

Understanding Political Realism: A Review of the Thoughts of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Morgenthau

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Abstract

This article discusses one of the basic concepts in political science and international relations, namely realism. As a perspective often used to analyze various political phenomena, it is essential to re-understand the concept of realism itself as a whole. This article attempts to provide a clear picture of what realism is meant and explain the history of realism from various realism thinkers. This article reviews the realism concept of 4 characters, namely Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Morgenthau. This article explains that each thinker has their arguments for explaining realism. Hopefully, this article can provide readers with a complete understanding of realism as a concept or perspective often used in political science.

Keywords

political concept; realism; thucydides; machiavelli; hobbes; morgenthau

Introduction

One of the main discussions in political science is the perspective of realism. Moreover, in studying International Relations, realism is an essential point of view (Doyle, 1990). Many political scientists are increasingly using this approach to see the phenomenon after the second world war, where there was a cold war between the two world powers, namely the United States and the Soviet Union (Asrudin, 2017; Sudira & Winarno, 1997).

Political realism as a thought existed long before politics itself was formed as a discipline. Political literature notes that the fundamentals of realism have lived in the works of great writers, from Thucydides (historian) and Niccolo Machiavelli (philosopher) to Thomas Hobbes (philosopher) (Galston, 2010; Sleat, 2016). Political realism developed in its more modern appearance in scholars such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Nicholas J. Spykman, E.H. Carr, Frederick Schuman, Arnold Wolfers, Raymond Aron, Stanley Hoffman, and Kenneth W. Thompson (Bell, 2017; Tambunan, 2010). We know names like George Kennan and Henry Kissinger from politicians who adopted realist thinking and helped develop it through practical life (Tambunan, 2010). Then, in the 20th century, a name was best known or often identified with political realism, namely Hans Joachim Morgenthau (17 February 1904-19 July 1980) (Rossi & Sleat, 2014; Sleat, 2016).

This paper describes realism from the point of view of the four people among the names above. The four people are Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, who entered into realism thinkers in the early period. The last one is the thought of Hans Joachim Morgenthau, who can be said to be the most famous political scientist with his realism thinking.

What is Realism?

In political science, the concept of realism was first coined by Thucydides. At the beginning of writing the

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idea of realism by Thucydides, he did not state that what he wrote was a concept of realism, but modern political scientists analyzed that the statements written by Thucydides had many similarities to the idea of realism taught by modern political scientists (Hall & Sleat, 2017; Rossi & Sleat, 2014; Sleat, 2016). In International Relations, realism teaches that the state is the leading actor in the international structure. The existence of other actors, such as international organizations, is only the result of the formation of various countries to obtain the objectives of each country. Morgenthau stated that superpower is the main focus of international relations; power is a tool to achieve national interests (Prayuda & Sundari, 2019). Realism develops based on the idea that man is evil (Donnelly, 2009). In the perspective of realism, an actor is a state as an individual who will not cooperate with other actors without any particular intention (self-interested) and will always try to strengthen himself. Starting from the history of international relations that emerged between World Wars I and II, realism was present as the mainstream of the international relations approach due to the imperfection of the idealist approach. The views that form the basis of this school are at odds with the ideas of idealists (Donnelly, 2009; Galston, 2010; Mantena, 2012).

The Realist Perspective has three basic assumptions in analyzing relations between countries in international politics, namely (Prayuda & Sundari, 2019):

1. The state is the leading and single actor that, in this case, international relations are identified with relations between sovereign states. Thus the security factor is seen in the context of national interests.
2. The realism approach focuses on the political and security approach, namely, assessing the function of power as an instrument of foreign policy.
3. The realism approach explains the existence of a clear hierarchy of issues that dominate international politics.

The basic assumption of realist thinking is a pessimistic view and the belief that international relations are inherently conflictual and ultimately resolved through War (Lobell, 2002). Political action will be considered rational to bring political actors closer to their goals. The best attitude is pragmatic, compromise, and mutual acceptance.

Political realism, Sleat argues, does not share this goal of providing a normatively neutral account of politics and political action. Sleat stated that one possible explanation is that realism in international relations is defined by an amoral or value-neutral analysis preoccupied with little more than pursuing national interests and political power (Rossi & Sleat, 2014; Sleat, 2010). Realists accept moral principles; it is just that in practice, individual morality is defeated by the interests of the state's survival and its inhabitants and, of course, the national interest itself. For realists, the state is the leading actor on the international stage. As the main actor, the state must defend its national interests in international politics. The state, in this context, is assumed to be a single and rational entity. At the state level, political views have been resolved to produce one vote.

Meanwhile, the state is considered rational because it can calculate how to achieve interests to get maximum results. Each country can optimize its ability to protect its interests by bolstering its national power to achieve and achieve its national goals (Bell, 2017). The realism perspective explains that the state is a single and rational actor in international politics. The realism approach has a basic assumption that the nation-state's existence is analyzed from the nation-state's behaviour, assuming that all decision-makers, wherever they are, basically behave the same when faced with the same situation (Bell, 2017; Donnelly, 2009).

A realist also usually focuses on potential conflicts between state actors to pay attention to or maintain international stability, anticipate possible failures of stability maintenance, consider the benefits of coercive action to solve disputes and protect against acts of violation of border region. Therefore, power is a critical concept in this regard. The basis of normative realism is national security and state survival. These are the values that drive realist doctrine and realist foreign policy.

A Brief History of Realism

In the development of political studies, especially international relations, realism has been the dominant

perspective since the 1940s, shifting the idealism perspective dominant from 1919 to the 1930s in studying international relations. The realism perspective shapes theories about global politics and offers a prescription of international politics in the interwar era ([Dugis, 2005](#)).

At that time, the idealism perspective lost most of its influence and was rivaled by the realism perspective because the idealism perspective was unable to offer a prescription that could stabilize and peaceful international politics after World War I. The idealism perspective was also unable to prevent World War II ([Zakaria, 2012](#)). As a competitor, realism emerged and became dominant in influencing international relations ([Dugis, 2005](#); [Hall, 2017](#)).

In discussing some of these predecessor realists, it is essential to know two things. First, none of the early writers claimed to be realists. Second, their discussion has not made international relations their primary focus, even though they have discussed international relations, such as Thucydides. Therefore, although previous realist thinkers contributed to the realist perspective, its formation as a theoretical perspective for international relations only took place after 1919, when the science of international relations officially began and was dominant since the 1940s ([Dugis, 2005](#)).

Many thinkers can be called realists, such as Heraclitus (535-475 BC), Thucydides (460-395 BC), Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) ([Bell, 2017](#); [Donnelly, 2009](#); [Hall & Sleat, 2017](#); [Sleat, 2016](#)). In addition, several politicians show realist attitudes, such as Cardinal de Richelieu, Otto von Bismarck, and Abraham Lincoln ([Dugis, 2005](#); [Schwartz, 2011](#)). During the 30 Years war leading up to the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), Richelieu already discussed the concepts of national interests, real-political security, and *raison d'etat*. Bismarck, the Prussian statesman, created and used the concept of a balance of power. Lincoln, the president of the United States, displayed a very realistic attitude when stating:

'I do the very best I know-how, the very best I can, and I mean doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.'

As mentioned earlier, as a thinking tradition, realism has a long history of many earlier thinkers. However, taking into account the space available, in this section, a very brief discussion of the figures and thoughts of Heraclitus, Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. Heraclitus was a 6th century BC Greek philosopher who asserted that "Opposites are necessary for life, but they are unified in a system of balanced exchanges," and that "The underlying law of nature also manifests itself as a moral law for human beings." ([Dugis, 2005](#))

Realism, whether consciously referred to by that name or not, is the dominant framework for understanding international relations and has virtually shaped the thinking of every professional foreign policy today in the United States and elsewhere in the world, primarily since Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Carr, Morgenthau, and Waltz address this issue in their works. When analyzing international relations, political realism always bases its views on reality, what is, and not on what should be claimed by political idealists. According to realists, conflict is imminent in the real world because of the nature of violence inherent in humans. The path chosen by the world's population is more interested in organizing a sovereign and independent form of state that tends to disrespect authority outside or above the country. Realist thinking is thus based on the search for the power and domination that emanates from human nature as the fundamental reasons for conflict.

Thucydides' Realism

Thucydides (b. 460 BC - d. 395 BC) was a Greek historian and writer from Alimos, a region in Greek territory. Thucydides is one of the most significant contributors to the theory of international relations ([Rahe, 1995](#)). His thoughts on realism are so prominent among political academics, especially international relations. He started his primary thinking about international politics ([Dugis, 2005](#); [Rahe, 1995](#)). The History of Peloponnesian War (The History of Peloponnesian War) tells of the 5th century BC war between Sparta and Athena ([Donnelly, 2009](#); [Forde, 1992](#); [Rahe, 1995](#)). Through this book, Thucydides has been dubbed the father of "scientific history" because of the strict standards of evidence collection and analysis

in terms of cause and effect without reference to intervention by the gods, like other historical books from the same era ([Dugis, 2005](#)).

The particular form of realism expressed by Thucydides is its natural character. What Aristotle said about 'man is a political animal,' by Thucydides, said that political animals are very different in the strength and capability of human beings to dominate one another and maintain their strength ([Doyle, 1990](#); [Forde, 1995](#)). Every country in the world, both developed and developing countries, must be able to adapt to its natural conditions, besides that, it must be able to compete with the reality of different forces and must also have the ability to organize itself according to its natural conditions ([Rahe, 1995](#)). If the state takes dangerous and suspicious actions, it will survive and even remain prosperous. However, if a country cannot do this, it will try to do things considered dangerous and may even be destroyed ([Forde, 1992](#)).

So, Thucydides emphasizes his thinking more on the limited options that can be made for citizens in carrying out their foreign policy. He also emphasized that all decisions that have been made and taken have consequences. Before a final decision is made, a decision-maker must carefully think about the possible consequences of bad and good ([Forde, 1992](#)). In this regard, Thucydides also emphasized the ethics of prudence and state policy in carrying out foreign policy in an international world full of different interests and in the face of dangers that always arise suddenly ([Kirshner, 2019](#)).

Foresight, wisdom, prudence, and decision-making are characteristics of classical realist politics in which Thucydides and the majority of other classical realists are cautious to distinguish it from personal morality and principles of justice. If a country and its government survive and prosper, they must pay more attention to these fundamental political teachings on international relations. In his studies of the Peloponnesian Wars, Thucydides introduced his realist philosophy to the leaders of Athens, a powerful state. Thucydides emphasized that justice is particular in international relations ([Forde, 1992](#); [Rahe, 1995](#)). Justice is not equal treatment to all parties; it is about knowing the place that is considered appropriate and about humans who can adjust to the reality of different natural forces. In his book on the Peloponnesian Wars in the 5th century BC between Sparta and Athens, he argued that the cause of the war was the increase in state power and the insecurity of other countries caused by the power of Athens at that time. Thucydides concluded that it was not aggressiveness but insecurity that caused the war.

The dramatic debate about 'The Melian Dialogue' in The Peloponnesian War became a reference in international relations theory. As a theorist, Thucydides makes four assumptions ([Ahrensdorf, 1997](#); [Bagby, 1994](#); [Donnelly, 2009](#); [Doyle, 1990](#); [Dugis, 2005](#); [Forde, 1992, 1995](#); [Monten, 2006](#); [Rahe, 1995](#)). First, humans are inherently selfish and selfish insofar as self-interest transcends moral principles. In relations between countries globally, identity interests are essential in relations between countries, as he said 'identity of interest is the surest bonds whether both of states or individuals.' This can be seen in the Athenians, who are interested in expanding their power without exception.

Second, the condition of human relations is always in an anarchic condition. Thucydides' understanding of the word anarchy is that no one actor dominates international relations. In the international world order, every country must maintain its existence by relying on its interest in military power. Third, to achieve state security, they seek to increase their strength and balance power to deter aggression so that war is waged to prevent the opposing country from becoming stronger militarily. Fourth, there is no room for politics; morality or ethics is put aside. However, if there is tension between moral demands and demands for immoral political action, the state may take action with its morality, which differs according to its wishes.

Like what Athena did in the attack on Melos, where they have prioritized ethics in politics because Melos was reluctant to surrender, this is considered to have hindered their political aims so that in that case, morality will indeed be sidelined ([Ahrensdorf, 1997](#); [Doyle, 1990](#); [Forde, 1992](#)). The general description that can be seen is that Thucydides' classical realism has several important points, namely, the problem of war power and security, where one country that continues to increase its war power creates a security dilemma against other countries because realists believe that the relationship of each country is anarchy. So with that, there must be a balance of power that departs from the assumption that war can lead to peace ([Doyle, 1990](#)).

Machiavelli's Realism

If a leader wants his power to last, it is essential to carry out an image. Moreover, even the tiniest accomplishment must be displayed in front of the public to garner public support and make the authorities look good. That is how Niccolo Machiavelli describes political reality. It is like recording a portrait of how the country's leader wants to maintain his power. Machiavelli does not talk about political theories in the realm of abstract idealism. Instead, they look at politics from the perspective of realism, separating the real from the ideal ([Major, 2007](#)).

Machiavelli was a European Enlightenment political thinker known for his controversial theories. His thoughts are often considered "evil" because he considers morality unimportant in political matters unless morality helps to gain and maintain power ([Major, 2007](#); [Mindle, 1985](#)). The political situation influenced his thinking in the Italian city of Florence in the 15th century. It was controlled by the De Medici dynasty, which ruled with an iron fist ([Boesche, 2002](#)). Under his rule, Italy had a very urban and secular civilization that made Italy a strong country because of its strict leadership style. The De Medici dynasty was so strong that none Italians dared challenge it.

Under the De Medici dynasty, Italy was the main factor influencing Machiavelli's thinking. The hegemony of power practiced by De Medici made Machiavelli aware that in power politics, normative and even religious normative approaches cannot be placed as guidelines. This is where the origin of Machiavelli's controversial theory of power and state emerged. He also emphatically rejects the previous theory put forward by Thomas Aquinas and St Augustine, especially the unification of religious affairs and state affairs ([Boesche, 2002](#); [Chong, 2005](#); [Gilbert, 2016](#); [Guilhot, 2016](#); [Shapiro & Wendt, 1992](#)).

Machiavelli's phenomenal work, *The Prince*, primarily reflects his realist political thinking based on the experience of the government in Florence. The government in that era illustrates that kindness and morality are not enough to win and maintain political power ([Bellamy, 2018](#); [Boesche, 2002](#); [Carr, 2016](#); [Carta, 2017](#); [Gilbert, 1965](#); [Major, 2007](#)). For Machiavelli, a leader needs to know how to use political power. The reason is that only with the proper exercise of power and the ability to maintain state security will society obey the regulations of their leaders. Machiavelli's political theory also explains how law enforcement and coercion interact. According to Machiavelli, law enforcement and political order will function effectively if their supervisory function is based on military strength. Coercion and military force can create legality in political power, and there can be no good law without a good military or armed base. In this case, fear of violence and military sanctions is one of the essential aspects used to control and shape people's compliance with the ruling regime. This theory is based on Machiavelli's observations that, in general, humans have unthankful, disloyal, insincere, deceitful, avoiding danger, always seeking profit, and only fear of punishment can limit human action ([Carr, 2016](#); [Chong, 2005](#); [Gilbert, 2016](#); [Mantena, 2012](#)). Machiavelli's perspective states that people tend to obey superior power in a country where political power is crucial for political leaders.

One of the concepts put forward by Machiavelli in *The Prince* is *virtù* which means the variation of personal qualities needed by the Ruler or The Prince to defend his country and "achieve great things." One of the qualities that the ruler ideally possesses is being a good or evil individual if conditions and circumstances oblige him to change his nature. Those who have implemented a new pattern of power management and separated political action from a moral judgment framework are Cesare Borgia ([Fischer, 2012](#); [Gilbert, 1965](#)). Borgia's political actions were an ideal illustration of the correct procedure for enforcing power for the rulers. For example, the procedure for enforcing power is how a new ruler enforces power in a newly controlled territory, namely by destroying the family of the previous ruler of the region. Authorities can use and commit atrocities in response to the pressures and demands of the situation to completely control a new territory because all threats to power can be overcome and eliminated. If power is stable and is held tightly in the hands of the authorities, then the next political step is to attract the sympathy of the people with various assistance ([Boesche, 2002](#); [Chong, 2005](#); [Fischer, 2012](#); [Galie & Bopst, 2006](#); [Gilbert, 1965](#)).

In the absence of ethical values in political life, a ruler may decide and violate an agreement pronounced both to his people and neighboring countries. In a war situation between two major powers, the rulers of

a country cannot be neutral but must side with a stronger country and have the potential to win the war. Siding with potential winners opens up more good possibilities for the rulers and their country because they will appreciate that partiality. From a religious perspective, Machiavelli wanted reform in the religious field for Italian society, which according to Machiavelli, was a nation experiencing a moral decline. National moral decline is the seeds of destruction for the Italian nation ([Major, 2007](#)). The factor that caused this moral decline was the moral scandals committed by the princes of the church, which led to a disintegration of public morals and a misinterpretation of Christian values that were too exalted ([Gilbert, 2016](#)). The religious reform that Machiavelli envisions is that religion must be a means to increase the patriotic spirit. Religion must support public institutions. Nationalism must replace the role of faith in the framework of orthodox religious ideas. Religious institutions are the only means or tools that can be used to maintain the prevailing order.

Machiavelli's thought adheres to realism, which views politics and power as conflictual matters that humans always try to fight over and cannot be based on morality. In this case, humans are considered profit-seeking, ambitious, selfish, cunning entities and will do anything to get their wish. Machiavelli also emphasized the importance of coercion, such as using the armed forces for law enforcement and controlling society.

Hobbes's Realism

Thomas Hobbes was born in the 16th century in Europe, known as The Age of Reason or the century of thought. Some scientists were influential until now, such as Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and others in that century. This century is part of the period of enlightenment in Europe after experiencing a dark age due to backwardness in science and technology. This century also became the starting point for the industrial revolution in the next century.

Realism in Hobbes's thought provides the basic assumption about human nature that is the same as other humans who desire to gain wealth, knowledge, power, and honor. Humans are anarchic in their interactions so that these traits can be drawn into a broad dimension, namely the state ([Moloney, 2011](#); [Williams, 2008](#)). In International Relations, Hobbes gave two ideas: international relations are different from social relations. The difference lies in state control. International relations are also an all-against-all conflict in which countries want to be at the forefront of power or legitimacy

In his view of the state of nature, Hobbes makes three basic assumptions about man. The assumption is that humans are equal, humans interact anarchically, and humans are driven by competition, distrust, and glory ([Chong, 2005](#)). From this assumption, the result is a war of all against all. As written in the following Leviathan ([Dugis, 2005](#)):

'Out of civil states, there is always warre of every one against every one hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man. For WARRE, consisteth not in Battell only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time, is to be considered in the nature of Warre; as it is in the nature of Weather. For as the nature of Foule weather, lyeth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together: So the nature of war, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All of the Time is PEACE.'

Thus, Hobbes argues that humans always want to conquer each other, even though they do not deny a peaceful situation ([Thivet, 2008](#)). From here comes a feeling of hostility. This hostility is exacerbated by competition, mutual mistrust, and glory. The first to make humans attack is for gain, the second for security, and the third for reputation. With these three things, war becomes challenging to avoid. Such conditions also lead to the condition that a country must have the power to answer all possible wars. This brings the view that because it does not know how much strength can be said to be strong enough, the state must continue to maximize its military strength. Each country cannot avoid the security dilemma, namely, when it increases its security due to a sense of insecurity from other countries ([Dugis, 2005](#); [Forde, 1995](#); [Jervis, 1998](#)).

This feeling of insecurity will then lead to a desire to create a sense of security, resulting in a Social Contract ([Dugis, 2005](#)). Based on the law of nature, a person will seek peace, cultivate it, and defend it. The path is taken, according to Hobbes, is the existence of a Social Contract. This social contract will make a person give up some of his rights over others voluntarily. However, since it is not part of fundamental human nature, relinquishing some of this right would require something that could be achieved—in other words, expecting something that was not obtained before, which is a sense of peace. A contract is the reciprocal transfer of this right to another person, and it is referred to as a social contract because it is done with another person. After a social contract occurs, Hobbes argues the need for an alliance; in this case, it is referred to as a state or state ([Yurdusev, 2006](#)). The creation of this state is seen to dampen human nature that wants to dominate other humans.

The contribution of Hobbes' masterpiece Leviathan to the science of International Relations is a paradigm of Classical Realism. Hobbes's realism is seen as Great Power Politics, a state with the capacity to provide strong punishments, even if the death penalty, to other powers in the system ([Dugis, 2005](#)). Apart from Realism, Hobbes also perfected The Security Dilemma concept developed from the Time of Thucydides. This Security Dilemma is still considered very relevant today. When viewed in the Cold War period, it can be seen how the arms race carried out by the United States and the Soviet Union was part of the Security Dilemma for the two countries. Another contribution, of course, is the rule of law concept. That there are government rights as sovereign ruler over its people. These rights are obtained from a social contract in society that gives power to some groups to rule.

Hobbes is a thinker from the 16th century who is very influential today. Especially for the Classical Realism paradigm until recently. His thoughts were founded on his impressions of the circumstances surrounding his war-torn life in Europe. The ideas of human existence being evil or 'men are evil' emerge from this. Not all omnium contra omnes or war of all against all becomes something that cannot be avoided ([Douglass, 2020](#); [Fischer, 2012](#)). However, Hobbes still views that humans will always try to want peace by forming a commonwealth ([Cozzaglio & Greene, 2019](#); [Douglass, 2020](#); [Fischer, 2012](#); [Malcolm, 2005](#); [Moloney, 2011](#); [Murphy, 2013](#); [Polansky, 2016](#); [Thivet, 2008](#); [Yurdusev, 2006](#)).

Morgenthau's Realism

Hans Morgenthau is considered one of the "founders" of the realist school in the 20th century. This school of thought states that the nation-state is the leading actor in international relations and that the primary concern of the study of International Relations is about power. Morgenthau emphasized the importance of "national interests" for each country in formulating its foreign policy ([Williams, 2004](#)). In his book, *Politics among Nations*, he writes that political realism in the study of International Relations is manifested in the concept of interest and power. These two concepts have become essential concepts in International Relations ([Cristol, 2009](#); [Molloy, 2004](#)).

Morgenthau's thinking about realism supports Thomas Hobbes' fundamental assumptions. In his book, *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau's contribution can be seen from three main ideas: human nature, power, and national interests ([Cristol, 2009](#)). This book seeks to consolidate the principles of realism, which seem only to be fixated on war and designed to make an intellectual contribution to the role the US plays in a postwar world where the US has emerged as the world's great strategic economic power. Morgenthau's important work, therefore, falls into two parts: It is an intellectual statement intended to influence students of that generation in HI academics and is a set of guides for US foreign policymakers faced with the uncertainties of the Cold War.

Starting his description of political realism, Morgenthau argues that "the history of modern political thought in the history of two competing schools of thought, which have fundamental differences regarding the conceptions of human nature, society, and politics." One school, known as idealism, believes that: (i) a rational and moral political order, which is derived from universal abstract principles, can be realized today; (ii) human beings have essential goodness and can be educated; (iii) lack of knowledge and understanding, the existence of outdated institutions, the crimes of individuals or certain isolated groups, are the causes of the failure of orderly matters; (iv) education, renewal, and sporadic use of force is believed to be able to repair this damage, ([Finlayson, 2017](#); [Galston, 2010](#); [Hall, 2017](#); [Mantena, 2012](#)).

At the same time, other schools believe that the world from a rational perspective is not perfect. It is the result of forces inherent in human nature. To build the world, one must work with these forces, not against them. In a world full of conflicting interests and conflicts between them, moral principles can never solve problems in the end. As far as possible, these principles should be brought closer to the problem through a temporary balance of interests and resolve uncertain conflicts. This second stream is known as political realism ([Galston, 2010](#)). Political realism is attracted to historical precedents, not abstract principles as idealists believe.

Its primary purpose is to minimize evil as far as possible, not to create absolute good. With such a philosophical background, Morgenthau compiled and proposed a theory of political realism which, according to him, is "a theory that is related to human nature as it is and with historical processes as it happens ([Amstrup, 1978](#); [Bain, 2000](#); [Behr & Heath, 2009](#); [Cristol, 2009](#); [Gellman, 2016](#); [Good, 1960](#); [Levine, 2013](#); [Molloy, 2004, 2020](#); [Murray, 1996](#); [Rösch, 2013](#); [Tambunan, 2010](#); [Tucker, 1952](#); [Williams, 2004](#); [Wong, 2000](#)). In summary, without being wordy and with a systematic explanation, Morgenthau proposes his theory of political realism built on six principles, which according to him, are more often misunderstood than well understood ([Cristol, 2009](#)).

The development of Hobbes' previous basic assumptions is illustrated by what Morgenthau called the Six Principles of Political Realism. Here are six principles of realism in the thought of Hans J. Morgenthau ([Cristol, 2009](#)).

1. Politics is rooted in the permanent, unchanging nature of the human being, which is self.
2. Politics is a "realm of autonomous action" and cannot be separated from economic problems or moral issues. State leaders should act following the directions of political policy.
3. Self-interest is a fundamentally human condition: all people have a shallow interest in fighting for their security and survival. Politics is an arena for expressing interests that sooner or later turn into conflict. International politics is an arena for conflicting interests of states. However, interests are not fixed: the world constantly changes whenever and wherever. Realism is a doctrine that answers the facts of a changing political reality.
4. International relations ethics are situational or political ethics that differ significantly from personal morality. A political leader does not have the same freedom to do a private citizen's right thing. This is because a political leader has a much heavier responsibility than a private citizen: he is accountable to the people (especially his country) who depend on him; he is responsible for their safety and well-being. Responsible state leaders must strive not to do their best but to do their best when circumstances permit. This situation of limited political choice is the normative core of realist ethics.
5. Therefore, realists oppose the idea that certain nations - even very democratic ones like the United States of America - can impose their ideology on other nations and use their power to support such actions. Realists oppose it because they see it as a dangerous activity threatening international peace and security. In the end, it can turn around and threaten a struggling country.
6. The state's art is a tedious and straightforward activity that creates full awareness of human limitations and imperfections. The pessimistic view of humans as they are and not what we expect is a complex reality at the heart of international politics.

From the six political principles above, it can be seen that Morgenthau considers the nation-state as a unity in international politics. However, Morgenthau also did not consider it the primary expression of the political community. Morgenthau sensed that the forces of globalization would invalidate the nation-state and soon become obsolete. This is due to modern transportation and communication technology which exceeds the ability of any nation-state to control it to make the situation beneficial or dangerous. This view defines Morgenthau from previous realists ([Amstrup, 1978](#); [Bain, 2000](#); [Behr & Heath, 2009](#); [Cozette, 2008](#); [Gellman, 2016](#); [Good, 1960](#); [Jervis, 1994](#); [Tambunan, 2010](#); [Williams, 2004](#); [Wong, 2000](#)).

In addition to the six principles above, some Morgenthau thoughts are considered essential because they form the foundation of further realism development. First, Morgenthau rejected rationalism. According to him, a theory must be judged on its empirical and pragmatic nature, not an a priori abstract assessment. Second, (international) political theory is like a map travelers use to find their way in unfamiliar areas. Maps usually only provide rough descriptions of an area and do not present it in detail, but the area's main features are listed in it. Political theory (international), too. It does not have to reflect the facts in detail

to effectively orient the researchers in this field. Third, the relationship between facts and theory can be compared to the relationship between a photo and a portrait. Photos show everything as the object exists. A good theory is quite like a rough and less detailed portrait, but it describes the object well and gives us an understanding ([Tambunan, 2010](#)).

Although based on the fundamental values of the previous realists, Morgenthau seems to have been a scientist in international law and politics who started very extraordinary thoughts and ideas in international politics and triggered later scientists to make corrections and support for what Morgenthau fought for in his efforts to understand international politics. Moreover, his view of international politics to see what it is and not what it should be is a tradition that persists even into the 21st century.

Conclusion

This paper has explained the realist view according to four people who are very popular in introducing realism into political science. Realism has a long theoretical tradition. Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes, and Morgenthau were most frequently mentioned among the nation's founders. In the twentieth century, neorealism replaced classical realism, which sought to establish a more scientific approach to studying international relations. Classical realism and neorealism have been the target of criticism from international relations theorists who represent liberal perspectives.

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