to invoke "timeless" principles of political behavior, Morgenthau recognizes that the development of nuclear weapons has inaugurated a new era in statecraft. What precisely has been the effect of such weapons upon the traditional relationship between the possession and the use of power to achieve national objectives? On this question, Morgenthau is much clearer in believing that fundamental changes have occurred since 1945 than in specifying the exact nature of these changes. At one point, for example, he tells us that the ready availability of nuclear weapons has "made it impossible to establish . . . a rational relationship between violence as a means and the ends of foreign policy." The plain (if possibly unintentional) meaning of this assertion is that because of the dangers of nuclear devastation, virtually all forms of violent relationships among nations have become passe.

Elsewhere, however, Morgenthau has referred to "the obsolescence of all-out [i.e., global nuclear] violence" among nations. In opposition to those seeking to reduce America's defense budget drastically, he contended that even in the nuclear age, "it is impossible to support national interests effectively without the ultimate resort to military force." Moreover, on several occasions, Morgenthau has called for a greater readiness by the United States to intervene abroad to protect its interests. Referring to Eastern Europe, for example, he deplored America's unwillingness to use force in countering Soviet oppression-a policy which gave Soviet Russia a "free hand." This in turn could lead to "surrender on the installment plan" and ultimately to "an atomic war of desperation. . . ."

As a general diplomatic principle, he asserted in the late 1950s, .. The peace of the world and the survival of civilization depend

67 Science: Servant or Master?, p. 139.
70 "Diplomatic Calamities" (1956), in The Impasse of American Foreign Policy, p. 25; and see also "The Decline and Fall of American Foreign Policy" in ibid., pp. 29-30.
upon the reputation of the United States to be able to protect the weak and destroy the strong.  

For many commentators, a partial solution at least to the dilemma posed by the conflict between the traditional role of force in international politics and the unprecedented dangers of nuclear devastation lies in differentiating between nuclear and "conventional" (or non-nuclear) weapons or between atomic and "limited" war. Sometimes, Morgenthau accepts this dichotomy and urges policymakers in the United States to base their defense strategies upon it. Thus, he concluded that a condition of nuclear stalemate means that "national interests can be supported with the conventional diplomatic and military methods." Morgenthau recommended that America's military arsenal consist of three main components: strategic nuclear weapons; tactical nuclear weapons; and conventional armaments. Tactical nuclear and conventional weapons "might actually be used in support of the national interest, as the circumstances would require." Soviet military strategists recognized this fact; Morgenthau lamented that American policy-makers did not.

Yet Morgenthau has also argued that in the nuclear age, the concept of limited war -upon which the preservation of the balance of power has traditionally depended-has now become untenable and obsolete. At one point, he recommended that all nuclear weapons-strategic and tactical alike-be eliminated from national arsenals. He is also persuaded that the distinction between nuclear and conventional power is tenable only with regard to relatively minor controversies among nations. Among nuclear-armed powers, the inherent tendency is for disputes to escalate into full-scale conflicts. Morgenthau thus rejects the idea that "tactical" nuclear weapons comprise a separate category which can and will be used, without nations' resorting to more destructive strategic nuclear weapons.

Although there has been an evident tendency over the years for Morgenthau to broaden and qualify the concept of national power, and to emphasize increasingly the importance of its intangible corn-

71 "The Decline of American Power" (1957), in The Impasse of American Foreign Policy, p. 48.
72 A New Foreign Policy for the United States, p. 242.
73 The Purpose of American Politics, pp. 167-168.
74 Principles and Problems of International Politics, p. 294.
75 A New Foreign Policy for the United States, p. 13.
ponents, his understanding of the nature and role of power in contemporary international politics exhibits three major deficiencies. First, even though Morgenthau concedes that power "is as indispensable to the righteous as it is to the wicked," his version of Realpolitik gives minimum attention to the implications of that fact. Almost never does he acknowledge, much less adequately discuss, the collaborative use of power by nations for constructive ends, such as occurred in the European Recovery Program and certain other instances of foreign aid programs, and in at least some of the peacekeeping and other activities of the United Nations. Power-construed as the allocation of material and non-material resources for the achievement of stated national objectives-is inherently an ethically neutral idea. In practice, it may often be (or result in) an "evil," as Morgenthau insists; but it may also produce beneficial results for mankind, as well. Using power to achieve the latter, rather than the former result, may well be the supreme challenge of statecraft.

Second, in stressing the importance of its intangible elements, Morgenthau so dilutes the concept of national power that it tends to become extremely diffuse, non-functional, and almost meaningless as a useful and accurate description of how nations in fact behave. As Morgenthau employs the term-and he properly insists that power must always be understood as entailing something more than the application of force-the concept becomes little more than a synonym for political activity generally, if not indeed for life itself! How nations "pursue" power may be even more important for the student of international politics than the fact that they all do so. Similarly, why nations choose to employ certain kinds of power and not others is perhaps an even more crucial question in the nuclear age than in previous eras. A basic problem in this respect, to which Morgenthau seems indifferent, is the relationship between the nature of the power possessed by a nation, on the one hand, and the nature and scope of its foreign policy goals and commitments, on the other. As the United States has discovered repeatedly since World War II, it is the necessity of maintaining some kind of equilibrium between these two which poses one of the most difficult challenges facing national policy-makers.

This leads to a third weakness in Morgenthau's understanding of national power: insufficient awareness of the significant changes which have taken place in the foreign policy goals and concerns of
influential nations since World War II, requiring corresponding changes in the means used to achieve national objectives. Take several of the leading goals of American foreign policy. Promoting political stability in the Third World; preserving the cohesion of alliance systems in an era of Cold War detente; creating and maintaining a sense of "identification" and common purpose between the advanced and the developing nations; finding workable methods for curbing the "population explosion" in less developed societies; preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons; instilling a sense of greater responsibility and maturity among members of the United Nations majority-responding effectively to such challenges calls for new modes and methods of utilizing power. Such problems underscore what may well rank as one of the most essential components of national power today: cognitive capability, or the capacity to understand the nature and implication of complex phenomena like the population explosion in the Third World. Quite possibly, the absence of this component may be one important key to many American foreign policy failures since World War II. In any case, the emergence of such new problems and concerns may well demand a complete redefinition of the traditional conception of national power, making it more relevant to the conditions of the contemporary global environment.

A logical corollary of Morgenthau's conception of power is the principle of balance of power. He has variously described the balance of power principle as "the perennial element of international politics" and as "the fundamental law of international politics." Traditionally, it has been "a universal instrument of foreign policy used at all times by all nations who wanted to preserve their independence...." Policy-makers who ignore the requirements of the balance of power have two alternatives: they "would either have to conquer the world or perish."\(^{77}\) Morgenthau's study of American diplomatic history convinces him that the creation and maintenance of the balance of power has been America's fixed "national interest" since the emergence of the Republic, although most Americans (including most national leaders) remain unaware of this fact. This has been America's historic goal toward Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Again, whether Americans realized it or not, the preservation of the balance of power was the real purpose of the Truman Doctrine.

\(^{77}\) Politics Among Nations, p. ix; and Principles and Problems of International Politics, p. 104.
in 1947. During the 1960s, Morgenthau also identified this same objective as America's dominant diplomatic goal in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{78} His opposition to American involvement in the Vietnam War also stemmed in part from a conviction that policy-makers had totally lost sight of the traditional goal in Asia, which would require a spheres of influence agreement with Red China-preservation of the balance of power.\textsuperscript{79}

A troublesome problem with the concept of balance of power, of which Morgenthau is aware (if not always adequately) is definitional. Bearing in mind that power is both \textit{a relative} and, according to Morgenthau's own assessment, increasingly \textit{intangible} asset, what does it mean for one nation to "balance" the power of another? Traditionally, it denoted a policy by which one nation endeavored

\[\ldots\] to counteract the power of another nation by increasing its strength [meaning chiefly, its \textit{military} strength] to a point where it is at least equal, if not superior, to the other nation's strength.\textsuperscript{80}\]

The hey-day of balance of power politics was the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, when several more or less equally influential European states joined in competitive alliance systems in behalf of limited (usually territorial) objectives, with Great Britain playing the role of "balancer" between rival coalitions. Yet even in this age of the "classical" and simple balance of power, it is important to note that the idea had two primary and rather antithetical connotations. Either it suggested an \textit{equilibrium of power}, as Britain and the United States sought to maintain on the European continent. Or, it could equally well denote \textit{superiority of power}, as Britain tried to maintain on the seas before World War I and as the United States sought from the early Nineteenth Century in the Western Hemisphere. Antithetical as these concepts appear, Morgenthau himself recognizes that in practice they are often less so, since policy-makers in every nation tend to err on the side of preserving an ample margin of safety in amassing the power needed to match the power of possible rivals. More frequently than not, in actuality policy-makers equate the balance of power with power \textit{superiority}.

Morgenthau is cognizant that after World war II the develop-

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Principles and Problems of International Politics}, pp. 178, 210; and "The Middle East" (1967), in \textit{Truth and Power}, p. 384.


\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Principles and Problems of International Politics}, p. 103.
ment of nuclear weapons-together with the decline of British, European, and Japanese power, and the acquisition of independence by former colonial societies-has produced a transition from a relatively simple to a much more complex configuration of global power. Despite the growing complexity of the international system, however, he believes that "the underlying principles" involved in maintaining the balance of power today are basically identical to those of an earlier era; and the necessity for doing so also remains undiminished. 81

Over the years, Morgenthau has been increasingly prepared to admit the validity of a number of serious criticisms of the balance of power principle—so many, in fact, as to raise a substantial question about the utility of the concept in the contemporary world. He concedes, for example, that the concept of balance of power is "a metaphor taken from the field of mechanics," suggesting the operation of a machine or watch; in adhering to the balance of power idea, there is always a temptation to interpret political behavior much too mechanistically. The concept also suffers from massive "uncertainty," resulting from the difficulty of measuring, and from the intangible nature of, national power. Moreover, Morgenthau acknowledges that national policies actuated by balance of power calculations have been a major cause of war throughout modern history. In addition, policy-makers often invoke the idea of balance of power to disguise their true intentions, which may actually be expansionism or domination over other nations. Morgenthau recognizes too that several important preconditions for the successful operation of the balance of power in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries—such as the existence of a moral-ethical consensus among the major European states and their willingness to fight limited wars for limited objectives—no longer exist today. Furthermore, he is convinced that the desire of nations "to attain a maximum of power" remains "universal" in the contemporary period, as in the past. These and other limitations not only make "the balance of power incapable of practical application" but lead "to its very negation in practice [i.e., the creation of instability, rather than stability, throughout the international system]." 82

It is curious and somewhat ironic that a leading political "real-

81 Politics Among Nations, pp. ix and 340-345.
Hans J. Morgenthau’s version of Realpolitik is one of whose maxims is the idea that politics is the "art of the possible"—both identifies these significant weaknesses in the balance of power principle and yet continues to call upon Americans to adhere to this historic principle in relations toward regions like Europe and Asia. The result is a puzzling ambivalence in Morgenthau's thought caused by the simultaneous advocacy and disavowal of the balance of power idea, leading him in effect to equate the balance of power concept in the contemporary era with little more than effective diplomacy. Thus, having urged Americans to return to the historic policy of preserving the balance of power in Asia, Morgenthau also admonishes them: "We must recognize that in Asia we are engaged in a struggle of ideas; a struggle for the minds of men." How American policy-makers are to maintain a balance of power in "a struggle for the minds of men" is never made clear. And while he reiterates the universal validity of the balance of power strategy, Morgenthau says that the Cold War contest will, ... ultimately not be decided by the political, military, propagandist and economic interventions of the contestants in the affairs of other nations, but by the visible virtues and vices of their respective political, economic, and social systems.

The Cold War, according to Morgenthau's judgment, is not really a conflict whose outcome will be decided by balance of power considerations at all, but on the basis of the attractiveness of the American vis-a-vis the Soviet (or Chinese) "models" for other societies. If this is so (and it seems a strange verdict for a leading apostle of Realpolitik), as Morgenthau has contended in recent years, then America's "national purpose" will play a crucial role in the outcome. We shall return to a detailed examination of this important idea in Morgenthau's recent thought at a later stage.

**The National Interest**

At the conclusion of *In Defense of the National Interest* (1952) Morgenthau urged Americans to remember that.

... it is not only a political necessity but also a moral duty for a nation to follow in its dealings with other nations but one guiding

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83 See A New Foreign Policy for the United States, pp. 157, 193.
84 In Defense of the National Interest, p. 209.
85 A New Foreign Policy for the United States, p. 243.
star, one standard of thought, one rule of action: THE NATION-
AL INTEREST.  

Along with power and balance of power, the idea of national interest forms a triad of concepts supporting Hans Morgenthau's version of Realpolitik. Convinced that the idea of interest is "of the essence of politics," Morgenthau's version of political realism contends that devotion to the national interest has been, and remains, the dominant motive force of actors in the international system.  

To his mind (citing the earlier view of Thomas Hobbes), "the state creates morality as well as law and ... there is neither morality nor law outside the state." On this premise, it follows that: "A foreign policy derived from the national interest is in fact morally superior to a foreign policy inspired by universal moral principles." Pursuit of national interest is the common denominator of the foreign policy of all nations. It follows that recognition of the primacy of national interest is the prerequisite for successful diplomacy, the task of which is to create "out of disparate and contradictory national interests a higher harmony."  

How is the national interest of particular states defined? Since some selectivity is necessary, let us concentrate upon Morgenthau's conception of the national interest of the United States. In general terms, today as in the past, America's national interest lies in maintaining the global balance of power in order to prevent threats to national security. More specifically, toward European affairs the United States has had an historic interest in preserving the balance of power, thereby minimizing the threat of European hegemony on the American continent. Morgenthau has interpreted America's postwar containment policy as a necessary effort to maintain the balance of power in the face of Communist threats to upset it. In contrast to many commentators, Morgenthau does not believe that detente has ended the Soviet threat to the West: "The
Soviet Union is still today, as it was two decades ago, the potential hegemonial power on the continent of Europe.\textsuperscript{93}

Toward Asia, Morgenthau similarly equates the historic national interest of the United States with preservation of the balance of power. Since the late 1940s, American policy-makers have erred, however, in perceiving Communist China's threat to American interests in Asia primarily as a military challenge. If the containment policy is really applicable outside the West at all (and Morgenthau is extremely doubtful that it is), it must be construed mainly in non-military terms. In time, Morgenthau became an outspoken critic of American involvement in the Vietnam War. He regarded Southeast Asia as peripheral to the nation's security interests. In this region, as in other settings, the United States had become identified with the \textit{status quo}, leading it to adopt an unsuccessful counter-revolutionary strategy opposing radical change.\textsuperscript{94}

The balance of power idea is also pivotal in understanding America's national interest in the Western Hemisphere. In this region, the

\begin{quote}
\ldots\; Monroe Doctrine and the policies implementing it express the permanent national interest of the United States in the Western Hemisphere.
\end{quote}

Traditionally, the goal has been "to preserve the unique position of the United States as a predominant power without rival."\textsuperscript{36} Here Morgenthau uses the concept of balance of power in a very different sense from its application to European affairs. Within the hemisphere, the United States has sought to maintain \textit{a preponderance of power vis-a-vis} possible rivals; its attempt to preserve a power equilibrium on the European continent was a vital means toward that end.

In recent years, Morgenthau has become preoccupied with America's "national purpose" at home and abroad. (The distinction between the "national purpose" and the "national interest" of the United States is never very clearly delineated in Morgenthau's thought, and insofar as he equates the latter with preservation of the

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{A New Foreign Policy for the United States}, p. 176.
\textsuperscript{94} See, for example, Morgenthau's criticism of American foreign policy toward Franco's Spain in \textit{Hearings on What Is Wrong With Our Foreign Policy}, pp. 8-12. America's alleged opposition to radical change is a major theme of \textit{A New Foreign Policy for the United States}. See pp. 9, 125, 149.
\textsuperscript{99} \textit{In Defense of the National Interest}, pp. 5-6.
balance of power, the two concepts are in some respects contradictory.) Morgenthau finds that from the colonial period, America's national purpose has "been the achievement of equality in freedom." Without this goal, for all its accomplishments the American society would be "nothing more than a complex of power and wealth without specific meaning." 96 Morgenthau's conception of the national purpose combines two rather contrary ideas. One side of the coin is the uniqueness of the American experience. In his assessment, America constitutes a "distinct society and national entity"; in contrast to all other nations, the American nation did not come into being principally as a result of geographical, ethnic, or other forces imparting political unity. The United States was founded "upon nothing except the will of a number of people to live together as Americans." 97 By definition, of course, a unique historical tradition is one which has no counterpart in the experiences of other societies.

Yet while emphasizing the distinctiveness of American history, Morgenthau is nevertheless persuaded that the American purpose does have relevance for other societies in the contemporary era:

The American purpose was intended not only to bestow the happiness of equality in freedom upon Americans but also to give through the American achievement an example of the happiness that is within the grasp of all men. 98

Three major questions may be raised briefly about Morgenthau's conception of the American national purpose. First, it may of course be asked whether the idea of achieving "equality in freedom" in fact accurately describes the historic purpose of the United States. Its pluralistic nature has given the American society a great variety of purposes, of which this was only one-and perhaps during some periods of American history, a clearly subordinate one. Second, as we have already noted, there seems a massive contradiction between Morgenthau's emphasis upon the uniqueness of the American experience, and his belief that the American purpose has (or should have) application for other societies, particularly those outside the West. If countries like Ghana or Egypt or India are incapable of duplicating the American experience, is it logical to suppose

96 See the "Introduction" to The Purpose of American Politics, n.p.
98 The Purpose of American Politics, p. 100.
that their peoples are likely to find the American purpose meaningful?

Third and most fundamentally for a devotee of Realpolitik, Morgenthau’s conception of the American national purpose collides with a two-fold injunction imposed by the political realist upon the conduct of foreign policy: national policy ought to be based upon empirical evidence rather than desires, and it ought to embody attainable goals. Recent experience in the vast majority of societies outside the West—where poverty remains endemic, where the gap between the privileged and lower classes is widening, and where for most countries the standard of living vis-a-vis the advanced nations is declining—offers little convincing evidence that America’s national purpose as defined by Morgenthau is an attainable foreign policy objective. In fact, during the 1960s Morgenthau himself expressed deep skepticism that goals like President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society could be realized abroad. His contention that America’s mission lies in offering the world “an example of the happiness that is within the grasp of all men”—or his recommendation to national policy-makers that the United States “ought to concentrate its efforts upon creating a society at home which can serve as a model for other nations to emulate”—thus appears in many respects as idealistic and visionary as any idea ever propounded by Woodrow Wilson!

Another important issue related to the determination of the national interest is the relationship between domestic and foreign affairs. To what extent do the former impinge upon and influence the latter? Again, on this question Morgenthau’s thought is ambivalent. In his critique of liberal political ideology, for example, he asserts that liberals have traditionally erred in believing that domestic affairs were more important than foreign relations; in thinking that the latter were merely a “reflection” or projection of the former; and of expecting the internal democratization of states to produce a more orderly and peaceful international system. During the 1960s, Morgenthau was also very critical of the Johnson Administration for permitting domestic political considerations to influence foreign policy decision-making, a tendency which produced “defective policies” overseas.

99A New Foreign Policy for the United States, pp. 85-88, 243.
100Scientific Man vs. Power Politics, pp. 42-65.
Yet earlier, in commenting upon John Foster Dulles's performance as Secretary of State during the McCarthy era of militant anti-Communism in the United States, Morgenthau asserted that Dulles was compelled to take account of domestic political controversies and issues, "as a pre-condition for the performance of his primary task in the field of foreign policy ... each impinges upon the other." Several years later, in a laudatory article on the views of Democratic presidential candidate Senator Eugene McCarthy, Morgenthau stated that, "the solution of our domestic problems is in the long run more important for our ability to change the world than the power we are able to bring to bear directly upon other nations"—a contention with which most isolationists before World War II and political liberals would readily agree. This pre-supposition—that the American society's ability to solve its internal problems is crucial in determining its influence abroad—is also of course implicit in Morgenthau's conception of the "national purpose" of the United States.

As a thinker who identifies himself with the conservative political tradition, it is not surprising that Morgenthau has a hierarchical conception of the policy-making process. More than once, he has advocated forceful executive leadership in foreign relations. In his view, and President must from time to time resort "to evasion, subterfuge, and manipulation" in dealing with rivals like Congress or public opinion. His assessment of the role of public opinion is that, more often than not, it is an impediment to sound policy-making by executive officials. Accordingly, the President has a major responsibility to serve as the "awakener of public opinion"; he has urged the White House to "marshal" public support in behalf of "wise policies," rather than be immobilized by uninformed public sentiment.

A corollary of Morgenthau's idea of the national interest is the concept of "spheres of influence." Throughout modern history,
powerful nation-states have had zones within which their power was largely dominant and uncontested. Ever since the issuance of the Monroe Doctrine (1823), the United States has had its sphere of influence within the Western Hemisphere. During World War II, Morgenthau believes that Stalinist Russia was prepared to accept that fact, as well as permitting Great Britain to re-establish its power in its traditional sphere, in exchange for Allied recognition that Russian power would be dominant, in Eastern Europe. Despite Prime Minister Churchill's efforts to create a stable postwar system based upon mutually acceptable spheres of influence among the Allies, the proposal was rejected by the Roosevelt Administration—a fact which Morgenthau believes was crucial in precipitating the ensuing Cold War. Implicitly at least, America's rejection of a spheres of influence understanding with the Soviet Union committed the United States to a policy position at variance with a fundamental axiom of Realpolitik. It identified America with a goal—the ultimate liberation of the Soviet satellite zone from Russian control—which exceeded its capabilities and was impossible of attainment, "as long as the Red Army was in control of Eastern Europe." Since Soviet-American disagreements over the future of Europe were "at the root of the Cold War," if the United States had accepted Churchill's spheres of influence scheme, "the main issue" destroying Allied unity might have been avoided."

A thorough critique of Morgenthau's thought on spheres of influence generally, and on their role as a major cause of Cold War tension, would require more space than is available here. It must suffice to make a few observations briefly about the concept. Enamored as he is of the spheres of influence idea, Morgenthau himself is far from consistent in discussing its contribution to the Cold War. Over against his contention that the United States should have accepted Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe after World War II, Morgenthau also asserted that the Roosevelt Administration erred in failing to adopt another Churchillian wartime strategy: a Western military invasion of the continent through the Balkans (the "soft under-belly of Europe") with the avowed purpose of placing Western forces as far eastward as possible, thereby averting Soviet military liberation and occupation of the European heartland.  

106 The Purpose of American Politics, p. 131.
Morgenthau, in other words, favored an even more overt and direct challenge to Soviet hegemony in east-central Europe than the Roosevelt Administration! After the war, as evidence of disaffection with Soviet rule appeared in several of the eastern European satellite states, Morgenthau urged the United States to exhibit less passivity in responding to developments like the Hungarian Revolt of 1956, when American policy-makers "refused to take the initiative and have reacted to Russian moves as though we were politically weak."

Morgenthau's spheres of influence strategy suffers from other defects. For example, it collides starkly with his conception of America's national purpose-promoting "equality in freedom"-which Morgenthau believes has global, as well as internal, applicability. On this point, it is instructive to note the verdict of another political realist, George F. Kennan, regarding the fate of those Europeans subjected to totalitarian rule, as a result of the Nazi-Soviet spheres of influence agreement from 1939-1941. This accord was a

. catastrophe . . . for the affected peoples . . . a calamity of the first order for almost everyone concerned . . . both Germans and Russians perpetuated appalling cruelties in their respective spheres of influence

Morgenthau's prediction that an Allied understanding on spheres of influence would have resulted in a stable postwar system also rests upon certain assumptions concerning the nature and goals of Soviet wartime and postwar foreign policy. If, as his writings at times suggest, Moscow sought only or mainly national security and hegemony over territories once included in Russia's "historic borders," then an Allied agreement on spheres of influence might well have promoted regional and global stability after the Axis defeat. By analogous reasoning, such an agreement between the United States and Communist China ought to enhance stability in contemporary Asia.

Yet this anticipated result is in turn predicated upon a dual premise: that Moscow's objectives were largely limited to the creation of a sphere of influence in Europe, roughly coterminous with

107 Hearings on What Is Wrong With Our Foreign Policy, pp. 2-5.
the zone of influence maintained by the historic Russian state; and that, having acquired the sphere of influence it desired, Stalinist Russia would thereafter be content with it, refraining from using it as a base for new expansionist moves and pressures against other countries. Morgenthau's own appraisals of Soviet foreign policy during and after World War II, however, cast considerable doubt on the validity of these assumptions.

Thus, on the fortieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Morgenthau noted that the record of Soviet expansionism had vastly exceeded Czarist objectives, most of it occurring during a period when Western nations were liquidating their empires. \(^{110}\) The United States, he commented on another occasion, adopted the containment policy in 1947 to prevent "the extension of the Russian sphere" into new areas. \(^ {111}\) Similarly, the Yalta Conference agreement (1945) was jeopardized by Moscow's interpretation of it to facilitate "the expansion of Russian power" into areas not then under Soviet control. \(^ {112}\) Moreover, prone as he has been in recent years to criticize postwar American foreign policy for its anti-Communist and anti-revolutionary cast, Morgenthau's judgment was that after World War II Moscow espoused a "philosophy of world-wide expansion," which was "turned on full blast" against its former allies once the war was over. \(^ {113}\)

Soviet Russia, Morgenthau observed elsewhere, exemplifies "universal nationalism." "The Soviet Union has indeed been the vehicle on which Communism has tried to conquer the world." \(^ {114}\) Early in 1946, former British Prime Minister Churchill delivered his celebrated Fulton, Missouri, speech in which he attributed the Cold War chiefly to Soviet expansionism and interventionism. Churchill likened the Soviet threat to German imperialism; he believed that no one could predict "the limits, if any, to their [Soviet] expansive and proselytizing tendencies"; and he accused Moscow of seeking "the indefinite expansion" of its power and doctrines. Morgenthau (who more than once cited Churchill

\(^ {111}\) "Arguing About the Cold War" (1967), in *Truth and Power*, p. 350, italics inserted.  
\(^ {112}\) *The Purpose of American Politics*, p. 129, italics inserted,  
\(^ {114}\) *Politics Among Nations*, p. 323.
as the epitome of "political wisdom" among modern statesmen) commended the "authoritative" and "prophetic" quality of Churchill's analysis. Morgenthau has repeatedly expressed skepticism about efforts to achieve detente between the United States and the Soviet Union. Referring to attempts by UN Secretary General U Thant to bring about an accommodation between the Super Powers, Morgenthau asked rhetorically:

... how do you bargain with a nation that believes in the inevitable universal triumph of Communism and regards its mission to be that of bringing about your doom? What can you give a nation by way of compromise, if that nation is bent on taking all?

The controversy over Allied spheres of influence after World War II illustrates a more general problem in Morgenthau's conception of the national interest. This is the question of permanence versus change in defining a nation's external policy goals. At times, Morgenthau explicitly states that the national interests of the United States are relatively fixed and unalterable, as when he asserts that the Monroe Doctrine and the policies undertaken to implement it expressed "the permanent national interest of the United States in the Western Hemisphere."117 Even more sweepingly, Morgenthau condemned American involvement in the Vietnam War because it ignored "the permanent interests that the United States has pursued throughout the world since the beginning of its history."118 Yet at other times, Morgenthau underscores the contingent and conditional nature of the national interest. Political realism, he informs us, "does not endow its key concept of interest defined as power with a meaning that is fixed once and for all.

This dichotomous view of the national interest is well illustrated by one of the most recent themes in Morgenthau's thought: his repeated assertion that in Southeast Asia and other locales, American foreign policy has miscarried because the United States has failed to identify itself with, and has often opposed, revolutionary change. Convinced that America's national purpose—the promotion of "equality in freedom"—has been a revolutionary idea,
while its political methods have not, Morgenthau believes that the achievement of that purpose has been impaired by the nation's identification with the *status quo* at home and abroad. Within the United States, Morgenthau has called for a "revolution in our economic thinking and practice commensurate in its magnitude with the changes modern technology has wrought in our economic circumstances." The object of such a revolution would be to realize "human potentialities in freedom." 120

Abroad, the case for America's support of revolutionary causes is, to Morgenthau's mind, even more compelling. Too often, American policy-makers have mistaken the desire for revolutionary change in primitive societies with Communist gains, sponsored by Moscow or Peking. American postwar opposition to Communism has misled Washington into an overall anti-revolutionary stance and support for entrenched political elites. If it is to regain its influence abroad, therefore, the United States must endorse the principle of, and actively encourage, "radical change" in other countries, giving contemporary revolutionary movements unequivocal moral and material support. 121

Morgenthau's recent redefinition of the American national interest to include support for revolutionary movements abroad raises a number of fundamental questions—not the least of which is reconciling this prescription with several tenets of political realism. In the first place, Morgenthau has consistently identified America's national interest with the preservation of the balance of power in Europe and Asia; and the preservation of the balance of power inherently suggests the necessity for *stability* within the international system. Yet, a fact which Morgenthau's endorsement of revolutionary change tends to overlook is that for many societies throughout the Third World, a change in their *diplomatic* orientations—including a desire to destroy the simple bipolar structure of global power—is often one of their foremost revolutionary objectives. In some cases (and India is a leading example), the acquisition of nuclear weapons is a dominant national goal.

In the second place, Morgenthau himself recognizes that in some societies abroad, the preservation of the existing order may be preferable to any new regime which may reasonably be expected to

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120 See the "Introduction" to *The Purpose of American Politics*, n.p.
121 *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*, pp. 9, 110, 125, and 149; see also, "Thought and Action in Politics," p. 618.
succeed it. Thus, he stated with regard to postwar American foreign aid programs that their alleged "failure" in certain countries may in reality have been a blessing: the failure prevented upsetting "a stable status quo whose continuance was in our interest." As a general principle, 'Morgenthau informed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "It is the task of foreign policy to create a defensible status quo.'

In the third place, Morgenthau has urged policy-makers in America (and all other countries whose policies are founded on the principles of political realism) to follow Great Britain's historic example of supporting foreign revolutionary movements selectively and not, as it were, ideologically. Following the British precedent, the test ought always to be whether such support serves the nation's diplomatic interests. For example, taking Morgenthau's own definition of America's national interest as promoting "equality in freedom" at home and abroad, he recognizes that some revolutionary movements merit support by the United States, while others—which seek merely the "substitution of one government of the few for another government of the few"—do not.

In the fourth place, Morgenthau acknowledges that from the vantage point of outside powers, some contemporary revolutionary movements might well prove "uncontrollable." Conceivably, it lies within the capacity of the United States to weaken or destroy the power of established political elites in other countries. But after doing so, America "may well be unable to control the course of the revolution itself."

Insofar as political realists regard politics as "the art of the possible," there is a fifth difficulty with Morgenthau's summons to American policy-makers to endorse revolutionary change throughout the world. It may be seriously questioned whether this is a credible policy position for American vis-a-vis Soviet or Chinese policy-makers. Officials in Moscow and Peking naturally espouse revolution as an extension of their ideological principles, and they are experienced in fomenting revolutionary political changes in other coun-

123 Hearings on What Is Wrong With Our Foreign Policy, p. 2.
124 "The Revolution We Are Living Through" (1955), in The Impasse of American Foreign Policy, p.248.
tries. Despite the fact that Morgenthau regards America's national purpose as revolutionary, he acknowledges the reality that to the outside world,

... as a Western capitalistic nation, the United States is a conservative power, both domestically and internationally, and must appear particularly so to the underdeveloped nations ....

To put the matter differently, in order to sponsor revolutionary causes abroad successfully, the United States would have to adopt a strategy totally foreign to its own tradition: support not only for revolutionary principles, but for revolutionary political, economic, and social processes as well.

Our final aspect of Morgenthau's conception of the national interest remains to be discussed: the relationship between his conviction that nations are the decisive actors in the international system and his belief that various forms of supra-national cooperation will (and perhaps should) evolve within the system. Morgenthau disclaims any intention to enshrine the nation-state as the final product of political evolution. In company with many other commentators, he is mindful of its growing "obsolescence" and perceives the need, for example, to merge the nation-state "into supra-national organizations of a functional nature...." Modern methods of warfare and technology now require "a principle of political organization transcending the nation-state...."  

Yet neither the precise forms such supra-national cooperation may be expected to take, nor indeed the prospects for successful supra-national collaboration at all on important political questions, emerges clearly from Morgenthau's thought. He is dubious, for example, that the kind of functional collaboration witnessed in Western Europe since World War II is likely to lead to European political unification, as many advocates of functionalist theory expect. Repeatedly, Morgenthau has also expressed serious doubts about the ability of the United Nations to function as an effective supra-national agency. The UN's activities have been increasingly characterized by "immobilization" and growing "fragmentation" of the in-

127 Politics Among Nations, p. x.
terests of its members. (Yet, Morgenthau also believes that the United States ought to take the lead in "reforming" the UN, although the precise nature of the reforms needed is not specified). On an even higher level of supra-national authority–world government–Morgenthau's thought exhibits the same duality. On the one hand, included in America's national purpose is an obligation to build "the foundations for a supra-national order that will take the control of nuclear weapons out of the hands of the nation state." On the other hand, Morgenthau has argued persuasively that national sovereignty cannot be "divided." He believes that in the post-war era, the impulse toward supra-nationalism has waned, while "nationalist tendencies" have been on the upsurge. He disagrees with the views of commentators like Herman Kahn that the threat or actuality of nuclear war will provide an impetus toward supra-national forms of political collaboration. And he is persuaded that, far from enhancing world stability and peace, a global political authority would merely reflect, rather than resolve, conflicts like the Cold War, already present within the international system. Since the likelihood of world government is minimal, Morgenthau approvingly cited the verdict of the late Reinhold Niebuhr that agitation in favor of it "is actually destructive of those elements of peace and order present in the international situation."

CONCLUSION

In company with several other spokesmen for the Realpolitik viewpoint during the past generation—notably, Walter Lippmann, Nicholas J. Spykman, Robert Strausz-Hupe, Dewitt Poole, and George F. Kerman–Hans J. Morgenthau has been prominent in familiarizing the serious students of international politics with the basic tenets of this approach. That Morgenthau's influence upon the postwar climate of informed American opinion toward foreign affairs has been pervasive and profound can hardly be doubted. Very

130 A New Foreign Policy for the United States, p. 244.
131 The Purpose of American Politics, p. 310.
132 Politics Among Nations, p. 317.
133 A New Foreign Policy for the United States, pp. 6-7.
134 Science: Servant or Master?, pp. 132-133.
135 "The Escape from Power" (1947), in The Decline of Democratic Politics, pp. 315-316; and Politics Among Nations, pp. 490-491.
136 See the views of Reinhold Niebuhr, as cited in Principles and Problems of International Politics, p. 133.
few commentators have been as prolific, as authoritative and well-versed in their subject-matter, or have concerned themselves with such a wide spectrum of national policy issues as Morgenthau. Intellectually, Morgenthau is a seductive writer. Once his underlying \textit{Realpolitik} premises have been granted, his thought exhibits a certain relentless and overpowering logic, making it difficult to disagree with his principal conclusions. For devotees of political realism, his ideas provide powerful support and reinforcement. But even those who have not been converted to \textit{Realpolitik} benefit from his thinking, since they are compelled to re-think their own viewpoints in order to defend them against the kind of formidable intellectual assault Morgenthau is capable of mounting against his critics.

Morgenthau and other modern political realists have supplied an essential and extremely useful perspective on international politics and on America's role in them since World War II. In the absence of the realist approach, two orientations— isolationism and Wilsonian-New Deal idealism—were available to American policy-makers. Alone, neither was capable of providing the kind of guidance required by the United States in its new role as a Super Power. The same point can also be made of \textit{Realpolitik}: this perspective exhibits numerous deficiencies, contradictions, and weaknesses—fully as many as isolationist or idealistic thought. Careful examination of America's postwar diplomatic record, however, would reveal that most major decisions in foreign affairs have involved some \textit{combination} of two or more of these approaches to problems in the outside world.

With its philosophical origins mainly in the thought and political behavior of the Old World, \textit{Realpolitik} provides Americans access to the diplomatic traditions of older, more experienced nations. Novel as many postwar challenges may have seemed to Americans, Morgenthau is surely correct in his insistence that many contemporary problems and international behavior patterns resemble those of an earlier era. More than any other peoples in modern history perhaps, Americans believe in the uniqueness of their society and its political principles. Historically valid as such a claim may be, it can—and not infrequently does—engender attitudes of hypocrisy, self-righteousness, Phariseeism, and the "arrogance of power" in the American approach to other countries. Acquaintance with the precepts of political realism ought to serve as a partial correc-
tive against such tendencies. Uncongenial as the idea may be to those Americans steeped in the traditions of Wilsonian idealism, spokesmen for Realpolitik properly and unapologetically emphasize that the United States has security and other primary diplomatic interests, which are not always identical with the "interests of humanity"; the protection and pursuit of America's interests often engenders conflict with other nations; power in one form or another must frequently be employed to safeguard these interests; international conflicts are not likely to be permanently eliminated by devices like international agreements to "outlaw war," by summit conferences, by resolutions of the United Nations, or by other steps customarily proposed by idealists for eliminating international violence. One of the strengths of political realism is that it has the virtue of demanding honesty and candor as a minimal condition required for durable international agreements and stability.

The opposite side of the coin of American interests in global affairs of course is the realization that adversaries like the Soviet Union, Communist China, and Castro's Cuba also have interests to which they are attached. Both before and after World War II, the American approach to foreign policy has sometimes ignored that pivotal fact. As the unfortunate history of the Treaty of Versailles suggests, whether a peace treaty (or in the contemporary period, a settlement of the Arab-Israeli controversy) is actually "dictated" by outside powers and imposed upon weaker states may be less important in determining its contribution to international stability than the belief that German or Israeli or Arab interests have been ignored in such settlements. Nebulous and difficult to formulate precisely as they often are, the interests of nations must not only be taken into account in efforts to resolve global conflicts, but no less crucially they must appear to be considered if agreements are to endure. Similarly, if the concept of balance of power gives rise to numerous logical and practical problems, it can at least be said that, today as in the past, the preservation of some kind of equilibrium of power throughout the international system—in the sense of preventing any one nation or power bloc from becoming dominant—ranks as a continuing challenge of statecraft. In fact, in the absence of such an equilibrium of power, what is called "international politics"—political relationships among sovereign and juridically equal nations—would obviously cease to exist.

In the post-Vietnam War era, more than at any time since World
War II, the *Realpolitik* perspective of Hans J. Morgenthau underscores another important point which Americans have sometimes been prone to forget or disregard in their foreign relations. The effectiveness of a nation's diplomacy is largely a function of the relationship between its goals abroad and the means available for achieving them, or its power. Isolationists were largely oblivious to both of these components, more so perhaps toward the latter than the former. By contrast idealists have been prone to believe that the enunciation of efficacious foreign policy goals was equivalent to their realization, especially if such goals were embodied in legal documents and international charters. As often as not, in this perspective power was viewed as an impediment to achieving national objectives, rather than as an indispensable means for doing so. Quite possibly, political realists like Morgenthau tend to err in the opposite direction—as, for example, when they identify pursuit of the national interest or preservation of the balance of power as ends of foreign policy, rather than primarily as means for the accomplishment of a society's underlying purposes, which are in turn an outgrowth of its historical experience, ideology, and ethical-moral values. In any case, realists are surely justified in their insistence that neglecting the problem of acquiring and utilizing the power required to achieve national goals can be a serious failure. It may, and during some periods of American history no doubt did, give rise to Utopian attitudes toward foreign relations—and eventually to public and official disillusionment, cynicism, and withdrawal toward the outside world, after Utopian expectations are disappointed. As in the contemporary period, some segments of American public opinion (with political liberals often at the forefront of this transition) have swung from an earlier confidence that America could solve virtually any problem in foreign affairs, to the contrary view that the United States is now a "crippled giant" which can do very little constructively in the foreign policy field. These periodic oscillations in the American mood may in some measure be explained by saying that too often in the process of formulating external goals, insufficient attention was devoted to the question of the power required—and the power available to policy-makers—for the attainment of objectives overseas.

Since detailed criticisms focusing upon specific tenets of *Realpolitik* have, already been made, it suffices here to conclude with certain brief and very general observations about this school of
thought, as exemplified by the views of Hans J. Morgenthau. Perhaps the overriding impression conveyed by our analysis is that, insofar as his thought serves as an influential model of modern political realism, it is much less unified, coherent, logically consistent, and free of lacunae than disciples of this viewpoint would have us believe. At numerous points, Morgenthau's thought exhibits anomalies, inconsistencies, and (to use one of his own favorite terms) paradoxes, several of which seem intrinsic to the Realpolitik perspective. Key terms and concepts in this doctrine tend to be excessively general; and they are often employed in various senses, producing ambiguity in meaning and circularity in reasoning. Not infrequently, among realists concepts like the "national interest" degenerate into a kind of incantation or nostrum of foreign policy, as though intoning it often enough provides a sufficient guide to sound foreign policy formulation and execution. But as our earlier treatment has emphasized, terms like power, balance of power, and national interest raise fully as many questions and problems for policy-makers as they resolve.

This leads to one of the most conspicuous omissions in Morgenthau's thought: inadequate attention to the process by which the national interest of the United States and other countries is formulated, continually reformulated, and translated into national policies and programs. As an experienced American diplomatic official expressed it: the concept of national interest "begs more questions than it answers." Or as Philip Quigg has observed, "deciding upon the national interest is what politics is all about." Unless it is assumed that the national interest is fixed and immutable (and this is among the more conspicuously ambiguous points in Morgenthau's thought), then the process by which it is determined and the reasons why policy-makers in the executive and legislative branches, not to mention influential segments of public opinion, usually arrive at diverse conceptions of it—is a paramount issue affecting the nation's role abroad. Moreover, in a revolutionary global environment, the definition and re-definition of the national interest is an ongoing, increasingly complex and controversial pro-

cess. It would not be amiss, for example, to interpret the bitter internal debate over the Vietnam War as a clash among several fundamentally different conceptions of America's "national interests" in Asia and in global affairs generally.

In the particular context of American foreign policy, *Realpolitik* principles confront a number of unique obstacles. It may be asked initially whether an approach to international politics derived mainly from the philosophical traditions and experiences of the Old World can ever be satisfactorily adopted to the American *milieu* and character. As we have seen, the conservative political tradition massively influences modern-day political realism. Yet the American political tradition is predominately liberal in its values and goals. How "realistic" is it to expect Americans to adopt goals, like maintenance of the balance of power or preservation of spheres of influence, as primary foreign policy objectives? If they did so, would not the hiatus created between their external goals and their internal concerns and values prove permanently divisive—so much so as to create a new obstacle to constructive American influence overseas?

In a special sense for Americans—but increasingly for other societies throughout the world as well—the *Realpolitik* mentality confronts a growing "credibility gap," creating serious doubts about its adequacy as a basis for foreign policy. Even devotees of this approach like Henry A. Kissinger have conceded that today traditional concepts like the national interest and balance of power are incapable of evoking the loyalties of mankind. 139 Do masses and political leaders throughout Black Africa or the Arab world discern any meaningful connection between the pursuit of power or the preservation of the balance of power by the United States, the Soviet Union, and Red China, and their own overriding personal and national aspirations? The steady growth of the neutralist movement among Third World nations strongly suggests the contrary. Indeed, insofar as a balance of power implies an indefinite Soviet-American duopoly in global affairs, this fact may well alienate a majority of countries throughout the world. Contemporary versions of *Realpolitik* tend to ignore an intriguing and bewildering recent phenomenon: the Super Powers have discovered that, at a time when many traditional elements of their national power have in-

increased, their influence over societies beyond their own borders has declined sharply. Even Morgenthau, for instance, recognizes that Soviet and American ability to influence the behavior of the Third World has deteriorated markedly in recent years. While the reasons are varied, the phenomenon may be partially accounted for by saying that the Super Powers have experienced great difficulty "relating" their own foreign policy objectives and interests to the needs and concerns of a majority of the world's population.

Another way of expressing a major limitation in the usefulness of Realpolitik for contemporary international relations is to say that in nearly every sphere of life, "classical" principles and norms have largely become passe. Wisely or unwisely, modern man finds little utility in classical moral and ethical codes, norms of etiquette and personal behavior, literary and poetic modes, artistic and musical forms, economic doctrines and countless other ideas derived from an earlier age. As Boulding reminds us, interpreted quite literally the "national interest" is "what the nation is interested in." There is no more evidence that the nation is interested in the goals associated with Realpolitik than it is in any other approach to human problems derived from the experiences of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, or earlier eras.

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141 See the views of Kenneth Boulding, as cited in Quigg, America the Dutiful, p. 107.