

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HANS MORGENTHAU'S APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

Hans Morgenthau's contribution to the scholarship of International Relations dominated the field at least until the 1970s. The aim of this article is to explore how Morgenthau's views on Realism have impacted on the subsequent study of international relations (IR), and to identify the salient aspects of the ongoing debate between Morgenthau and his many critics. Regardless of the explanatory power of Morgenthau's Realism, and its advantages of parsimony and clarity, Morgenthau's thinking has been convincingly challenged by a number of other incisive approaches. Even the most rigorous IR theory has finite explanatory power and cannot hope to provide a satisfactory account of every single aspect of international politics. However, traditional Realists are perhaps too dedicated to the vision of an unpromising future for humanity.

Key Words: *International Relations, Morgenthau, Realism, Alternative Approaches.*

HANS MORGENTHAU'NUN ULUSLAR ARASI İLİŞKİLERE YAKLAŞIMI ÜZERİNE ELEŞTİREL BAKIŞ AÇILARI

Özet

Hans Morgenthau'nun Uluslar arası İlişkiler bilimine katkısı 1970'lere kadar alanda üstünlüğünü sürdürmüştür. Bu makalenin amacı; Morgenthau'nun realizm üzerine görüşlerinin Uluslar arası İlişkiler(IR) alanında daha sonraki çalışmalarda nasıl bir etki bıraktığını ve Morgenthau ve eleştirenleri arasında süregelen tartışmanın önemli yönlerini ortaya koymaktır. Morgenthau'nun realizminin açıklayıcı gücüne ve cimriliğinin ve

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açıklığının yararlarına bakmaksızın, Morgenthau'nun düşüncesine, diğer birçok akla yatkın yaklaşım tarafından açıkça meydan okundu. Hatta en iyi Uluslar arası İlişkiler yaklaşımı bile sınırlı bir açıklayıcı güce sahiptir ve uluslar arası ilişkiler politikasının her bir yönüne yeterli ölçüde değinmesi beklenilemez.

Fakat gelenekçi Realistler, belki de insanlık için umutsuz bir gelecek olduğu görüşüne kendilerini fazlaca kaptırmışlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Uluslararası İlişkiler, Morgenthau, Realizm, Alternatif Yaklaşımlar*

Introduction

Realism has arguably been the most prominent theoretical paradigm in international relations discourse since 1945. There can equally be little doubt that Hans Morgenthau's contribution to this body of scholarship singularly dominated the study of international relations until the 1970s. Morgenthau's particular concern in the 1940s and 1950s was to tame Americans' optimism that complex geopolitical conflicts could always be resolved by high-minded principle. Thus, Morgenthau's approach stood in sharp contrast to the idealist theory of international relations, which had dominated the inter-war study of the field. Idealism, an essentially normative approach, had argued that the elimination of war and its replacement by reinvigorated international law (the principle of "peace through law") and improved diplomacy would create a better international order. One assumption of idealism was that human beings everywhere were linked by overriding common interests based on either morality or enlightened self-interest. Central to Morgenthau's thinking, however, lie the fundamental concepts of power and national interest. The aim of this article is to explore the way in which Morgenthau's views on Realism have impacted on the subsequent study of international relations (IR), and to identify the salient aspects of the ongoing debate between Morgenthau and his many critics. This article will attempt to demonstrate that fundamental questions of international relations have been rigorously dissected by a range of new critiques that contest fundamental aspects of Morgenthau's thinking.

1. The Realist Mindset

The classical realists generally shared the basic assumption of a pessimistic view of human nature in which man is viewed as inherently self-interested and unchangeable. For realists, states are autonomous sovereign entities that develop their own independent, self-interested decisions in a constant struggle for scarce resources. Realists believe that anarchy in the international system limits the willingness of states to cooperate. It is rational for states to compete for power and security. Thus, Realism predictably emphasises the importance of military power. Hans J. Morgenthau (1904-1980) was a pioneer in post-world War Two theorizing about International relations and a powerful proponent of political realism. He was, as Henry Kissenger notes, '...the doyen of American philosophers of the national interest'¹. Indeed, Morgenthau came to be viewed as 'the pope of IR' (Griffiths 1992, p. 36).

¹ Henry Kissenger, **Diplomacy**, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1994, p.668.

Morgenthau's first book *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* (1946), critiqued what he '...claims is the dominant liberal belief in progress, based on an optimistic set of assumptions regarding human nature...' ². In *Politics among Nations* (1946), Hans Morgenthau attempted to outline a general theory of international politics that is conceived as interest defined in terms of power. Morgenthau argues that states are the key actors in world affairs. State interests are not constructed by the international system. States act as rational, self-interested, opportunistic individuals in pursuing national interests by the most efficient, available means. Indeed, states are so preoccupied with power and security that they must even be prepared to renege on international agreements if they are found to weaken a states vital interests. Power is an end in itself. Morgenthau, insisted on the radical antinomy between Christian virtues and political action. He attributes much of the evil in politics to human nature and '...the animus dominandi, the desire for power...' ³. There is, Morgenthau argues '... no escape from the evil of power, regardless of what one does.... Political ethics is indeed the ethics of doing evil. While it condemns politics as the domain of evil par excellence, it must reconcile itself to the enduring presence of evil in all political action...' ⁴. This does not mean that he was insistent on the detachment of morality from international politics rather that '...In order to be worthy of our lasting sympathy, a nation must pursue its interests for the sake of a transcendent purpose that gives meaning to the day-to-day operations of its foreign policy...' ⁵.

For all realists, calculations about power are fundamental determinants in how states think about the world around them ⁶. Power is the primary consideration: morality, ideology, economics, and religious or other cultural factors are of far less importance as to how states may explain their actions. For Morgenthau, '... Power is the force that determines international political scenarios in the absence of divine truth, and is located among the representatives of a nation whose responsibility it is to oversee foreign affairs...' ⁷. The ethics of international relations are purely situational and are very different from the strictures of private morality that may be held by individuals ⁸. For Morgenthau, motives and personal virtue were not of any relevance in the underpinning of foreign policy. There can be no question of universal values:

'...We judge and act as though we were at the center of the universe, as though what we see everybody must see, and as though what we want is legitimate in the eyes of justice. Turning Kant's categorical imperative upside down, we take it for granted that the

² Martin Griffiths, 'Hans Morgenthau', **Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations**, Florence, Routledge, 1999, p.37.

³Hans Morgenthau, **Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace**, New York, Knopf, 1946, p.192.

⁴ Morgenthau, a.g.k., p.201-2.

⁵ Hans Morgenthau, **The Purpose of American Politics**, New York, Knopf, 1960, p.8.

⁶ John J. Mearsheimer, **The Tragedy of Great Power Politics**, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, p.12.

⁷ A. Heath, "Re-examining Core Concepts of Classical Realism: E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau and the Realist agenda", paper presented to **Sixth Pan-European International Relations Conference**, University of Turin, 12 -15 September, 2007, p.20

⁸ Morgenthau, a.g.k., p.12.

standards of judgment and action produced by the peculiarities of our perspective can serve as universal laws for all mankind'⁹...

Morgenthau '...judged as blasphemous any claim that a given nation or leader was guided by Providence. Concrete results, not universal principles, were his test of a policy's morality...'¹⁰.

Morgenthau argued that the national and world arenas were based on the same processes and principles of power politics¹¹. The ultimate skill of the state leader is to adapt to the changing power-political configurations in world politics. Politics domestically and internationally is fundamentally concerned with the balancing of power. Morgenthau also argued that the balance of power would emerge almost as a 'natural phenomena'. Morgenthau emphasised that '...all the successful statesmen of modern times from Richlieu to Churchill have made the national interest the ultimate standard of their policies, and none of the great moralists in international affairs has attained his goal...'¹². Politics, '...has no limits-it lacks defined objects of interest or resources of power. Its limits lie only in the confrontation between divergent wills, interests, and the forms of power they can wield...'¹³ Morgenthau asserts that Realism must '...guard against two popular fallacies: the concern with motives and the concern with ideological preferences... History shows no exact and necessary correlation between the quality of motives and the quality of foreign policy...'¹⁴. Overall, Morgenthau espouses the importance of military power and the fact that without military power, states are unable to defend their core interests. He believed, at least in the early post-war era, that international relations was shaped by bipolarity and nuclear weapons.

As Michael C Williams points out, in theoretical terms, Morgenthau's '...core concepts of power and the national interest were attacked as too vaguely formulated to be analytically useful...'¹⁵. Morgenthau's writings fundamentally argued that politics is governed by objective laws which are held to apply universally. For Morgenthau, there could be no question of integrating scientific rationalism with the practice and study of politics (Morgenthau, 1946a). Inevitably, Morgenthau's ideas have given rise to a variety of alterantive paradigms that will be considered below. In the 1950s and 1960s, Morgenthau's thinking-especially, the precision of his methodology- came under critical scrutiny from a

⁹ Hans Morgenthau, **Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-70**, New York, Pall Mall Press, 1970, p.64.

¹⁰ K. Meyer, "Weighing Iraq on Morgenthau's Scale", **World Policy Journal**, Fall, Vol. 20, Issue 3, 2003, pp.89-92, at p.89.

¹¹ Hans Morgenthau, **Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace**, 6th edition, New York, Knopf, 1985, pp.39-40.

¹² Hans Morgenthau, **In Defence of National Interest: A critical Examination of American Foreign Policy**, New York, Knopf, 1951, p.34.

¹³ M.C. Williams, "Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics", **International Organization** Vol. 58, No. 4, Fall 2004, pp. 633-665, at p.645.

¹⁴ Hans Morgenthau, **Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace**, New York, Knopf, 1946, pp.5-7.

¹⁵ Michael C. Williams, "Introduction" **Realism Reconsidered**, Ed: Michael C Williams, 2007, pp.1-18, at p. 3.

newly-emergent school of 'behavioural' or 'scientific' political analysis. This approach was critical of the traditional realists for their insistence on what the behaviouralists saw as the traditionalist focus on the accumulation of facts about seemingly unique events drawn from philosophy, history and law. The proponents of the scientific approach, as in the case of Morton Kaplan (1964), stressed the need for rigorous evidence, quantification of the phenomenon under observation and strict procedures for verification. Morgenthau was consistently hostile towards the 'science' of politics approach advocated by behaviouralism. Morgenthau also never wavered from his sharp focus on the limits of human nature and what was considered to be the unchanging nature of political behaviour.

2. The Liberal-Pluralist Paradigm

Predictably enough, major challenges to Realism continued to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s as anomalies between the presuppositions of Realism and developments in global politics became ever more apparent. Each challenge sought to question the assumptions of the realist approach and attempted to radically recast Morgenthau's approach to international relations. The liberal-pluralist paradigm fundamentally took issue with Morgenthau's state-centric view. Indeed, the emphasis on international anarchy and state competition is rejected in favour of the idea of an international society. Self-interest is important but it is always moderated by an awareness of the interests of others. Liberal-pluralists have condemned the short-sightedness of sovereign nation-states in pursuing their own security and narrowly defined national interests. It has been argued that '...For liberal-pluralists, order is maintained in the global system not through states or the balance of power... The international society was an environment in which order develops through the development of international law, commonly accepted values and cooperative activity...' ¹⁶. The support of peace and mutual assistance are *possible* in international politics. Sociological liberals have been greatly interested in the question of transnational relations. During the 1950s Karl Deutsch and his collaborators attempted to analyse what he termed the '...channels of communication and decision...' that exist between societies ¹⁷. Deutsch was particularly interested in the way in which the peoples of the North Atlantic area form what he termed a "security-community". The military option is an unlikely one. Unsurprisingly, Morgenthau regularly criticised liberals for holding utopian views of politics which he felt could only lead to disaster.

3. Complex Interdependence

In the 1970s, critics of realist orthodoxy pointed to the importance of rising levels of interdependence as well as to the increasing number of significant international regimes and sets of procedures, and institutions to govern behaviour within 'issue-areas'. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye presented an argument for what they termed 'complex interdependence'. They argued that modern states were characterised by "multiple channels of access", which, in turn, progressively reduce the hold on foreign policy previously maintained by central decision makers. Secondly, complex interdependence disputes the

¹⁶ Anthony G. McGrew, "Conceptualising World Politics" **Global Politics**, Eds: AG McGrew- P G Lewis et al., Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992, pp.1-31, at p.20.

¹⁷ Karl [Deutsch](#) et al, **Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience**, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1957, p.32.

central realist claim that military force is an effective instrument of policy; a perspective which contrasts markedly with the central role that military utility is accorded by Morgenthau and other traditional realists. Whereas Realism always assumes that security is the pre-eminent constant in relations between states, under complex interdependence there is no neat or consistent hierarchy of issues; any 'issue-area'-trade, diplomacy, etc- might dominate the international agenda at any given time. Military security, certainly does not always dominate the agenda.

Keohane and Nye distinguish two aspects of interdependence, "sensitivity" (the degree to which changes in one actor's circumstances affect other actors) and "vulnerability" (the measurement of the costs an actor would incur from ending a relationship). Under complex interdependence, the politics of agenda setting will be determined by changes in the distribution of power resources within issue areas and not by potential shifts in the balance of power and security threats asserted by realists. Complex interdependence by definition means that Realism (or traditional Realism) is challenged. The system changes of interdependence and the role of individuals in the processes, plus environmental issues, all mean that the Realist position must indeed be contextualised with the recognition of the total inter-dependency of the state system and integration of the global communities which were once identified as 'belonging' to one state or another. Whereas for realists the role of international organisations is minor, under complex interdependence these organisations will set agendas and facilitate coalitions. However, it remains unclear from this perspective whether the use of military force remains an option in the relations between advanced, industrialised states.

4. Neorealism

While interdependence was the focus of considerable attention in the mid-1970s, the contemporary IR debate has been substantially concerned with Kenneth Waltz's distinctive account of Realism, sometimes described as structural Realism or neo-realism, which was first developed in his *Theory of International Politics* (1979). Waltz argued that while '...Morgenthau dealt persuasively with major problems and with issues of enduring importance...' he and other realists '...failed to take the fateful step beyond developing concepts to the fashioning of a recognizable theory...' ¹⁸. In opposition to Morgenthau's inductive thinking, Waltz uses Popperian scientific method to produce concise propositions from which plausible hypotheses can be extracted and tested. Waltz is intent on '...depicting an international political system as a whole, with structural and unit levels at once distinct and connected...' so that '...Neorealism develops the concept of a systems's structure which at once bounds the domain that students of international politics deals with enables them to see how the structure of the system, and variations in it, affect the interacting units and the outcomes they produce...' ¹⁹. Waltz's fundamental claim that international politics can be regarded as a system possessing a clear-cut structure marks a significant break with traditional realist thinking.

¹⁸ K. Waltz, "[Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory](#)", *Journal of International Affairs*, vol 44, no 1, Spring/Summer 1990, pp. 21-37, at p. 26.

¹⁹ K. Waltz, "[Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory](#)", *Journal of International Affairs*, vol 44, no 1, Spring/Summer 1990, pp. 21-37, at p.29.

Unlike Morgenthau who argued that the national and world arenas were based on the same principles and processes, Waltz claimed that there were sharp differences between hierarchic (domestic) and anarchic (international) political systems. Waltz too suggests that the concept of power is difficult to adequately delineate. He has noted that ‘...Although power is a key concept in realist theory, its proper definition remains a matter of controversy...’²⁰. He disputes the causal notion of power and suggests ‘...the old and simple notion that an agent is powerful to the extent that he affects others more than they affect him...’²¹. Where Waltz differs from earlier realists is in his rejection of the assumption that power is rooted in human nature. Indeed, Waltz offers very little analysis of human nature or the ethics of statecraft. Waltz makes clear that neo-realists ‘...rather than viewing power as an end in itself, see power as a possibly useful means, with states running risks if they have either too little or too much of it...’²². What is more, ‘...In crucial situations, the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security. This is an important revision of realist theory...’²³. States strive only to survive and are not inherently aggressive. The notion of an absence of government and a lack of a centralised control over force in the international system are central to Waltz’s thinking (Waltz 1979, p.102). As Mearsheimer has observed, ‘...whereas human nature is the deep cause of security competition in Morgenthau’s theory, anarchy plays that role in Waltz’s theory...’²⁴. In contrast to Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz argued not that balances of power are inevitable but that they would result from states observing their surroundings and adjusting their policies in light of changes in the configuration of power worldwide.

For Waltz, the defining characteristic of the structure of the international system is the distribution of capabilities (or power) they command which means that states will tend to become ‘like units’ and ‘...states are made functionally similar by the constraints of structure, with the principal differences among them defined according to capabilities...’²⁵. Waltz suggests that states can be ranked according to their capabilities²⁶. These capabilities are formulated in terms of ‘...how they score on *all* of the following items: size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence...’²⁷. Waltz asserts that capabilities are ‘attributes of units’²⁸ and that states use their capabilities only to ‘...serve their interests...’²⁹. The

²⁰ Kenneth Waltz, 1986, “Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics”, in **Neorealism and its critics**, ed, R Keohane, New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 322-345, at p. 333.

²¹ Kenneth Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1979, p.192.

²² K. Waltz, “[Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory](#)”, **Journal of International Affairs**, vol 44, no 1, Spring/Summer 1990, pp. 21-37, at p.36.

²³ K. Waltz, “[Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory](#)”, **Journal of International Affairs**, vol 44, no 1, Spring/Summer 1990, pp. 21-37, at p.36.

²⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, **The Tragedy of Great Power Politics**, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, p.19.

²⁵ K. Waltz, “[Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory](#)”, **Journal of International Affairs**, vol 44, no 1, Spring/Summer 1990, pp. 21-37, at p.36.

²⁶ Kenneth Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1979, p.131.

²⁷ Kenneth Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1979, p.131.

²⁸ Kenneth Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1979, p.98.

²⁹ Kenneth Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1979, p.131.

problem with Waltz's analysis is that it fails to offer definitive criteria in how scoring is to be conducted. For Morgenthau, of course, military preparedness is the core element of national power while Waltz supplements the focus on material power with other unit-level variables. Neo-realism is apparently uninterested in explaining structural change or the study of interaction between states. Waltz also pointedly observes that one cannot explain both war and peace by arguing that humans are wicked. It was with the emergence of Waltz and the neo-realist argument that '...Morgenthau's Realism came to be seen as ever more anachronistic- an interesting and important episode in the history of thinking about the subject, no doubt, but one scarcely to be seen as a serious contribution to the construction of the rigorously parsimonious scientific theory that was (and to some extent still is) the goal of this mode of thinking about world politics...'³⁰.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a number of the pluralists of the 1970s refashioned themselves as 'neoliberal institutionalists' determined to challenge the central tenets of realist and neo-realist thinking. Robert Powell has identified the following three issues as being at the center of neo-realist-neoliberal debate: the meaning and implications of anarchy, the problem of absolute gains and relative gains, and the tension between cooperation and distribution³¹. Neoliberal scholars such as Robert Keohane and Robert Axelrod concede much to neorealism including the argument that anarchy impedes the opportunity to promote international cooperation but they also argue that states can work together (even if only in a sub-optimal way) and that international institutions also play a significant role in international politics. Keohane and others do not reject Realism but wish to adapt it to reflect more accurately the world in which we live today. Keohane's position is clear – he argues that Realism does not provide a satisfactory theory of world politics – that is, if what is wanted is a theory that provides a set of plausible and testable answers to questions which are crucial to an understanding of the state system itself and how states interact to and in certain situations or conditions. It is weak when looking at change – and change is exactly what IR needs to be focused on. Neo-liberals believe that states cooperate to achieve absolute gains and the greatest obstacle to co-operation is 'cheating' or non-compliance by other states³². Most neoliberals have, however, not challenged Waltz's view that power and interest are the material base of the system.

5. Competing Perspectives

In recent years, Social Constructivism has also offered a radical approach to Realism. Constructivist thought rejects realist assumptions that state interests and interests are constant and aims to examine the 'ontology of the states system'. One of Constructivism's chief proponents, Alexander Wendt, has argued that constructivism aims to develop a systemic, cultural theory of international politics based not on materialism but on the idea that '...the character of international life is determined by the beliefs and expectations that states have about each other, and these are constituted largely by social

³⁰ Michael C. Williams, "[Introduction](#)" **Realism Reconsidered**, Ed: Michael C Williams, 2007, pp.1-18 p.1

³¹R. Powell, "Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate", **International Organization**, vol 48, no. 2 Spring 1994, pp. 313-344, at p.329.

³² Steven L. Lamy, 2001, "Contemporary mainstream approaches: neo-realism and neo-liberalism", **The Globalisation of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations**, Eds: J. Baylis and S. Smith, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.313-344., at p.323.

rather than material structures...'³³. Wendt does not seek to imply that material power and interests are insignificant but rather that the way states view each other are constituted by 'cultures of anarchy' described as Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian respectively. Wendt criticises the way that both neorealism and neoliberalism fail to recognise that the states system '...shapes state identities and interests...'³⁴. Critical theory approaches too are less interested in conventional IR agendas, particularly the analysis of cooperation and conflict. They are markedly post-positivist in outlook and have adopted a Habermasian conceptual apparatus that attempts to transcend the examination of states and the state system that have marked traditional IR approaches³⁵. For instance, postmodernist IR theorists reject the existence of one fixed reality or a single historical narrative and dispute the notion of universal human progress. They argue that Realism, as a theoretical construct, is inherently flawed and needs to be thoroughly deconstructed.

Turbulence in the global economy of the 1970s impacted markedly on traditional, state- and security-centric international relations and encouraged many IR scholars to reflect on the distinction between politics and economics that appeared to have framed much IR thinking in the 1950s and 1960s. International political economy (IPE) theorists were to argue that politics and economics cannot be easily disentangled and international relations are not a zero-sum game. Neo-Marxist underdevelopment theory or dependency theory argues that the global capitalist system is asymmetrical, shifting the economic surplus to the core and generating poverty in the periphery (the Third World). Another neo-Marxist analysis comes from Immanuel Wallerstein and his Marxist-inspired concept of world system analysis. Wallerstein aims to emphasise the economic and social roots of history rather than the political aspect and argues that human political will can bring about change. Feminist theory recently has started to provide innovative contributions to the study of IR. While not denying the validity of Morgenthau's work, J. Ann Tickner writing from a feminist perspective, has taken issue with the way that '...supposedly "objective" laws of human nature are based on a partial, masculine view of human nature...', that '...the national interest is multidimensional and contextually contingent...', and '...power cannot be infused with meaning that is universally valid...'. Tickner also argues that '...a feminist perspective rejects the possibility of separating moral command from political action. All political action has moral significance...' and that '...a feminist perspective seeks to find common elements in human aspirations which could become the basis for de-escalating international conflict...'³⁶.

Despite the powerful critiques emanating from these different schools of thought, realists have usefully challenged the idealistic view of international politics. This is particularly the case with regard to the necessity of focusing on the significance of power

³³ Alexander Wendt, **Social Theory of International Politics**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.20

³⁴ Alexander Wendt, **Social Theory of International Politics**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.11.

³⁵ A. Anievas, "Critical Dialogues: Habermasian Social Theory and International Relations", **Politics**, vol. 25, no. 3, 2005, pp. 135-43, at p.135.

³⁶ J. Ann Tickner, 2005, "A Critique of Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism" **International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues**, 7th edition, eds, RJ Art, - R Jervis, New York, Pearson-Longman, pp.15-27, at p. 24).

and interest as guiding principles for foreign policy-makers and how states relate to each other. To his credit, Morgenthau later reviewed and rejected certain elements of his earlier thinking on the basis of shifts and developments in world politics. In the 1960s and 1970s, Morgenthau noted that superpower warfare was no longer a feasible tool of statecraft due to the existence of large quantities of nuclear weapons on the part of the superpowers. He also noted that increasing levels of economic interdependence had brought the developed states closer together. In sum, Robert Jervis is right, however, to argue that Morgenthau failed to:

‘...see the extent to which international politics among the developed states was being transformed radically not only because of changes in the costs and benefits of war and peace but of changes in values and the propensity of democracies to cooperate with each other. Morgenthau denied the possibility of the former change or the efficacy of the latter...’³⁷.

The “lesson” to be extracted from Morgenthau’s work is that not even the most rigorous IR theory has finite explanatory power and no single theory can hope to provide a satisfactory account of every single aspect of international politics.

Conclusion

In many key respects, new approaches within IR differ in a number of important ways to those of traditional Realism- specifically, in terms of their methodology, their chosen levels of analysis, the distribution of power among states and their assumptions about the ability of decision-makers to shape international outcomes. Whatever the explanatory power of Morgenthau’s Realism, and its virtues of parsimony and clarity, it has not, as this article attempts to demonstrate, gained general acceptance. Realism is appropriate in the explanation of events in certain areas of contemporary international relations, primarily those in which ‘traditional’ state based conflicts occur. Realism is far less able to explain international relations in those areas of the world where states cooperate, for collective economic, cultural and political benefit, such as the European Union. Clearly, states remain the key players in world politics and states remain intensely preoccupied with their own continuing existence. Military power, thus, remains of primary importance to them just as Morgenthau had argued.

The state system is now arguably so complex and transcended by, and undermined through Multinational Corporations and transnational actors that the ‘traditional’ realist position as stated by Morgenthau et al is no longer tenable. The challenges posed by militant Islamism, the rise of China, a revived Russian bureaucratic megastate and the implications of global change and order are also additional pressures and influences on the way in which the international order will operate in the future. The problem with applying Realism as a concept for certain states and certain situations is the fact that the complete interdependence of the state system means that this does not work. Realism does have its place in explaining IR, but a re-alignment of the whole concept is necessary. Traditional Realists are perhaps overly-dedicated to the vision of a bleak and unpromising future for humanity. In this sense, Morgenthau’s vision is certainly a vision worth contesting.

³⁷ R. Jervis, “Hans Morgenthau, Realism, and the Scientific Study of International Politics”, **Social Research**, Winter, Vol. 61, Issue 4, 1994, pp.853-876, at p.871.

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