INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND MARXISM

INTRODUCTION

The approach of international realism may not seem to be compatible with Marxism. It emphasises the importance of order, national sovereignty, and the balance of power in order to explain the relations between nations. This standpoint seems to be opposed to the universalism of Marxism, which ultimately considers that the role of nations and wars will be replaced by peace and the gradual development of an international society that will overcome the tendency for conflict between contending powers. This perspective is held to be utopian by the realists who consider that conflict is an inherent aspect of the relations between rival nations. The views of Marxists are considered to be discredited by the behaviour of the Soviet Union which conformed to the pattern of realist behaviour despite its supposed universal and socialist beliefs. This article will consider the views of two major proponents of realism, and outline the Marxist alternative. But it will also be important to also establish where realism and Marxism may agree about the importance of tension and conflict in contemporary international relations.

THE APPROACH OF HEDLEY BULL

Hedley Bull outlines in his work: 'The Anarchical Society' how society is based on the importance of order which maintains the role of stability, security, peace and the adherence of a system of property. (1) The assumption is that what could be defined as disorderly is in opposition to the values and laws of a stable society, and this situation means that the various aspects of society have become disfunctional and are no longer capable of promoting equilibrium. In this situation revolution may occur. However the assumption is that an effective society that is able to maintain the importance of stability will not be subject to this type of upheaval. What is not mentioned in this analysis is that the existing society may have become intolerable to its members, and so they act to create a different form of stability that is based more effectively on new conceptions of social functioning and justice. The point is that order cannot be static, it must be based on the aspirations of the people within society and therefore change may have to occur if discontent develops that is widespread and requires resolution. Hence order cannot be defined in terms of the dogmatic defence of a particular type of society, but instead should be modified in terms that enable the people to establish more principled and efficient forms of order. Instead of this dynamic view the proponents of realism imply that the role of order is defined in terms of one particular type of society, which is capitalism. This is because they identify the dominant state with the role of the USA, which is capitalist. They cannot envisage any comprehensive alternative to this situation. Therefore the result is that any actual expression of discontent within the international system would be considered as disruption of the order that is existing within the present and preferred system.

The world system of states is based on a situation in which: “On the one hand, states assert, in relation to this territory and population, what may be called internal sovereignty, which means supremacy over all other authorities within that territory and population. On the other hand, they assert what may be called external sovereignty, by which is meant not supremacy but independence of outside authorities.”(2) The problem with this type of definition is the assumption that what exists at the present may be the ideal norm of actuality. The role of national states is understood to be the basis of the very process of historical development, and so the standpoint being asserted is that it is not likely the role of national states will be replaced. Instead it is being argued that states based on common rules and laws, values and interests, will emerge that are able to provide stability. In actuality states are characterised by frequent periods of upheaval because of the very fact that these aspects are often in dispute, and so result in internal conflict. Only the emergence of powerful ruling classes enables the situation to be stabilised. What results in the development of internal cohesion is the generation of a popular ideology of nationalism which is based on the acceptance of the domination of an elite by those that are subordinated within society. But it is entirely possible that such a situation could become undermined by class conflict.

However, Bull's definition of state sovereignty and its relation to the international situation is essentially accurate for periods of stability. Hence the approach of realism is based on the importance of the status quo. Given that this situation is generally an expression of the typical role of the state and international relations it could be argued that realism has an explanatory character. In this context the historical importance of states is that they act in a manner that attempts to uphold their sovereignty and distinctive importance in relation to other states. Only in exceptional circumstances does the actions of the leaders of a state undermine its integrity, as in relation to the expansionist and increasingly irrational actions of the leaders of Nazi Germany. The attempt of this reactionary leadership to establish world domination only resulted in the formation of a coalition of more powerful states, and the result was the defeat and subordination of Germany to the Allied forces. Bull would contend that this situation was because the German leadership did not conform to the principle of maintaining the sovereignty of the state without undermining that of other states. The preservation of the stability of a state is most compatible with a situation in which world peace is maintained. The most ideal instance is one in which states co-operate in order to maintain the stability within their societies. Thus there is a connection between internal and external sovereignty. What this perspective possibly underestimates is that there can be an inherent conflict between internal and external sovereignty because a powerful nation will have a tendency to dominate other nations. This point is allowed by realism, but it is contrasted with the primary emphasis on the internal and external stability of society. But the question arises: how is it possible to uphold stability within a society if it is confronted with the issue of external domination? Bull could reply and suggest that the very aim of international order can only be realised in terms of the role of states. Only the actions of states can bring about peace and stability in their external relations. What is this view ignores is that it is relations of inequality between states which is caused by the importance of imperialism which develops tensions between them. The imperialist character of the USA means that it is has a tendency for expansion and domination of independent states. Bull would reply and imply that Marxism tends to uphold the view of Hobbes that states are in a perpetual situation of conflict because of an inability to resolve differences. However Bull suggests that the rules of expediency and prudence ensure that stability between nations is realised. In contrast, the Marxist would argue in favour of world revolution. But it could be argued that the revolutionary perspective results in upheaval but social justice is not certain to be realised. Hence it could be suggested that Kant had a more realistic universal approach in terms of establishing harmony between the common moralities of democratic nations. An important criticism of Kant is that he underestimated the tensions between what would become rival democratic nations. Kant also argued that what could overcome this rivalry is the development of trade between nations and the creation of an integrated world economy. This standpoint has some justification, but this very form of world trade has occurred in terms of the competition involving the USA, China and Western Europe. Hence Marxists would argue the actual cause of international tensions is the competitiveness of capitalism. Only global socialism can resolve this problem.

Bull could reply to this debate and accept that conflict has been a general part of the development of an international system of relations between states. This situation has often been caused by the role of economic rivalries. There has also been political and ideological reasons for tensions. The point is that the importance of the role of nations has never been replaced by a cohesive conception of the international society. Indeed, Bull contends that world government of either a capitalist or socialist character is not required in order to enhance the possibility of economic progress: “The absence of world government is no necessary bar to industry, trade and other refinements of living. States do not in fact so exhaust their strength and invention in providing security against one another that the lives of their inhabitants are solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short; they do not as a rule invest resources in war and military preparations to such an extent that their economic fabric is ruined. On the contrary, the armed forces of states, by providing security against external attack and internal disorder, establish the conditions under which economic improvements may take place within their borders. The absence of a universal government has not been incompatible with international economic interdependence.”(3)

Bull is outlining the important view that the political stability provided by national states, both in internal and external terms, can result in economic dynamism which can only result in the growth of international trade. The role of the nation state is to generate the advance of the international productive forces. This is opposed to the Marxist view that national limitations undermine the promotion of the international expansion of the world economy. In empirical terms, Bull may be able to provide justification for his view. He is outlining that the possibility of order and stability established by a successful state may be able to create the political conditions for economic advance. However, what this view ignores is that this very economic success can still be at the expense of the material interests of those that are subordinated within society. The point is that Bull assumes that there can be an agreed national interest that is defined by the aspiration of the ruling elite within the state which ensures the realisation of order and stability. This aim is constantly undermined by the grievances that capitalism generates because of its promotion of social injustice. But it could also be suggested in Bull's favour that the very role of the nation promotes the cohesion and common interest of society. There is an inherent relationship between the nation state and the possibility of harmony within society. It could be suggested that Marxists underestimate this point because they do not recognise the stabilising role of the nation. This point could have some temporary truth, but it can also be argued that the class contradictions of society cannot be resolved until capitalism has been overcome. In this sense, the nation does express some form of relationship to Hobbes view that is based on conflict. However, Bull is possibly ultimately right to suggest that nations do not necessarily undermine the international expansion of the economy. What is more important for understanding the decline of world capitalism is the role of the falling rate of profit and the decaying character of monopoly.

Bull would also suggest that at various moments in time institutions like the League of Nations, or United Nations, have been able to create a sense of international government. This has undermined the tendency for nations to create conflict despite an ultimate lack of success. Hence it could be implied that even realists accept the possibility to overcome the limitations of the nation state in relation to the character of international politics. However, Bull would also suggest that the goodwill of nations is also required in order to uphold the feasibility of international organisations to maintain stability and order. Hence the cohesion of the UN depends on the goodwill of the USA. The fact is that Bull's view is that the nation is a permanent aspect of history, and so a new social system will not replace its importance. This view is disputed by Marxists, but it is a virtual fact that any revolutionary process will be originally national and so the attempt to begin the creation of socialism will take this form. The constant tendency will be for the national degeneration of the revolutionary process. Only the success of international revolution will resolve this problem. Thus the difficulties of resolving this contradiction would seem to suggest that the events of history confirm the views of Bull. His perspective of the importance of the nation is upheld by the view that the importance of economic interdependence implies that there is a common interest within society. The workers rely on the capitalist for his/her welfare, and this means that society in general is united by the necessity of upholding its cohesion. Marxists do not deny this aspect of society because labour is in a sense reliant on the goodwill of the capitalists but this situation does not mean that class conflict cannot occur. The point is because Bull and other realists emphasise so one-sidedly the role of order and stability within the nation means they cannot recognise any other possibilities. Marxists may exaggerate the potential for class conflict and upheaval, but the realists cannot envisage anything other than cohesion because they consider that the nation is generally based on the acceptance of a collection of agreed social rules, and the state has a monopoly of coercion and the ability to implement any disputed laws and rules.

Thus the realists contrast the potential for social cohesion with the instability that may arise in the attempt to impose external national aims in relation to the problem of possibly contending interests of other states. The possibility of order in international terms depends on the potential for the realisation of common interests, but this may not be possible as the cold war indicated. Order depends on the acceptance of the sovereignty of states over their common territory, but this principle has often been undermined in the history of international relations. Bull cannot provide a causal reason for this development, and instead considers it as the undermining of order in international relations. However, this is a description of what is occurring. The most important explanation is still provided by Marxism in terms of the role of imperialism, and its connected tendency generate a situation of a powerful country dominating other nations because of economic and political reasons. Instead of this coherent explanation, Bull tends to understand international relations in terms of the vague relationship of order and justice. The contradiction that he does not resolve is that order may be imposed at the expense of justice, and vice versa. The point is that it is necessary to understand the character of the relations between dominant nations who impose order, and the more oppressed nations who aspire to justice.

Bull argues that the concept of the world common good, or what we may define as socialism is irrelevant as a resolution of this situation because it lacks public support and empathy. Primarily, this is because the role of nations means that they promote the role of order instead of any sense of world justice or common good. Only if nations accept the validity of conceptions of social justice will this aim become important: “If international society is quite inhospitable to notions of cosmopolitan justice, and able to give only a selective and ambiguous welcome to ideas of human justice, it is not basically unfriendly to notions of interstate or international justice.....Whereas ideas of world justice may seem entirely at odds with the structure of international society....ideas of interstate and international justice may reinforce the compact of coexistence between states by adding moral imperative to the imperatives of enlightened self-interest.... on which it rests.”(4) Thus the perspective of justice is based on the acceptance by nations of this aim. However, if this view is not accepted then justice will not be realised. Furthermore, this type of justice will not undermine the present hierarchy of nations which presently results in inequality between nations. Only the world common good that Bull rejects will realise the possibility of consistent justice between both individuals and within nations. This is because: “Such a notion of the world common good concerns not the common ends or values of the society of states, but rather the common ends or values of the universal society of all mankind, whose constituent members are individual human beings.”(5) Bull rejects this perspective because any action that transcends the role of the nation is defined by him as being unrealistic. But as Marxists we can accept the concept of the world common good because it is what will bring about international social justice and the emancipation of society. Bull is limited by what he considers to be realistic for nations, but Marxist want to go beyond the restrictions of nations and instead develop international action for justice. Bull cannot accept this because to him there is a simple contradiction between the demands of order when compared to the aspiration for justice: “Yet international order is preserved by means which systematically affront the most basic and widely agreed principles of international justice. I do not mean simply that at the present time there are states and nations which are denied their moral rights or fail to fulfil their moral responsibilities, or that there is gross inequality or unfairness in their enjoyment of these rights, or exercise of responsibilities. This of course is the case, but it has always been the case, and it is the normal condition of any society. What I have in mind is rather that the institutions and mechanisms which sustain international order, even when they are working properly...necessarily violate ordinary notions of justice.”(6)

Hence not only does Bull admit that the imposition of order within nations inherently results in injustice, he also concedes that this is a necessary situation in terms of the realisation of international order. Thus the very character of the realistic programme is effectively opposed to the prospect of social justice. Hence the possibility to bring about social justice means that the character of inequality related to the dominant role of present order must be opposed. A certain amount of disorder is required if social justice is to be realised. This does not mean the promotion of chaos, but instead the bringing about of a higher level of order in which society is based and whereby the principles of justice have a higher priority than those of order. Bull replies to this perspective and contends that an orderly realisation of justice will be more effective than the disorderly transfer of power. But he is assuming that those who control the process of order are the most genuine and effective arbitrators of what is necessary and permissible. This process of change will be limited and restricted, and so mean that social justice is not realised. What Bull ignores is the uncomfortable fact that only the oppressed themselves can define what is meant by social justice. Only in this context can order be reconciled with the contrasting demand of justice. Bull does not deny the necessity of change itself, and suggest that the very process of change can reconcile order and justice. But this view is based on the understanding that order is the outstanding and primary value. In this context he is in favour of justice which can be assimilated with the approach of order. He does not ask whether in this context justice is effectively being realised. Instead he has an inherent opposition to revolution which he equates with chaos and a lack of order. Hence the primary ideological character of his approach is conservative. It is opposed to most forms of change in the name of order, and the issue of justice is entirely secondary in this context.

Bull describes the development of a balance of power, which has many different forms but its major function is to maintain the situation of international order. The major role of the balance of power is not to primarily maintain peace, but instead to uphold the cohesion and integrity of states. In the cold war period this meant the importance of relations between the USSR and the USA. The major aspect of this situation was the role of mutual nuclear deterrence. This moderated the behaviour of both powers and meant that they generally acted without trying to create a situation of conflict, although crisis situations did develop in relation to events in Cuba and West Berlin. The problem with this situation was that diplomatic initiatives for improving international relations were undermined by this delicate balance of power. Attempts to improve the situation were generally not possible, and ultimately only the decline of the USSR altered the situation. However, it could be argued that this cold war situation did uphold a type of order in terms of the fact that the possibility of aggression by one of the major powers was limited and restricted by the importance of the rival nation. But this situation also meant that the world was organised in terms of the omnipotent power of the USA and the USSR. In this sense order was uphold to the detriment of the realisation of social justice. The claim of the USSR to represent socialism was spurious because it upheld its repressive domination of Eastern Europe which was effectively not challenged by the USA. Indeed it could be argued that the USSR equated socialism with its own great power imperatives. Hence its international behaviour confirmed to the realist view that order will always prevail in world affairs despite the contrasting ideology of the various nations. But it was the very reactionary character of the Soviet bureaucracy which meant the aim of world revolution had become a fiction. In this context order was a dominant value to the Soviet elite when contrasted with the alternative of social justice and socialism. Ultimately the cold war balance of power suited both the USA and the USSR because it was the manner in which their international influence within the world was upheld and maintained. In this sense we could suggest that the standpoint of realism and revolutionary Marxism indicate certain similarities. This is not because of a common theoretical approach, but instead because of the implications of understanding the empirical behaviour of the USSR and USA.

Bull outlines how the character of war is carried out between sovereign nation states. It is an expression of disorder in the international system and the realisation of the fact that order has been replaced with conflict and upheaval. Despite these limitations war is also an expression of policy. War can be in order to enforce international law, or maintain the balance of power, or war is carried out in order to vaguely enforce the interests of what could be defined as the international order. None of these reasons amount to establishing the causes of war. A Marxist would suggest that war is generally because of the continued imperialist character of capitalism. In the recent period this has occurred between advanced capitalist countries and more backward semi-colonial countries. But war has also taken the form of civil war and this has led to various forms of intervention by the most dominant nations. The point is that it has been difficult to realise order in the international situation because of problems at the level of the tensions within many third world countries. Bull outlines how the regular frequency of war and its utilisation of instruments of policy are still apparent, but the ability of war in order to change the balance of power has become uncertain. Instead war is often related to the role of civil war, and in the nuclear age the role of war has become uncertain and risky. The bi-polar age in which only the USSR and the USA were super-powers has ended, but the ability of the USA to organise international society continues. The relations between the USA and the USSR was generally stable because these countries tended to intervene only in their respective spheres of influence, and they often co-operated in order to resolve issues of crisis. Hence this situation was ideal from the viewpoint of order. The bi-polar situation was one of a genuine balance of power, and enabled the two powers to dominate the world and impose their interests.

Kenneth Waltz has outlined how the end of this situation has led to the ascendency of the USA, but there is also increasing rivalry from China and Russia. Western Europe in the form of the European Union has also become important. (7) This leads to a situation of the end of order and stability. Waltz describes the problems with the unipolar power of the USA: “Will the preponderant power of the United States elicit similar reactions? Unbalanced power, whoever wields it, is a potential danger to others. The powerful state may, and the United states does, think of itself as acting for the sake of peace, justice, and wellbeing in the world. These terms, however are defined to the liking of the powerful, which may conflict with the preferences and interests of others. In international politics, overwhelming power repels and leads others to try to balance against it. With benign intent, the United States has behaved and, until its power is brought into balance, will continue to behave in ways that sometimes frighten others.”(8)

In other words a unipolar world has ended the order and balance of power of the bi-polar era. This means that instability and unexpected wars become more frequent. International tensions also increase as ascendant powers like China attempt to challenge the supremacy of the USA. But what is the answer of the realists to this situation? Waltz suggests that the USA should promote a new balance of power in order to realise international stability.(9) But this possibility is unlikely, or at least will not be advanced voluntarily by the USA, because it would end its hegemonic uni-polar status. Instead the politicians of the USA will accept the uncertainties of the present situation in order to maintain its dominant international status. This will enable the USA to be able to dictate what other countries should do, as Donald Trump is trying to carry out with his 'America First' standpoint. This approach is the logical result of the uni-polar position of the USA. Such a perspective does not mean an end to the relationship of America to globalisation, but instead the USA will be attempting to impose its own economic and political interests more vigorously. Presumably some realists would question the wisdom of this standpoint because it is based on the dominant interests of the USA at the expense of order and the necessity of developing a new balance of power. However, in an era of capitalist crisis is it is logical for the USA to assert its economic interests at the expense of other countries. What is unrealistic of Trump is his attempt to maintain friendly relations with countries like China despite this competitive stance. The populist character of this policy is ultimately irrational in relation to the demands of order in international terms. As Waltz argues the attempt to impose benign hegemony on the world by the USA is ultimately irrational and self-defeating. (10) But what is the alternative? The USA cannot allow genuine rivals to emerge in economic and political terms. Thus the disorder of its hegemonic position is ultimately preferable to the uncertainties of the revival of a form of balance of power. Thus order seems to be an illusory aim of contemporary international politics. Instead the USA would seem to have no other option than to utilise its military position in order to uphold an increasingly uncertain economic situation. The point is that the aim of order and stability is being undermined by the present balance of forces of world capitalism. Indeed it is questionable whether the approach of order can be restored if capitalism continues. The logical response for all realists is to support an alternative economic and political system in order to realise genuine order in terms of the aim of social justice. However the influence of bourgeois ideology means that realists do not adopt this position.

In other words the unipolar position of the USA is not the primary issue because the actual issue is about the unequal advantage that results from the dominant situation of the USA. This means that other countries like China are attempting to oppose this domination and realise a more competitive position for their trade and production. Hence it is the interaction of unipolarity with the dynamics of world capitalism which are creating the present international tensions. It is also necessary to suggest that the hegemonic role of the USA is unable to overcome and resolve the various situations in which civil war is occurring. These can result in great power rivalry, as in relation to Syria and the related tension between the USA and Russia. Hence unipolarity does not meant that the USA has freedom of action or the ability to undermine the dynamics of tensions within a competitive world economy. Instead we can agree with the realists that unipolarity does contribute to the ending of the essential stability and order within international relations. However in a paradoxical manner this instability does not mean that the hegemonic role of the USA can be effectively challenged. Instead the dynamics of competition and tension are enhanced.

Bull discusses the various proposals for organisation of the world system. Firstly, the proposal for total world disarmament. The problem with this perspective is that the reasons for war between nations would not be overcome, and so they would quickly rearm in order to act in military terms. Furthermore, some nations would have a greater capacity for war than others if there was total disarmament. This situation of total disarmament does not explain how order would be realised. It would also be necessary to establish a world authority that verified that total disarmament was being maintained. Primarily, the ability to realise a more just order by the role of force would be made invalid. This would be a world of little change and instead it is possible that unequal power relations were being upheld. These criticisms made by Bull have validity. Any world of disarmament must be supplemented by a perspective of attempting to realise a just world that would be the major reason why force would not occur between states. It is also unrealistic to expect that in the present conditions that any states would disarm if their rivals were reluctant to also carry out this measure. Hence the possibility of disarmament can only be successful if change occurs within the world in order to make this action effective and just.

Another proposal is for the United Nations to become an effective organisation that can enforce the principle of solidarity between states. This situation would realise a more orderly world in which war between states would become more difficult. We can agree with Bull that the various historical events in the past have not been favourable in relation to promoting the merits of this proposal but this does not mean that political conditions could not become more conducive to this possibility in the future. The point is that an international organisation would become effective if states had decreasing reasons to go to war. At present the UN is unable to end the possibility of war despite international goodwill. Only the advance of the aim of social justice can undermine the impulses for war. Bull also argues that a world of many nuclear powers could establish a condition of mutual nuclear deterrence that would undermine the possibility of war between states. However, he accepts that this development is unsatisfactory and could not resolve the problem of war. It is an incomplete proposal. But we could also contend that a world of this type could actually result in an increase of international tension, and expenditure on nuclear weapons would be a waste of resources. What would be more constructive would be definite measures to reduce tensions between states in terms of diplomatic agreements and the increased prestige of the UN.

Bull suggests that a situation in which one ideology such as democracy or socialism is dominant seems to imply the development of a uniform world in which war would be overcome. But he argues that ideological differences will be difficult to resolve and so could still result in wars between states, or international tensions as occurred in the period of the cold war. Bull has outlined a dilemma for anyone who advocates global socialism. This aim is connected to peace, but the attempt to advance it is likely to result in increased international tension and the possibility of war. However, in this situation it would be necessary to appeal to the international working class to act to undermine the potential for war and instead advance the combined aims of socialism and peace. Bull considers that this approach is unrealistic. It is not empirically possible to establish a world based on ideological uniformity. He argues: “It may be doubtful, however, whether world politics is likely ever to display the kind of ideological uniformity that would be necessary to establish or to maintain an alternative form of the states system such as this. If we assume that in the future as in the past there will be constant change and varieties of the ideologies that are espoused in different parts of the world, then the attempt to remould the states system on principles of ideological fixity and uniformity is likely to be a source of disorder, and we are driven back to the principle that order is best founded on agreement to tolerate ideological difference, namely the principle upon which the present states are founded.”(11) This comment may explains the situation in relation to the bi-polar tension of the cold war, but it does not recognise that the present world order is based on the economic and ideological domination of capitalism. This is the uniform system that promotes the possibility of trade, and war occurs despite this ideological uniformity. The reason for socialism is because the world economy of capitalism is understood to be unjust and so should be replaced by a more equal society that is able to realise the material wellbeing of the majority of people. This aim may be unrealistic but it is motivated by the very limitations of capitalism. There is no historical reason why capitalism should not be challenged and its domination ended. The realist approach cannot recognise this unequal character to the world because it assumes that diverse nations will have different ideologies. Instead political differences occur despite similarities in ideology and economic system.

Bull's argument against a world government is simple, because he maintains that no state would accept this possibility. States would not agree to a new type of authority being responsible for their security. The only precedent for a world government is by the method of conquest, as in relation to the expansion of the Roman Empire. What would be more realistic would be the disintegration of states into smaller units, as in relation to the situation in the UK. The problem with Bull's view is that it is static and cannot envisage new developments that might promote the possibility of a world government. The most promising of these possibilities if created by the impulse for socialism which is based on an ideology that promotes the integration of nations into larger international units. However, if this development does not occur, Bull is probably right to imply that world government remains an unrealistic possibility. Bull is also right to imply that the impulse of transnational production and trade does not undermine the system of nations and instead occurs in the form of this mediation by states. Capitalism is not likely to realise a world government.

Bull concludes and maintains that the role of states is the most effective manner in which international order can be upheld. Indeed he considers that the alternative of a world government is essentially unrealistic. But he accepts that the system of states could undermine the expansion of world economic growth because of national restrictions and the inability to realise social justice may be related to the biased role of states. However, this situation may not be resolved by the formation of world governments because what is required is the promotion of social solidarity in international terms. Hence a world government could favour those who uphold an unjust distribution of resources. The logical argument of Bull's standpoint is that the only type of world government that would be principled is a socialist one, which would ensure that resources are equitably distributed and developed. But he does not make this argument instead he implies that only the modification of the system of nations can result in social justice: “In the third place, the argument we are considering overlooks the possibility that the state system may come to be infused with a stronger consensus about goals of economic and social justice; that while the division of sovereign states persists, these states in defining their objectives will be increasingly disciplined by a sense of human solidarity or nascent world society.”(12) If this perspective was to have some validity it would still mean that the impulse for social justice would imply that the nations influenced by this dynamic would also be moving towards socialism. Only a change in the balance of power between classes could ensure that social justice was actually realised.

Bull maintains that the perspective of proletarian revolution cannot address the issue of maintaining order within and between states. He comments: “Proletarian revolution, however desirable it may be, does not remove the system of states, in which independent political communities dispose of power and pursue objectives that come into conflict. The question how international order is maintained thus arises in relation to the world that may follow universal proletarian revolution, just as it arises in the world at present.....To this question about order among states the revolutionary model does not provide any answer, indeed it does not recognise the validity of the question. Whether or not the revolutionary model points a way to just change in international society, it leaves us unable to dispense with the range of ideas concerning the maintenance of order, with which the bulk of this volume has been concerned.”(14) A Marxist approach does not evade the issue of order, even if it has not been a theoretical question for it to resolve. The starting point is that the order of the capitalist nation state is unjust and so should be replaced, but this does not mean that chaos is justified. Instead what is being advocated is a higher form of order in which the aim of a classless society is being promoted. This common aim should mean that national differences between different socialist states are progressively overcome. In this manner a united sense of order is being advanced in relation to overcoming any differences between socialist states. This type of order could not be established by the USSR because it was not genuinely socialist. Instead its order was based on the perpetuation of forms of national domination, as in relation to Eastern Europe.

HANS J MORGENTHAU'S CLASSIC REALISM

Morgenthau outlined his exposition of the definitive version of realism in his work: 'Politics Among Nations'.(14) In his introductory remarks he contends that realism is not an attempt to impose an ideal construction onto reality but instead attempts to understand what is happening in terms of the relationship of experience to reason. This means that ideological preferences and moral ideals are secondary when compared to the role of power. Furthermore, politicians can be limited by the influence of rigid ideological views such as the standpoint of anti-communism which influenced post war American politicians. Thus flexibility and prudence is the most important guide for international politics. Power is not reduced to the role of coercion but instead involves influence and legitimate power which may be used in terms of self-defence against aggression. The primary aspect of power is whether it is effectively utilised by one nation against other nations in relation to economic, political and military policy: “When, however the objectives of those policies serve to increase the power of the nation pursuing them with regards to other nations, these policies and their objectives must be judged primarily from the point of view of their contribution to national power. An economic policy that cannot be justified in purely economic terms might nevertheless be undertaken in view of the political power pursued..... It may of course be that the economic or financial losses involved in such policies will weaken the nation in its international position to such an extent as to outweigh the political advantages to be expected. On these grounds such policies might be rejected. In such a case, what decides the issue is not purely economic and financial considerations but a comparison of the political chances and risks involved – that is, the probable effect of these policies upon the power of the nation.”(15)

This standpoint is most compatible with Marxism. It outlines how the exercise of power, and the effects of unequal power, are the most logical and plausible expression of international relations. Obviously the country with greater economic and political power has an ability to impose its will on weaker nations. This standpoint enables us to understand the exercise of power by imperialist nations, and the bi-polar character of power during the cold war. It also means that the role of the uni-polar power of the USA in the present can be rationalised and understood. However, the limitation of this standpoint is that the importance of power is not systematically connected to the significance of economic and political systems. Instead it is argued that power inherently has an omnipotent capacity within both domestic politics and international relations to become the major dynamic dominating the actions of humans. Thus: “In view of this ubiquity of the struggle for power in all social relations and on all levels of social organisation, it is surprising that international politics is of necessity power politics? And would it not be rather surprising if the struggle for power were but an accidental and ephemeral attribute of international politics when it is a permanent and necessary element of all branches of domestic politics.”(16) A question that arises is whether the emphasis on power can be reconciled with the contrasting realist principle of order. It would seem that the impulse for power would mean that international politics could not establish a situation of stable order between nations?

Thus it is not surprising that Morgenthau is dismissive of the various attempts to promote peace via the role of trade, international organisations or socialism. His view is that these perspectives which are based on an emphasis on reason underestimate the impulse of power. Instead nations either attempt to maintain the present levels of power in terms of upholding the status quo, or represent an attempt to expand power through a policy of imperialism, or a policy which is based on formal demonstration is one of prestige. The approach of status quo involves trying to uphold the distribution of power at any given moment. For example, France in the inter-war period attempted to maintain the relations of power established by the Versailles treaty. In relation to understanding imperialism it is argued that the attempt to consolidate Empire is not an example because it does not involve the expansion of power. Furthermore, Morgenthau opposes the Marxist theory of imperialism and contends that it did not have an economic logic related to the influence of monopoly capital and instead was as a result of the pressure of politicians because of national power considerations: “Yet far from being the instigators, capitalists as a group – aside from certain individual capitalists - were not even enthusiastic supporters of imperialistic policies.”(17) This was because capitalists considered that imperialism would undermine free trade and result in war. Imperialism is instead a policy of replacing the status quo with new power relations, via the military victories of a given state. It can also take the form of conquest. Imperialism can therefore express an expanding empire, and so imperialism can take a military, economic or cultural form.

Marxists do not necessarily dispute the possibility that imperialism can take these forms, and that it can be motivated by the ambitions of the nation state rather than the specific role of capitalists. But what they would also claim is that this varied situation cannot be understood without the relevance of the dynamics of capitalism. It is the competition of rival forms of monopoly capital which has in the past been an aspect of the formation of colonial empire, and enables us to understand the contemporary importance of neo-colonial domination. Thus the attempt to define power as the major causal aspect of the impulse for imperialism has to be clarified in terms of the imperatives of the competitive character of the world economy. If this clarification is not made then imperialism can be reduced to the policy of a few politicians. Indeed it is being argued that imperialism is nothing more than an attempt to change the distribution of power. This would imply that the nations of the status quo, like France between 1918 and 1939 are not imperialist. Such a view would be dogmatic given the immense economic and political power of France in this period. Instead it is the structural context of the world economy under capitalism which enables us to understand imperialism, even if would be dogmatic reasoning to reduce it merely to economic imperatives.

But Morgenthau is right to suggest that the politics of prestige can have a profound influence upon how the balance of power between contending states can be understood. The influence of the Soviet Union was underestimated before 1939, and this meant the possibility to develop a coalition against the expansion of Nazi Germany was undermined. This situation was only rectified in 1941 after the invasion of the USSR by Germany. But prestige can only be the effect of the situation of international politics. It is part of the hierarchy of power, but it does not explain the character of power which must be related to the dynamics of competing imperialist nations. But what is not explained by Morgenthau is that an aspect of this underestimation of the role of the USSR was because of distrust of Stalinism and the supposed socialist character of the USSR. It was ideological and political motivations that enable us to understand the role of prestige. This led to the isolation of the USSR. In this context the actual expansion of the USSR meant that its prestige was enhanced and the result was the formation of the bi-polar system.

Morgenthau outlines how the issue of national power is related to a sense of the population belonging to the nation so that they identify with the aims of the politicians concerning enhancing the importance of the state. This issue is also connected to the raw materials that a country has like oil and the level of productivity and technological sophistication. In this context the USA and the USSR became the major powers of the cold war era because they were endowed with natural raw materials and had a massive population that was able to ensure that these countries were the most productive and had the highest level of economic output. But this view is questionable when he argues that the role of national character has an influence upon the application of national power. The concept of national character is hard to define, and it would be more explanatory to suggest that it is the influence of ideology which has defined whether a population of a given country becomes enthusiastic about imperial type ambitions. For example the victory of the Nazis in Germany led to mass support for the aims of conquest and expansion. In contrast the post-war German is more modest about national aims because of the defeated character and division of Germany. Indeed Morgenthau seems to agree with this point when he suggests that national morale determines the extent to which a population of a country identifies with the foreign policy objectives of politicians. In other words the role of public opinion is crucial for the future of a country, as the referendum on the membership of the |UK in the EU indicated. The fact that Morgenthau identifies national character with national morale means that he is able to define the role of national character in a manner that is not mythical or arbitrary. For example, the defeat of Frame by Germany in 1939 was connected to the low level of morale in France. But this situation had a political aspect because major right wing politicians preferred the victory of Nazi Germany rather than success under a popular front regime. Hence domestic politics often has an important influence on the ability to mobilise the people in support of foreign policy objectives. The strength of the Conservative Party in the UK meant that the campaign for the UK to remain part of the EU was seriously undermined. In other words within the UK nationalism has had a right wing bias that is in favour of traditional institutions. Socialism is considered to be anti-patriotic because of its association with left wing ideas.

Morgenthau considers that a successful foreign policy must mean that politicians are not the mere supporters of domestic public opinion. |Instead they must be prepared to carry out a policy despite a lack of majority public support. The government should also be able to differentiate between what is desirable from what is essential in relation to foreign policy. It must also obtain the support of other nations for its policies. We can agree with this point and also outline how the success of the USA has been connected to its ability to construct alliances like NATO. We could also mention that the ability of the USA to be dominant in world politics has been because of its influence within the various international economic institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. The USA is also the leading economic nation at various international conferences like the G7. Hence the very rules of the international economic and political system has been based on the hegemonic role of the USA. This is why it is so serious that the USA under Trump has acted to withdraw from the agreement on climate change. This will mean that this agreement becomes meaningless because it is the USA that is the most important country in relation to the validity of this document.

Morgenthau considers that three mistakes can result in a failure to evaluate national power correctly. Firstly, the projection of relative power into an absolute. This means that the power of the given nation is not contrasted correctly with that of other nations. The second problem is to view a particular form of power as absolute and therefor ignore the changes that can occur. The third is about neglect of the changes within the domestic situation that can affect the character of power. This perspective has some merit but it neglects what could be the ultimate criteria of power which is the relationship of a given country to the world economy. The ability of the USA to be the dominant power since 1919 is because of its increasing influence within the world economy. This situation has enabled it to acquire new forms of political and cultural power. Morgenthau maintains that there is a tendency to conflate the ascendency of a particular power with an absolute status, and so to equate certainty with the actual significance of uncertainty in international affairs. This view is an important methodological criteria to understand the dynamism of power within international relations, but we must also understand why the USA has been able to establish hegemonic power in virtually permanent terms. This is not because the impulse for power has been greater in the USA than other countries but rather because its geographical situation and resources has ultimately enabled the USA to become the dominant economic and military power. This situation was obscured between 1919 and 1939 when the various American governments of this period refused to politically accept that it was the leading nation. But the results of the Second World War and the advent of the cold war meant it had to become the major 'defender of the free world'. This aspect was connected to the fact that the USA became the major bulwark of the world economy and was the leading part of the IMF.

Morgenthau would not necessarily deny the above point. But what is problematical in his standpoint is the mythical and idealist equation he makes about the nation and the role of power: “Membership in a nation may be defined in terms of language, culture, common origin or race, or in the decision of the individual to belong to the nation. But no matter how it is defined, the membership always entails as its essence partaking in certain qualities called the national character, that the members of a particular nation have in common and by which they are differentiated from the members of other nations. The preservation of the national character and more particularly, the development of its creative faculties is the supreme task of the nation. In order to fulfil this task the nation needs power that will protect against other nations and will stimulate its own development. In other words the nation needs a state.”(18) If applied dogmatically this comment implies that the supposed particular aspects of the national character means that the various nations are based upon incompatible views and ideologies, and therefore the struggle for international power becomes inevitable. The different and antagonistic role of the national character means that the striving for power is a logical outcome and so the survival of the fittest is the basis of historical development. This would mean that aggressive nationalism and the conflict of rival powers is an inherent part of history. Hence irrationality is the defining aspect of social reality and the rationalist role of reason, such as expressed by the development of an international world economy is understood to be a secondary aspect of social reality. Instead imperialism is the outcome of the conflict of rival forms of national character and their 'will-to power'. Morgenthau admits that it is possible to justify aggressive nationalism and racism if this standpoint is carried to its extreme. The problem is that this logic is outlined in his own conception of incompatible national characters. His denial of the possibility of universalism and internationalism can only result in his justification of national power struggles. In this context he defends national power rivalries, but tries to moderate them in terms of rejecting any reactionary nationalist ideology. His standpoint is contradictory and untenable. He also tries to deny the militaristic logic of his standpoint. Hence he justifies the problematical view that different and mutually incompatible national characters can somehow co-exist, or at least moderate the possibility of war. The only genuine manner in which his contradictions can be resolved is to develop a genuine internationalist project of change in which nations become part of a coherent international community.

His pragmatic resolution of the dilemmas that he has created in his position is to suggest that the balance of power can resolve conflicts between rival nations: “The aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying either to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a configuration that is called the balance of power and to policies that aim at preserving it.”(19) Thus he argues that power politics will become subordinated to the greater necessity for the balance of power which acts as 'an essential stabilizing factor in a society of sovereign nations'.(20) Hence he implies that the balance of power acts like a process of equilibrium in that it resolves the tensions between competing nations. But it is optimistic to define politics in terms of equilibrium, and instead it could be argued that inherently antagonistic power relations mean that the tendency for nations to obtain advantage over others is a perpetual aspect of politics because of its competitive character. The actual problem is the antagonism between nations which must be resolved if genuine mutual relations between nations is to be established. Morgenthau is forced to admit that the balance of power is inherently unstable because countries have a tendency to try and obtain an advantage over the other. For example the bi-polar cold war system always had an element of instability because the USA continually advocated the liberation of Eastern Europe from the domination of the USSR. Furthermore, the very sceptical description of the balance of power outlined by Morgenthau is related to the fact that historically they could not undermine the possibility of war, as in relation to the First World War and the Second World War. Aggressive national impulses meant that war occurred despite intricate alliances and a general temporary stalemate in power relations. The balance of power has only generally been successful, as in relation to the bi-polar system of the cold war, because it was based on mutual nuclear deterrence rather than the goodwill of its participants.

Morgenthau admits to the uncertainties and fragility of the balance of power in the following manner: “This uncertainty of power calculations is inherent in the nature of national power itself. It will therefore come into play even in the simplest pattern of the balance of power – that is when one nation opposes another. This uncertainty is, however, immeasurably magnified when the weights in one or the other are composed not of single units but of alliances. Then it becomes necessary not only to compute one's own and the opponent’s national power and to correlate one with the other but to perform the same operation on the national power of one's allies and those of the opponent. The risk of guessing is greatly aggravated when one must assess the power of nations belonging to a different civilisation from one's own.”(21) Hence it is admitted that the balance of power is inherently unstable and is likely to be undermined by the uncertainties of the attempt to gain advantage by the rival powers. This possibility is intensified if alliances are involved. The complications only become greater. Morgenthau has no resolution of these dilemmas because he is unable to tackle the problem of the admittedly aggressive character of nations which challenge each other in terms of antagonistic power impulses. Thus the problem concerns the logic of rival will-to-power's which he can only attempt to empirically tackle rather than resolve. It is effectively admitted that the balance of power can only be a temporary attempt to resolve an enduring problem of the conflicts between nations because of their antagonistic power tendencies.

Indeed Morgenthau admits that the balance of power is an illusory diplomatic attempt to resolve the power impulses of rival nations: “This uncertainty of all power calculations not only makes the balance of power incapable of practical application but leads to its very negation in practice. Since no nation can be sure that its calculation of the distribution of power at any particular moment in history is correct, it must at least make sure that its errors, whatever they may be, will not put the nation at a disadvantage in the contest for power. In other words, the nation must try to have at least a margin of safety that will allow it to make erroneous calculations and still maintain the balance of power. To that effect, all nations actively engaged in the struggle for power must actually aim not at a balance – that is, equality of power – but at superiority of power in their own behalf”(22) Thus the balance of power is not actually realised. It is instead inadequate and cannot disguise the effective domination of some nations over others. This is a logical conclusion for Morgenthau to make because he does not consider that it is possible to ultimately restrict what he defines as the 'limitless aspiration for power, potentially always present'(23) Furthermore, all nations have this power impulse and so there will a constant tendency to create the inferiority of other nations: “Hence all nations who have gained an apparent edge over their competitors tend to consolidate that advantage and use it for changing the distribution of power permanently in their favour.”(24) This means the balance of power can only be of an expedient character, because the various nations fear that their rivals will try and utilise this situation in order to gain advantages. The only constant aspect in this situation is that the 'will to power' is more important than the will to cooperate in alliances. Morgenthau has outlined the importance of power, but he has no policy that can resolve it and bring about an amicable resolution in international relations. Instead he has rationalised the constant conflict of nations.

Hence he effectively does not describe the character of the balance of powers in terms of an equilibrium that is able to stabilise the international situation in durable terms. Instead the balance of power is unstable and is likely to be undermined by the conflict of rival power impulses from nations that have not been able to overcome this dynamic to strengthen themselves at the expense of other nations: “Yet the very act of redressing the balance carries within itself the elements of a new disturbance. The dynamics of power politics.....make this development inevitable. Yesterday's defender of the status quo is transformed by victory into the imperialist of today, against whom yesterday's vanquished will seek revenge tomorrow. The ambition of the victor who took up arms in order to restore the balance, as well as the resentment of the loser who could not overthrow it, tend to make the new balance a virtually invisible point of transition from one disturbance to the next. Thus the balancing process has frequently led to the substitution of one predominant power, disturbing the balance, for another one.”(26) It could be argued that this approach is able to explain the dynamics of international relations before 1945, but it is less explanatory in relation to the period after 1945. The contemporary role of public opinion would not support war in order to satisfy any imperialist tendencies because of the horrors of modern conflict. Instead it could be suggested that rival forms of national power have been resolved in different terms such as a result of the utilisation of diplomacy and because of economic competition. But Morgenthau is probably right to imply that the balance of power is still formed by rival nations and that it is upheld by one particular country that is able to consider itself the guardian of the given alliance. This has been the role of the USA since 1945 in relation to the Western countries. They had an ideological adversary in the form of the USSR. However the demise of the USSR has not undermined this alliance because it is based on the general adherence to capitalism and opposition to any threat to international stability. The concept of antagonistic national power is unable to explain this development in satisfactory terms. But the point is that it is possible to reconcile economic competition between states with the consolidation of common political aims. The Western alliance is united by the common ideology of upholding the concept of a free world. This unites them against any threats and generally they combine in order to resolve any international tensions. Such a development does not mean that the power impulses of the various nations have been transcended, but rather that this aspect is connected to what are common aims. The point is that more unites the most developed capitalist countries than divides them. Primarily they act to try and ensure that stability is dominant and that any instances of disruption of the international order are overcome. This explains the role of international coalitions in various areas of conflict throughout the world. However, the advent of the Trump government represents the formation of an administration that is committed to asserting its distinct power impulses. Whether this intention is realised remains to be confirmed because there are profound reasons why the various Western countries should still cooperate, and reach agreement with other powerful nations like China, in order to resolve common problems and difficulties. They primarily have a common interest is creating a situation in which the world economy can prosper. This aim requires united political action. Hence objective material interests are the major reason why the power impulses of nations has been diluted over the recent years.

Morgenthau also argues that nations are influenced by moral values, which means that power impulses are modified. This has meant that limits have generally been placed on how war is conducted. But the influence of morality has been distorted and undermined by the rival approach of nationalism. The apparent universality of ethics is replaced by a national form of morality, and the result is that nations develop different and opposing concepts of morals. The outcome is that some nations attempt to impose on others their concept of morality, or define it as a universal morality. For example, this has occurred in relation to the significance of human rights, or in relation to Woodrow Wilson's perspective of spreading the role of democracy within the world. Morgenthau contends that there is a world public opinion that is able to influence national morality. However, this opinion is undermined when given nations enter into conflict and people have to define their actions in national terms. This means: “Inevitably, then, the members of the human race live and act politically, not as members of one world society applying standards of universal ethics but as members of their respective national societies, guided by their national standards of morality. In politics the nation and not humanity is the ultimate fact.”(26)

This view may be essentially valid for most periods of time, but it has been possible to develop an effective world opinion which has had an influence on the actions of nation states. For example, the agitation against the Vietnam War was based on the international view that this war was immoral and that the USA should not intervene in Vietnam. This agitation had an influence on the policy of the various American governments. But the most important basis to develop a universal morality is to generate support for socialism. The very fact that the attempt to promote socialism in national terms will be ineffectual means it is necessary to develop a global form of this system, and therefore implies that it is vital that international struggle for this aim is crucial. It is the fact that people support capitalism, which is linked to the role of the nation state, which means that the development of a universal morality has been difficult, and has been only occasional successful. However, the major problem with the approach of Morgenthau is that he considers national moralities to be logical and essential. This means that he thinks that an international morality is unrealistic. If this view was strictly true, it would mean that any attempt to create a universal morality would fail. However, we could argue that the very ethics of human rights has been enduring and does limit the actions of national governments. The same point could be made about the necessity of social justice and ending poverty. Furthermore, the ecological movement is developing an international sensibility. Thus the fact that many problems are global is generating an international consciousness about the necessity of action that is not limited to the role of nations. These sentiments could become transformed and become more definite if they are connected to the aim of socialism.

Morgenthau is concerned to suggest that the influence of morality or international law does not undermine the concept of the sovereignty of the nation. Indeed he outlines many example of when the attempt to impose international law has failed because of the effective opposition of nations. Nor does the role of interdependence as in economic relations undermine the principle of sovereignty. The nation is the primary legislative and executive organisation. The point that Morgenthau is making is that people would not want to undermine national sovereignty in order to advance the cause of world peace. However, the problem with his view is that he is suggesting that what exists at the moment will be permanent. What is ignored is that the Western nations do effectively compromise aspects of their sovereignty in order to be part of international institutions like the EU, or alternatively unite so that common economic and political policies can be realised. It is understood that sovereignty has to be compromised if it is to be possible that aspects of a united interest can be realised. This can takes the form of summits. It also has to be outlined that various international courts concerned with human rights have evolved which do undermine national sovereignty in the name of justice.

Morgenthau defines the character of the nationalism of the great powers in the following terms: “The nationalistic universalism of our age......is a secular religion, universal in its interpretation of the nature and destiny of man and in its messianic promise of salvation for all mankind. A particular nation will bear its torch at any particular moment in time, but in principle any nation can. Thus the claims to universal domination in the name of the new crusading nationalism may shift from nation to nation according to the conditions of spirit and power.”(27) The major problem with this perspective is that it assumes that only the nation as the centre of power and consciousness can be able to develop universal ambitions in order to define the character of the world. No other social force, such as class, is able to express universal ambitions, and therefore the role of the working class was subsumed into the role of the Soviet nation. Only in that manner could universal ambitious for socialism be upheld. Marxism would dispute this standpoint because it would argue that it is possible for the working class to acquire international sensibilities. However, any perceptive Marxism would have to admit that this possibility has been historically undermined by the influence of nationalism. In this manner, Morgenthau is able to express historical developments accurately even if he still implies that 'what is' represents 'what should be'. The problem is that he can only confirm his standpoint in the reactionary terms that the most durable form of nationalistic universalism is that of imperialism and conquest, which in its most extreme form was defined by the Nazi ideologies. But the most durable nationalist universalism has been the ideology of the USSR and the standpoint of democracy. Morgenthau admits that the approach of the Western nations often deteriorated into being a justification of military intervention such as the threat to liberate Eastern Europe, or actual action in Vietnam.

But the conclusion that he makes in relation to the tensions created by rival forms of universalism is premature: “This struggle for the minds of men, advancing rival claims to universal dominion on the part of different nations has dealt the final, fatal blow to that social system of international intercourse within which for almost three centuries nations lived together in constant rivalry, yet under the common roof of shared values and universal standards of action. The collapse of this roof has destroyed the common habitat of the nations of the world, and the most powerful of them each assert the right to build it anew after their own pattern.”(28) This conclusion has proved to be premature because after the demise of the USSR the common logic of the most powerful nations is expressed by capitalism and the political system of democracy. Universalism is no longer merely an impulse of the most powerful nations, but is also an indication of the influence of the common economic system which generates cooperation in political terms. The very importance of the world economy means that political power struggles have become modified and lessened. In this context the USA is able to assert its hegemonic power in terms of multi-lateral co-operation with other nations. However, the big issue is whether President Trump is trying to revive the era of nationalistic universalism. But at the present the institutions of international support express the structural character of international politics.

Morgenthau's views was influenced by the bi-polar rivalry of the competing universalistic doctrines of communism and American influenced democracy. The ascendency of the colonial revolution and the fact that the post-colonial regimes were often pro-Soviet meant that he considered this period to be the era of the decline of American power. This view is connected to the standpoint that Western Europe is also declining. But in actuality it was the Soviet Union that was undergoing the most profound economic crisis and decline. This situation resulted in the decomposition of the USSR and the realisation of the political independence of Eastern Europe. Morgenthau's viewpoint was obscured by a lack of a valid political economy which would have been able to establish that the Soviet economy was inefficient when compared to that of the USA and capitalism in general. Thus the various political setbacks of the USA, as in relation to the trajectory of the colonial revolution, and the war in Vietnam, did not alter the situation of the continued superiority of the USA. Nor did the successes of the USSR in the detente period alter this situation of the supremacy of the USA. Hence the military and economic pressure applied by Reagan did contribute to the continued decline of the USSR. But the one sided political approach of Morgenthau implied that the bi-polar system would be effectively permanent He understood the role of the two major superpowers as one of 'unchallenged prominence' and the USA and USSR expressed 'political centers of the world'. (29) In actuality, the situation was one of increasing USA pressure to undermine the strength of the USSR, which culminated in the Reagan offensive, after the temporary political ascendency of the USSR in the detente era. The ultimate aspect which was causally primary in their antagonistic relations was the economic strength of the USA, which meant it could overcome any political reversals without its superiority being ended. The fact that Morgenthau defined the situation in terms of rival centres of political power meant that he was unable to understand this actual and effective balance of power.

Morgenthau studies the history of the League of Nations and United Nations and concludes that they have been unsuccessful in realising the prospect for peace. This is because only the role of nations can bring about the possibility of an end to wars and international stability. Hence it is vital that nations have a political system that promotes order and justice which means that it will not have aggressive impulses for war. The economic and political differences within a nation should not undermine a sense of common loyalty and allegiance to the country: “Thus protection of the nation against destruction from without and disruption from within is the overriding concern of all citizens. Likewise loyalty to the nation is a paramount concern of all citizens. Nothing can be tolerated that might threaten the coherence of the nation. Interests, ideas, and loyalties that might not be compatible with the concerns of the unity of the nation must yield to that concern.”(30) This view implies that the very importance of democratic freedoms and the right of different opinions should be restricted by the requirements of national unity and loyalty to the government. Hence the necessity to have a conformist population that will support the objectives of the state is considered to be a vital aspect of the promotion of a foreign policy that is in the interests of the nation. Morgenthau argues that it is possible to reconcile the aim of social justice with the common endeavours of the nation. But he does not explain how this possibility will be realised, except to imply that the state should be willing to listen to the views of important social groups. He is relying on the influence of nationalism in order to ensure that any grievances are limited and do not undermine the carrying out of the foreign policy of the state. In the last analysis, Morgenthau is emphasising the importance of the state in order to restrict the possibility of the development of social tension within society. He accepts quite emphatically that this may mean the role of coercion in order to repress revolution. Thus the coherence of the society that he is advocating requires acceptance of a strict code of national loyalty, or obedience to the aims of the state. There is no role for any serious opponents of the regime who may become revolutionary. Instead he is justifying a concept of a conservative nation that accepts the domination of the ruling class. Only in this manner can the foreign policy of the nation be carried out.

His standpoint is related to the view that the nation is the most legitimate form of authority. The possibility of a world government is unrealistic. Furthermore, the character of a world government would be define by the actions of particular nations. Hence to support its development may mean betraying your own nation. Morgenthau accepts that arguments could be made in favour of a world government but that would mean opposing the sentiment in favour of the primary role of the nation. This view has some credibility, but what exists in the present may be transformed in the future. The point is to unite working people in favour of the aim of a world socialist government. The very limitations of the present states system could promote support for this aim. However, this development would mean that the enduring adherence to the nation has to be overcome. This is admittedly a difficult task.

Morgenthau outlines how the role of diplomacy is essential if peace is to be realised between possibly competing and aggressive nations. This activity must be based on the combination of the principles of upholding national security with recognition of the interests of other nations. Hence this process of negotiation must involve the willingness to compromise. But Morgenthau admits that this role of diplomacy is not sufficient because it is based on the role of nations who may aim to resolve differences by means of war. Hence: “Diplomacy is the best means of preserving peace that a society of sovereign states has to offer, but especially under the conditions of contemporary world politics and of contemporary war it is not good enough. It is only when nations have surrendered to a higher authority the means of destruction that modern technology has put in their hands – when they have given up their sovereignty – that international peace can be made as secure as domestic peace.”(31) This is an astonishing conclusion. The very advocate of the important relationship of nations to their power impulses has admitted that this logic has terrible consequences and can only be resolved in terms of the formation of a world government. But the problem is that he actually is unable to outline how this world government would be formed. He has outlined how most people, most of the time have allegiances to their respective nation state. These states are committed to national sovereignty which means that they are the expression of defence of this principle in international terms. Hence there is an impasse according to the views of Morgenthau. How will it be possible to form a world government? The problem is that he never discusses the fact that the dominant economic system of capitalism is politically related to the role of nation states. This means that the impulse for world government has been historically limited and ineffective. The world economy of capitalism has a formal aspect in terms of its division into rival nations. This competition can occasionally provide the impulse for war. But globalisation has meant that national antagonism has been modified in terms of a general commitment to the increase development of trade. But this does not mean that the role of nations will be superseded. The ruling elites cannot envisage any alternative to the continuation of their state sovereignty and the expression of antagonistic power impulses. This is why Morgenthau provides a generally accurate view of international relations, even if it is antiquated in some senses such as not being able to predict the present unipolar domination of the USA. But the influence of rival forms of power means that the formation of a world government, except in its limited UN form, will not be created under capitalism. Instead only when the working class is able to oppose national ideologies, and aim to realise global socialism, will this potential for a world government become possible. It could be argued that even the history of socialism assumes a national form of universalism. But this was because of the degeneration of Stalinism. We are confident that an international working class can mobilise in order to realise an international type of society. Only in this manner will the problem of power be tamed and resolved.

FOOTNOTES:

(1)Hedley Bull: The Anarchical Society Fourth Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2012 p4-6

(2) ibid p8

(3) ibid p45-46

(4) ibid p87

(5) ibid p81

(6) ibid p87

(7)Kenneth Waltz: Realism and International Politics, Routledge Oxon 2008 p197-229

(8) ibid p214

(9) ibid p224

(10) ibid p242

(11)Bull op cit p239-240

(12) ibid p282

(13) ibid p303

(14) Hans J Morgenthau Politics Among Nations, seventh edition, McGraw Hill, New York 2006

(15) ibid p34

(16) ibid p38

(17) ibid p63

(18) ibid p171-172

(19) ibid p179

(20) ibid p179

(21) ibid p216

922) ibid p218-219

(23) ibid p219

(24) ibid p219

(25) ibid p221

(26) ibid p279

(27) ibid p339

(28) ibid p346

(29) ibid p397

(30) bid p508

(31) ibid p567