

The Unrealism of Contemporary Realism: The Tension between Realist Theory and Realists' Practice

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Realist International Relations thinkers often intervene in political debates and criticize their governments' policies even as they pride themselves on theorizing politics as it "really" is. They rarely reflect on the following contradictions between their theory and their practice: if there is a "real world" impervious to political thought, why bother to try to influence it? And, is realist theory not putatively disconfirmed by the fact that realist thinkers have so often opposed existing foreign policies (e.g., the wars in Vietnam and Iraq)? I argue that these contradictions are not inherent in realism *per se* so much as in the commitment of contemporary realists to naturalistic methodological and epistemological postulates. I show that Hans Morgenthau and especially E. H. Carr, far from being naïve "traditionalists," have grappled with these questions in a sophisticated manner; they have adopted non-naturalistic methodological and epistemological stances that minimize the tension between realist theory and the realities of realists' public activism. I conclude with a call for contemporary realists to adjust their theory to their practice by trading the dualism underlying their approach—subject-object; science-politics; purpose-analysis—for E. H. Carr's dictum that "political thought is itself a form of political action."

This essay addresses a seeming paradox in realist International Relations (IR) thought. Realist thinkers from Edward H. Carr, through Hans Morgenthau, to John Mearsheimer—even as they set their theories off against "idealism" and claimed to "see the world as it is, not as we would like it to be"—have often criticized the foreign policies of their home countries and advocated alternative policies that their governments *should* pursue.¹ If there is indeed a "real" political world that exists independently of theories of international politics, why do leading realist theorists bother to intervene in political debates? Are their repeated attempts to change the course of foreign policy

not akin to "tell[ing] leaves to appear in the spring and fade in the autumn"?² Moreover, assuming that the realists' policy positions are informed by their theories, are these theories not putatively disconfirmed by the fact that the policy preferences of their authors are often at odds with actual foreign policy? In sum, the passionate and often-critical interventions of realist scholars in policy debates appear to contradict both the philosophical claim that the "real" political world cannot be changed by political thought and the empirical claim that realist theory accurately describes this world.

This apparent paradox has not received much attention from students of IR, save for a recent article by Rodger Payne, who powerfully exposed the "disconnect" between the active participation of neorealist scholars in policy debates and the skepticism of neorealist theory toward the transformative potential of political discourse.³ My account of the activism of contemporary realists dovetails substantially with Payne's excellent discussion of the subject and my analysis of the tension between realist thought and practice is indebted to his framing of the problem. But in two important, interrelated respects my analysis goes beyond Payne's critique and even challenges his conclusions. First, whereas Payne focused almost exclusively on neorealism, I expand the discussion to include leading "classical" realists. Are classical realist thinkers as vulnerable as their successors, I ask, to the charge that their political practice contradicted their political thought? Second, perhaps partly because he paid little attention to the

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classical realists, Payne failed to recognize that the source of the tension between realist theory and realists' practices lies less in realist thought *per se* than in the naturalistic philosophy of science embraced by contemporary realists, that is, their espousal of the idea that the study of international politics should be patterned after the natural sciences.⁴ The recurring attempts of realists to influence policy, or the frequent variation between their prescriptions and actual foreign policy, are far more problematic for contemporary realism than for the non-naturalistic approaches embraced by classical realists. Whereas Payne concludes that the "contradiction between realist theorizing and policy action is logically unsustainable" within the bounds of realist thought, I argue that realist theorizing *is* reconcilable with policy action provided that realist theorists draw on the sophisticated epistemological thinking of prominent classical realists, who have cogently rejected positivism long before it became the orthodoxy in IR.⁵

I develop my argument by exploring how three leading realist thinkers—E. H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and John Mearsheimer—have dealt (or failed to deal) with the theory-practice paradox. Mearsheimer and other present-day realists are prevented from effectively tackling the paradox by their commitment to the "standard canons of [naturalistic] scientific research."⁶ The basic presupposition of naturalistic epistemology, namely, that subject (IR theory/ist) and object (international politics) are strictly separate from each other, can hardly be squared with the reality of realists' attempts to influence politics/policy. Furthermore, Mearsheimer's view that the "ultimate test" of theories consists in their correspondence to the historical record is inconsistent with his repeated public criticisms of U.S. foreign policy, most glaringly his lament that "the thrust of U.S. policy in the [Middle East] region derives almost entirely from domestic politics."⁷

As for Morgenthau, I show that he self-consciously adopted the view—adumbrated by Max Weber—that the methodology of social science consisted not in uncovering general laws but in constructing inherently partial and one-sided ideal types. Because ideal types are, by design, abstract tools of "understanding" reality, not accurate representations of it, Morgenthau's theory, unlike Mearsheimer's, was not putatively disconfirmed by the fact that he often criticized the realities of U.S. foreign policy. Morgenthau's resolution of the theory-practice paradox was only partial, however. His passionate attempts to shape political realities were consistent with his Weberian methodological stance but not with Morgenthau's ontological claim that politics is governed by "laws impervious to our preferences" (even as his method did not seek to uncover these laws) or with his insistence—also inspired by Weber—on the separation of science and politics, or truth and power.

Finally, I contend that E. H. Carr confronted the theory-practice paradox and resolved it in the most compelling

way, that is, by being realistic about the limits of realism. He conceded the impossibility of being a thorough-going realist and incorporated into his theory the (realistic) insight that realist thinkers, too, much like other mortals, harbor political purposes which they seek to realize, purposes that cannot be neatly separated from their analysis of political facts. The reality of realists' frequent attempts to influence political decisions is not compatible with the truth-power dualism espoused by Morgenthau, let alone with Mearsheimer's full-fledged naturalism. This reality is perfectly consistent, however, with Carr's insistence that, in contrast with the natural sciences, in political science "the role of the investigator who establishes the facts and the role of the practitioner who considers the right course of action . . . shade imperceptibly into [each] other."⁸

Realists as Policy Critics and Advocates

Although realism emerged as a self-conscious reaction to the prevalence of "wishing over thinking" in "idealist" thought, the careers of realism's leading minds have not been confined to the analytical realm.⁹ From the time of modern realism's birth in the interwar era, prominent realist thinkers have actively engaged in the foreign policy debates of their day with a passion that, though they might be reluctant to admit it, belied the realist idea that the "real world" cannot be changed by the desire to change it. They have sometimes supported the policies of their government but at other times they have advocated alternative policies and even, on some occasions, envisioned radical transformations of world politics.

The career of Edward H. Carr, whose book *The Twenty Years Crisis* is widely regarded as modern realism's founding text, is a case in point. Carr worked for the British Foreign Office for two decades before accepting the Wilson Chair of International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 1936.¹⁰ Simultaneously with his tenure at Aberystwyth, Carr worked, from 1940 to 1946, as an assistant editor of *The Times*, a newspaper that was widely viewed then—with at least some justification—as a quasi-official organ of the British government. As Charles Jones points out, during his years at Aberystwyth (1936–1947) "the main purpose of Carr's work was to influence policy."¹¹ In *The Twenty Years Crisis* and in other publications from the late 1930s, he articulated a defense of the policy of appeasement.¹² During and immediately after the war, in the scores of editorials he penned for *The Times*, Carr persistently urged the British government to cooperate with the Soviet Union, acquiesce in the extension of Soviet power over Eastern Europe, and avoid slipping too far into the embrace of the United States.¹³ These policy prescriptions were embedded in Carr's view—articulated in his book *Nationalism and After*—that fully-sovereign nation-states were becoming obsolete and that they should

give way to regional, functionally-integrated groupings of nations led by Britain, the United States, China, and the Soviet Union. One reviewer of the book, though he resisted the temptation to use the word “utopian,” characterized Carr’s post-nationalist vision as a “pious wish.”¹⁴

Carr’s pro-Soviet sympathies were hardly controversial in the immediate aftermath of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, but as the war progressed and Anglo-Soviet relations came under growing strain, his views and actual British foreign policy gradually grew apart. By 1945 the gulf between the British government and the editorial line of *The Times* became so wide that Winston Churchill, reacting to a lead article authored by Carr, publicly denounced the newspaper in the House of Commons. A year later, the staunchly anti-Communist foreign minister of the Labour government, Ernest Bevin, summoned the editor of *The Times*, Robin Barrington-Ward, to the foreign office and blasted him for what Bevin characterized as the newspaper’s pro-Russian line. A short time later, in July 1946, Carr resigned his post at *The Times*.¹⁵

If E. H. Carr was the founder of modern realism in Great Britain, his American counterpart was undoubtedly Hans Morgenthau. Morgenthau’s career, much like Carr’s, straddled the line between political analysis and political advocacy. Although Morgenthau never held an official government position (save for being an occasional consultant),¹⁶ he engaged in the foreign policy debates of his day with great passion. As his former student Kenneth Thompson observed,

Whatever Morgenthau may have written or said about the limitations of the philosopher in politics, he has, to a certain extent, defied it in practice. An extraordinarily successful teacher in the classroom, he has sought to make the Congress, successive administrations, and every available public his classroom. Public lectures in far-flung corners of the nation and globe have been as commonplace as at his home institutions.¹⁷

In these public appearances and in numerous contributions to non-academic publications, Morgenthau “has been a consistent critic of at least some of the policies of every Secretary of State of his lifetime.” In the 1950s, when Asia became a central theater in the Cold War, “Morgenthau repeatedly warned of the danger of applying the largely successful instruments of the balance of power in Europe to the quite different political environment of the Third World.”¹⁸ He subsequently became one of the sharpest and most outspoken public critics of the American intervention in Vietnam. As a result of his withering criticism of the war, which “culminat[ed] perhaps, in a televised debate with President Johnson’s National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy,” Morgenthau became a *persona non grata* in Washington’s power corridors.¹⁹ The White House encouraged public attacks on Morgenthau by pro-war academics and it even sent FBI agents to investigate him.²⁰

Notably, Morgenthau’s interventions in debates on international affairs were not limited to defending or criticizing particular policies. As Campbell Craig explains, in the late 1950s Morgenthau concluded that the thermo-nuclear revolution rendered Great Power war unwinnable and that the resulting inability of the state to protect its citizenry from destruction signaled the obsolescence of the nation-state.²¹ In a series of speeches and articles from the early 1960s, he argued that nuclear power “requires a principle of political organization transcending the nation state.”²² In a piece published in the *New York Times Magazine* Morgenthau described the United Nations as “an opportunity to point the world in the direction of replacing national sovereignty with supranational decisions and institutions, for the fundamental argument in favor of the United Nations is the incompatibility of national sovereignty with the destructive potentialities of the nuclear age.”²³ In a contribution to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* he went further, stating that the dilemma of total nuclear war “suggests the abolition of international relations itself through the merger of all national sovereignties into one world state which would have a monopoly of the most destructive instruments of violence.”²⁴ Morgenthau’s public advocacy of a “new international order radically different from that which preceded it” can hardly be reconciled with his theoretical claim (articulated as part of his first “principle of political realism”) that “politics . . . is governed by objective laws” whose operation is “impervious to our preferences.”²⁵

Kenneth Waltz, who succeeded Morgenthau as the leading realist figure in the discipline, shared the German émigré’s opposition to the Vietnam War. Moreover, Waltz has been, in his own words, “a fierce critic of American military policy and spending and strategy, at least since the 1970s.”²⁶ But Waltz, unlike Morgenthau and Carr, rarely if ever contributed articles to non-academic publications or appeared in the electronic media; his criticism of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam characteristically appeared in a scholarly journal.²⁷ Because of Waltz’s apparent reluctance to reach out beyond the academic world, I do not discuss in this article how his theory responds to the theory-practice paradox. Still, it bears mentioning that, in an interview he granted to the *Review of International Studies*, Waltz—referring to Morgenthau’s, and his own, opposition to the Vietnam War—claimed that there was no “easy correspondence between a realist *theoretical* position and the *political* legitimation of existing foreign policy.”²⁸ He claimed, in other words, that opposition to the existing reality of foreign policy is compatible with theoretical realism. But is there no tension between the two? To the extent that Waltz and other realists often implore their government to change the course of its foreign policy, are they not making a major concession to the idealist position that human thought can potentially shape political realities? Does it not imply,

furthermore, that the theories which inform the policy criticisms voiced by the realists fall short of adequately describing international realities?

Although Kenneth Waltz's reputation is built largely on highly abstract theory, "he also mentored about two dozen younger academic specialists" who went on to revive "security studies"—a field that, though it "fits comfortably within the familiar realist paradigm," prides itself on "address[ing] questions of direct concern to national leaders."²⁹ As Waltz's former student Stephen Walt explained, one of the central norms of security studies is "relevance, a belief that even highly abstract lines of inquiry should be guided by the goal of solving real-world problems." He proceeded to assert that "security studies has probably had more real-world impact, for good or ill, than most areas of social science."³⁰ How it was possible for ideas rooted in the "familiar realist paradigm" to have an impact on the "real world" was an issue that Walt regrettably evaded.

According to James Kurth, "the most distinguished" of the international security scholars mentored (if not formally trained) by Waltz is John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago. Mearsheimer's first book, *Conventional Deterrence* (1983), was "highly relevant and applicable for senior U.S. military officers, who were then developing non-nuclear deterrence strategies against the Soviet Union."³¹ Mearsheimer subsequently threw himself into the task of elaborating a grand realist theory of international relations. The product of this effort, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, was described by Samuel Huntington as "rank[ing] with, and in many respects superseded[ing], the works of Morgenthau and Waltz in the canon of the realist literature on international politics."³²

But even as his academic research was moving in the direction of grand-theorizing, Mearsheimer has become increasingly involved in foreign policy debates as a guest on current affairs' programs in the electronic media and as a contributor to daily newspapers and magazines. During the 1990s he authored several opinion pieces in the *New York Times* that criticized the Clinton administration's policies in the Balkans and South Asia.³³ Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Mearsheimer has ratcheted up his involvement in public affairs, raising his voice persistently and courageously against, first, the escalation of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and, subsequently, the invasion of Iraq. He squared off in a public debate against prominent neo-conservative advocates of the Iraq invasion, authored or co-authored anti-war articles that "radiated across the internet and stirred far-reaching discussion," and co-sponsored a paid advertisement in the *New York Times* declaring that "war with Iraq is *not* in America's national interest."³⁴ The advertisement was signed by 33 IR scholars, most of whom identify themselves as realists; in its aftermath Mearsheimer, along with other signers, helped form the Coalition

for a Realistic Foreign Policy—"a group of scholars, policy makers and concerned citizens united by our opposition to an American empire."³⁵

As Mearsheimer pointed out recently, just as "Morgenthau, along with almost all realists in the United States—except for Henry Kissinger—opposed the Vietnam war," so did "almost all realists in the United States—except Henry Kissinger—oppose the war on Iraq." Had Morgenthau been alive, Mearsheimer (plausibly) surmises, it is "highly likely" that he would have opposed the Iraq war too. Now, Mearsheimer counts the fact that the invasion of Iraq has gone badly as "powerful evidence . . . that the realists were right and the neo-conservatives [who advocated war] were wrong."³⁶ He begs the following questions, however: assuming that realist opposition to the invasion of Iraq was rooted in realist theory, does the fact that the United States' government ignored the realists' protests not constitute a putative disconfirmation of realist theory(ies)? How good a theory of the world is realism if numerous American interventions in the Third World from Vietnam to Iraq have been opposed by "almost all realists," and if, in the intervening years, the discipline's leading realist figure has been a "a fierce critic of American military policy and spending and strategy"? Furthermore, does the claim that "the thrust of U.S. policy in the [Middle East] region derives almost entirely from domestic politics, and especially the activities of the 'Israel Lobby'" —a thesis advanced by Mearsheimer and Walt in an article that stirred a major public controversy—not "contradict the essential tenet of the theory on which they have in large part constructed their academic reputations?"³⁷ Finally, if, as Mearsheimer puts it, realists "see the world as it is, not as we would like it to be," why do they put so much energy and passion into trying to reverse the course of current U.S. foreign policy? In the following section I discuss how, based on clues provided by *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* and by a 2005 critique of neo-conservative thought, John Mearsheimer might have responded to these questions.

The Unrealism of Mearsheimer's Naturalism

The founding fathers of modern realism, E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, rejected the idea that the study of international politics should be patterned after the model of the natural sciences (I will discuss their views later). In the debate over IR methods that took place in the 1960s—known in the mythology of the discipline as "the second debate"—realists such as Morgenthau were on the "traditionalist" side, set off against the "behavioralist" advocates of a natural-scientific approach to the study of IR.³⁸

In subsequent decades, however, realist IR scholars have become increasingly committed to the canons of naturalistic social science. This trend is evident, for example, in

Walt's upbeat account of "the renaissance of security studies," which he dated to the mid-1970s. Walt maintained that

the resurrection of security studies was facilitated by its adoption of the norms and objectives of social science. As a social science, security studies seeks to develop general explanatory propositions about the use of force in international politics, and to apply this knowledge to important contemporary issues. Like other social scientists, scholars in security affairs engage in three main activities: 1) *theory creation*, the development of logically related causal propositions . . . 2) *theory testing*, attempts to verify, falsify, and refine competing theories by testing their predictions against a scientifically selected body of evidence; and 3) *theory application*, the use of existing knowledge to illuminate a specific policy problem.³⁹

Security studies, Walt added,

seeks *cumulative knowledge* about the role of military force. To obtain it, the field must follow the standard canons of scientific research: careful and consistent use of terms, unbiased measurement of critical concepts, and public documentation of theoretical and empirical claims. . . . The increased sophistication of the security studies field and its growing prominence within the scholarly community is due in large part to the endorsement of these principles by most members of the field.⁴⁰

John Mearsheimer unambiguously endorses the principles of social science articulated by Walt.⁴¹ In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, he explains that his intellectual "enterprise involves three particular tasks." The first task consists of "laying out the key assumption of the theory, which I call 'offensive realism,'" and making "arguments about how great powers behave toward each other."⁴² It corresponds to what Walt labeled "theory creation." The second task—corresponding to what Walt called "theory testing"—is "to show that the theory tells us a lot about the history of international politics. The ultimate test of any theory is how well it explains events in the real world, so I go to considerable lengths to test my arguments against the historical record." Finally, the third task of the IR theorist, according to Mearsheimer, is to "use the theory to make predictions about great-power politics in the twenty-first century." Mearsheimer acknowledges that "political phenomena are highly complex" and that "all political forecasting is bound to include some error," but he writes that "despite these hazards, social scientists should nevertheless use their theories to make predictions about the future. Making predictions helps inform policy discourse . . ." Mearsheimer adds that "trying to anticipate new events is a good way to test social science theories because theorists do not have the benefit of hindsight and therefore cannot adjust their claims to fit the evidence (because it is not yet available). In short, the world can be used as a laboratory to decide which theories best explain international politics."⁴³

Thus, even as Mearsheimer concedes that "the study of international relations, like the other social sciences, rests

on a shakier theoretical foundation than that of the natural sciences," he shares with the natural scientists the presupposition that there is a "real world" which exists independently of, and separately from, the theoretical ideas created by the investigator. Just as a chemist develops a theoretical hypothesis and proceeds to test it in her laboratory, or just as a meteorologist constructs a forecasting model and proceeds to test it against unfolding weather conditions, so does the IR scholar create a theory and "test" its predictions against events unfolding in the "laboratory" of the "real world."

Now, the offensive realist theory created by Mearsheimer posits that the anarchic structure of the international system strongly encourages great powers to seek a preponderance of power—"great powers recognize that the best way to ensure their security is to achieve hegemony now."⁴⁴ But due to the "stopping power of water," that is, due to "the difficulty of projecting power across the world's oceans," the "best outcome a great power can hope for is to be a *regional* hegemon." According to Mearsheimer, even great powers that have achieved regional hegemony, as the United States alone has done in modern history, cannot realistically aspire to dominate the entire globe—what they can do, and what America has done in 1917–18, 1941–45, and during the Cold War, is to act as an "offshore balancer" in order "to prevent great powers in other regions from duplicating [America's] feat."⁴⁵ Being an offshore balancer, Mearsheimer argues, "the United States has no appetite for conquest and domination outside of the Western Hemisphere;" it intervenes militarily in other parts of the world only if, absent such an intervention, a rival great power is about to "overrun" its region.⁴⁶ Mearsheimer's theory predicted that the United States would continue to act in the same manner in the twenty-first century.

In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, published two years before the U.S. invaded Iraq, Mearsheimer did not count Iraq among the great powers; in fact, he explicitly characterized it as a "small, weak state."⁴⁷ Because Iraq lacked the wherewithal to dominate its region, it is clear that Mearsheimer, based on the logic of his theory, would have predicted that the U.S. would *not* use force against Iraq. Thus, Mearsheimer's antiwar stance during the run-up to the Iraq war, if not the fact that the United States ultimately went to war, was altogether consistent with the logic and predictions of his theory. But was the vocal and public fashion in which he articulated his antiwar position compatible with Mearsheimer's image of himself as a scientist who tests theoretical hypotheses in the laboratory of the real world?

If the political world is a laboratory, then it is incumbent upon realist theorists to detach themselves from the political events anticipated by their theories in the same manner that the chemist avoids intervening in the experimental processes underway in her lab. If realist theory is

to be used for “political forecasting,” then realist theorists should abstain from influencing policy decisions in the same way that the meteorologist does not, and in fact cannot, influence weather events. Alas, in practice, as we have seen, Mearsheimer has not related to his objects of study in the same way that the chemist or meteorologist relate to theirs. He *has* actively sought to intervene in the “real world” and shape its course. He *has* actively tried to reverse the momentum toward war and thus bring foreign policy into conformity with the predictions of his theory. Indeed, in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer, echoing Walt’s call for “theory application,” rejects the “wrongheaded” view that “theory should fall almost exclusively within the purview of academics, whereas policymakers should rely on common sense, intuition, and practical experience.”⁴⁸ Moreover, he acknowledges that although “offensive realism is mainly a descriptive theory, . . . it is also a prescriptive theory. States *should* behave according to the dictates of offensive realism because it outlines the best way to survive in a dangerous world.”⁴⁹

How does Mearsheimer square the putative contradiction between his claim that offensive realism “see[s] the world as it is, not as we would like it to be,” and his desire to prescribe how states *should* behave? In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* he offers two interrelated responses to this paradox. First, he claims that “general theories about how the world works play an important role in how policymakers identify the ends they seek and the means they choose to achieve them.” Thus, to the extent that policymakers, self-consciously or otherwise, harbor non-realist theories of international relations, the policies they would adopt would be inconsistent with realist predictions. For example, the Clinton administration’s decision to expand the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization despite the collapse of the Soviet empire—a decision that defied the realist logic of the balance of power—can be attributed to liberal theories to which President Clinton and his chief aides subscribed.⁵⁰ In the same vein, Mearsheimer later attributed the George W. Bush administration’s decision to wage war on Iraq—a decision that, as we have seen, was inconsistent with the predictions of Mearsheimer’s theory—to the “neo-conservative theory” that “underpin[ed] the Bush doctrine.”⁵¹ So long as policymakers, Mearsheimer implies, harbor such “bad,” or “defective” theories, it is the role of the realist theorist to warn them that their “foolish behavior” would have “negative consequences” unless they adapt to the tragic realities of world politics—“if they want to survive, great powers should always act like good offensive realists.”⁵²

There are two problems with this attempt to resolve the tension between analysis and prescription in realist theory. First, in stating that the political theories harbored by policymakers shape their political practices,

Mearsheimer makes a substantial, if unintended and unacknowledged, concession to the idealist position that human thought can shape the human world. He inadvertently undercuts, in other words, the realist position that the political “real world” is impervious to political theory. Second, if, as Mearsheimer clearly believes, the tragic realities of the international system are bound to force policymakers motivated by “bad” theories to desist from their “foolish behavior,” why does his theory need to have a prescriptive element? Why would he implore American leaders to act like “good offensive realists” if objective political forces are likely to make them act in this fashion anyway?

This brings us to Mearsheimer’s second response to the putative contradiction between description and prescription. Realist theory involves prescription as well as description because “great powers sometimes—although not often—act in contradiction to the theory.”⁵³ They sometimes engage in “anomalous” behavior due to the influence of factors that the theory omits in the interest of simplification—domestic politics, for example, or neo-conservative ideas harbored by policymakers. When such “omitted factors . . . occasionally dominate a state’s decision-making process . . . offensive realism is not going to perform as well.”⁵⁴ In sum, Mearsheimer incorporates into his realist theory what quantitative modelers call an “error term.” The presence of this error term legitimizes the prescriptive function of the theory. On those few occasions in which foreign policy is unduly shaped by the error term—when, for example, the Israel Lobby “divert[s]” foreign policy “far from what the national interest would suggest,” or when the United States invades Iraq due to the faulty neo-conservative beliefs of U.S. officials—it is incumbent upon the realist theorist to expose the error and try to minimize it.⁵⁵

There are two serious problems, however, with this approach, one logical, the other empirical. On the logical side, this stance is incompatible with Mearsheimer’s commitment to the canons of naturalistic social science. As Kratochwil and Ruggie point out, “before it does anything else, positivism posits a radical separation of subject and object.”⁵⁶ Using realist theory to “inform public debates,” to try to stir foreign policy clear of its “error,” constitutes a violation of this presupposition. The empirical success of the theory—its consistency with reality—and its success in shaping policy feed into and reinforce each other.⁵⁷ Mearsheimer cannot liken the world to a “laboratory,” in which the predictions of his theory are being tested, at the same time that he intervenes in this world so as to make these predictions come true.

The empirical problem is that, as I pointed out earlier, the phenomenon of realist scholars’ dissent from actually-existing foreign policy has been the historical norm more than an anomaly that only occurs “not often.”⁵⁸ Morgenthau has been critical of every secretary of state during

his lifetime, not to mention his opposition to the Vietnam War. Waltz has opposed U.S. military policies over a span of more than thirty years; and now Mearsheimer and fellow realists passionately oppose yet another American military intervention, this time in Iraq. Furthermore, Mearsheimer and Walt complain that “for the past several decades, and especially since the Six-Day War in 1967” U.S. policy in the Middle East has been at variance with the tenets of realism.⁵⁹ This historical pattern is hardly consistent with Mearsheimer’s claim that “omitted factors” such as domestic politics shape foreign policy only “occasionally.” If U.S. foreign policy in (arguably) the world’s most important strategic region has been dominated by domestic politics for four decades, and if realists, Mearsheimer included, consistently find themselves criticizing the course of actually-existing foreign policy, does it not suggest that the “error term” might account for more of the variance than the realist variables included in Mearsheimer’s theoretical model?

An additional response to the theory-practice paradox can be gleaned from an article published in 2005, in which Mearsheimer argued that the “big problems” encountered by the U.S. military in Iraq vindicated realism and discredited the neo-conservative theoretical underpinnings of the Bush doctrine.⁶⁰ Mearsheimer claimed that

actually, the war itself has been a strong test of the two theories. We have been able to see which side’s predictions were correct. It seems clear that Iraq has turned into a debacle for the United States, which is powerful evidence—at least for me—that the realists were right and the neo-conservatives were wrong.⁶¹

Mearsheimer basically suggested that the objective laws theorized by realists continued to operate in world politics even when the behavior of states appeared, from time to time, to defy these laws. The Bush administration may try to defy geographic realities (“the stopping power of water”) and it may foolishly think that Iraq’s neighbors would “bandwagon” with the United States rather than obey the objective law of the balance of power. But this does not mean, Mearsheimer implies, that the geographical forces or objective laws theorized by realists were no longer in effect. On the contrary, these objective forces/laws persist and states that attempt to flout them are bound to face “debacles,” as the United States has learned in Iraq. Sooner or later, Mearsheimer implies, these enduring forces will compel the United States to retreat from Iraq.

This approach, however, is not without its difficulties, some of which I have discussed earlier. First, Mearsheimer’s claim that his theory’s predictions were confirmed by the post-invasion problems in Iraq glosses over the failure of the theory to account for the invasion itself, save as an “anomaly.” Second, as noted above, it is not clear why Mearsheimer needs to publicly criticize U.S. policy in Iraq if the objective forces theorized by realism were going to doom this policy anyway. Third, if the “stopping

power of water” and the objective logic of balancing continue to powerfully counteract America’s misguided actions in Iraq, why do large U.S. forces still operate there even as five years have elapsed since the invasion and three years have passed since Mearsheimer declared that the Iraqi “debacle” vindicated realist theory? Does the lingering presence of U.S. forces in Iraq not indicate that perhaps the objective laws of world politics are not quite as determinative of states’ behavior as Mearsheimer implies? And, should U.S. troops remain in Iraq for years to come, at what point would Mearsheimer concede that the forecast of offensive realism, that is, the prediction that the United States would desist from its foolish behavior in Iraq, has been contravened?

Finally, when U.S. forces do leave Iraq, how confident can we be that their withdrawal actually confirms the predictions of offensive realism, as Mearsheimer would have it? How can we confidently separate the effect of the objective causal factors theorized by Mearsheimer *qua* social scientist from the effect of the public opposition to the war, fueled in significant if small part by Mearsheimer *qua* political activist? Here, it would be instructive to revisit the analogy, implied by Mearsheimer, between forecasting the weather and forecasting political events. When the meteorologist constructs a model and uses it to predict a storm, the weather elements—the objects of the model—cannot react to the model no matter how widely and loudly the meteorologist has publicized his forecast. If the predicted storm actually occurs, we can be sure that the meteorologist’s wish to see his prediction come true had no effect on the outcome. This sharp separation between subject and object in turn strengthens our confidence in the validity of the causal model created by the meteorologist. When Mearsheimer, however, predicts that the United States would fail to control Iraq and proceeds to declare publicly that U.S. policy in Iraq is doomed to failure, the officials whose actions he predicts, or other political actors capable of pressuring those officials, *can* react to his prediction. They can—indeed, Mearsheimer wants them to—be persuaded to carry out, or demand, a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. Thus, to the extent that the United States ultimately retreats from Iraq, we cannot be confident that the domestic opposition to the war—in whose arousal Mearsheimer and other realists have played an active part—had nothing to do with the outcome. We cannot be confident, in other words, that the practical political action in which Mearsheimer participated did not exert a greater impact on the outcome than the objective causal forces specified by Mearsheimer’s theoretical model (e.g., geography, balancing). Whereas unfolding weather patterns are strictly insulated from the desire of the meteorologist to see his analysis validated, Mearsheimer’s analysis of the objective laws of international politics is not neatly separable from his desire to see the United States heed these laws.

Mearsheimer, in sum, cannot have his cake and eat it too. He cannot liken the world to a laboratory in which his political theory is being scientifically tested against unfolding political events at the same time that he actively tries to nudge these events in the direction predicted by the theory. And he cannot claim, wearing his scholar's hat, that his realist theory receives ample empirical validation from the history of great power behavior at the same time that, wearing his practitioner hat, he repeatedly criticizes great power behavior for straying from the realist path. The latter dissonance could have been greatly reduced, however, had Mearsheimer exchanged his naturalistic presumption that the validity of concepts depends on their correspondence to reality for Max Weber's view that the proper function of scientific concepts is to *idealize* reality, not correspond to it. Enter Hans Morgenthau.

Hans Morgenthau's Weberian Approach

Hans Morgenthau's first English-language book, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, constituted a powerful polemic against "the conception of the social and physical world as being intelligible through the same rational processes" and the attendant assumption that "the social world is susceptible to rational control conceived after the model of the natural sciences."⁶²

Because in his second and most popular book, *Politics among Nations*, Morgenthau associated his theory with "the science of international politics," and because in that book he memorably declared that "politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature," some otherwise-perceptive commentators have erroneously concluded that Morgenthau has backpedaled on his rejection of the naturalistic conception of social science.⁶³ Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, for example, characterized *Politics among Nations* as "essentially positivistic."⁶⁴ Alas, this characterization conflates Morgenthau's ontological view with his methodological choice. His ontological claim, presented in the opening paragraph of his first "principle of political realism," that politics is governed by objective laws whose operation is "impervious to our preferences," does not necessarily imply acceptance of the naturalistic persuasion that the role of social science is to discover such universal laws (or "lawlike regularities") and predict future social behavior based on these laws. Indeed, Morgenthau's ontological claim is immediately followed by a qualifying statement that does not square with the positivist account: "Realism, believing as it does in the objectivity of the laws of politics, must also believe in the possibility of developing a rational theory that reflects, however imperfectly and one-sidedly, these objective laws."⁶⁵ This statement, rather than depict theory as an accurate description of objective reality, suggests that Morgenthau regarded theory as an inherently partial "reflection," or idealization, of real-

ity. Indeed, by using the term "one-sided" Morgenthau sent a strong signal that he embraced Max Weber's methodology of "understanding."⁶⁶ Weber employed this term ten times in his chief methodological essay, including, twice, in his definition of the "ideal type": "a one-sided *accentuation* of one or *several* perspectives, and through the synthesis of a variety of diffuse, discrete, *individual* phenomena, present sometime more, sometime less, sometime not at all; subsumed by such one-sided, emphatic viewpoints so that they form a uniform construction *in thought*."⁶⁷

Since Morgenthau's death in 1980, a substantial literature has emerged linking his thought to the writings of Weber.⁶⁸ This literature focused on the inspiration Morgenthau drew from Weber's *political* writings,⁶⁹ but, as Stephen Turner has argued recently, Weber's influence on Morgenthau extended to the methodological realm as well. Turner has demonstrated that, although Morgenthau rarely expounded on methodological issues, his texts "employ and directly reproduce the key elements of Weber's methodological writings, virtually unchanged and in fine detail."⁷⁰ Drawing partly on Turner's work, I now turn to interpreting Morgenthau's famous "six principles of political realism" from the perspective of Weber's methodological approach.

Weber dismissed as "nonsense" the notion that the "ideal aim of [social] scientific labor" is identical to the aim of the natural sciences, that is, "the reduction of the empirical to 'laws.'" It is nonsense, Weber explained, "*not* because (as is often claimed) the unfolding of cultural or intellectual processes is 'objectively' any less law-governed" than that of physical processes.⁷¹ From a methodological standpoint, then, Weber would have had no problem with Morgenthau's ontological claim that politics "is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature." In fact, this claim echoed Weber's own statement, in his political writings, that "whatever participates in the achievements of the power-state is inextricably entangled with the laws of the 'power pragma' that rule over all political history."⁷²

For Weber, then, human life was not necessarily less regulated by the laws of human nature than natural processes were ruled by the laws of nature. The fundamental distinction between the two realms was rather that, unlike non-human objects, humans were "cultural *beings* endowed with the capacity and desire to adopt a position with respect to the world, and lend it *meaning*."⁷³ Social science is thus inherently a "cultural science" and, as such, it

can rise above the mere registration of functional relationships and rules ("laws") typical of all "natural science" (where causal laws are established for events and patterns, and individual events then "explained" on this basis) and achieve something quite inaccessible to natural science: namely, an "*understanding*" of the behavior of participating *individuals*, whereas we do *not* for example "understand" the behavior of cells, but merely register them functionally, and then determine their activity by reference to *rules*. The superiority of interpretative over observational explanation is . . . what is specific to sociological knowledge.⁷⁴

As Robert Proctor explained, Weber's "method of *Verstehen* differs from natural science methods in that the goal is neither prediction nor control but rather a certain identification with one's object of study."⁷⁵ Understanding is enabled by the researcher's capacity to empathize with (if not necessarily valorize) the thinking of other human being.

Now, consider an important passage from Morgenthau's discussion of the first principle of political realism:

In other words, we put ourselves in the position of a statesman who must meet a certain problem of foreign policy under certain circumstances, and we ask ourselves what the rational alternatives are from which a statesman may choose who must meet this problem under these circumstances . . . and which of these rational alternatives this particular statesman, acting under these circumstances, is likely to choose.⁷⁶

Or, consider the following statement from the second principle of political realism:

We look over [the statesman's] shoulder when he writes his dispatches; we listen in on his conversation with other statesmen. We read and anticipate his very thoughts. Thinking in terms of interest defined as power, we think as he does, and as disinterested observers we *understand* his thoughts and actions perhaps better than he, the actor on the political scene, does himself.⁷⁷

These passages leave no doubt that Morgenthau has internalized Weber's interpretative approach. The method of "put[ting] ourselves in the position of a statesman" and "think[ing] as he does" is an unambiguous application of Weber's principle of empathetic "understanding."

Committed though he was to the idea that social science must interpret social action in terms recognizable by the actors being studied, Weber rejected the view—espoused by contemporaneous proponents of subjectivism—that "the goal of social scientific analysis is to minutely reproduce social reality through a process of 'intuiting' or 'reliving' the actions of social actors."⁷⁸ Weber would have disapproved of a science of international politics whose chief aim was to provide an indiscriminate description of facts constituted by a statesman, for the statesman's world is tremendously multifaceted, consisting not only of national power considerations but also of domestic political interests, ethical concerns, religious beliefs, economic self-interest, prejudices, and emotional needs. Rather than reconstruct the statesman's experience in its infinite complexity, Weber would have sought to do precisely what Morgenthau set out to do in *Politics among Nations*, that is, to "understand [the statesman's] thoughts and actions perhaps better than he . . . does himself" by "giving them meaning through reason." Weber would undoubtedly have endorsed Morgenthau's view that "examination of the facts is not enough. To give meaning to the factual raw material of foreign policy, we must approach political reality with a kind of rational outline, a map that suggests to us the possible meanings of foreign policy."⁷⁹

Morgenthau's repeated characterizations of his theory as a "rational" construct that gives reality "meaning" strongly echo Weber's notion that "ideal types," even when they are designed to illuminate non-rational spheres such as religion, "are for the most part constructed rationally . . . , and are always meaningfully adequate."⁸⁰ Indeed, Morgenthau's "concept of interest defined in terms of power," which he regarded as "the main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics," is best understood as a Weberian ideal type. It is a concept designed to make foreign policy intelligible by "one-sidedly accentuating"⁸¹ its rational features while abstracting away from the equally real but, from the theorist's viewpoint, less significant, "contingent elements of personality, prejudice, and subjective preference, and of all the weaknesses of intellect and will which flesh is heir to." Morgenthau proceeds to explain that these contingencies, much like "the need to marshal popular emotions to the support of foreign policy, cannot fail to impair the rationality of foreign policy itself. Yet a theory of foreign policy that aims at rationality must . . . abstract from these irrational elements and seek to paint a picture of foreign policy which presents the rational essence to be found in experience, without the contingent deviations from rationality which are also found in experience."⁸²

Morgenthau's distinction between the rationality of his theory and the irrational character of social reality closely mirrors Weber's exposition of the logic of his typological approach:

A *typological* scientific approach in general treats all irrational, emotionally determined, meaningful behavioral contexts influencing action as "deviations" from a pure construct of instrumentally rational action. For example, . . . in the case of a political or military action it would first be established how things *would* have developed if the action taken had been informed by complete knowledge of circumstances and participants' intentions, consequently selecting those instrumentally rational means which in our experience appeared most appropriate. . . . This construct of rigorous, instrumentally rational action therefore furthers the evident clarity and understandability of a sociology whose lucidity is founded upon rationality. In this way a *type* is presented ("ideal type") from which real action, influenced by all manner of irrationalities (emotions, errors), can be presented as a "deviation" from processes directed by purely rational conduct.⁸³

Weber, thus, designed the ideal-type not as a facsimile of reality but as an instrument of elucidation and understanding through "accentuation of particular elements of reality." He emphasized that "in its conceptual purity this [ideal typical] construction can never be found in reality, it is a *utopia*."⁸⁴ That Morgenthau assimilated this Weberian principle is plainly evident in his statements that "experience can never achieve" the theoretical construct of a rational foreign policy and that "it is no argument against the theory here presented that actual foreign policy does not or cannot live up to it. That argument misunderstands the intention of this book, which is to present not

an indiscriminate description of political reality, but a rational theory of international politics.”⁸⁵ Substitute the term “ideal type” for “theory” and this passage would read as if it were lifted directly from Weber’s methodological essays.

It should be clear by now that Morgenthau’s realist theory offers a sensible resolution of one aspect of the theory-practice paradox, that is, the putative contradiction between the theorist’s persistent criticism of actually-existing politics and the empirical validity of his or her theory. For Morgenthau, like Weber, the validity of concepts rests on their utility as tools of understanding international politics, not on their correspondence to international realities. Thus, the fact that foreign policy rarely meets the expectations of the theory—an ideal-type—does not undermine the theory, for the theory is not designed to accurately represent, let alone predict, actual policy. On the contrary, recognition that “actual foreign policy does not or cannot live up to it” is an integral part of Morgenthau’s theory.⁸⁶ The fact, then, that Morgenthau persistently criticized the architects of the Vietnam War for deviating from the U.S. national interest was, in his words, “not an argument against the theory here presented.”⁸⁷ Nor would Morgenthau’s theory be undermined if it were true that, as Mearsheimer and Walt have complained, America’s policy in the Middle East since 1967 has been shaped primarily by domestic politics. This claim hardly squares with Mearsheimer’s (and Walt’s) own naturalist methodology, which conceptualizes deviations from theoretical propositions as “anomalies” that only occur “not often.”⁸⁸ It is perfectly consistent, however, with Morgenthau’s ideal-typical approach, which allowed him to acknowledge that “especially where foreign policy is conducted under the conditions of democratic control, the need to marshal popular emotions to the support of foreign policy *cannot fail* to impair the rationality of foreign policy itself.”⁸⁹

Now, what about the other aspect of the theory-practice paradox? I argue that although the adoption of Weber’s interpretative methodology allowed Morgenthau to criticize politics without contradicting his theory of politics, inasmuch as he also embraced Weber’s plea for separating politics (power; values; object) and political science (truth; facts; subject), the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of Morgenthau’s worldview, much like Mearsheimer’s, were inconsistent with his indefatigable efforts to influence U.S. foreign policy. The Weberian truth-power framework may have been sound in theory, but in practice it was defied by Morgenthau’s involvement in the politics of the Vietnam War. Let me explain.

In two famous lectures he delivered near the end of his life, Max Weber delineated the “vocations” of science and politics.⁹⁰ The politician, he maintained, must follow neither the “ethic of ultimate ends”—pursuing a moral conviction without regard for the consequences of one’s actions—nor the purely pragmatic, amoral ethos of the bureaucrat or the political boss.⁹¹ The politician must

rather be guided by an “ethic of responsibility,” an ethic that combines a passion for a moral cause with “a sense of proportion” and a “trained ability to look at the realities of life with an unsparing gaze.”⁹² Translated into the argot of IR theory, Weber contended that the vocation of politics entailed a synthesis of idealism and realism.

If politics involves the blending of utopia and reality, what is the relationship between these two elements in the scientific vocation? In his chief methodological essay, Weber argued that although the social scientist’s evaluative ideas inevitably shape the questions he asks, the selection of the facts to be analyzed, and the concepts he adopts to interpret the facts, the validity of the results of the analysis does not depend on these evaluative ideas. Weber insisted that social scientists who harbor divergent cultural and political values—a German and a Chinese, for example—should be able to agree on the truth of a factual claim, if not its significance, so long as they adhere to the norms of scientific inquiry. For Weber, in other words, the truth of political facts was unfettered by the political values of the political scientist. Political analysis and political purpose were, in this sense, separate from each other.⁹³

Weber later elaborated on this dualism in his lecture on the vocation of science. The political scientist, he warned, must keep politics out of the lecture room, for value-laden “opinions on practical political issues and the scientific analysis of political structures and party positions are two different things.” The words used by the politician constitute “swords against opponents, instruments of struggle;” they are “not means of scientific analysis but means of winning the attitudes of others politically.” The words of the political scientist, on the other hand, are but “ploughshares for loosening the soil of contemplative thought.”⁹⁴ The political scientist can, and should, inject “clarity” into political debates by specifying the best means for realizing a given political end, or by clarifying what ends are (dis)served by a particular policy, but he has no business actively formulating and promoting political ends.⁹⁵ In other words, the scientist may help the politician “look at the realities of life with an unsparing gaze,” but the passion to change these realities must be left to the politician alone.⁹⁶ Weber thus argued that, whereas the responsible politician fuses utopia and reality, the political scientist must keep the two elements apart.

Weber’s lecture on the vocation of science was concerned with keeping politics out of the lecture room more than with the lecturer’s role in politics outside the classroom. Hans Morgenthau, as noted earlier, “sought to make the Congress, successive administrations, and every available public his classroom. Public lectures in far-flung corners of the nation and globe have been as commonplace as at his home institutions.”⁹⁷ That Morgenthau embraced Weber’s science-politics dualism, and adapted it to his role as a prominent participant in foreign policy debates, is evident from the title of his collected essays from the Vietnam War era: *Truth*

and Power. In the volume's eponymous essay, Morgenthau argued, much like Weber, that the intellectual and political worlds, though they are potentially intertwined, "are separate because they are oriented toward different ultimate values: the intellectual seeks truth; the politician, power."⁹⁸ Ostensibly alluding to his own role as an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War, Morgenthau wrote that

The intellectual can maintain the integrity of his position as an intellectual by remaining outside the political sphere, yet he can make the knowledge and insight peculiar to him count for the purposes and processes of politics. He is concerned with, but personally detached from, politics. He looks at the political sphere from without, judging it by, and admonishing it in the name of, the standards of truth accessible to him. He speaks, in the biblical phrase, truth to power. He tells power what it can do and what it ought to do, what is feasible and what is required. What he has to say about politics may have political consequences . . . But these consequences are a mere by-product, hoped for but not worked for, of his search for the truth.⁹⁹

Morgenthau also followed Weber closely in distinguishing between the words of the intellectual, whose hallmarks are "logical consistency and theoretical purity," and "the words of the statesman," which are "themselves a form of action" and "which are intended to influence" political realities as much as to describe them.¹⁰⁰

Morgenthau's Weberian distinction between the politician—whose words constitute political weapons—and the intellectual—who "looks at the political sphere from without" and whose words are but analytical and descriptive constructs—is compelling in theory. As political theorist Richard Ashcraft pointed out, however, history is yet to produce a single empirical example of an engaged thinker who conformed to this distinction in practice.¹⁰¹ Morgenthau himself surely did not set such an example. On the contrary, as one of his admirers observed, he has "defied . . . in practice" what he has "written or said about the limitations of the philosopher in politics."¹⁰² This is not to say that Morgenthau's image of himself as a speaker of truth to power was insincere. In his own mind, the words he uttered in his numerous public appearances may well have been but apolitical pronouncements on the "objective laws" of politics.¹⁰³ Alas, this stance not only begged the question raised by Jervis—were Morgenthau's efforts to educate power holders in the objective laws of power not akin to "tell[ing] leaves to appear in the spring and fade in the autumn"?—it was also grossly inconsistent with how other participants in the debate perceived Morgenthau's role.¹⁰⁴ For the Johnson administration, whose foreign policy Morgenthau criticized persistently, the distinction between words *qua* weapons and words *qua* ploughshares must have amounted to idle hairsplitting. Had Morgenthau's media appearances been unambiguously devoted to calm statements of facts, would the administration have bothered to launch "Project Morgenthau" in order to dis-

credit him?¹⁰⁵ Had the White House viewed Morgenthau's words merely as "ploughshares for loosening the soil of contemplative thought," would it have moved, as Morgenthau complained, to fire him as consultant to the Pentagon or "to threaten [Morgenthau] with the FBI and make the Internal Revenue Service waste many man-hours in repeated audits of [his] income tax returns"?¹⁰⁶ In sum, sincere though Morgenthau may have been in upholding the truth-power dualism in theory, in practice the distinction between Morgenthau *qua* truth-teller and Morgenthau *qua* political fighter was blurry at best. Morgenthau's desire to intervene in highly charged political debates without becoming tarred by politics was curiously unrealistic, if not downright naïve.

A recent attempt by a large group of IR scholars, including many self-styled realists, to intervene in the debate over the Iraq war similarly highlighted the practical impossibility of separating political science and politics. Under the banner "Security Scholars for a Sensible Foreign Policy" (SSSFP), these scholars self-consciously engaged in "Weberian activism." They tried, in the words of two of their leaders, "to preserve our professional integrity as scholars: entering the debate in a non-partisan way, and confining ourselves to disclosing 'facts' rather than making pronouncements about 'values,' would keep us on the scientific side of the thin line separating science from politics."¹⁰⁷ The group drafted an open letter that "aimed merely at highlighting relevant, but not universally understood, facts bearing on the pursuit" of the Bush administration's policy goals. The letter swiftly attracted 851 signatures but, as its initiators conceded, "in its larger purpose of public education the effort was a miserable failure, essentially because it received little news coverage." The chief reason for the scant coverage was that, even as the signers of the letter sincerely believed that its content was analytical and apolitical, the journalists and editors at whom the letter was aimed largely read it as an "obviously 'political'" document. "The Assumption of 'political,' i.e., partisan, motives was pivotal for the letter's fate," its drafters candidly observed. "The implication was that the SSSFP effort was not Weberian activism at all, but a partisan attack—and a tacit call for votes against George Bush—thinly disguised as an educational effort."¹⁰⁸

The fate of this Weberian initiative is yet another illustration of the un-realism of the epistemological principle—which Weber adapted from the natural sciences even as he rejected their methodology—that, in political inquiry, object and subject, fact and value, must be separated from each other. This unrealistic principle is still upheld by contemporary realists such as John Mearsheimer even as they have jettisoned Weber's, and Morgenthau's, interpretative methodological commitment. Should contemporary realists not base their thought on more realistic epistemological foundations if they wish to continue their admirable engagement in public affairs? Should they not acknowledge—as E. H. Carr has lucidly done seven decades

ago—that the distinction between a theory of international politics, even one that prides itself on its realism, and an international *political* theory is fuzzy at best.¹⁰⁹

The Realistic Epistemological Foundation of E. H. Carr's Thought

In the preface to the first edition of *The Twenty Years Crisis* (TTYC), E. H. Carr acknowledged a special debt to Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, whose English translation was published in 1936.¹¹⁰ In order to understand Carr's view on the relationship between politics and political science it is important to grasp not only what he learned from Mannheim but also what aspect of Mannheim's theory Carr rejected.

Although Mannheim's book is remembered largely as an analytical treatise on the sociology of knowledge, its original edition, published in Germany in 1929, was primarily motivated by a practical purpose. Colin Loader shows persuasively that *Ideology and Utopia* was "a call to action," an attempt to define and champion an active yet nonpartisan role for intellectuals in the political process of the Weimer republic, in the spirit of Weber's thoughts on the relationship between science and politics.¹¹¹

Mannheim shared Weber's distaste for politics of "ultimate ends;" before leaving Hungary in 1919 Mannheim refused to follow his mentor Georg Lukács into the Communist Party.¹¹² He also shared Weber's fear of the bureaucratization of modern life, that is, the eclipse of politics—a competitive sphere inhabited by parties seeking to change reality in accordance with their worldviews, or "utopias"—by the routinized, reality-bound sphere of administration. Mannheim was particularly concerned that, with the popularization of the idea of the relativity of knowledge—an idea initially applied by Marx to Bourgeois thought and later generalized to all political thought—politics would degenerate from a pluralistic competition among worldviews into a chaotic contest in annihilating opponents' utopias through unmasking their ideological underpinnings. He was fearful that such wholesale unmasking would result in the "complete elimination of reality-transcending elements from our world . . . lead[ing] us to a 'matter of factness' which ultimately would mean the decay of the human will."¹¹³ Thus, though he had no taste for the pure utopianism of revolutionary movements, Mannheim sought to safeguard the utopian element in politics as a bulwark against the danger of bureaucratic reification. He self-consciously sought to preserve a politics guided by Weber's "ethical principle of responsibility," that is, a politics that heeds the "dictates of conscience" without shrinking from a hard-nosed examination of historical realities.¹¹⁴

In an age whose consciousness internalized the historical determinedness of knowledge, a hard-nosed examination of historical realities entailed not only recognition of the practical consequences of the politician's value choices,

and not only unmasking the historically and socially-determined character of the values of opponents, but also a "critical self-examination" of the politician's own conscience.¹¹⁵ The problem, however, was that expecting politicians to subject their own ideals to a searching analysis was grossly unrealistic. "Nothing is more self-evident," Mannheim recognized, "than that precisely the forms in which we ourselves think are those whose limited [interest-bound] nature is most difficult for us to perceive."¹¹⁶

Mannheim maintained that only "when we are thoroughly aware of the limited scope of *every* point of view" would it become possible to break the negative cycle of annihilating all utopias and move toward a positive "synthesis," that is, "an integration of many mutually complementary points of view into a comprehensive whole."¹¹⁷ But "what political interest," he asked rhetorically, "will undertake the problem of synthesis as its task?"¹¹⁸ Surely, political parties could not undertake it because, as noted above, they were unable to confront the partial, interest-bound nature of their own thinking. Only a "relatively classless stratum which is not too firmly situated in the social order" would be capable of achieving a synthesis. In modern society, Mannheim argued, the "socially unattached intelligentsia" constituted that stratum.¹¹⁹

According to Mannheim, the intellectuals came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and were united only by "participation in a common educational heritage." As individuals, their thought remained conditioned by the circumstances of their birth, status, and wealth, but as a group, precisely because of their socioeconomic heterogeneity, they were not attached to any particular political utopia. Much like Weber's model scientist, their ultimate ethical commitment was to seeking the truth.¹²⁰

Mannheim urged the intelligentsia to live up to its "mission as the predestined advocate of the intellectual interests of the whole."¹²¹ He envisioned the establishment in academic institutions of "an advanced form of political science" that would strive to achieve a "total," synthetic perspective through exposing the historical and social determining factors of *all* partial viewpoints. Echoing Weber's formulation of the "clarifying" function of the scientist in politics, Mannheim explained that the socially unattached political scientist would be able to advise the politician as follows: "Whatever your interests, they are your interests as a political person, but the fact that you have this or that set of interests implies also that you must do this or that to realize them, and that you must know the specific position you occupy in the whole social process."¹²² Like Weber, Mannheim argued that the political scientist "aims not at inculcating a decision but prepares the way for arriving at decisions."¹²³ S/he analyzes historical reality, including the historical determinateness of all political value positions, without advocating any particular position.

Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, then, constituted a sophisticated attempt to work out Max Weber's views on

the vocations of science and politics. As Loader explains, Weber set limits for science but he did not expand on how the scientist's restricted, clarifying role could be of benefit to politics. Mannheim's elaboration of the role of the unattached intellectual was an attempt to flesh out the "clarifying" function assigned by Weber to the scientist. Mannheim's political scientist facilitated the politics of responsibility by helping politicians grasp reality from a more complete perspective than they could have done themselves. Grasping for totality allowed the political scientist to participate actively in the political process in an apolitical, nonpartisan fashion.¹²⁴

Carr's debt to Mannheim was substantial, as Charles Jones has demonstrated.¹²⁵ The dialectical structure of TTYC mirrored, in broad outline if not in detail, the dialectics of *Ideology and Utopia*. And Carr's realist critique of the doctrine of the harmony of interests deployed with devastating effect the weapons of the "new science," founded "principally by German thinkers, under the name of the 'sociology of knowledge.'" ¹²⁶

For our purpose, however, it is important to recognize that Carr's enthusiasm for Mannheim's work was not unqualified and that he criticized a central tenet of Mannheim's theory. In fact, although he praised Mannheim's book in the preface to TTYC, Carr cited *Ideology and Utopia* only once in the actual text of his book, *disapprovingly*. "It has often been argued," Carr remarked, "that the intellectuals are less directly conditioned in their thinking than those groups whose coherence depends on a common economic interest, and that they therefore occupy a vantage point *au-dessus de la mêlée*." Recently, Carr continued,

this view has been resuscitated by Dr. Mannheim, who argues that the intelligentsia, being "relatively classless" and "socially unattached," "subsumes in itself all those interests with which social life is permeated," and can therefore attain a higher measure of impartiality and objectivity. In a certain limited sense, this is true. But any advantage derived from it would seem to be nullified by a corresponding disability, i.e., detachment from the masses whose attitude is the determining factor in political life.¹²⁷

Carr claimed, in other words, that, though the relative impartiality of intellectuals may be a sound theoretical concept, in practice it can be realized only if the intellectuals confine themselves to the proverbial ivory tower and avoid any involvement in the political sphere. But if they want their voice to be heard in the political arena, as Mannheim desired, the intellectuals cannot have their cake and eat it too. Contra Mannheim and Weber, Carr saw that, no sooner than the intellectual publicly intervenes in political debates, his or her theory ceases to be purely analytical, taking on a political, or utopian, dimension. Indeed, Carr perceptively diagnosed the impracticality of speaking strictly truth to power long before this diagnosis was confirmed by the experiences of Hans Morgenthau and the SSSFP.

Carr's skepticism about the separation of science and politics found expression in his discussion, in the first chapter of TTYC, of the epistemology of political inquiry. There, Carr provided a remarkably lucid exposition of how the relationship between fact and value, object and subject, in the study of politics differed from its counterpart in the natural sciences. The sophistication of the exposition belies the perception, held by present-day realists, that their "classical" predecessors were naïve in the ways of social *science*. It shows, as Jones put it, that "far from being a methodologically unsophisticated historian, a traditionalist displaced by post-war behaviorism as it colonized international relations, Carr was a social scientist in a tradition that had already proclaimed the redundancy of behaviorism."¹²⁸

All scientific research, Carr observed, originates from utopia, or human purpose. "It is the purpose of promoting health which creates medical science, and the purpose of building bridges which creates the science of engineering. Desire to cure the sicknesses of the body politic has given its impulse and its inspiration to political science . . . 'The wish is father to the thought' is a perfectly exact description of the origins of normal human thinking." Nevertheless, Carr explained, the connection between purpose and analysis is far more "intimate" in political science than in the natural sciences.

In the physical sciences, the distinction between the investigation of facts and the purpose to which the facts are to be put is not only theoretically valid, but is constantly observed in practice. The laboratory worker engaged in investigating the causes of cancer may have been originally inspired by the purpose of eradicating the disease. But this purpose is in the strictest sense irrelevant to the investigation and separable from it. His conclusion . . . cannot help to make the facts other than they are In the political sciences . . . there are no such facts. The investigator is inspired by the desire to cure some ill of the body politic. Among the causes of the trouble, he diagnoses the fact that human beings normally react to certain conditions in a certain way. But this is not a fact comparable with the fact that human bodies react in a certain way to certain drugs. It is a fact which may be changed by the desire to change it; and this desire, already present in the mind of the investigator, may be extended, as the result of the investigation, to a sufficient number of other human beings to make it effective. The purpose is not, as in the physical sciences, irrelevant to the investigation and separable from it: it is itself one of the facts.¹²⁹

Without naming Weber or Mannheim, Carr proceeded to take issue with the dividing line they drew between the vocation of the politician and that of the scientist: "In theory, the distinction may no doubt still be drawn between the role of the investigator who establishes the facts and the role of the practitioner who considers the right course of action. In practice, one role shades imperceptibly into the other. Purpose and analysis become part and parcel of a single process."¹³⁰

Carr emphatically refused to exempt realist theories from his claim that purpose and analysis are practically

inseparable in political thought. Having exposed the ideological character of liberal IR theory—showing that the analysis of the harmony of interests and the purpose of preserving the dominance of the English-speaking powers were “part and parcel of the same process”—Carr proceeded to observe that realism, too, “often turns out in practice to be just as much conditioned as any other mode of thought.” Indeed, according to Carr, “the impossibility of being a consistent and thorough-going realist is one of the most certain and most curious lessons of political science.”¹³¹

Carr did not reach this conclusion merely by way of logical analysis but also by examining the record of actual realist thinkers, including Marx and Machiavelli. Karl Marx, Carr noted, illustrates the impossibility of consistent realism in so much as, “having dissolved human thought and action into the relativism of the dialectic,” he proceeded to “postulate the absolute goal of a classless society where the dialectic no longer operates . . . The realist thus ends by negating his own postulate and assuming an ultimate reality outside the historical process.” Similarly, the realism of that most famous realist icon, Machiavelli, “breaks down in the last chapter of *The Prince*, which is entitled ‘An Exhortation to free Italy from the Barbarians’—a goal whose necessity could be deduced from no realist premise.”¹³²

Had Carr been alive today, he might have commented that, just as Machiavelli’s masterpiece ended with a call to action that did not flow logically from the content of the bulk of the book, so does *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, by realists’ John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, conclude with a chapter titled “What Is to Be Done?”¹³³ As *New York Times* book reviewer William Grimes wryly observed, the prescriptions presented in that chapter envision a fantastic transcendence of current Middle Eastern politics prompted by a dramatic reversal of U.S. policy in the region. Such a reversal, should it occur, would negate the realities of the domestic politics of U.S. foreign policy that Mearsheimer and Walt have analyzed so coolly and dispassionately in the preceding chapters.¹³⁴ *The Israel Lobby*, then, constitutes yet another illustration of that “most curious lesson” of political science that E. H. Carr tried to teach us many years ago: the “impossibility of being a consistent and thorough-going realist.”¹³⁵

In sum, E. H. Carr, far from being a “traditionalist” who was ignorant of the canons of modern scientific research, actually thought long and hard about the naturalistic approach to social science and rejected it years before it became the orthodoxy in IR. He subjected the central epistemological presupposition of this approach—the separation of purpose and analysis, subject and object—to a critical examination and found it to be unrealistic in practice, including the practices of realist theorists. Indeed, Carr stands out among modern realist thinkers in his commitment to reflexivity, namely, taking a realistic look at realism itself and acknowledging its limitations. Ironically, inasmuch as he has grounded his thought in more

realistic epistemological foundations, Carr can be said to have been a more thorough-going realist than his successors even as (or perhaps precisely because) he proclaimed thorough-going realism to be impossible.

Conclusion

If “political science is the science not only of what is, but of what ought to be,” as E. H. Carr has taught us, what is the purpose of this political scientist?¹³⁶ Having analyzed the inconsistency between the realities of realists’ careers and the naturalistic philosophical underpinnings of contemporary realism, what is to be done about this state of affairs? Obviously, the tension between realist theory and realists’ practices ought to be reduced, but should practice be adjusted to conform to theory or should theory be modified to accord with practice?

My purpose is not to dissuade realists from intervening in public affairs. On the contrary, I find realist public activism to be admirable; it would be regrettable if realist scholars restricted their speaking to the classroom and confined their writings to specialized, jargon-filled scholarly journals. Besides, in light of the long history of realist public activism, it would be unrealistic to expect contemporary realists to readily transcend this historical experience.

My purpose is rather to prompt realists to rethink their attachment to the “standard canons of scientific research.”¹³⁷ Rather than seek to “test” lawlike generalizations in the “laboratory” of the “real world”—a methodology at odds with the realist habit of publicly criticizing the state of the world—realists may draw inspiration from Morgenthau’s Weberian, ideal-typical methodology. And rather than presuppose that realist theories are external to the political processes they analyze, realists should harmonize their epistemological assumptions with their practical experience by exchanging the dualistic truth-power framework for Carr’s dictum that “political thought is itself a form of political action.”¹³⁸

My call for realists to adjust their methodological and epistemological postulates to their actual practices surely has a utopian ring, but it is not altogether unrealistic, at least not in comparison with the expectation that realists would cease their activist practices. It is not entirely unrealistic because, for one, the predominance of the naturalistic approach in realist thought has a rather short history, shorter (and therefore, perhaps, more precarious) than the history of realist practical activism. And my proposal is not entirely unrealistic because, second, the embrace of naturalism by realist scholars does not appear to have earned them the professional respect that they have been hoping for. In his 1991 survey of security studies Stephen Walt attributed the renaissance of the field to its “adoption of the norms and objectives of social science” and wrote optimistically that the field’s “growing prominence within the scholarly community is due in large

part to the endorsement of these principles by most members of the field.”¹³⁹ But if the endorsement of scientific norms has indeed boosted the standing of realism in the profession, why do leading realist scholars continue to complain, to quote John Mearsheimer, that “dislike of realism is widespread and often intense” inside American universities, “especially among liberal international relations theorists”?¹⁴⁰ Mearsheimer’s gloomy assessment of the status of realism in the academy—“There is little reason,” he wrote, “to think that such hostility toward realism will subside anytime soon”—belies the earlier hope that the adoption of the naturalistic persuasion would result in the field’s “growing prominence.”¹⁴¹ To borrow a realist locution, *the reality is* that realism has little to lose professionally, and much to gain intellectually, from breaking free of the positivist straitjacket.

Notes

- 1 Mearsheimer 2001a, 4.
- 2 Jervis 1994, 859.
- 3 Payne 2007, 508. The paradox is also perceptively analyzed in a yet-unpublished paper by Barkin 2008, whose conclusions remarkably parallel mine.
- 4 This idea (often labeled “positivism” in disciplinary discourse) entails the ontological assumption that there is a “real” political world whose objective patterns are resistant to change by human thought, the attendant epistemological presupposition that, in political inquiry, subject (political theory/ist) and object (politics) should be separate from each other, and the view that the proper method of social science consists in validating general hypotheses by “testing” them successfully against (past or predicted) political facts. I will show how these views are manifest in the writings of leading contemporary realists. The philosophical underpinnings of naturalistic political science are cogently critiqued in Bevir and Kedar 2008.
- 5 Payne 2007, 510.
- 6 Walt 1991, 222.
- 7 Mearsheimer 2001a, 6; Mearsheimer and Walt 2006.
- 8 Carr 1964, 4.
- 9 Carr 1964, 8 (“wishing over thinking”). I put the term idealism in quotation marks on account of Brian Schmidt’s (1998) disciplinary history, which demonstrates that the idealism of interwar IR was grossly overstated by its realist critics.
- 10 Haslam 1999, ch. 2.
- 11 Jones 1998, 28.
- 12 As Jones 1998 (46) observes, *The Twenty Years Crisis* was “conceived . . . as a polemic for appeasement.” Carr deleted from later editions of the book two passages that explicitly endorsed the Munich agreement; see Smith 1986, 83–87 and Haslam 1999, ch. 3.
- 13 Jones 1998, Chapters 4–5.
- 14 Carr 1945; Sarkissian 1947.
- 15 Jones 1998, 110–12.
- 16 Thompson 1977, 27.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 18 Osgood 1977, 33.
- 19 Craig 2003, 114.
- 20 Raskin 1977, 94; Oren 2003, ch. 4.
- 21 Craig 2003, 104–05.
- 22 Morgenthau 1970a, 260. This essay was originally delivered as an address at the University of Maryland in March 1961.
- 23 Morgenthau 1961, quoted in Craig 2003, 108.
- 24 Quoted in Craig 2003, 108–09.
- 25 Morgenthau, 1970a, 259–60; Morgenthau 1985, 4.
- 26 Halliday and Rosenberg 1998, 363.
- 27 Waltz 1967.
- 28 Halliday and Rosenberg 1998, 363; original emphases.
- 29 Kurth 1998, 33; Walt 1991, 212 and 215 respectively.
- 30 Walt 1991, 231.
- 31 Kurth 1998, 33.
- 32 Mearsheimer 2001a. Huntington’s comment appears on the book’s jacket.
- 33 See, for example, Mearsheimer and Van Evera 1996; Mearsheimer 2000. A list of Mearsheimer’s commentaries on public affairs is posted at <http://johnmearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pub-affairs.html> (accessed on August 27, 2007).
- 34 Postel 2004; Mearsheimer 2001b; Mearsheimer and Walt 2003a; Mearsheimer and Walt 2003b; “A War with Iraq Is *Not* in America’s National Interest,” paid advertisement, *New York Times*, September 26, 2002.
- 35 Postel 2004. The Coalition’s description is quoted from its web site (<http://www.realisticforeignpolicy.org/>) accessed on October 23, 2005. Realist scholars who have signed both the paid ad and the anti-Empire manifesto issued by the Coalition include, among others, Robert Art, Richard Betts, Michael Desch, Robert Jervis, Barry Posen, Jack Snyder, Stephen Walt, and Kenneth Waltz.
- 36 Mearsheimer 2005.
- 37 Mearsheimer and Walt 2006; Pfaltzgraff 2006. See also Mearsheimer and Walt 2007—an extended version of the argument advanced in the article. Neither the “offensive realism” elaborated by Mearsheimer nor Walt’s well-known “balance of threat” theory (which is often characterized as an exemplar of “defensive realism”) accord any explanatory status to domestic political variables such as the influence of ethnic pressure groups—see Mearsheimer 2001a and Walt 1987.
- 38 See Knorr and Rosenau 1970.
- 39 Walt 1991, 221; original emphases.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 222; original emphasis.

- 41 So do other prominent contemporary realists. Dale Copeland (2000, 235–36, 2) develops a theory of “dynamic differentials,” from which he deduces “falsifiable predictions about when states will either initiate major wars” or accept high risks of war; he proceeds to “test” these predictions against historical evidence on major wars “across the millennia.” Randall Schweller (1998, 11–12) self-consciously employs the “scientific method” in his study of the origins of World War II; his empirical analysis explores whether changes in the structure of the international system in the 1930s “affected the various foreign policies of the major powers in a manner consistent with the predictions of my theory.” Fareed Zakaria (1998, 10, 183) lays out a “state-centered” realist theory of foreign policy and, after criticizing rival theories for confusing normative prescriptions with “scientific truths,” he demonstrates that his own theory’s “predictions” are validated by the historical record of U.S. foreign policy in the late nineteenth century. And Christopher Layne (2006, 11) “test[s] extraregional hegemony theory with a detailed case study . . . of America’s grand strategy from the 1940s to the present;” he seeks to show that that “U.S. policymakers have acted as hegemonic strategy theory predicts.” Thus, much like Walt, Mearsheimer, and other contemporary realists who cannot be discussed here due to space limits, these realist scholars all write in a manner that clearly distinguishes between their theories (subject) and the “real world” (object). All of them follow the naturalistic scientific protocol articulated by Walt inasmuch as they all construct a theory, derive causal “hypotheses” or “predictions” from this theory, and “test” the theory by analyzing whether its predictions correspond to the historical record.
- 42 Mearsheimer 2001a, 4–5.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 6–8.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 41; emphasis added.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 391, 387.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 98.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 11; emphasis original.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 51 Mearsheimer 2005, 1.
- 52 Mearsheimer 2001a, 10, 12.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 55 Mearsheimer and Walt 2006; Mearsheimer 2005.
- 56 Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986, 764.
- 57 The violation of the subject-object separation assumption is brought into yet sharper relief in cases in which enacting the prescriptions of the theory would disconfirm, rather than reinforce, the theory’s predictions; see Oren 2006.
- 58 Mearsheimer 2001a, 12.
- 59 Mearsheimer and Walt 2006; emphasis added.
- 60 Mearsheimer 2005, 1. This article was excerpted in Fall 2005 issue of *The National Interest* under the title “Realism is Right.”
- 61 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 62 Morgenthau 1946, 2–3.
- 63 Morgenthau 1985, 18 and 4; emphasis added.
- 64 Hollis and Smith 1990, 23.
- 65 Morgenthau 1985, 4.
- 66 Turner and Mazur 2007.
- 67 Weber 2004a [1904], 387–88; emphases original.
- 68 Turner and Factor 1984; Smith 1986; Walker 1993, 55–58; George 1994; Barkawi 1998; Pichler 1998; Williams 2004.
- 69 This focus may be partly attributable to the fact that Morgenthau, in an autobiographical essay, acknowledged his intellectual debt to Weber’s “political thought”—see Morgenthau 1977, 7; emphasis added. In his scholarly writings, Morgenthau almost never cited Weber (or other German thinkers) for reasons discussed by Turner 2004.
- 70 Turner and Mazur 2007, 2. See also Turner 2004 and 2006. Morgenthau’s use of Weber’s ideal-typical method is also discussed in Barkawi 1998, 173–74, and Ish Shalom 2006.
- 71 Weber 2004a [1904], 380; emphasis original.
- 72 Quoted in Turner 2004, 103. Similarly, in one of his essays on the sociology of religion, Weber (1946, 339) wrote that “As economic and rational political actions follow laws of their own, so every other rational action within the world remains inescapably bound to worldly condition.”
- 73 Weber 2004a [1904], 380–81; emphasis original.
- 74 Weber 2004b [1920], 322. This essay constitutes the first chapter of Weber’s *Economy and Society*.
- 75 Proctor 1991, 145.
- 76 Morgenthau 1985, 5.
- 77 *Ibid.*; emphasis added.
- 78 Hekman 1983, 27.
- 79 Morgenthau 1985, 5.
- 80 Weber 2004b [1920], 326.
- 81 Weber 2004a [1904], 388.
- 82 Morgenthau 1985, 7.
- 83 Weber 2004b [1920], 314.
- 84 Weber 2004a [1904], 387–88; emphases original.
- 85 Morgenthau 1985, 10.
- 86 *Ibid.*
- 87 *Ibid.*
- 88 Mearsheimer 2001a, 11–12.
- 89 Morgenthau 1985, 7; emphasis added.
- 90 Weber 2004c [1919]; Weber 2004d [1918].
- 91 See Loader 1985, 97.
- 92 Weber 2004c [1919], 257, 267.
- 93 Weber 2004a [1904].

94 Weber 2004d [1918], 279.
 95 Ibid., 283
 96 Weber 2004c [1919], 267.
 97 Thompson 1977, 30.
 98 Morgenthau 1970b [1966], 14.
 99 Ibid., 15.
 100 Ibid., 17.
 101 Ashcraft 1975, 21.
 102 Thompson 1977, 30.
 103 Morgenthau 1985, 4.
 104 Jervis 1994, 859. Kuklick (2006, 78) similarly remarked that “Morgenthau spent his career blaming American policymakers for doing what they should not have been able to do—violating the iron laws of politics.”
 105 Morgenthau 1970b [1966], 22.
 106 Weber 2004d [1918], 279 (“ploughshares”); Morgenthau 1970b [1966], 16. See also Oren 2003, ch. 4.
 107 Jackson and Kaufman 2007, 95.
 108 Ibid., 97, 96, 99.
 109 Ashcraft 1975, 17.
 110 Carr 1964, ix; Mannheim 1985 [1936].
 111 Loader 1985, 95.
 112 Ibid, 14.
 113 Mannheim 1985 [1936], 263.
 114 Ibid., 191. See Loader 1985, 121–24.
 115 Mannheim 1985 [1936], 191.
 116 Ibid., 187.
 117 Ibid., 105, 149; emphasis added.
 118 Ibid., 153.
 119 Ibid., 154–55.
 120 Ibid., 155; Loader 1985, 112–21.
 121 Mannheim 1985 [1936], 158.
 122 Ibid., 162–63.
 123 Ibid., 162.
 124 Loader 1985, 121–24.
 125 Jones 1998, ch. 6.
 126 Carr 1964, 68.
 127 Ibid., 15.
 128 Jones 1998, 122.
 129 Carr 1964, 3–4.
 130 Ibid., 4.
 131 Ibid., 89.
 132 Ibid., 89–90.
 133 Mearsheimer and Walt 2007, 335.
 134 Grimes 2007.
 135 Carr 1964, 89. Mearsheimer and Walt, of course, would probably reply that their prescriptions, though they transcend the realities of U.S. domestic politics, are in line with the objective realities of the international system. This reply, however, begs the questions I raised earlier: how objective and constraining are the realities of the international system if the United States could ignore them for

four decades? And how good an international theory is realism if actual U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has diverged so dramatically from realism’s “predictions”?

136 Carr 1964, 5.
 137 Walt 1991, 222.
 138 Carr 1964, 5.
 139 Walt 1991, 222.
 140 Mearsheimer 2002, 29. See also Abel 2001.
 141 Mearsheimer 2002, 31; Walt 1991, 222.

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