1987

Raison d'ETAT and the American Philosophy of Realism in World Affairs. (Volumes I and II).

Gregory T. Russell

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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Raison d’état and the American philosophy of realism in world affairs. (Volumes I and II)

Russell, Gregory T., Ph.D.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1987
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RAISON D'ÊTAT AND THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY OF REALISM IN WORLD AFFAIRS

VOL. I

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Political Science

by

Gregory T. Russell
B.A., East Texas State University, 1977
M.A., East Texas State University, 1979
May 1987
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I wish to dedicate these pages to Dr. Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., whose exemplary scholarship as an accomplished author and professor of political science has provided an enduring standard for theorists and practitioners of American foreign policy. In helping to supervise the preparation of this manuscript, Dr. Crabb gave generously of his time in the capacity of judicious editor as well as provocative critic of the methods and arguments developed throughout the several chapters. Moreover, his thoughtful substantiation of a distinctively "pragmatic spirit" in the American diplomatic tradition helps to broaden, as it aspires to transcend, the perennial conflict between the ubiquity of power and the requirement of moral evaluation of state behavior in a largely anarchic world arena.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the heritage of political thought shaping European raison d'état is significant for the theory and practice of post-World War II realism in American foreign policy. Analysis is guided by the hypothesis that the response of postwar realists to the issues raised by an interdependent multistate system differs from the traditional rationale of raison d'état intended for a Eurocentric international society characterized by common diplomatic objectives and values. Consideration is given to how the continental legacy has been modified and adapted by realist spokesmen to the exigencies of America's postwar foreign policy agenda.

An opening chapter examines some of the leading European proponents of raison d'état (Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Richelieu, and Bismarck). The following four chapters provide a number of case studies by which four prominent American thinkers (Walter Lippmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and George F. Kennan) can be compared and evaluated with regard to the basic assumptions and principles of raison d'état. The four general criteria for evaluation include: (1) political philosophy and methods of analysis; (2) conceptualization
and definition; (3) realism and moral choice in foreign policy; and (4) contemporary foreign policy developments.

A concluding chapter assesses the intellectual orientation of American realism by noting both similarities and differences with respect to how the four American thinkers critique the methods and principles of raison d'état. Specifically, realist scholars have more often exemplified a "pragmatic" perspective in seeking to reconcile universal moral principles with the necessities of national survival and security. Moreover, the continuing significance of the national interest and balance of power illustrates the tension between the persistence of state sovereignty and the need for political realists to forcefully address the emergence of new domestic and transnational variables that have become relevant for the role and responsibilities of American power in world politics.
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the heritage of political thought shaping European raison d'état is significant for the theory and practice of postwar realism in American foreign policy. In comparing the two traditions, analysis will be guided by the hypothesis that the response of postwar realists to many of the challenging issues raised by an increasingly interdependent multistate system differs from the classic rationale of raison d'état intended for a Eurocentric international society characterized by common diplomatic objectives and values. The proposed hypothesis is not intended to suggest the absence of any relationship or continuity between the continental tradition and the basic tenets of recent American realism. At issue, however, is the method (or justification) by which the inherited European tradition has been modified and subsequently adapted by realist interpreters to the exigencies of post-World War II United States foreign policy. An equally important consideration in the examination of American realism is the recognition of persistent, and often contradictory, themes and principles, which have influenced American foreign policy since the founding of the republic.
(e.g., isolationism, legalism, idealism, and pragmatism), and that have been given vivid expression in numerous doctrines, unilateral declarations, and multilateral diplomatic commitments of the United States.

Realist political philosophy is based upon the recognition of the sources of power and conflict at all levels of human existence and the methods by which expressions of individual and national self-interest might be kept consistent with the requirements of order. For the realist, the realm of politics is the twilight zone where ethics and power meet. The formulation of this perennial political dilemma is impossible without some prior consideration of antecedent philosophical assumptions related to the problems of human nature and politics, order and disorder in society, state of nature, and the quest for community. In addition, these core assumptions bear directly upon the possibility of compromise and reconciliation of divergent national interests backed by rival moral claims. At this juncture, our objective will be to identify clearly any possible nexus between the continental tradition of raison d'État and postwar American political realism, in order to grasp the moral problem among nations, as well as the difficulty in defining viable and coherent guides to national action.

If a case can be made that the realist interpretation of the postwar aims of American power in world affairs
differs from the continental thinkers’ vindication of the statesman’s primary obligation to follow the dictates of self-interest in state relations, knowledge of the former’s views should serve two important purposes. First, insight into the normative roots of realist thought should help explain some of the peculiarities, novel features, and recurrent traits of the contemporary American approach to world affairs, which often puzzle foreign observers and leads them either to praise the special virtues of American policy or condemn what they consider its “hypocritical” pretense. Second, the ideals influencing the realist estimation of the appropriate methods and national aims of American diplomacy should help to promote critical self-understanding of America’s moral presuppositions and of the deeply ingrained habits of thought affecting its foreign policy conduct in a field where emotion and value judgment play an important role. By identifying and paying respect to an impressive intellectual ancestry for American realism, our understanding of international politics should gain in philosophical depth, historical perspective, and academic respectability.

The divergence between the classical formulation of raison d’état and the operative principles of postwar American realism was noted by Arnold Wolfers’ earlier and broad distinction between the Anglo-American approach to foreign policy and the contribution of such continental
precursors as Machiavelli, Grotius, Spinoza, Rousseau, and Kant. It would be misleading to suggest that all versions of continental international thought have been Machiavellian; opposition to the views expressed in Machiavelli's *Prince* was voiced repeatedly throughout the centuries that followed its publication. In particular, Friedrich Meinecke provided an illuminating exposé of the debate between the Machiavellians and anti-Machiavellians. However, Meinecke's analysis justifies the contention that continental theory centered around the idea of the "necessity of the state," which was the focal point of Machiavelli's position. From the venue of continental *raison d'état*, the main problem presented by the conditions of multiple sovereignty was the existence of a profound cleavage between the requirements of morality and expedient calculations of national self-interest in foreign policy. This was consistent with the experience common to all continental countries which—in the face of constant external threats to their national existence—believed themselves exposed to the compelling impact of forces beyond their control. The central question for the continental theorists, therefore, was whether the statesman was under any moral obligation to resist these "compelling" demands of state necessity. From this perspective, a statesman found little leeway, if any, to reconcile the need for security with universal norms or laws applicable to an anarchic
environment of sovereign states.³

On the other hand, English and American thinkers were less inclined to accept a rigid distinction between the requirements of self-interest and moral principles in foreign policy behavior. To a considerable degree, the concepts of "necessity of the state" or raison d'état remained anathema to political thinkers of the English-speaking world. Moreover, the Anglo-American approach took the form of a debate about the most appropriate way of applying accepted principles of morality to foreign policy conduct. The rationale for such efforts was the belief that statesmen enjoyed a degree of freedom in choosing the "right" path in their external policies (much as they did in their internal conduct). The dichotomy between national interest and moral principle was not seen as irreconcilable: there was surely room, it was often held, to decide for the good ends and to preserve them with the least evil of the available means. As Wolfers pointed out, this was a philosophy of choice, "which was bound to be ethical, over against a philosophy in which forces beyond moral control were believed to prevail."⁴ Indeed, choice implies the freedom to decide what goals to pursue and what means to use in accordance with one's desires and convictions.

In comparing American realism with continental international thought, Wolfers' historical survey of competing theoretical traditions offers a useful typology
for assessing the intellectual antecedents of realism as a
contemporary manifestation of Anglo-American thinking on
international politics. In fact, the point can be argued
that realism simply gives renewed expression to the familiar
Anglo-American stipulation that statesmen are compelled to
integrate two basic goals: one, the primary though prudently
conceived objective of national self-preservation; the
other, implied in such prudence, a fulfillment of the moral
law to the maximum compatible with the primary duty of
defense. For example, there is freedom of choice between
more or less moderation, more or less concern for the
interests of others, more or less effort to preserve the
peace, and more or less responsibility for the whole of
mankind. The underlying philosophy and concepts that inhere
in realism as a theory of international politics are vital
for demarcating the boundaries and limitations of any such
philosophy of choice and its relevance for specific policy
initiatives.

Before turning to the issues that arise from these
broader and more far-ranging questions, a qualifying
statement about international relations theory is in order.
International relations theory is not "philosophy" in the
broaderest sense. As a rule, it does not seek to define the
nature of truth or locate man's place in the universe. It
does not ask with theology, "What is ultimate truth?"; nor
with philosophy, "What is man's highest end in life?" This
lack has led philosophers, such as the late Leo Strauss, to question the validity of a philosophy of international politics. Unless it sought to answer such questions, Strauss asked whether a philosophy of world politics was not as problematical as, for example, a philosophy for New York’s sanitation workers! To a degree, Strauss was correct in believing that theorizing about international politics usually takes place at a more immediate or less universal level of discourse that general philosophy, and as a result it suffers from the fact that common moral principles are difficult to discover in such theories.

At the same time, it would be the height of intellectual arrogance for one school of thought to claim a monopoly over philosophy. By way of analogy, one can appreciate the fundamental dilemma of Edmond Cahn, one of the twentieth century's most distinguished scholars of jurisprudence, who asked: Where is the legal theorist to find the ideas and principles necessary for the illumination of the broad dimensions of his field? Writing in The Sense of Injustice (1949), Cahn observed:

The choice would be rather difficult if we did not have the benefit of indications vividly and repeatedly inscribed in the history of philosophy....That is why the ideal is habitually set off against the positive, identity against time, the free against the determined, reason against passion.

For our purpose, philosophy provides a number of interpretive and normative constructs by which to relate and
assign meaning to recurrent patterns of international political behavior. Most social scientists seeking to understand the causes of war and the conditions of conflict resolution assemble and explain their data on the basis of assumptions about the nature and behavior of man, the internal organization of societies, or the decentralized character of the international political system.

Certain cautions and qualifications must be acknowledged in any effort to identify and analyze the philosophical and ethical roots of the American realist tradition. First, rarely has a majority of the realists ever approached their tasks with any explicit acknowledgment of an intellectual debt to the competing traditions of Western political thought. Second, the political norms of postwar realism have often been obscured by the energetic critique of idealism and the abstract moral groping associated with specific foreign policy initiatives since the interwar years. Third, political realism draws on the varied contributions of both academicians and diplomatic practitioners at the highest levels of government. The occupational specialization of these scholars has inspired a wide variety of research interests and alternative approaches (e.g., historical, descriptive, theoretical) to contemporary issues in American foreign policy. Fourth, the philosophy and concepts of realism have typically been associated with the work of specific individuals, writing
during particular periods and about particular topics. For example, the subject matter and historical field for the "early realists" such as Walter Lippmann and Reinhold Niebuhr can, in a number of respects, be differentiated from the developing perspectives of more contemporary spokesmen such as George Kennan and Kenneth Thompson. Finally, as a consequence of the behavioral revolution in the social and political sciences, political realism has been exposed to considerable censure for a confusion of its theoretical aims and its ambiguous conceptualization.

The elaboration of a unifying philosophical disposition largely depends on the possibility of identifying a common body of principles or a core of residual truths reflecting the essence of American realism. That American realist thought can be cast in general philosophical terms has been the principal theme of one prominent spokesman, Kenneth Thompson, in much of his published work over the previous thirty years. Particularly relevant for this study is his *Political Realism And The Crisis Of World Politics: An American Approach to Foreign Policy* (1959) in which he portrays the normative prerequisites of the realist position in the form of a distinctive American approach to foreign policy. Much of the motivation for this dissertation derives from what can be perceived as the strengths, weaknesses, omissions, and unanswered questions associated with Thompson's thoughtful contribution.
Thompson emphasizes four attributes inherent in the philosophical basis of American realism. First, political realists bring to their task a lively sense of history. Consideration here extends to differentiating between the recurrent and unique in history, as well as the legacy of philosophies of history predicated on the idea of progress.

Second, realists share the conviction that an understanding of both international and domestic political phenomena is derived from a clear conception of human nature. This view runs counter to much of present-day social science thought which holds that man is a bundle of contradictory impulses and that his behavior must be tested and analyzed experimentally before anything at all may be said about political philosophies.

Third, American realists evince a particular outlook toward the possibility of human progress. History is seen as the record of important human advances, but of advances marked by retreat and retrogression. More often than not, progress is the half-step, the partial advance which is accepted when the ultimate goal is beyond reach. The realist is compelled to challenge the Enlightenment conception of progress, as well as views espoused by millennial Christians, liberals, and secular Marxists alike.

Finally, a realist philosophy must possess a workable concept of politics. According to Thompson, politics is compromise, the adjustment of divergent interests, and the
reconciliation of alternative moral claims. Politics calls for the highest moral stamina if men are to stand on the uncertain terrain where to act may be to act unjustly, where there are few if any absolutes in human existence, and where success is the most common criteria of political action."

The various limitations embodied in Thompson's account of political realism permit a renewal of the debate and a reevaluation of the philosophic vision promulgated in the early postwar environment. Thompson's Political Realism was published during the height of the cold war and was understandably influenced by perceptions of a global system with distinctive (if changing) structural features. Today, attention should focus on the viability of conceptual definitions (e.g., power, national interest, balance of power, force) in light of fundamental ways in which the world has changed since 1945. Alternatively, to what extent has the transformation of world politics in the twentieth century been inhibited by the strength of persistent global patterns? The answers to these questions are integral to any contemporary appraisal of conceptual strengths and weaknesses in the realist position.

An additional, and perhaps more important, difficulty stems from Thompson's penchant for attributing the intellectual antecedents of American realism to a diversity of traditions in Western political thought, encompassing such figures as Aristotle, St. Augustine, Machiavelli,
Grotius, Burke, De Tocqueville, Lincoln, and Niebuhr. Our interest lies less in sorting out Thompson's explanation of realism's philosophical pedigree than in explicating how American realists either affirm or disavow the presuppositions of the European tradition of raison d'état. There can be no doubt that modern expressions of political realism, at least in part, invoke philosophical assumptions and categories of analysis well-known to the continental tradition.

How does an underlying philosophy of the major tenets and questions of political realism (i.e., history, human nature, politics, and progress) converge or differ from comparable considerations germane to raison d'état? In fact, is it even possible to speak of an "Americanized" Realpolitik (rooted in the precepts of raison d'état) and, if so, how can it be differentiated from competing explanations of United States foreign policy and diplomatic history which invoke alternative philosophical criteria? If these preliminary considerations or root assumptions in the continental and American conceptions are essentially compatible, how is the realist to justify or explain a distinctive realist diplomatic tradition in international affairs? Insofar as European advocates of "reason of state" looked to an anarchic international arena organized only by the expedient projection and balancing of power, why have realist thinkers been unwilling to dissociate the exercise
of American national interest from universal moral principles? Failure to address the significance of this relationship can only further exacerbate the unenthusiastic reception of political realism in both the discipline of political science and American society as a whole.

As a basis for contrasting American realism with continental international thought, an opening chapter examines some of the leading European theorists and diplomatic practitioners of *raison d'état* (Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Richelieu, and Bismarck). A preliminary section within these pages reviews the principal attributes and problems of theorizing about state relations in the history of European political thought. Subsequent treatment of the various spokesmen for *raison d'état* will build on such considerations as: (1) the philosophical understanding of human nature and politics characterizing each thinker's definition of state interest in foreign policy; (2) the combination of domestic and external factors influencing a state's diplomatic and military objectives across all or part of Europe; (3) the manner in which state interest, or state necessity, is manifested in alliance systems and forms of power arrangements; and (4) the relevance of ethical commands in the state’s relentless quest for power and security.

In judging the significance of *raison d'état* for postwar American realism, the following chapters provide a
representative number of case studies by which four prominent realists can be compared within a common framework of analysis. An effort will be made to select individuals of different background and experience, whose published works address a wide variety of topics in the postwar period. This will contribute to an understanding of major and minor differences among the ideas of various realists; it will also highlight the evolution in the thought and perspective of individual thinkers. Integral to the development of an American realist philosophy of international politics has been the seminal contributions of Walter Lippmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and George F. Kennan.

While other individuals could be added to our list, these scholars have been selected for three reasons. Each of these thinkers has persistently explored the larger philosophical and theoretical themes of political realism, in addition to commenting on a wide variety of contemporary foreign policy concerns. Moreover, these individuals helped to identify the core principles of realist thought from unique professional and occupational perspectives. Finally, this grouping of individuals amplifies the evolution and development of realist doctrine over a volatile forty year postwar period in United States foreign policy.

The framework of analysis to be utilized embodies four main criteria of description and comparison that can be
applied consistently in the various case studies. Moreover, the framework incorporates the normative features of Thompson's early effort in *Political Realism* (and seeks to update them), as well as other categories that receive only brief attention in his work. These criteria include:

1. **Political Philosophy And Method Of Analysis**—Emphasis in this section is devoted to the operative intellectual commitments and formative personal experience of each realist thinker. To what extent have theological or philosophical assumptions of history and politics influenced their inquiry into the perennial problems of man's existence in society? The continental theorists examined in this study exhibit significant differences in viewpoint concerning the requirements of order and justice within political society; however, their international perspective more commonly posits a strict separation between the ethical standards of state behavior and the moral responsibility of the individual. By contrast, the Anglo-American political tradition is distinguished by an array of constitutional restraints on the legitimate functions of governmental power. The morality of state behavior is shaped by, and inseparable from, certain self-evident principles of liberty and equality which find expression in the Christian-liberal-humanitarian values of the American mission. How have realist thinkers been able to reconcile their allegiance to the transcendent ideals embodied in the
American mission with man's incurable ego and the exigencies of power politics? In addition, is it possible to reconcile the objectives of both normative and empirical theory in a realist philosophy of international politics?

2. Conceptualization And Problems Of Definition—Problems of conceptual definition extend to competing interpretations of power, national interest, and balance of power. While American realists have elaborated on and applied a wide variety of concepts, none is perhaps more basic than these three. An assessment would have to take into account both domestic and international developments that contribute to the selection of appropriate criteria for definition and evaluation. Insofar as these three principles were consistently affirmed by proponents of raison d'état, how have American realists accommodated such developments as growing military and economic interdependence among an ever-increasing number of nations, as well as the reliance on new modalities of power and influence (e.g., economic, psychological, and ideological)? Furthermore, how do realist definitions of these basic concepts impact on the limits and possibilities of a democratic foreign policy?

3. Realism and Moral Choice in American Foreign Policy—The significance of continental raison d'état for American diplomacy points to the statesman's dilemma of having to reconcile the requirements of moral principle and national security. In addition to their more explicit observations
on the role of power and principle in statecraft, it will be important to determine the degree to which these individuals identify a distinctive American mission or purpose in world affairs. How, if at all, does the realist reconcile the successful defense of the national interest through strategies of balance of power and spheres of influence with the promotion of universal values (e.g., liberty and freedom) in foreign policy? Indeed, can America's national interest in world affairs be interpreted as an objective, value-free category exempt from any normative restraints transcending the parochial national community? Do American realists acknowledge transnational norms in a world menaced by the nightmare of nuclear catastrophe and ecological disaster?

4. Contemporary Foreign Policy Developments—In addition to a deep appreciation for the philosophical and ethical roots of their intellectual tradition, these scholars were dedicated political activists, always outspoken on the domestic and international issues of the day. Their views often carried considerable weight at the highest echelons of government and helped to shape public perception of the methods and goals of United States foreign policy. Often overlooked by those critics who equate the philosophy of realism with the cynicism of raison d'état is how often realist thinkers have emphasized the limits and responsibility of American power as well as the increasing
obsolescence of the national interest in an era of increasing interdependence. Inasmuch as a complete inventory of the many national issues they addressed throughout the postwar era is beyond the scope of this study, selective consideration is given to such topics as: (1) limits of international law and organization; (2) nuclear proliferation and disarmament; (3) American foreign policy and the Third World; (4) containment strategy and the limits of American intervention; and (5) human rights and the American moral purpose in world affairs.

Within the context of each case study, the particular topics to be examined will largely be determined by both the respective interests of each thinker, as well as the time period in which they were active. For example, Lippmann and Niebuhr published little after the period of American involvement in the Vietnam War. By contrast, Morgenthau and Kennan are more illuminating on the orientation and evolution in realist thought regarding the current debate over human rights in foreign policy and the nuclear balance of terror in the aftermath of the SALT agreements.

A concluding chapter attempts to assess the intellectual orientation of the four American realists by evaluating their critique of the methods and principles of raison d'état according to the categories of comparison utilized in each case study. A balanced assessment of raison d'état in American diplomatic experience cannot be made in
vacuo, separate and apart from rival intellectual currents and influences. Indeed, one expectation of this study is that the principles of *raison d'état* fail to provide an adequate justification for the rank-ordering of priorities in foreign policy formulation or, for that matter, a convincing rationale for many of America's diverse diplomatic initiatives since the Second World War. A second expectation, therefore, is that *raison d'état* is but one of the important intellectual determinants that has been factored into the realist worldview. This expectation brings into focus the tension between the principles of the continental tradition and the willingness of leading American commentators to acknowledge the emergence of new domestic and transnational variables that have become increasingly relevant for the formulation and implementation of American foreign policy.
Endnotes


4. Ibid., pp. 244-246.


8. Ibid., pp. 3-14.
CHAPTER I

THE CONTINENTAL TRADITION OF RAISON D'ÉTAT

This chapter will focus on the broad philosophical heritage of raison d'état from its moorings in the classical city state system of Thucydides to its culmination in the Bismarckian conceptualization of Realpolitik in nineteenth century Germany. A number of key considerations will structure the inquiry into the evolution and interpretation of this millennial concept in the work of continental theorists and statesmen. First, how and why was raison d'état an early manifestation of theorizing about interstate relations? Second, what continuities and inconsistencies in conceptual understanding can be derived from a review of some of the prominent exponents of raison d'état in different historical periods? Finally, as a theory of international politics, how does raison d'état supply meaningful presuppositions for the successful exercise of European diplomacy and balance of power?

Machiavelli's doctrine of raison d'état as the servant of political necessity represented both a thesis and justification which numerous European statesmen felt obliged to affirm and practice in their diplomatic and foreign policy conduct. The doctrine was repeated in the words of
Frederick the Great: "Princes are slaves to their resources, the interest of the state is their law, and this law is inviolable." Its spirit was similarly expressed when Bismarck suggested that: "It is better to seek salvation via the sewer than to allow oneself to be choked or beaten to death." A more comprehensive summation of Machiavelli's principle was offered by the German historian, Friedrich Meinecke, who pointed out that:

*Raison d'état* is the fundamental principle of international conduct, the State's First Law of Motion. It tells the statesman what he must do to preserve the health and strength of the state. The state is an organic structure whose full power can only be maintained by allowing it... to continue growing; and *raison d'état* indicates both the path and goal for such growth.

*Raison d'état* as interpreted and elaborated by continental theorists signified a pattern or tradition of thought which encompasses a description of the nature of international politics and also a set of prescriptions as to how statesmen should conduct themselves. For what has been termed the Machiavellian tradition in international politics—including such figures as Thomas Hobbes, Cardinal Richelieu, Frederick the Great, Georges Clemenceau, the twentieth century realists such as E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau—the true description of international politics was one of international anarchy, a war of all against all, or a relationship of unending conflict among sovereign states.

The structure of diplomatic practices was based on the
existence of a number of independent territorial states, free from external control and able to pursue their own interests by bargaining and fighting with each other. Each national unit pursued objectives that best served the interests of its ruling (and largely aristocratic) class. These objectives, outlined in *The Prince*, involved a maximum extension of the territory and power of the state at the expense of rivals. Diplomacy, balance of power, and war were the means to power. The question of morality in international politics, at least in the sense of moral rules which restrained states in their mutual relations, either did not arise or was effectively subordinated to the competitive struggle for power.

**European Political Theory and the Rise of Raison D'État**

By what standards or criteria can *raison d'état* be interpreted or justified as a theory of international politics? Is it possible to specifically identify the intellectual origins of *raison d'état* in the long history of European statecraft? As a theory or explanation of relations among independent states, how can *raison d'état* be distinguished from the emphasis of traditional political philosophy on the primordial fact of man's membership and obligations within separate states? Finally, what are the implications deriving from *raison d'état* for such fundamental topics in international thought as the nature and structure of international society, the relationship
between human nature and state conduct, the role of power and diplomacy, the nature and conduct of war, and viable ethical guidelines above the state itself?

At the outset, it is important to address briefly the development and possibility of theory in international relations. Perhaps the prevailing view concerning the scope of theory is that the field is beleaguered by a plethora of theoretical approaches, models, and rival conceptual frameworks—that it is "in as much a state of change, chaos, and confusion as the contemporary world scene which it strives to comprehend"—and that theorizing about international relations is of only "fairly recent origin." Martin Wight suggests that if international relations theory "means a tradition of systematic investigation about relations between states, a tradition imagined as the twin of speculation about the state to which the name political theory is appropriated, it can hardly be said to exist at all."

Wight's observation, perhaps expressing a consensus among contemporary observers of international politics, provides an initial platform by which to assess the consequences of political theory above the nation state.

Wight's comment posits a basic distinction between political theory and international theory. The former represents speculation about the state; the latter seems to constitute "either the methodology of the study of
international relations, or some conceptual system which purports to offer a unified explanation of international phenomena. Even if international theory is on a less rigorous plane, construed as philosophical or historical description of particular events and diplomatic practices, it remains true that many of the older theoretical treatments are not easily accessible because they are scattered over the writings of highly diverse authors.

Prior to the twentieth century, for example, speculation focusing on the society of states was largely confined to international law and such other sources as: (1) theorists who foreshadowed the League of Nations, such as Erasmus, William Penn, and the Abbe de St. Pierre; (2) Machiavellians and defenders of raison d'état, such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Meinecke, and E.H. Carr; (3) philosophers and historians who examined basic problems of international politics, as in David Hume's "The Balance of Power," Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "Project of Perpetual Peace," Jeremy Bentham's "Plan for an Universal Peace," Edmund Burke's "Thoughts on French Affairs," Leopold von Ranke's essay on the great powers, and J.S. Mill's essay on the law of nations; and (4) speeches, dispatches, memoirs, and essays of statesmen, such as George Canning's classic dispatch of 1823 on the doctrine of guarantees, Bismarck's Gedanken und Erinnerungen, and Lord Salisbury's early essays on foreign affairs in the Quarterly Review.
The often diverse and ambiguous expression of political theory above the nation state can be explained in some measure by a number of assumptions which reinforce the gulf between political theory and international politics. The starting point for the majority of political theorists and philosophers has been the question of man and human nature. Plato's often-quoted phrase that a polis is man written large provides a general principle for the interpretation of society. Eric Voegelin points out that "as a general principle it means that in its order every society reflects the type of men of whom it is composed." Whenever the theorist wants to understand a political society, it will be one of his first tasks, if not the very first, to ascertain the human type which expresses itself in the order of the concrete society. While the typical starting point for the theorist is man, the question of human nature does lead to an inquiry into men who live in association with others under government. In short, the political theorist frequently is led to develop a theory of politics and the state, as well as to explain the terms of man's membership in the state.

Does man live in one state or many? Although several theorists and philosophers have raised the question of a truly global community free of parochial and self-interested nation states, few thinkers have wavered from the conclusion that man lives and will always live in
differentiated political and social structures. While political theorists are apt to begin their work with an inquiry into human nature, they do not begin with mankind as a basis for distinguishing between the reason and unreason of the separate states into which he is divided.¹

The assumption of man's membership in separate states poses the fundamental dilemma for any political theory of interstate relations. If human nature and potential are fully actualized in the polity or state, what can there be for the theorist to say about international relations? Gerhart Niemeyer identifies the source of the problem by suggesting:

Foreign policy lacks the direct reference to human nature, since it deals not with the relation between the particular man as citizen and the community of citizens as a whole, but rather relations between wholes who are not "natural" substances in the way each individual person is, and who have no center of normative experiences resembling the human soul.¹⁷

Niemeyer's cogent observation indicates that the duties of the statesman cannot be reduced to the citizens' good life, but rather operate to insure "the continued existence of an artifacted whole neither the size, nor the configuration, nor the duration of which are given, as it were, by nature."¹⁷ On what basis and with what justification (theoretical or not) did European political theorists and statesmen reflect on the normative criteria that govern diplomatic conduct in a world of co-sovereign nation states?

While the older theoretical treatments of international
politics are often "unsystematic" and "highly dispersed," it is possible to ascertain a reasonable degree of coherence in matters of both preliminary philosophical assumptions and conceptual definition. Recognizing that the development of international political theory continues to stimulate profound disagreement among contemporary scholars, it will illuminate our subject to view the growth of classical international theory in terms of the general developmental pattern of scientific disciplines as outlined by Thomas S. Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.17

Arend Lijphart argued that continental thinking about interstate relations was, in fact, governed by what Kuhn calls a "paradigm," and this paradigm remained the basis of a research tradition that dominated the field until the 1950s.20 Kuhn identified science as a communal activity, carried on by a community of scholars who share a common set of assumptions about the nature of their subject matter.21 These assumptions and beliefs constitute a paradigm within which normal scientific activity is conducted. A paradigm represents an accepted approach, model, or theory which constitutes the foundation for the cumulative growth of scientific knowledge.

While Kuhn's concept of a paradigm frequently yields diverse interpretations in the philosophy of science literature,22 the term is applicable to traditional patterns of theorizing about international relations.23
more global and philosophical sense (i.e., comprehensive ways of looking at the subject matter, or "worldviews") that European theorizing about international relations meets the criteria of paradigmatic thinking, as identified by Kuhn. According to Kuhn, a philosophical paradigm is both wider than and prior to theory.24 It is what Michael Polanyi calls a "heuristic vision" that leads to the formulation of theory.25 By drawing on Kuhn's contribution, it will be useful to approach the question of "theory" in the classical mold by shifting the intellectual focus to account for the philosophical worldview that influences not only the identification of a reality between separate states but the adumbration of key concepts which illumine the nature and type of relations between separate states. While the full development of European thought on interstate relations over the last four-hundred years often displays considerable diversity in subject matter and method, it is possible to identify salient paradigmatic attributes that impart a modicum of coherence to continental theory. Peter Savigear argued that the theory of the state in Europe from its beginnings in the High Renaissance spawned a theory of international relations.26 In particular, early continental theorizing focused upon two features of the political landscape: the constitution (or nature) of the state and the dilemma of ethical guideposts imposing some minimal level of order in relations among states.27
Arnold Wolfers pointed out that the main question for the continental theorists was whether statesmen and nations were under any moral obligation to resist these compelling demands of state necessity. The underlying tension between the unavoidable demands of state interests and the application of ethical desiderata in foreign policy rests on a number of presuppositions associated with a Machiavellian worldview of international politics. It should be acknowledged that many European theorists who were proponents of *raison d'état* often disagreed about the scope and method of their theoretical examination of phenomena within the nation state; however, on the question of the structure of international society and the justification of state conduct, they viewed a number of principal attributes as integral to the development of *raison d'état* as the basis for a theory of international politics.

First, advocates of *raison d'état* have generally emphasized the inevitable expression of individual self-interest and the lust for power at all levels of human existence. Violence, coercion, and countervailing power are the principal means by which the state must protect the integrity of its political life and defend its security against external threats and subversion. From the vantage point of morality, the state is under no ethical obligation other than the expedient observance of its own interest. From Machiavelli to Bismarck, *raison d'état* has been
characterized by the tendency to sharply differentiate between the moral inclinations of the solitary individual and the immoral nature of political society both within and above the state.

Second, the state itself represents a moral force. The state did not simply exist as a set of institutions, but made a claim on the loyalty and service of its citizens and, as such, took on a moral quality which demanded priority and obedience. Machiavelli was one of the strongest advocates of this position in urging that the statesman's duty was to the political entity and its security, and not to any other moral code. The distinction between the public and private realms of ethical behavior became a central premise for those thinkers who assumed that preserving the integrity and sovereignty of the state was a necessary objective of international politics. The assumption that the public realm acquired a rightful authority which superseded private conscience led many theorists to assign primacy to the external strength of the state and adopt a more expedient view by which political actions would be evaluated.

Third, the international environment exists and has structure. In terms of the structure of the international arena, a number of thinkers argued that the state was not defined exclusively by its internal ordering or territorial domain, but also by an understanding of the interests of other states. The ruler was obliged by the external
circumstances of the state\textsuperscript{32} to formulate policy objectives by reference to the interstate environment. However, the interrelatedness and reciprocity of states was largely restricted to the norms of military capability and the successful defense of state sovereignty. International thought based on \textit{raison d'\'etat} portrayed international society as merely the sum of its individual (i.e., state) parts and bereft of moral certainties transcending conflicting and competitive national goals. The task for the theorist of international politics was to provide some justification for the possibility of orderly political relations among states in an anarchic global setting where:

Kings and Persons of Soveraigene authority, because of their Independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their Forts, Garrisons and Guns, upon the Frontiers of their Kingdoms; and continual Spyes upon their neighbors; which is a posture of war.\textsuperscript{33}

Fourth, among the ideas integral to \textit{raison d'\'etat}--by many criteria, perhaps its pivotal idea--is the concept of power.\textsuperscript{34} It is from an understanding of the nature and role of power in political life that collateral concepts like balance of power, national interest, and diplomacy are largely derived.\textsuperscript{35} From the standpoint of many continental theorists, power politics as applied to relations among sovereign states constitutes a theory of survival by which statesmen seek freedom, security, prosperity, or even power itself. Whenever states strive to realize such goals by
means of international politics, they do so by a striving for power.

Fifth, an important corollary to the idea that international politics is best described as a struggle for power and state security is the idea that statesmen may define diplomatic ends in terms of religious, philosophic, economic, or social objectives. Ideological criteria and other normative sources, however, tend to disguise and distort the universal urge to power. Moral and ethical pronouncements can play a positive role in foreign policy only insofar as they function to legitimize successful policy initiatives and "keep aspirations for power within socially tolerable bounds."

Sixth, while proponents of raison d'État were less than sanguine about the prospects of an authentic international community based on a harmony of values and interests, several thinkers turned their attention to the formulation of rules and norms consistent with the possibility of a minimum level of orderly relations among states. The recognition of any rudimentary form of order among constituent states was predicated upon the preservation of state sovereignty (in addition to facilitating a wide margin of maneuverability in diplomatic strategy). In brief, the problem of order in international politics presented continental theorists with the challenge of defending both the source and nature of viable standards
of state conduct in a world that exhibited the indivisibility of peace and war. Moreover, how could the continental theorist reconcile the elaboration of any such ethical norms at the international level with a view of global politics as essentially anarchic?

Both structural and procedural attributes identified as contributing to the maintenance of orderly interaction among states were subsumed under such principles as diplomacy and balance of power. While it must be admitted that both concepts have been invoked by competing theoretical approaches to the study of international politics, it can safely be asserted that the continental tradition of raison d'État provided a distinguished historical legacy by which they were initially formulated and adapted to the emergence of the modern European state system. More importantly, both the means and ends of diplomacy, as well as the operation of the balance of power, offered a conceptual basis by which European statesmen and thinkers attempted to build a coherent worldview of a European system of state relations that acknowledged the interrelatedness of states based on the pursuit of interest and the recognition of the interests of others.

In sum, international theory grounded in raison d'État built upon philosophical assumptions about human nature and political reality. Moreover, these assumptions provided the justification for principles and concepts which functioned
as both a description of the international milieu as well as a prescription for foreign policy conduct. At this juncture, it will be useful to introduce a central paradox in classical raison d'État that is exhibited by several thinkers evaluated in this study. On the one hand, continental theorists clearly relied on ethical and political norms for the investigation of international phenomena. For example, the preoccupation with national self-interest grew out of the value placed on the existence of sovereign states. Similarly, emphasis on diplomacy and the balance of power reflected a concern for the sources of order and stability in an anarchic world. On the other hand, proponents of raison d'État distinguish between the private realm of ethical discourse affecting the individual and the morally-neutral obligations incumbent on the statesman in the defense of state interests.

The emergence of such a paradox in international theorizing raises a number of significant questions. Have expositors of raison d'État clearly and convincingly demonstrated the importance of political philosophy (or ethics) for the theory and practice of international politics? If such a justification can be found, does it find consistent support and interpretation from theorists of different historical periods? What is the exact nature of the relationship between philosophical thinking about ethical criteria applying to man's membership in the state
and the nature and functions of norms of interstate behavior?

The section which follows will examine several of the more prominent political thinkers who have drawn on the key assumptions and precepts of raison d'État in an effort to theorize about relations among sovereign states. An attempt will be made to give brief attention to the intellectual heritage of raison d'État in the history of Western political philosophy (e.g., Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes) as well as its culmination in the statesmanship of Realpolitik associated with the classical era of European diplomacy since the Peace of Westphalia (e.g., Richelieu and Bismarck).

European Philosophers and Statesmen: An Inquiry into a Theory of International Politics

Thucydides: While a philosophy of raison d'État has typically been associated with a description and explanation of conditions of multiple sovereignty since the period of the European Renaissance, its central assumptions and concepts received thoughtful attention by Thucydides (fifth century B.C.) in the History of the Peloponnesian War. Indeed, few surveys of the development of international political theory fail to assign his contribution a prominent position among other intellectual precursors of more modern political realism. Thucydides' History not only aimed at making future readers understand a singular event but also
at describing generally the necessary logic of a certain kind of human behavior. His basic ambition was to illustrate how the combination of human nature, a certain structure of power, and the specific properties of rival states create an inescapable logic characteristic of world politics. A leading student of the period has written:

He was writing, he said, for the guidance of men of all times and in all places, on the assumption that recurrent elements were present in varying historical circumstances. This assumption was based on the conviction that man has a nature.

The History illustrates a number of general principles that have continuing relevance for contemporary international political theory. A cursory inventory of topics encompassed by Thucydides' analysis include: the relationship between force and consent, the distinction between coalition and dominion, the nature of leadership, the effect of means upon ends, and the contrasting implications of land and sea power. Our interest will be confined to Thucydides' understanding of how such seminal themes for raison d'état as human nature, the interest of the political community, and power cohere to form a theoretical worldview or explanation of international politics.

Although the work of Thucydides can be profitably read as a treatise on war (its causes and effects), it ultimately belongs to the category of tragic drama. Throughout, there is a sense of destiny and the helplessness of men to
save themselves from disaster. The downfall of Athens was attributed, in no small part, to a deterioration in human character in the toils of war. Thucydides' observations on human nature became explicit in his chronicle on the moral demise of Athenian statesmanship after the death of Pericles. In one of his most famous and often-quoted passages, Thucydides spoke directly about the eclipse of political morality under the strain of war:

In peace and prosperity states and individuals are governed by higher ideals because they are not involved in necessities beyond their control, but war deprives them of their easy existence...and brings most men's dispositions down to the level of their circumstances. So civil war broke out in the cities, and the later revolutionaries...derived new ideas which went far beyond earlier ones, so elaborate were their enterprises, so novel their revenges....The cause of all these evils was love of power due to ambition and greed, which led to the rivalries from which party spirit sprung.

The tragedy of Athens, as Thucydides saw it, lay in its inability to live up to the moral standards and responsibility that had resulted from her own moral excellence.

The demoralization of Athenian political life and the increasing demagogy called into question the role played by human nature in the course of historical events and suggests the importance of differentiating between the impact of human and environmental factors. In assessing the force of human nature vis-à-vis external determinants of the origin and conduct of the war, Thucydides turned his attention to
two sources: the political necessities inherent in the circumstances which man can neither harness nor evade, and man's ambitious and passionate nature which prevents him from exercising rational choices. Of major importance in Thucydides' examination of the inexorable force of environmental factors which shape state conduct was the distribution of power among Greek states and its impact on the interest of the nation. Thucydides' diagnosis of the causes of the war received striking formulation in Book 1:

The real cause I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable.

It is possible, from Thucydides' account of the Hellenic world (the Archaeology) and the creation of the Athenian empire (the Fifty Years), to understand his conception of power, how it operates, and its relation to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. Briefly, power encompasses a number of important variables, including cumulative material resources (e.g., capital combined with military-naval strength, national character, and leadership potential). The process of civilization is also a process of the growth of power. Moreover, power operates in a world of states much like a physical law; it expands until checked or balanced by countervailing power. Once checked, as Athenian power was, it dissipates and the entire historical process toward higher organization and effective use of technological resources begins anew. In Thucydides' words:
The object of interest for the nation is its historical development is *dynamis*, power, and this means dominion over others. Fear and greed are the dominating motives on the road to imperialism, and there is no turning back. Power becomes an amoral force that will grow until resisted by opposing power, and its very growth promotes conflict and opposition. Indeed, Thucydides' statement that "identity of interests is the surest of bonds whether between states or individuals" simply affirms a key assumption associated with a philosophy of *raison d'état*: the idea of interest (defined in terms of power) is an objective category and the very essence of politics.

In summation, Thucydides' treatment of the Peloponnesian War represents a conscious effort to articulate theoretically the dynamics of international politics as they might be identified in the intense struggle between Athens and Sparta. Thucydides introduced a number of insights and principles which form the core of a philosophy of *raison d'état* and were subsequently applied to the European system of states by continental theorists.

First, he called attention to the fact that the structure of the international system and the power relations between states are primary factors in individual state behavior. Second, his identification of system structure and the relations of power was based on a vision of human nature which reminds the reader of the tragic ambiguity of life and the irrational inclination toward
hubris (pride) which tempts the powerful to grandiose or arrogant policies. Third, he pointed to the gulf that separates the possibility of dike (justice) and moral obligation in the polity and the type of political morality which guides the statesman in the quest for successful policy. To understand such an apparent inconsistency, Thucydides argued that the statesman must be prepared to act in accordance with certain necessities which are not of his making, even if such actions do not conform to generally accepted moral standards.

Thucydides bequeathed to Western civilization one of the earliest and most original efforts to theorize about relations between states in terms of both recurrent and universal categories (e.g., human nature, politics, power, interest). However, the scope of his theoretical inquiry was circumscribed by two elemental factors: the specific configuration of rival city states on the Greek peninsula in the fifth century B.C., and the absence of any explicit formula or criteria by which to differentiate the ad hoc assemblage of ethical prescriptions from empirical generalizations. While more modern European thinkers in the tradition of raison d'état (and American "realists") acknowledge a normative or philosophical component in their theorizing, the vital nexus remains obscure and ambiguous in Thucydides' treatise.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527): The Renaissance marked the
decline of a comprehensive theocracy which had governed the feudal structure of international society. The appearance of a system of independent states in Italy as well as a diminution in the status of the pope to prince contributed to Machiavelli's formulation of a "new morality" prevailing in the relations among sovereign states. Although Machiavelli was still far from having succeeded in elaborating a comprehensive conception of the new type of international relations which would characterize Europe just two centuries after his death, he was among the first to treat the study of international politics as a purely technical affair.

It was not until the period of the Italian Renaissance at the close of the fifteenth century that Machiavelli provided a somewhat more systematic and far-reaching theory of the modern state and the emerging interstate system. The elaboration of raison d'état (or razón de estado) as a unifying theme for Machiavelli's understanding of state relations was heavily influenced by several important biographical and historical developments. As a secretary and diplomat of the Florentine Republic until 1512, Machiavelli observed the French and Spanish invasions which overtook Italy after 1494 and led to the decline of Neopolitan and Milanese independence, the change of government in Florence, and the collective impact of foreign powers on the entire Apennine peninsula. While
Machiavelli's diplomatic and foreign policy background endowed him with a working knowledge of Italian statecraft. It was not until the restoration of the Medicis in Florence (1512) that he was prompted to develop and express his own thoughts concerning the origin and nature of state behavior.

As a member of the party which had been overthrown, Machiavelli sought to reestablish himself by seeking the favor of the Medici rulers. A conflict thus developed between Machiavelli's own political and egocentric objectives, and the ideas of republican freedom he had long acknowledged. It was against such a political background that Machiavelli reflected on the relations between republic and monarchy, as well as the new national mission of monarchy on the Italian peninsula. In the words of one historical scholar:

It was in a context of all this that the whole essence of *raison d'état*, compounded of mingled ingredients both pure and impure, both lofty and hateful, achieved a ruthless expression. He had reached his fortieth year—the age at which productive scientific minds often gave of their best—when after 1513 he wrote the little book on the prince and the *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*.

In addition, Machiavelli's work was brought into being by an extraordinary conjunction of events: the coinciding of a political collapse with a spiritual and intellectual renaissance. He wrote at a time when the personal loyalties of the feudal age were disappearing, when the moral
restraints of the Middle Ages were felt less keenly, and when Italy was ruled by a number of petty tyrants. In studying the formation and background of Machiavelli's *Prince*, one contemporary political philosopher has written:

The mediaeval Christianitas was falling apart into the Church and the national states....The disintegration of the Christianitas affected both the spiritual and temporal orders insofar as in both spheres the common spirit, inducing effective cooperation between persons in spite of divergence of interests as well as the sense of an obligation to compromise in the spirit of the whole, was seeping out.*9*

The focus of attention had shifted from God to man, with the consequence that increasing attention was given to temporal security over eternal salvation.** Displacing God, man became the center of the universe; the values of this new solar system was inevitably different from those of the God-created universe.*10*

Machiavelli's passionate interest was the state, the analysis and computation of its different forms, functions, and conditions for existence.*11* Indeed, it was in Machiavelli's analysis of the new secular state (divorced from ecclesiastical considerations) that the specifically rational, empirical, and calculating element in Italian Renaissance culture reached its peak in Machiavelli's thought. He was interested in the state as a self-sufficient entity in continual contact with other states and, therefore, in need of power. His contribution to raison d'état can, in no small part, be understood as an
urgent plea to the princes for a new conception of politics in general, both at home and abroad. An attempt to distill the core attributes of Machiavellian *raison d'état* must acknowledge a sense of limitation at the outset. Meinecke pointed out:

Machiavelli had not yet compressed his thoughts on *raison d'état* into a single slogan. Fond as he was of forceful and meaningful catch-words, he did not always feel the need to express in words the supreme ideas which filled him.... Critics have noticed that he fails to express any opinion about the final real purpose of the State, and they have mistakenly deduced from this that he did not reflect on the subject. But...his whole life was bound up with a definite supreme purpose of the State. And in the same way his whole political way of thought is nothing but a continual process of thinking about *raison d'état*.

For our purposes, three basic themes of *raison d'état* were especially important in Machiavellian thought.

Machiavelli's preoccupation with such principles as *virtù*, *fortuna*, and *necessita* sum up the demands he made of the state in terms of power politics. Consideration of these recurrent themes and their interrelation will also highlight many of the fundamental problems and topics (e.g., human nature, power, interest, morality) integral to the historical development of *raison d'état*.

Machiavelli's deliberations on the meaning of *virtù* (or manly strength) has its origin in the effort to restore the sources of order for both individual and social existence as a result of the political humiliation inflicted by foreign powers on the Italian peninsula. Foremost among
Machiavelli's objectives was to see Italy united in a condition of peace and security. The virtù of the conquering prince became the source of order; the political instability represented a challenge to a ruler of semi-divine, heroic qualities to eject the barbarians, to restore the order of Italy through his virtù that would overcome the adverse fortuna.**

Although the concept of virtù was taken over from antiquity and humanism by Machiavelli's era, it represented something of a new naturalistic ethic* that denoted qualities of heroic political and military achievements, as well as the strength for the founding and preservation of states.** Indeed, the development of virtù by the prince was proclaimed by Machiavelli as the ideal and self-evident purpose of the state. Equally important was the connection Machiavelli made between virtù and monarchy. Perceiving the incurable corruption of republican rule, Machiavelli argued that the creative virtù of one individual should take the state in hand and revive it. Devoted to securing the authority of the Medicis, the Prince featured advice on the prerequisites of diplomatic success within the set of novel circumstances that had arisen in Renaissance Italy.

Before turning to the principal manifestations of princely rule, brief attention must be given to a serious problematic element in the whole character of raison d'état. This dilemma concerns the conflict between the
ethical sphere of virtù (and the state animated by virtù) and the old sphere of morality and religion, represented by the Christian transcendental order. From Machiavelli’s perspective, religion and morality were seen as indispensable in the influence they exerted towards maintaining the state. However, by this formulation, Christian ethics and morality became nothing but means toward the goal of the state animated by virtù. Insofar as the higher realm of virtù constituted the vital source of the state (vivere politico), it could be permitted to encroach on the moral world to achieve its ends.

Reference must also be made to the concepts of fortuna (fortune or fate) and necessita (necessity) and how they influenced Machiavelli’s reflections on the requirements of state conduct. While Machiavelli viewed the unification of Italy as a present possibility, he was quick to acknowledge the role of fortune (fortuna) in human affairs. The drama of human existence achieves meaning by the dialectical interplay between the creative genius of the individual (virtù) and the unsuspected revolutions of fate.

Because, where men have little ability, Fortune shows her power much, and because she is variable, republics and states often vary, and vary they always will until someone arrives who is so great a lover of antiquity that he will rule fortune in such a way that she will not have cause to show in every revolution of the sun how much she can do.

Machiavelli concludes that fortune can be an ally or adversary, depending on the circumstances. The true task of
virtù is, therefore, the ability to suppress fortuna.
Because fortuna is often malicious, so virtù must also be malicious when there is no other available option. That a man of virtù can conquer the vicissitudes of fate expresses the inner spiritual core of Machiavellianism and supplies an essential presupposition of raison d'état: the doctrine that, in national behavior, even immoral methods are sanctioned in the heroic defense and preservation of the state.

The triumph of virtù over fortuna was largely contingent on the intervening force of necessità (necessity) in human conduct. It is important to note that Machiavelli traced the origin of morality back to the idea of "necessity." In the Discourses, he suggests that men will never do anything good, unless they are driven to it by some necessity. Machiavelli's conception of raison d'état was both amoral in essence and originated in ineluctable necessity. The state was a necessity; power was necessary to the state; and in order to secure power it was sometimes necessary to violate the laws of decency and morality.

Although religion, law, and morality were considered indispensable for the state's existence, the requirements of necessità sometimes compelled the statesman to set these aside whenever the need for national self-preservation required it. Machiavelli pointed out that, for the purpose of maintaining the state, a prince "is often obliged
(necessitato) to act without loyalty, without mercy, without humanity, and without religion." However, he does not offer dispensations for all human sins. Only the stern necessities of the state—not personal caprice, nor any other personal consideration—justified doing evil. In summation, the struggle between virtù and fortuna, and the theory of necessità, worked together to legitimize the prince in the discriminating use of immoral methods.

While ostensibly preoccupied with the need to bring unity out of the anarchy of Italy, Machiavelli's adaptation of power politics to a community of sovereign states yields a number of key principles for the study of world politics. Machiavelli identified two key elements which would shape continental theory about state relations for the next four-hundred years: the state is a moral force and the international world exists and has structure. The Italian state system created its own patterns and demands that transformed the interest of the state by reference to the interstate environment. To illustrate this contention, Machiavelli refers to the analogous experience of Rome: "It was Rome's neighbors who in their desire to crush her, caused her to set up institutions which not only enabled her to defend herself but also to attack them with greater force, counsel and authority." In short, the state was not defined simply by internal factors but also by the interests and objectives of other states.
Concomitant with the idea of the interrelatedness of states was the elevation of the state to the level of a new moral force in world politics. Taking primacy over older political forms like the guilds and feudatories, the state was viewed as a moral entity which demanded the sacrifice and service of its citizens and could be defended against competing moral claims. Indeed, Machiavelli's concept of necessita (a central theme in raison d'état) was based on the idea that the ruler's primary duty was to protect and defend the sovereignty of the state. The morality and raison d'état derived from the ethical imperative of national survival and state security.

Machiavelli's discussion of the state as a moral entity has direct relevance for the ethics of statesmanship. The axioms and principles of statecraft presented in The Prince and the Discourses were intended to apply to the intercourse of states as much as to internal politics. In elaborating on the requirements of successful political actions, Machiavelli reaches the conclusion that a ruler is often obliged to ignore considerations of religion and ethics (perhaps applicable to private relationships) and employ force and fraud where needed. Though Machiavelli never praises immorality for its own sake or denies the existence of values in this world, his writing affirms that in the situation of the statesman the rules of power have priority over those of ethics and morality. In fact, power becomes
an end in itself, and he confines his inquiry into the means that are best suited for acquiring, retaining, and expanding power.\(^7\) In political relationships, morals are not to enter at all: the only question that need trouble a prince is whether the means he employs--and if necessary they might include assassination--are best adapted to the great end, the preservation or advancement of the state.\(^7\)

Of equal importance to the study of international politics are the implications deriving from Machiavelli's assessment of human nature. Though one can find some evidence of a fragile optimism in the ability of institutions to channel human ambitions for public good, in the main, he seems to subscribe to the notion that "men are ungrateful, inconstant, deceitful...greedy and avaricious."\(^7\) That the prince must be as ferocious as the lion and as cunning as the fox is a reflection of Machiavelli's belief that history proves the most successful rulers to be those who do not scruple to break their pledges. Since most men are wicked and faithless, Machiavelli sanctions the sovereign's breach of treaty where fidelity to such an agreement would turn to the disadvantage of one who signed it.\(^8\) Pope Alexander VI's success in extending his power throughout Italy, Machiavelli explained, was due to the fact that he was a past master of this stratagem.\(^8\)

Unlike many of the later proponents of raison d'état in
European politics, Machiavelli was both ambivalent and critical about the balance of power system. The ineffectiveness of the balance of power in the Italy of his day for creating unity against foreign aggression from the outside discredited the concept in his eyes. Prior to the invasion of Charles VIII of France, power was distributed among the Holy See, the Venetian Republic, the Kingdom of Naples, the Duchy of Milan, and the Florentines. While the greatest of the five powers was Venice and Rome, it took an alliance of the other four to hold Venice in check. Rome was held at bay by fomenting discord among the Orsini and Colonna factions. Machiavelli admitted that this sort of arrangement was sound policy in the days when the balance of power was fairly stable in Italy, but he thought it would be mistaken in his own day.

In addition, Machiavelli was critical of alliances, the working combination of states within the balance of power system. The chaos into which Italy had fallen, he thought, was largely due to the use of disloyal mercenary and allied troops. Instead, Machiavelli advocated a policy of military self-reliance. He cited the case of Caesar Borgia who began with allied troops, turned to mercenaries, and ended with his own forces. At the same time, he argued that no ruler can simply afford to ignore the workings of the balance of power system. For example, Machiavelli thought that the ruler was ill-advised to remain neutral in a
conflict between two nearby powers, for he would lose no matter which side should win, whereas he could only lose one way if he were committed. In short, the prudent prince was one who is able to develop his own military arsenal and rely on it alone and never, unless compelled by necessity, on the power of allies.

In conclusion, it must be noted that Machiavelli's desire that Italy attain unity and freedom from foreign interference did not entail a state organized for peace rather than conquest. The Greek ideal of the small state free from preoccupation with external affairs, absorbing its energies within itself, was not practical. He learned from Polybius that nothing is permanent in human affairs and that the fortunes of every state are repeated in a cycle of rise and fall. If organized only to live, with no thought of foreign conquest, necessity may nevertheless drive them to pursue conquest. With regard to international politics, Machiavelli assumed that there is a necessary and natural hostility among states and that the advancement of the interests of one must necessarily be at the expense of the other. Abandoning good faith as an essential requirement for public intercourse, and elevating raison d'état above all other considerations, Machiavelli rejected the possibility of any moral premises uniting the larger community of sovereign states.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679): Before turning to the more
direct impact of Machiavellianism and *raison d’État* on European politics and statemanship following the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), brief attention will be devoted to how the work of the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, supplies a number of interesting variations on the theme of *raison d’État* in world politics. While the political thought of Hobbes has often been cited as an "adaptation" or even "departure" from the thrust of Machiavelli’s analysis, several reasons can be offered to justify his inclusion within the scope of this study.

In particular, the philosophy of Hobbes provides an early and interesting example of how specific attributes of *raison d’État* impact on the Anglo-American tradition of theorizing about international politics. Moreover, such an investigation reveals how certain principles associated with *raison d’État* from the horizon of continental theorists have been revised and recast, according to alternative philosophical criteria. Finally, the tendency to associate postwar American "realists" with either a Hobbesian or Machiavellian worldview of global affairs can be better understood by including Hobbes as a representative disciple of *raison d’État* in state behavior.

That the name of Hobbes is frequently employed by contemporary observers to characterize a particular vision of international politics is subject, however, to some qualification. Indeed, Hobbes constitutes no exception to
the general truth that may be stated about many of the
greatest thinkers of the past: few ever devoted themselves
primarily to the study of the subject. The historical
drama in relation to which Hobbes' ideas take much of their
relevance was, after all, not an international but an
internal civil conflict. Aside from the more general
objective of providing a scientific basis for moral and
political philosophy, his thought seeks to contribute to the
establishment of civic peace and amity and to the disposing
of mankind toward fulfilling its civic duties. The
priority that Hobbes assigns to the pursuit of domestic or
internal peace over international concord appears to reflect
his belief that internal strife is more terrible than strife
among states.

At the same time, a variety of historical and
intellectual factors led Hobbes also to reflect on
international and interstate conflict. Born in 1588—the
year of the Spanish Armada—Hobbes lived through the
struggles of the Hapsburg ascendancy, the last phase of the
European wars of religion, and the early phase of the wars
for naval and mercantile predominance. As a youth he was
introduced to the subject by his readings of Thucydides'
History of the Peloponnesian War, Francis Bacon's essay on
The True Greatness of Kingdoms, and John Selden's Mare
Clausum. More significantly, in Hobbes' time, civil
conflicts and interstate conflicts were clearly bound
Civil wars brought opportunities for foreign intervention, and religious loyalties linked parties across state boundaries. In his account of the history of the English Civil War (Behemoth), Hobbes attempted to show that conflicts within states are often determined by relations among them. In fact, the institution of Commonwealth can be justified by reference to its capacity to insure internal security as well as its ability to effectively resist foreign intrusions.

In terms of his contribution to world politics, Hobbes seeks to account for the logic of relations between independent powers that find themselves in a situation of anarchy. Both descriptive and prescriptive criteria structured the direction of his inquiry. On the one hand, Hobbes explains why and how these powers do and must confront one another under the imperatives of international anarchy; on the other hand, he suggests what they should and sometimes can do to insure a modicum of security even while remaining in this condition. Hobbes' view of international anarchy is premised on the idea of a "state of nature" that functions both as a description for the life of individual men as well as the condition of states in relation to one another. In a state of nature, prior to the establishment of civil society, man is at war with man seeking to justify his own desires, to keep what he has or to preserve his reputation. In such a condition, men
live in "continual fear" and in "danger of violent death," the "life of man being solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." In this war of every man against every man, it is not until men enter into civil society that justice is possible for "where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice."

While Hobbes' understanding of human nature laid the foundation for his contract theory and defense of absolutism, it also contributed to his rather fatalistic view concerning world politics. The life of individual men in the state of nature may be interpreted as a description of the existence of states in relation to one another. Nations like individuals, before the latter are coerced by a supreme authority, exist within a state of nature, which is a state of war. At the same time, however, Hobbes stops just short of suggesting that all international politics is characterized by recurrent and unending warfare. The situation is not one of war, but of a "posture of war." The very vigilance of the state is itself a modification of a world of total chaos and implies, in however rudimentary form, some degree of order in the world of states.

It is a feature of a condition of war that "the notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place." Where there is no common power to enforce compliance with legal requirements, force and fraud become the virtues by which the statesman acts to preserve the
security of the state. The conception of international law, which Hugo Grotius had established as offering a limitation to conflict among nations, was refuted by Hobbes with the following remark:

Concerning the offices of one sovereign to another, which are comprehended in that law, which is commonly called the law of nations, I need not say anything in this place, because the law of nations, and the law of Nature, is the same thing. And every sovereign hath the same right, in procuring the safety of his peoples, that any particular man can have in procuring the safety of his own body.\textsuperscript{101}

It is Hobbes' conception of the natural right of states to take all appropriate actions to ensure their own survival that links him to the continental tradition of \textit{raison d'état}. In asserting the ultimate freedom of states from moral fetters, at least where the objective of self-preservation is concerned, and in his willingness to allow whatever measures are rationally judged necessary to achieve this objective, Hobbes stands within the broad tradition of Machiavellianism.\textsuperscript{102} It is well to remember that only the internal affairs of states, according to Hobbes, are susceptible to rational pacification by means of setting up an all-powerful Leviathan capable of restoring order and tranquility in the commonwealth. In the absence of a supranational Leviathan with the power to transform the international state of nature (\textit{bellum omnium contra omnes}), Hobbes' doctrine of natural right performs the function of hallowing self-interest.\textsuperscript{103}
Yet it is also possible to point to a number of important differences between Machiavelli and Hobbes concerning the core assumptions of *raison d'État*. At the outset, it is questionable to what extent Hobbes subscribed to Machiavelli’s understanding of the state as a living personality, which had a value of its own and which possessed, in *raison d'État*, a law governing the ongoing process of its own perfection. For Hobbes, the personality of the state is reduced to an artificial authority created by individual acts of will and embodied in an Absolute Sovereign Will. In other words, the sovereign becomes an artificial person who represents "the words and actions of another." In return for obedience and the surrender of their natural right to unlimited self-defense (a precondition for civil society), the subjects may expect a sovereign to establish a milieu in which they can pursue felicity in reasonable tranquility. The sovereign’s task is not to repress men, but to help create those conditions under which they can express their individuality.

While Hobbes' *Leviathan* is often considered the climax of the absolutist conception of the state and *raison d'État*, it does not celebrate absolutism for the sake of the idea itself. A completely individualistic and utilitarian spirit pervades everything that he has to say about the final purposes of the state. It is precisely this attribute of Hobbes' political philosophy which sets him apart from
Machiavellian *raison d'État*. While Hobbes' mechanically-contrived state may call for blind obedience from its citizens for the sake of public order and individual well-being, it cannot require from them that devotion founded on faith and attachment to the truly and living personal state.10

Two examples may be briefly cited to illustrate how Hobbes' mechanistic conception of the state differs from the virtù republic of Machiavelli. First, unlike Machiavelli, Hobbes argued that a citizen who has been taken captive by an enemy country is justified in saving his life by becoming an enemy subject. Second, Hobbes suggested that a citizen can ask to be released from military service to the state as long as one can find a substitute.10

At the same time, Hobbes supplied a new intellectual justification by which to assess and affirm the role of *raison d'État* in relations among sovereign states. Hobbes' fatalistic equation of the international state of nature with a condition of anarchy contains an important qualification, relating to what Hobbes perceived as a fundamental tension between morality and power in foreign policy. In foreign politics, all the power measures and underhanded tricks of Machiavellianism are possible, because the participants are bound by no contract and cannot be sure that the laws of nature will be observed.10

However, Hobbes was not prepared to divorce himself
totally from the tradition of natural law as the necessary ethical basis for interstate relations. According to Hobbes, peace was impossible unless such laws of nature were observed. It followed that:

the same law, that dictateth to men that have no civil government, what they ought to do, and what to avoid in regard to one another, dictateth the same to commonwealths, that is, to the consciences of sovereign princes and sovereign assemblies; there being no court of natural justice, but in conscience only.

Yet even here sovereigns are morally obligated to observe these laws as far as possible without jeopardizing the safety of their dominions, since otherwise there would be no respite from war. Reason, Hobbes argued, was the principal element in the law of nature and implied a striving towards some sort of international society. Imperfect as they might be, these laws of nature, "the articles of peace" as Hobbes called them, are the lifeline to which sovereign states in the international anarchy must cling if they are to survive.

Cardinal Richelieu (Armand Jean du Plessis): Throughout the course of European history, the definition and justification of governmental policy has been the most consequential issue that has forced its attention upon rulers, statesmen, and political thinkers alike. The consolidation of power commensurate with the emergence of the modern nation state must be viewed against a background characterized by the breakdown of the community of belief (Christendom) that too
place in the Reformation and was made manifest during the Religious Wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The unity and moral reciprocity of the medieval Christianitas was rendered obsolete by the Treaty of Westphalia, which made the territorial state the cornerstone of the modern state system. The new justification associated with the development and use of power within the modern state and in the community of nations was, in no small part, the achievement of Cardinal Richelieu's (1585-1642) policies, while serving as prime minister of Louis XIII's France.

The same generation which observed the inability of Wallenstein to convert the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation into a modern state saw the consolidation of such a state in France under Richelieu. As prime minister, Richelieu was charged with the responsibility of preserving and strengthening the French state in the face of formidable foreign obstacles. These included not only the massive Hapsburg challenge abroad but also endemic governmental weakness, social fragmentation, and factionalism at home. In his celebrated Mémoires, Richelieu described his conception of policy as consisting of three interrelated parts: destroying the Huguenot opposition, humbling the great nobles and reducing them to subjects, and raising the royal prestige and power abroad to its deserved "place in the sun."
At the core of Richelieu's domestic and foreign policy designs was one central ambition: aggrandizement of the royal power at home and abroad to the point where true sovereignty and independence would be realized. The relationship between Louis XIII and Richelieu was intensely personal and mutually advantageous. While a sovereign of limited ability, Louis XIII had the judgment to support Richelieu as the embodiment of royal power and prestige. In turn, by making the achievement of absolute power by the king his overriding goal, Richelieu enhanced his own position accordingly. The political objectives of Richelieu have been summarized by Carl Friedrich as follows:

Through him, a prince of the church, the claims of absolute secular authority were made to prevail, and the body corporate of the modern state came into being....The state which Machiavelli had visualized as the most admirable work of art man can make thus emerged in true baroque style: not clearly against the church, but partly by its connivance.

While the full range of Richelieu's literary and political achievements are beyond the purposes of this study, specific consideration will be given to his conceptual formulation of the state as a necessary moral end. Attention will also be devoted to the implications of his philosophy of the state for diplomatic and political relations within the volatile European state system. To what extent did Richelieu draw upon or modify Machiavellian raison d'État in his justification of French absolutism? Is the politician or diplomat obliged to evaluate his actions...
exclusively from the standpoint of expediency and success; or should he pursue the paths of personal honor and righteousness though the end may be failure? How did Richelieu differentiate between public and private realms of ethical behavior in his efforts to defend the integrity of France against internal subversion and external constriction? Finally, in what respects did Richelieu's defense of the state provide a foundation of principles and precepts for the practice of power politics in international relations?

A leading biographer of Richelieu points out that "the concept of reason of state was the most important contribution of Cardinal Richelieu's generation to the growth of political thought in France." Along with the development of divine-right sovereignty, the formulation of a viable raison d'état supplied the essential foundations for seventeenth century absolutism. The latter concept was not new in that it concerned very old and continuing political problems; moreover, many of the political writers of Richelieu's period who were preoccupied with a new justification for the state rarely transcended the intellectual categories that they had inherited from the past. By contrast, Richelieu stands out as one of the few great thinkers who was able to synthesize prevailing political concepts in order to justify the policies he believed necessary to the continued success and expansion of
the French state system. Before elaborating on the more specific attributes of Richelieu's conception of raison d'état, it is important to take brief note of how reason of state in the service of French absolutism may be distinguished from the earlier Machiavellian version.

A number of philosophical and historical considerations produced a significant evolution in the meaning of raison d'état from Machiavelli's Italy to Richelieu's modern European state system. It will be recalled that the political mechanism and agents that so intrigued Machiavelli were not yet state personalities; instead, they were personalities of heroic figures who held a stato in their hands. For all practical purposes, in Machiavelli's conception, the chief meaning of stato amounted to a power apparatus. Despite the insight Machiavelli provided into the inner structure of the state (as well as the link between national vitality and external political power), he still permitted the philosophical (or ethical) presuppositions that lay behind the operations of power policy to fade out of the picture. Rather than calculating these operations themselves, his task was limited to judging what was expedient in the actions of individual statesmen.

In addition, it was not until the rise of the modern nation state system in seventeenth century Europe that raison d'état could provide a new foundation for a more
systematic account for the interrelationship among state interests. The growing empirical spirit of the latter period moved political thinkers to refine their perception that the supra-personal interessi di stato governed the conduct of individual states (uniting one, and disuniting another). The new thinkers and political practitioners inherited Machiavelli's conviction that the movement of politics proceeded from the deep-rooted vital forces of states; at the same time, however, they arrived at a much clearer understanding that these vital forces had begun to differentiate themselves more strongly from one another in European state relations.

Although raison d'état was believed to be a motivating force for all national units, attention now turned to how various states began to shape their own special existence and destiny according to particular interests and needs. This produced an impulse in both political thought and statesmanship to go beyond the purely subjective aspect of statecraft and raw state egoism and identify the "objective" interconnections of state activity beyond national borders. For the first time, raison d'état was elevated to the level of a composite picture or principle of European state relations. The first attempt to put forth this principle was made in France during the era of Richelieu.

The precise nature of Richelieu's contribution to raison d'état continues to elicit debate and disagreement.
among leading scholars and biographers. A number of authors tend to regard him as little more than a man of power, a Machiavellian statesman in Cardinal's clothing. Such a view unduly distorts the tension in Richelieu's policies between politics and morals, power and principle, ethics and expediency. While a master technician of power, his ideals and conception of the good state were such that he was also a man of higher principle as well. The religious character of the French state for whose good he committed many high-handed acts serves to indicate the distinction between Richelieu's worldview and the secularism of Machiavelli. It must be emphasized that the functions and objectives of the French state were shaped to a considerable extent by its Christian traditions, values, and purposes. As for Richelieu, himself, the sincerity of his religious beliefs is generally accepted, and he was thoroughly convinced that they were in no way compromised by his often ruthless policies for the good of the French state.

Cardinal Richelieu's use of power presented the problem of just government in a Christian monarchy and inspired widespread debate over the legitimate exercise of royal power in both foreign and domestic affairs. His version of raison d'état was built on the concept of the unique rights, nature, and purposes of the Christian state. The first foundation of the happiness of the state, said Richelieu, was the establishment of the reign of God. The divinely
established relationship between church and state decreed that, in their sphere, the king and his minister were more knowledgeable than all others concerning the proper measures by which to guide France to its higher objectives. From Richelieu’s perspective, raison d’État provided a kind of means-end rationality and succeeded in justifying political measures that were in themselves morally objectionable but which benefited the state as a whole.

The application of a means-end rationality to state conduct implied a sharp distinction between the public and private spheres of ethical behavior. The critical problem in Richelieu’s life was the uneasy interaction between public activity and religious standards. In an age of little faith in human goodness, Richelieu was pessimistic about humanity. He was convinced that the evil in man derived from a fallen nature and a propensity to sin. Freedom in the early seventeenth century meant in practice license; therefore, freedom (in theory) had to give place to the concept of order, a notion which appears more often than any other in Richelieu’s writing.

Richelieu’s approach, therefore, gave rise to a dual moral standard in national and international affairs. In his Mémoires, Richelieu acknowledged that “there is a difference between civil and political prudence, and this is so great that the moral order really makes two separate virtues of them.” He once wrote:
In the course of ordinary affairs justice requires clarity and evidence of proof. But it is not the same when one is concerned with affairs of state, when one is dealing with the sumnum rerum, for often conjectures must stand in place of proof, considering that great designs...can never be verified except by their success or outcome. 

The new force of raison d'État in French foreign policy and diplomacy illustrated that peripheral or ad hoc methods and aims of statecraft were gradually replaced by intensive and centralized control. It was no longer sufficient for the statesman simply to possess a special knowledge of the state itself in the pursuit of territorial independence and sovereignty. Indeed, contemporary statesmanship rose to a more comprehensive political vision which brought within its focus the state in its relations with other states, how it is governed, and the relationship between rulers and subjects.

The outbreak of the Thirty Years War (1638-1648) and the stirrings of a new great ambition on the part of France heralded a tendency toward pure power politics which had already flourished at the time of Machiavelli. However, the power politics of Richelieu can be distinguished from the simple, egocentric prescriptions of Machiavelli by: (1) an insight into Europe as a collective whole; (2) a clearer perception of the connection between unity within the state and the external manifestation of power; (3) a strong sense of the great and dominating powers; and (4) a conscious reaction against permitting ecclesiastical and
denominational considerations obscure the simple interests of power. The significance of *raison d'état* for French power and independence in Europe can be illustrated by France's entry into the Thirty Years War in 1635 and the subsequent attempt to counter the imperial designs of the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs. The justification for Richelieu's policies centered around the tension between politics and morals in the Cardinal's devotion to the national interests of France at a time when the ancient unity of Christendom was beyond repair. That French diplomatic objectives in opposition to the formidable Hapsburg league were based on the interests of power over religious criteria is, however, subject to an important qualification.

As previously mentioned, *raison d'état* in seventeenth century France assumed the character of a special means-end rationality. Questionable methods were often justified if they served the state as a whole. At the same time, there is little doubt that Richelieu operated upon the assumption that the purpose of the French state was essentially religious and that the cause of religion might therefore be served by less than ethical acts in support of French interests. In short, in Richelieu's thought the subordination of moral-ethical factors to power considerations applied specifically to the sphere of means, as opposed to ends.

It is possible to identify briefly a number of key
diplomatic principles and objectives integral to Richelieu's successful defense of French interests in Europe. All political writers of the period believed that the problem of international peace was best resolved by a theory of equilibrium. France and the Hapsburgs were seen as two poles of power, evenly balanced. As Philippe de Béthune, the French ambassador in Rome, wrote: "The security of states consisting principally in an equal counterpoise of power, and the aggrandizement of one prince implying the ruination of his neighbors, it is wise to prevent it." The means for balancing Hapsburg aggression was Richelieu's alliance with the leading Protestant powers of Europe.

Moreover, Richelieu's support of the balance of power principle derived from his conviction that the arsenal of diplomacy served as a weapon for the advancement of state interests. It is important to view his belief in the efficacy of diplomacy within the larger historical context of the "community of reason" characteristic of seventeenth century Europe. Richelieu was a man of the time of Descartes and Corneille. In his Testament Politique he once wrote:

> The light of natural reason enables everyone to know that, since man is endowed with reason, he must do nothing except by reason, for otherwise he would act contrary to his nature, and as a result, contrary against Him who is its author.

What is important, however, is that Richelieu's confidence in reason extended beyond the range of the national
community to the community of nations. If man was essentially reasonable and would be guided by reason, then the way to obtain what one wanted for one's own country was to reason with the representatives of others.137

The tension between ethics and power in foreign policy is typified by Richelieu's position on the question of fidelity to treaty obligations. As for the king's relations with fellow princes, Richelieu found it indispensable that he keep faith and observe sworn treaties, once his word was pledged:

Kings should be wary of making treaties, but when they are made, they should religiously observe them....But without considering...what Christian faith may teach against such maxims, I maintain that since the loss of honor is greater than that of life, a great prince should risk even his person and interests of the state rather than break his word which he cannot violate without losing his good reputation.138

On the supposition that the "community of reason" applied to the community of nations, the statesman could not afford to disregard it by failure to negotiate or by failure to observe the commitments entered into by way of diplomatic negotiation.

By way of summation, Richelieu believed that he had forged a justification for extensive application of discretionary power to achieve the state's higher purposes. The idea of a pure state interest, of the subordination of any fortuitous and instinctive impulse to the inexorable rule of raison d'état, was tempered by a commitment to the
fundamentally religious end of the French state. However, the subsequent evolution of the nature and practices of the state gave *raison d'état* a different meaning. With the further development of state power and the expanding secularization of European culture, the exigencies of politics eventually undermined the fusion of religion and politics.¹³ When applied to the manifold relationships of state power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the doctrine of *raison d'état* rapidly deteriorated into a materialistic ability for calculation, into a purely utilitarian technique and mechanism of political trade.¹⁴⁰

**Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck:** Appearing before the Prussian Parliament in 1881 for the purpose of defending the growing military budget and power of the empire, Chancellor Bismarck (1815-1898) answered his progressive and liberal opponents with the following observation:

> I have always had one compass only, one lodestar by which I have steered; *salus publica*, the welfare of the state....I have always acted according to the question, "What is useful, advantageous, and right for my Fatherland, and--for my dynasty, and today--for the German nation?" I have never been a theorist. The systems which bind separate parties are for me of secondary importance. The nation comes first, its position in the world and its independence.¹⁴¹

While the precise motives and historical consequences of Bismarck's domestic and diplomatic machinations have long been debated by scholars,¹⁴² few have denied his brazen affirmation of *raison d'état* in the service of the Prussian
state and German unification.

As with earlier champions of *raison d'état* in world politics, it is possible to formulate several preliminary questions in order to help identify the salient themes contributing to Bismarck's defense of state objectives in international affairs. First, what historical developments and events in nineteenth century Europe and Germany were instrumental in the energetic drive to create a new German nation state? Second, to what extent did Bismarck draw on more traditional philosophical and political arguments associated with *raison d'état* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Third, in what ways did *raison d'état* function as the foundation for the diplomacy of Realpolitik? In particular, how was Bismarck's cabinet diplomacy and war policy affected by new, unpredictable factors (e.g., public opinion, popular pressures, or ideologies) which jeopardized the very stability of the Concert of Europe? Finally, how did the peculiar admixture of might and right in Bismarck's "blood and iron" version of *raison d'état* contribute to the ultimate collapse of the Hohenzollern Empire in 1918?

Bismarck's rise to power can be traced to the revolutionary fervor that swept over Europe in 1848. The new liberal and democratic movement had shown itself powerless to create a German national state. Bismarck's repudiation of democratic doctrines and his protests against
the subordinate part played by Prussia in the thirty-eight member German Confederation, which had succeeded the old empire in 1815 under Austria's continued hegemony, had already gained for him the goodwill of the sovereign. Only under a particularly favorable constellation of European powers could German nationalism risk a new attempt in this direction. Indeed, the danger of intervention by the great neighboring powers was all the more serious, because the Hapsburg monarchy was determined to reassert its old hegemony over Germany and minimize Prussian aspirations for leadership.

Upon assuming the position of Minister-President in 1862, Bismarck announced that he did not believe that the German problem could be solved in any way but through "blood and iron." Rejected were the visionary hopes of his liberal antagonists that Prussia could build a united Germany by "moral conquests" or by arousing the support of public opinion. Without an armed struggle against Austria, the Prussian monarchy had virtually no prospect of asserting its claim to German leadership. German nationalism provided the moral issue by which to justify a war with Austria, the moral elan by which to gain the victory, and finally the centripetal force with which to consolidate the new state which would then emerge. The creation of a German nation state was for Bismarck not an ultimate objective, but an incidental result of his striving for a more powerful
Convinced that three wars must be fought before Prussia would be powerful enough to assert primacy in Germany, Bismarck sought and found occasions for them. The war with Denmark in 1864 gained for Prussia the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. By defeating Austria in the "Seven Weeks War" of 1866, Bismarck was able to end Austrian control of the old German Confederation. In its place the North German Confederation was formed under Prussian domination, with Austria and four southern German states excluded. Finally, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 preempted French intervention in German affairs and made possible the integration of all the German states into a revived empire enlarged by the recovery of the old imperial territories of Alsace and Lorraine. Treaties were negotiated during the war stipulating that all of Germany should be united into a Hohenzollern empire. These agreements were given formal effect in 1871 when King William I of Prussia was invested with the title of German Emperor and Bismarck became the first Imperial Chancellor.

Machiavelli's doctrine of raison d'état as the servant of political necessity became the powerful weapon by which Bismarck justified the power needs of the Prussian state. He rejected the admonitions of his conservative colleagues, that the guiding principle of state policy should be the ethical command to resist revolutionary forces; and he
argued that the ultimate norm of state behavior was derived from the immediate interests of the state itself. Realistic and successful policy could be formulated only if the statesman first looked to the specific needs and circumstances of his own state and then reflected on how those needs could be realized within the arena of international politics. Indeed, Bismarck could and did ignore ethical-political doctrines which transcended or were alien to his own Prussian state.

Bismarck claimed that the state derived its norms of action primarily from itself and viewed any doctrine forbidding the state to consult its own interests as either self-deception or hypocrisy. State egoism was the fundamental presupposition of the *Realpolitik* which Bismarck practiced in diplomatic affairs. In opposition to nineteenth century political romanticism, he suggested: "The only healthy basis for a great state...is state egotism....It is unworthy of a great state to contend for something which does not correspond to its own interests." It is interesting to note that the most eminent German historian of the nineteenth century, Leopold von Ranke, coupled the premise of state egotism with the idea of a moral purpose which the state must fulfill. Bismarck was much less concerned with such philosophical questions and was inclined to leave moot the question of state morality. He contended that the possibility of more
pragmatic political achievement obligated the prudent statesman to think exclusively in political categories.

In addition, the strict separation of politics from morality was no more vividly exemplified than by the diplomatic maneuvers and foreign policy aims associated with Bismarckian Realpolitik. Amid the great powers of the continent, there was no possibility of "splendid isolationism" or insular aloofness typical of England's liberal empire. Instead of calm repose and conciliation, the cardinal virtue of a statesman was strict vigilance and the exertion of all energies on behalf of the state. Bismarck justified the authoritarian nature of his state by the pressure of an international situation constantly threatened with struggles for power. Moreover, he argued that the foreign policy of such a state could be successfully conducted only under the completely unrestrained sovereignty of a monarchical government independent of fleeting parliamentary majorities. It was from this point of view that Bismarck's attitude on diplomacy, power, and war must be understood.

While William Gladstone was the extreme champion of English and insular statecraft, Bismarck was perhaps the most powerful representative of a continental, hierarchically-organized, actively belligerent great power. In fact, the Chancellor was the last great representative of cabinet diplomacy which governed the fate
of Europe from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. The resourcefulness and restraint of his diplomatic overtures reflected the traditions of Richelieu, Mazarin, Kaunitz, and Metternich. These past masters of diplomacy operated on the basis of known quantities—rulers, ministers, court favorites. They did not have to concern themselves with such new pressures as public opinion and militant ideology. Yet the time when these new elements could be ignored was drawing to an end; the age of mass communication and political movements was rapidly approaching. To Bismarck, diplomacy remained a technique whose prudent maneuvers ought not to be deflected by popular demands. In general, he felt strong and secure enough either to ignore or manipulate these forces, and diplomatically he was largely successful.

At the same time, however, it is important to take brief note of how Bismarckian cabinet diplomacy can be distinguished from the statesmanship and political strategy associated with the "community of reason" which was to supply the foundation for the Concert of Europe. Following the dissolution of the community of reason at the time of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, there was an attempt at the Congress of Vienna (1815) to revive it under the Concert of Europe. Concert members (France, England, Prussia, Austria, and Russia) were to act jointly to maintain national "stability" through monarchical rule and
international "tranquility" through the balance of power.\textsuperscript{154} On a number of occasions, however, concerted action was possible only when it happened to coincide with the several national interests of the Powers.\textsuperscript{155} In a famous remark about Europe representing little more than a geographic expression, Bismarck proclaimed:

That Europe cannot give way is a proposition that I cannot accept, for I do not admit the conception of Europe as a joint liability. The five powers have agreed on precise measures whose possible inadequacy was recognized from the very beginning.\textsuperscript{156}

In contrast to the cosmopolitanism of Metternich, Castlereigh, and Tallyrand, Bismarck lacked any sense of a transcendent European community united by the "traditions of civility." The only viable order left in the West, as far as he was concerned, was the community of mutual fear, the balance of power.\textsuperscript{157}

As noted by George Kennan, Bismarck’s European policy was based on the maintenance of a reasonable balance of power between Austria and Russia and the avoidance of any major conflict between those two powers.\textsuperscript{158} The new German Reich was a political arrangement that Bismark had found necessary to create in order to assure what he believed to be Prussia’s proper place in the Central European scheme of things. After emerging victorious from the war of 1870–1871, Bismarck’s diplomacy grew essentially defensive with the purpose of protecting a unified Germany from the threat of hostile coalitions. Specifically, he was concerned to
preempt a French war of revenge by depriving France of possible allies. Similarly, his diplomacy towards both Austria and Russia sought to deprive each power of any incentive to ally with France or confront each other in the Balkans. The Three Emperors' Alliance (Dreikaiserbund) among Germany, Austria, and Russia that was engineered by Bismarck in 1881 had the dual effect of ending the chances for a revival of the European Concert and balancing the various national claims impinging on the destiny of Central Europe.¹⁰

Bismarck's outlook on war did not originate in the passions of a conqueror or unrestrained militarist, but in the sober raison d'état of a military state. As Gerhart Ritter points out, "he is a spiritual descendent of Frederick the Great in a completely altered world."¹¹ As one of the last great cabinet statesmen of European history, he represents a lonely figure, somewhat alien in his own time. The European cabinets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries waged war with a sober calculation of power interests of the state, in contrast to the moral and religious passions which had been aroused during the age of religious wars. For both Richelieu's "community of reason" and Metternich's "Concert of Europe," raison d'état represented the harmonization of separate national interests with European-wide political and cultural objectives.

By contrast, Bismarck's political and military
achievement consisted of harnessing *raison d'état* with specific national aims, at a time when the vision of an organized international order based on the willing partnership of self-governing units was illusory. For Bismarck, war was not seen as a crusade for the cause of God or some abstract sense of the nation, but as a political struggle to determine superior power. Even though Bismarck was somewhat harsh about human nature and progress, the causes of war were located within an international environment where conflicting power interests could be peacefully reconciled. In this sense, morality and politics were sharply differentiated in his thought. This provided a vivid contrast to the normal turn of military and diplomatic events since the French Revolution, when almost every political conflict tended towards the "total" antagonism and moral destruction of the opponent as an "enemy." What separated Bismarck from his German nationalist successors was thus a devotion to prudent *raison d'état*, unobscured by passion, imposing firm restraints on the deployment of power, and pursued with the skill of a born diplomat who knew the great courts of Europe as no other knew them.

Finally, in what ways did Bismarck's commitment to *raison d'état* in both domestic and foreign affairs contribute to, or fail to prevent, the collapse of the Hohenzollern Empire in 1918? Such important figures as Jakob Burckhardt and Constantin Franz argued that Bismarck's
policy meant the victory of Machiavellianism over the principles of morality and justice in international relations. It let perish the higher and finer things in culture, due to a relentless striving after power and pleasure. On the other hand, there are a number of voices to defend Bismarck. They called attention to all the similar experiences of Machiavellian practices in the rest of Europe of that day and especially to the fact that Bismarck himself acknowledged some limits to his policy of force (e.g., the defensive character of German diplomacy after 1870). Moreover, Bismarck did not stand alone in the battle against Catholics and Progressives or in the bitter struggle with the socialists. Yet he helped to determine the nature of these struggles. Irrespective of whether or not he considered himself a "maker of history," Bismarck did face alternatives and made conscious choices.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which Bismarck shared the conception of a synthesis of power and culture as it was understood by leaders of the movement for German unification. As Meinecke pointed out, however, the inevitable result was that "in the synthesis of power and culture, of the things of the state and the things of the spirit, the preponderance steadily shifted further over to the side of power and its domain." The center of gravity between might and right, which was at best in a precarious balance, kept shifting slowly towards the former. It was to
become a serious omen for the future that ideas about the all-powerful state and Machiavellianism, at first expressed as mere theories, might become potent weapons in the hands of the ruling authorities. In the end, Bismarckian Realpolitik knew no appeal to the imagination of the nation, no vision of a richer future; nor did it exhibit an abiding faith in humanity which gave true significance to the birth of the American and French Republics.

Raison D'État and World Politics

The previous section of this study sought to provide a brief overview of some of the more influential theorists and practitioners of raison d'état in world politics. Attention was given both to the unique historical and political setting of each major representative thinker as well as to his underlying philosophical assumptions (both implicit and explicit) influencing his conception of recurrent themes and principles of state behavior in global affairs. Of particular importance were such perennial topics as: the sources of international conflict and war; (2) power and morality in statecraft; and (3) the contribution of diplomacy and balance of power to international order and stability. The concluding section will attempt to summarize the essential tenets of the continental tradition of raison d'état in international politics and suggest how this tradition raises important philosophical and theoretical questions for the study of contemporary state relations.
An attempt carefully to inventory the primary assumptions and concepts associated with continental *raison d'état* must acknowledge a number of significant caveats. At the outset, it is important to note that *raison d'état* defies the narrow limits of any one specific doctrine or conceptual definition. In one perspective, *raison d'état* is a mixture of moral and power considerations, "a bridge between ethos and kratos." In another light, it has been described as the valuing of power above law and morality. In still another and more comprehensive sense, *raison d'état* is "the law governing the movement of the state....It tells the statesman what to do in order to maintain the state's health and vigor." The implication of determinism in this conception is unmistakable, in that "to live in liberty and independence the state must...obey the laws dictated by *raison d'état*.

While subject to a number of interpretations, *raison d'état* has also functioned as a description and explanation of state behavior in a wide variety of historical and political circumstances. Although its earliest antecedents may be traced back to the civil strife among Greek city states (Thucydides), the first attempt to provide any kind of detailed account of the underlying diplomatic norms and realities of interstate behavior was supplied by Machiavelli during the wars of unification in fifteenth century Italy. Machiavelli's vivid portrayal of the instrumentalities of
power in the service of state necessity was later reinforced by Hobbes' elaboration of an anarchic international arena, bereft of effective legal and ethical restraints. Statesmen were seen to confront each other in the uneasy posture of combative gladiators.

Both raison d'État and divine right sovereignty supplied the basis for seventeenth century absolutism. In defense of French national interests and the so-called European community of reason, Cardinal Richelieu interpreted raison d'État as a special kind of means-end rationality which would fulfill the unique rights, nature, and purposes of the Christian state.

Following the virtual collapse of the Concert of Europe in the midst of nineteenth century revolutionary ferment, Bismarck's "blood and iron" method of unifying Germany satisfied the conventional definition of raison d'État as reliance on armed strength for national ends. By insisting that the state derives its norms of action primarily from itself, he established a pattern of thought which expressed itself in German diplomacy as a penchant for "calling a spade a spade" and which in popular vocabulary came to be known as Realpolitik. In short, the meaning and utility of raison d'État for the statesman was largely determined by an evolving constellation of political and historical forces impinging on a state's diplomatic objectives at any particular time.
Moreover, it would be somewhat misleading to suggest that *raison d'état* has always functioned as an *a priori* set of immutable diplomatic guidelines. The determinism traditionally associated with the concept has gone little beyond the assumption that the imperative of state survival might require moral or immoral actions; once that state was accepted as supreme, the ruler had no choice but to obey. However, the requirements of state survival and the necessity for either moral or immoral measures were meaningful only in relation to specific and concrete challenges and opportunities that confronted the statesman. Indeed, the assumption of state survival reveals little about the significance of important domestic factors or the distribution of power in the international political system that inevitably influence the formulation and implementation of foreign policy goals. It was not until the rise of the modern European state system after Westphalia that the chief spokesmen for *raison d'état* began to turn their attention to a more objective (and systematic) assessment of state activity across national borders. It was only with Richelieu and Bismarck that one finds *raison d'état* elevated to the level of a composite worldview of European state relations.

While being mindful of the often disparate historical forces which help mold both personalities and national policies over time, it is possible to isolate several key
tenets or elements which distinguished a *raison d'état* approach to world politics. While by no means an exhaustive list, the following concepts and themes received repeated attention and varying degrees of affirmation by the major figures discussed thus far in this study. Moreover, it must be admitted that theorists and practitioners of *raison d'état* almost never sought to relate and develop all of these tenets into an integrated theory of international politics.

1. **Nation States as Primary Actors**

The nation state represents both a moral agent and the most significant "actor" in international politics. As far back as the Greek city state system of Thucydides, the organized political community was viewed, not merely as a collection of institutions, but as an enduring moral entity that could compel the loyalty and service of its citizens.

Writing about the political world at the birth of modern European theory, Machiavelli established the proposition that every other value must bow to the survival of the state: "When the safety of the Fatherland is at stake, there should be no question of reflecting whether a thing is just or unjust, humane or cruel, praiseworthy or shameful." After the emergence of the modern European nation state, both Richelieu and Bismarck echoed Machiavelli's judgment that the statesman must only take that course of action which will secure the state's life and
liberty. The centrality of the state for international politics received normative reinforcement from the fact that values associated with and derived from the state's existence transcended either subnational or transnational standards.

2. International State of Nature

The necessities of a raison d'état policy arise from the unregulated competition of states. Sovereign states, recognizing no higher authority, are in a Hobbesian state of nature; the resulting security dilemma forces them to live in a condition of mutual competition and conflict. Raison d'état in international politics represents a "natural tendency" of the state to restrict its foreign policy behavior, therefore, to the realm of self-interest. Possibilities for orderly and peaceful exchange between nation states are subordinate to the statesman's calculation of selfish and tangible advantages for the state. In addition, for the figures included in this study, the perception of an anarchic international system is reinforced by a pervasive pessimism about man and human nature in general.

3. Ubiquity of Power

The "Machiavellian" or "Hobbesian" view of the international political system is geared to the assumption that the broader aspects of interstate politics may be characterized by a relentless struggle for and extension of
state power. Each state seeks safety by relying on its own power and viewing with alarm the power of its neighbors. Accordingly, the *ulta ratio regum* of sovereigns in dealing with other sovereigns is force. Proponents of *raison d’état* have generally emphasized that the "power" which is of prime concern to the statesman is, in the final analogy, military power or fighting capacity. Concern with military capability derives from the observation that each state can best preserve its power by expanding it and can most surely guarantee its own security by depriving others of theirs. For the purposes of *raison d’état*, the pursuit of power tends to become an end in itself rather than a means to other ends. No other end matters if the state lacks power to serve its ultimate end: self-preservation.

4. Ethics and Foreign Policy

Nowhere does the contradiction between professed ethical principles and actual behavior appear so patent and universal as in the conduct of foreign relations. Down through the centuries, Machiavellianism has stood for a doctrine that places princes and sovereigns under the rule not of ordinary morality, but of "reason of state." Unlike the solitary individual who may claim the right to judge political action by universal ethical guidelines, the statesman will always make his decision on the basis of the state's interest and survival. Such ultimate measures of a state's worth as individual freedom and welfare of the
community tend to be overshadowed by the more amoral necessities of state interest.

Perhaps the ultimate irony of the ethical dualism associated with *raison d'état* is the idea that political ambition could, in a limited sense, contribute to the strengthening of particular moral values. Despite the fact that few could assert the ego of the state in the ruthless tone of Machiavelli, the Florentine's idealism expressed itself in the thought that *necessità*—understood as the imperative of survival—could conceivably provide the means to salvage the decline of moral energies in the Italian state system. That political ambition and the struggle for power could *augment* moral values was echoed by Hobbes' assertion that one need not fear "that the Leviathan would misuse its power...because the power wielder would be compelled by his own interests to rule with reason and advance the public welfare." In seventeenth century France, Richelieu suggested that the true interests of the state required concessions of tolerance to the Huguenots in order to safeguard the freedom of the state from foreign influence and to develop its internal strength.

At the same time, however, the precarious balance between considerations of national interest and moral conduct in state relations gradually shifted to accentuate the role of the former. The thesis that state egotism is justified by the values it serves was brought into question
by recurrent power struggles of the state, which tended to
destroy the ethical and cultural values that might function
as the state’s ultimate justification. Indeed, Bismarckian
Realpolitik represented the eclipse of state necessity or
interest from higher ethical or moral considerations.

5. Balance of Power

Perhaps no other concept or principle has been so
frequently associated with raison d’état as has the illusive
balance of power. While raison d’état may be taken as an
indication of the methods by which foreign policy is
conducted and rationalized, balance of power purports to
explain the international result that such methods
produce. For many observers, it has become an “avowed
principle of foreign policy, accepted and acted on so
consistently by all the great states that it may well be
viewed as the central theme about which the web of diplomacy
is woven.” It should be recognized that the precise
origins and operations of the balance of power have been
subject to widespread debate. Among representatives of the
continental tradition in international politics, the concept
has functioned ambiguously as both a description of the
international system and as a prescription shaping the
successful defense of state objectives.

The principle of balance of power has emerged more or
less clearly in every system of states in which units have
engaged with one another in the competitive struggle for
power. In his essay on the balance, David Hume traced the origins of the idea to the shifting coalitions of Greek city states (poleis) at the time of the Peloponnesian War. J.M. Robertson, writing his biography of Emperor Charles V, made the case for the balance as the creation of the fifteenth century Italian state system.

Although Machiavelli emphasized military self-reliance and was skeptical about the balance of power as an effective technique to bring about Italian unity, he also suggested that no prince can afford to disregard its workings. Indeed, he thought that the ruler was ill-advised to remain neutral in a conflict between two nearby powers. However, as Frederick Schuman pointed out, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the states of Europe pursued balance of power policies without the principle itself receiving any clear and universal formulation. Contrary to Hume's contention that the balance doctrine originated in antiquity, Sir Herbert Butterfield argued that the idea of a balance operating throughout the international system as a whole became implanted in European thought only in the seventeenth century, along with the notion that European politics formed a single system. The key question affecting both theorists and statesmen was the nature and degree of interrelatedness and reciprocity of the new European order of states. If there was an international order (or society), was it immune to the follies and
incompetence of statesmen, or was it necessary to deliberately control the international system?

Richelieu's affirmation of a community of reason (une négociation continuelle) operating on diplomats and statesmen merged with the idea of "equilibrium" among major European powers. While state interest remains the essential guide for foreign policy, its realization is made possible by the community of reason among nations that is operative in the negotiations of diplomats. With France and the Hapsburgs seen as two poles of countervailing power, Richelieu sought to balance the Hapsburg threat by an alliance system with the leading Protestant powers of Europe. The negotiations required by the community of reason (and the obligations emanating therefrom) were simply conditions for the maintenance of a desired balance of power. For both seventeenth and eighteenth century theorists, balance of power policies reflected the belief in a rationally induced world, a diplomacy conforming to clear and often mechanistic rules productive of order among states.

Similarly, Bismarck was the managing director of a state which played the role of a great power in the European system of five major powers and many smaller powers. Bismarck's European policy aimed at the preservation of a reasonable balance of power between Austria and Russia and the avoidance of any major conflict between these two
powers. It will be useful to recall that an effort was made to revive the community of reason after the violence of the Napoleonic Wars at the Congress of Vienna. The five predominant powers, acting as the "Concert of Europe," frequently resorted to balance of power tactics based on the conception of Europe as a joint liability, an interdependent world of great powers united by "traditions of civility." By contrast, Bismarck found the Concert formula inimical to the purpose of building a unified German state in central Europe. Much like Machiavelli who worked to upset the balance of power in Italy to create a unified Italian state, Bismarck’s wars were designed to set up a new balance of power in Europe with a unified Germany as one of its principal weights. Bismarck’s "blood and iron" Realpolitik was an attempt to blend secret diplomacy and balance of power to the specific needs of the German power state.

6. Raison D’état as the Sport of Kings

The continental tradition of raison d’état in international politics remained the sport of kings, or the preserve of cabinets—the last refuge of secrecy, the last domain of largely hereditary castes of diplomats. The democratization of foreign policy was effectively preempted on two counts. First, proponents of raison d’état consistently emphasized that the foreign policy of a state constantly threatened with struggles for power could only be conducted with the unrestrained sovereignty of a monarchical
government independent of parliamentary majorities. Second, only a well-trained core of aristocratic elites could engage in the kind of diplomacy required by the balance of power principle without undue concern about the reactions of public opinion, the need to consider ideological values, or attention to the nation's "image" in the minds of foreigners.

Finally, in what ways is it possible to speak of continental _raison d'état_ as a distinctive theoretical or philosophical approach to the study of international politics? On the one hand, efforts at theorizing or speculating about the nature of interstate relations are quite old; some, in fact, go back to ancient times in India, China and Greece. However, the attempt to assess the patterns of conflict and cooperation among mutually alien actors systematically received little sustained attention prior to World War I.

While theorists and statesmen of _raison d'état_ attempted to describe a permanent logic of state behavior, most were careful to avoid explicit generalizations, "if...then" propositions, and analytic categories relevant to the sphere of international political behavior. Even though Machiavelli stands out in his belief that politics has its own laws, discernible by reason and rooted in political interest, he failed to develop any theory which would explain the operation of such laws beyond the level of
the state itself. What often passes for theory in the continental tradition is usually a mixture of statements in which concepts are ill-defined, the connections of the theory's components are loosely specified, and possible conclusions wear the guise of assumptions. Such problems reinforce the strength of Wight's observation that, in the classical (European) tradition, "international theory, or what there is of it, is scattered, unsystematic, and mostly inaccessible to the layman," as well as being "largely repellent and intractable in form."

A less stringent but perhaps more revealing inquiry into the patterns of coherence of *raison d'état* in international politics can be developed by interpreting the continental tradition as governed by what Kuhn has termed a "metaphysical" or "philosophical" paradigm. From this vantage point, *raison d'état* would constitute the wide-ranging assumptions and beliefs about the international milieu (as well as its key components) shared by a community of scholars and statesmen. Reduced to its essentials, the principal assumptions and beliefs of *raison d'état* may be summarized as follows: the ruler's, and later the state's, interest provides the spring of action; the necessities of policy arise from the unregulated competition of states; calculation based on these necessities can discover the policies that best serve a state's interest; success is the ultimate test of policy; and success is defined as
preserving and strengthening the power of the state. Raison d'état identifies the methods by which foreign policy is conducted and provides a rationale for them; the balance of power concept provides a rough explanation of the result that such methods produce.

Contemporary theorists and observers of international politics have frequently assumed that the elements and reasoning of raison d'état have remained constant from Machiavelli through Meinecke and the postwar political "realists" in America. The remaining chapters of this study will seek to assess the impact of the continental legacy on twentieth century political realism in the American foreign policy experience. Although a few of the influential political realists made significant contributions during the interwar period, our focus will largely be upon the substantive foreign policy problems and impulse to theoretical expression in the post-World War II era.

Within the intellectual tradition applicable to international politics, is it possible to plot a continuum encompassing the fundamental norms associated with raison d'état since the time of Machiavelli, as well as the philosophical convictions of such contemporary thinkers as Walter Lippmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and George F. Kennan? Is it possible to speak of an "Americanized Realpolitik" which emerges from the work of leading realist scholars?
At this juncture, it is useful to recall the hypothesis which will shape our inquiry in the ensuing chapters: The philosophical substratum governing the response of postwar realists to many of the challenging foreign policy issues associated with an increasingly interdependent world differs from the classic rationale or exposition of continental raison d'état. A full exploration of this hypothesis necessarily calls into question the method or justification by which the European tradition has been modified and adapted to the exigencies of postwar American foreign policy. Insofar as a large number of American realists have devoted considerable attention to the evolution of the modern European state system and the diplomatic history of raison d'état, what facets of the American diplomatic experience justify a philosophy of political realism as a unique approach to foreign policy? In short, where does European raison d'état end and American political realism begin?
Endnotes


2. Ibid.


5. Ibid.


10. Ibid. p. 56.


13. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.


18. Ibid.


27. Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration, p. 244.

28. Ibid.


30. Ibid., p. 36.
31. Ibid.

32. Machiavelli went further and argued that the contribution of the state was in some measure a response to its international environment. Thus, "It was Rome's neighbors who in their desire to crush her, caused her to set up institutions which not only enabled her to defend herself but also to attack them with greater force, counsel and authority." See Machiavelli: The Chief Works And Others, ed. and trans. Allan H. Gilbert, 3 vols. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), 1:269.


35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.


39. Ibid.


44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., p. 272.

47. Ibid., p. 18.


60. Ibid.

62. Ibid. p. 29.

63. As one scholar has noted:
"The virtù of the conquering prince became the source of order, and since the Christian, transcendental order of existence had become a dead letter for the Italian thinkers of the fifteenth century, the virtù ordinate of the prince, the only ordering force experienced as real, acquired human-divine, heroic proportions....The evocation of the mythical hero is at the center of Machiavelli's work in the sense that the evocation of the philosopher king is at the center of Plato's work." See Voegelin, "Machiavelli: Prince: Background and Formation," p. 165.

64. Ibid.

65. Meinecke, Machiavellianism, p. 31. Machiavelli broke with the dualistic and spiritualizing ethic of Christianity, which depreciated the natural impulses of the senses. Although he retained some of its structural ideas about the difference between good and evil, he strove primarily for a new naturalistic ethic which would follow the dictates of nature impartially and resolutely.

66. Ibid.

67. Germino points out that Machiavelli does not overtly call for the overthrow of Christianity and its replacement with a neopagan cult of the state. He appears to have thought that Christianity could be adapted to the needs of the modern polity. At the most, he seeks to supplement the morality of the gospel with the martial vigor of ancient Rome. See Germino, From Machiavelli to Marx, pp. 42-43.

68. Meinecke, Machiavellianism, p. 33.


70. Meinecke, Machiavellianism, p. 36.

71. Machiavelli's preoccupation with what is politically expedient and the morality of political action is vividly elaborated in a chapter of The Prince entitled "How Princes Should Keep Their Promises." See Machiavelli: The Chief Works, pp. 64-67.

72. In a famous passage, Machiavelli pointed out:
"...and in the actions of men, and especially princes from which there is no appeal, the end
justifies the means. Let the prince, therefore, aim at conquering and maintaining the state, and the means will always be judged honorable and praised by everyone..." See Ibid., p. 67.

73. Ibid., p. 66.

74. Ibid., p. 269.


78. Savigear, "European Political Philosophy and International Relations," p. 36.


80. Russell, Theories of International Relations, p. 122.


85. Ibid.

86. Machiavelli: The Chief Works, p. 82.

87. Russell, Theories of International Relations, p. 123.

88. Ibid.

89. See, for example, Wolfers and Martin, eds. The Anglo-American Tradition in Foreign Affairs.

90. Ibid.


96. Ibid., p. 82.

97. Quoted in Russell, Theories of International Relations, p. 159.

98. Ibid.


102. Meinecke, Machiavellianism, pp. 207-216.

103. Bull points out that Hobbes' doctrine of natural right was used by writers on international law from the eighteenth century on as a means of demolishing the claims of international society on its member states, or at least showing that they had only a contingent or tentative validity. See Bull, "Hobbes and the International Anarchy," p. 725.


105. For Hobbes, the state was certainly a personality; however, it was a "commoda vitae, a fons et origo, a fundamenta" piece of clockwork machinery, manufactured by human ingenuity, in order to promote the objects of men (i.e., of individual men). An important role is assigned to the commoda vitae, the delectatio, the jucundissime et beat vivere of the individual citizen. It was Hobbes' opinion that only in the proper functioning of the state as a whole could individuals be properly cared for. There is already here a portent of that "greatest happiness of the greatest number," which was later to be proclaimed by Jeremy Bentham. See Meinecke, Machiavellianism, pp. 213-214.
106. Ibid., p. 215.

107. Ibid.


109. Hobbes sought refuge under the umbrella of traditional natural law as the ethical basis of relations between states. According to him, then, peace could not be achieved unless the law of nature was generally observed between states. Reason, he argued, was the principal element in the law of nature and implied a striving towards some sort of international order. See Parkinson, The Philosophy of International Relations, pp. 39-40.

110. See Hobbes, Leviathan, Chapter 31. While states find themselves in a state of nature and have little chance of escaping it, there are still limited measures that may be taken to minimize the consequences of unrestricted anarchy. Hobbes acknowledged that men are driven by passions that incline them to peace: the fear of death, the desire of things necessary for commodious living. Men are equipped with "natural reason," which prescribes for them the rules they must follow if they are to attain peace, the rules which Hobbes called the "laws of nature." While these dictates of right reason are theoretically available in the state of nature, they cannot be enforced. The statesman is obliged in practice to follow them only if it is safe to do so. Imperfect though they are, these laws of nature, the "articles of peace" as Hobbes called them, are the lifeline to which sovereign states must cling if they are to survive. These "articles of peace" enjoin states to seek peace, honor agreements and covenants, and respect the immunity of mediators and envoys. See Bull, "Hobbes and the International Anarchy," pp. 728-729.

111. Ibid.


115. Ibid.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid., p. 199.
118. William F. Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 11. *Raison d'état* was not new in that it concerned both very old and continuing political problems; however, the writers of Richelieu's period articulated new solutions and gave them a new rationale. No one was more conscious of this than Richelieu himself, and he keenly felt the need to justify the policies that he believed necessary to the continued success of the French state. As Church points out, Richelieu and his supporters embarked on the first concerted effort in the history of French political thought to develop a viable concept of reason of state.


120. Ibid.

121. According to Meinecke:

"This was one limitation of his perception, and the other... was that he really only wanted to bring about what was typical and general in all political conduct: that he wanted to establish certain rules, definite maxims... for every ruler... and this also led to the result that he remained firmly under the influence of that view of history which held that everything human repeated itself." Ibid.

122. Ibid., p. 150.

123. Ibid., p. 151. In France people were forced out of this petty preoccupation with self-interest by the bitter experiences of the Huguenot Wars. It was, in fact, this profound religious and political division of the nation that brought political thought to fruition and impelled it to seek out a new intellectual and spiritual cohesive force for a state threatened with dissolution.


125. Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State*, pp. 8-12. It is important to note that Richelieu's building of state power and some of his tactics opened the way for the growth of the modern state which eventually became a lawless and thoroughly secular affair, deliberately divorced from the religious phase of human experience. As Church points out, however, this crucial development lay far in the future of Richelieu's time and was totally unknown to him and his contemporaries.


130. Ibid.

131. Ibid. p. 314.


133. Ibid., p. 162.


135. Ibid.

136. Ibid.

137. Dunne, "Realpolitik in the Decline of the West," p. 139.


139. Ibid., p. 509.


144. Ibid.


148. Ibid., p. 47.
149. Ibid., p. 75.
155. Ibid.
159. Dunne, "Realpolitik in the Decline of the West," pp. 143-144.
163. Ibid., p. 151.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
167. Ibid., p. 15.
170. Meinecke, Machiavellianism, pp. 3-5.
172. Machiavelli, Discourses, PAGE.
173. Quoted in Sterling, Ethics in a World of Power, p. 231. See also Meinecke, Machiavellianism, pp. 210-216.
174. Kenneth Waltz argues that if there is any distinctive theory of international politics, balance of power theory is it. However, it is difficult to find a statement of the theory that commands widespread acceptance. Ernst Haas has discovered eight meanings of the term, and Martin Wight found nine. Hans J. Morgenthau, in his lengthy analysis of the subject, makes use of four different definitions. In short, balance of power is viewed by some as a law of nature; by others, as simply an outrage. Some view it as a guide for the statesman; others, as a cloak that disguises imperialist policies. Some believe that the balance of power is the best guarantee of the security of states and the peace of the world; others, that it has ruined states by causing most of the wars they have fought. Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Menlo Park, Calif.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 177. See also Ernst B. Haas, "The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept, or Propaganda," World Politics 5 (July 1953): 361-380; Martin Wight, "The Balance of Power and International Order," in The Bases of International Order, ed. Alan James (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, 5th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1973); and Greg Russell, "Balance of Power in Perspective," International Review of History and Political Science 21 (November 1984): 1-16.
185. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, pp. 175, 182. Arend Lijphart makes the case that classical (or European) thinking about international politics constitutes the “traditional paradigm” which prevailed in the discipline until the twentieth century. Traditional thinking about world politics, according to Lijphart, satisfies Kuhn’s concept of a paradigm in at least two ways: it provides the model for a coherent tradition of research, and research conducted under the paradigm resembles puzzle solving (Lijphart, "The Structure of Theoretical Revolutions in International Relations," p. 42). At the same time, however, it is important to take note of the rule of "theory" within the context of Kuhn’s discussion of more global or philosophical paradigms. On the one hand, it is possible to identify the wide-ranging assumptions, beliefs, and values of raison d’État as they apply to international politics. However, the theoretical significance of these assumptions are certainly open to question. Even Lijphart admits that the traditional paradigm does not satisfy Kuhn’s contention that a paradigm is "a sign of maturing in the development of any given scientific field." In mature scientific communities, however, paradigms contain theories in the most exact, formal, and often mathematical sense. Therefore, raison d’État as a "heuristic vision" or philosophical paradigm may be interpreted to represent a theoretical tradition albeit a primitive one. See Richard S. Beal "Theory and the Scientific Study of International Politics," in International Relations Theory, Western and Non-Western Perspectives, eds. P.P. Misra and K.S. Beal (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1980), pp. 31-32.

186. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 117.

187. Ibid.
CHAPTER II

WALTER LIPPMANN: REALISM AND RATIONALITY IN DIPLOMACY

As America's most distinguished journalist of the twentieth century, Walter Lippmann achieved a world-wide reputation as a discriminating thinker and critic of public affairs. His was, as Van Wyck Brooks once observed, "the most brilliant career ever devoted in America to political writing." In appraising Lippmann's merit as a literary stylist, Richard Rovere argues: "As a stylist, he should be studied not only by other journalists but by everyone interested in English prose, for he was surely as much a master of it as any modern American writer." Lippmann's integrity as a journalist, as well as his ability to relate national policy to the underlying values and philosophical roots of American society, helped set standards for political commentators that few if any have equaled. As early as 1933, James Trustlow Adams went so far as to describe Lippmann as "one of the most potent political forces of the nation," as "the American phenomenon."

Influence was Lippmann's stock in trade and what made him a powerful public figure. He was the author of more than twenty books—some of them "best sellers"—scores of essays published in popular magazines and scholarly
journals, and countless newspaper editorials and columns.* Always able to plunge through the miasma of contention and grasp the essence of a situation, he preferred to analyze power rather than exercise it. By his own self-description, Lippmann was a man who led two distinct but interrelated lives, one of books (philosophy) and one of newspapers (politics and public policy). His unique career combined both activism and detachment; the combination made him distinctive and gave his voice an unparalleled authority.®

Only the briefest attention may be given to the many facets of Lippmann’s professional and public career. He was born in New York City on September 23, 1889, and died on December 14, 1974, at the age of eighty-four. The product of an upper-middle-class family, the young Lippmann was driven by his intellectual passions to the study of art, psychology, literature, and theology. He matriculated at Harvard College, attracted the attention of William James and George Santayana, and graduated with the celebrated class of 1910.*

Lippmann began his public career in the halcyon days before the First World War, when human progress seemed unlimited and science promised a life of leisure and abundance for all. Even in these early years, Lippmann was recognized in America as a force in journalism and politics. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has written of these years:
Born in the Victorian tranquilities of 1889, he was stirred by the ferment of the Progressive Era and became a socialist before he left Harvard in 1910. His socialism soon evaporated in any dogmatic form, but it left behind a residue in the shape of a belief in the necessity of rational planning and purpose to master the incipient chaos of modern society.

While many of Lippmann’s writings rested on the socialist commitment to planning in the service of liberal aspirations, he was essentially conservative in his preference for an orderly society and faith in reason.

Lippmann began his career in journalism as both editor and frequent contributor to the Harvard Monthly. In 1910, he was recruited by the social critic Lincoln Steffens to help prepare a series of muckraking articles for Everybody’s Magazine. His success as a writer were soon to attract the attention of those intellectual circles which were influential in the progressive climate of the prewar years. His first book, A Preface to Politics (1913) brought him instant recognition and the opportunity to join Herbert Croly and Walter Weyl in founding the weekly New Republic. No longer a socialist, yet one of the young “movers and shakers” whose intellectual virtue made the period prior to World War I a seedtime of new ideas and limitless hope, Lippmann found in the pages of the New Republic an outlet for articles on almost any topic about which he chose to write.

During World War I, in 1917, Lippmann served as an assistant to Secretary of State Newton D. Baker and was
later appointed executive secretary of a postwar planning group, the so-called House Inquiry.\textsuperscript{10} As a captain in military intelligence in 1918, he worked on Wilson's Fourteen Points Program and on preparations for the Paris Peace Conference. In 1920, Lippmann left the New Republic to become an editorial writer, and subsequently editor (1929), of the Democratic New York World. The World stood in the forefront of those fighting against social and political injustice and for liberal reforms, both within American society and in international relations.

In 1931, Lippmann joined the Republican Herald Tribune, to which, for the next thirty years, he contributed his nationally syndicated column, "Today and Tomorrow." It was in "Today and Tomorrow" that he offered the not-to-be-forgotten assessment of Franklin Roosevelt as "a pleasant man who, without any very important qualifications for office, would very much like to be president."\textsuperscript{11} In the same column, he attacked the "revolutionary policies" of the New Deal and endorsed Alf Landon for President in 1936, Dewey in 1948, and Eisenhower in 1952. Indeed, Lippmann's criticism of the New Deal and his support for Republican candidates led some to renounce him as a revisionist who had lost or bartered away his liberal principles.\textsuperscript{12}

The years which followed raised even more questions. Lippmann opposed the deployment of American combat troops in Korea as well as the Senate hearings of Joseph McCarthy. He
expressed admiration for France's Charles DeGaulle with whom--as with the Soviet Union's Nikita Khrushchev—he established relations of personal confidence as had no other American of his time.\textsuperscript{13} In both his books and columns, many of Lippmann's insights have stood the test of time. During World War II, he foresaw the military and political presence of the Soviet Union from the Baltic to the Balkans. He also prophesied the instability of the Chinese nationalist regime. Even more striking, Lippmann anticipated the problems that arose from the "universalization" of the Truman Doctrine.\textsuperscript{14} Although Lippmann exhorted his journalistic colleagues to keep their distance from those in public life, his own political activism remained a lifelong character trait. For a time Lippmann was an avid supporter of Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose progressivism.\textsuperscript{15} Lippmann's editorials for the \textit{World} helped prevent an American invasion of Mexico, and his secret negotiations made possible a settlement between revolutionary Mexican leaders and the Vatican.\textsuperscript{14} His talent as a speechwriter was drawn on by such figures as John W. Davis, Al Smith, Dwight Morrow, and Newton D. Baker. In later years, Lippmann counseled both Wendell Willkie and Dwight Eisenhower on presidential politics, quarreled with the Dulles brothers on foreign policy, and was enthusiastically sought out after by both presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

The tension in Lippmann's life between personal
detachment and political intervention reached its breaking point with protracted American involvement in Southeast Asia during the 1960s. While often portrayed by his critics as an "apologist" or "pundit" for the establishment, Lippmann turned bitterly against the Johnson Administration's destructive obsession with the Vietnam War. Repulsed by the administration's imperial pretensions, and subsequently alienating himself from those who often flattered him, Lippmann wanted his country to pursue its own ideals; and he never tired of reminding his readers of them.

Lippmann and the American Public Philosophy

At the outset, it is important to note that Lippmann's intellectual odyssey defies precise description and categorization. He was not one who can be easily associated with any particular "school" or "approach" in the history of political thought. In fact, Walter Lippmann's interest in philosophy and politics was an unending search, one that led him variously to socialism, to political activism, to skepticism, to social detachment, to economic conservatism, to Cold War criticism, and to social liberalism. At different stages in Lippmann's career, he was variously identified as a Marxist, a liberal, a conservative, a pragmatist, an aesthetic—and just plain confusing. Several of his critics agreed with the assessment that he was an "obfuscator" who drugs "lazy minds" with "pompous nonsense," an "equivocator who could be quoted on almost any
side of a question," and a disciple of Alexander Hamilton who was the first "strong advocate of plutocratic fascism in America."[^1]

Lippmann's intellectual orientation is especially difficult to describe, since his political outlook rarely remained fixed for any extended period of time. Perhaps the key to the successive shifts in Lippmann's thought lies in his own statement that "every truly civilized and enlightened man is conservative and liberal and progressive."[^20] What follows is an attempt to examine Lippmann's major works and to distinguish the different stages in his intellectual development.

Walter Lippmann's years at Harvard had a deep and lasting impact on the subsequent development of his political thought. He had come in contact there with socialist ideas and, for a short time, was active in the campus socialist movement. Fabianism and a future geared to socialism appealed to Lippmann because it embodied the desire of the middle class reformer to "level up" rather than "level down," to transform the poor into contented bourgeoisie. At the same time, however, he eschewed the more radical option of seizing the state apparatus and turning power over to a cloistered intellectual elite.

While at Harvard, Lippmann's zeal for moral reformism was matched by the intellectual impact of the ideas of both William James and George Santayana. James contributed to
his young disciple's interest in science and experimentation, persuaded him that science could be reconciled with religion by empirical standards, and evoked realms of consciousness beyond everyday experience. It was from James that the early Lippmann inherited the commitment to social and political meliorism, as well as the belief in "practicality" in a world of competing and often irreconcilable moral imperatives.

Perhaps even more decisive for Lippmann's thinking in later years was the teaching of Santayana. As a Catholic freethinker who valued religion aesthetically, rather than as a guide to morality, Santayana challenged those nineteenth century shibboleths about progress that Lippmann had grown up believing. In particular, Santayana's Platonism led Lippmann to acknowledge an invisible, immutable, higher order of reality, which structures and governs the flux of human experience. While traces of James' radical empiricism may be found in the early works of Lippmann, it was Santayana's realm of essences that increasingly took hold in the 1930s and 1940s and became a central theme in *The Public Philosophy* (1955).

Two of Lippmann's early works—*A Preface to Politics* (1913) and *Drift and Mastery* (1914)—illustrate the gradual shift from socialism and progressivism to pragmatic liberalism. *A Preface to Politics* is the most important work, for it embodies a protest against the empty formalism
and legalism of much political discussion and shows the author's creativity in being among the first to apply Freud's theory of personality to political life. The student of Lippmann's political philosophy may draw two basic conclusions from the many arguments presented in these early works. First, the most enduring theories of politics are those rooted in an explicit conception of human nature. Second, theories of morality are useful insofar as they help to find a mode of living which men will instinctively judge to be good. At this point in his career, Lippmann reflected James' belief that the criteria of ethical judgment are subjective, residing in the mind of the agent.

Throughout the 1920s, Lippmann began to reformulate his position on the desirability of creating a rational society. In *Liberty and the News* (1920), his sense of the complexity of modern industrial society convinced him that, if people were denied the facts, the common method of science could not hope to work. Specifically, the concern for objective truth was being overpowered by a concern for national security, which he found to be just another variation on the old doctrine that the end justifies the means. To assess the flow of uncontaminated fact, Lippmann proposed creating technical research organizations which would help build "a system of information increasingly independent of opinion." The intellectual should become the man, no longer of
"passionate ideas," but of neutral facts.

The arguments presented in both *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925) further develop his concern for the rational basis of political action in modern democracies. The overriding theme of both may be summarized by saying that government by the people is an unattainable ideal in modern industrial society. Not all men, he said, were reasonable, informed, or educated enough to discern and pursue their own interests.\(^2\) As a result, Lippmann suggested that public opinion represented little more than "a moralized and codified version of the facts."\(^2\) The masses have little contribution to make to public affairs, insofar as they are prone to consider facts within the context of their own desires and stereotypes. In short, Lippmann shared Aristotle's view that, in the ideal state, "the function of the governors is to issue commands and give decisions (that is, to govern): the function of the governed is to elect the governors."\(^2\)

Lippmann's *A Preface to Moral* (1929) represented his first foray into moral philosophy and ethics. The starting point of his analysis was anxiety and alienation: social institutions, social codes, and social movements were collapsing. What he termed the "acids of modernity" had corroded religious faith; science had demolished belief; and Freud had violated the sanctity of the human soul.\(^2\) Lippmann's answer to the eclipse of any underlying moral
order in society moved in the direction of a non-
metaphysical, non-absolutist ethic by which rational and
civilized men could live together in a complex world. In
opposition to supernaturalism and the one-dimensionalism of
science, Lippmann offered his own special brand of humanism.
The humanism he proposed rested on detachment—a detachment
that, however appealing in theory, was most difficult to
practice. Lippmann's "mature man" would be above vexing
emotion and not despair at failure.

...since nothing gnawed at his vitals, neither
doubt nor ambition, nor frustration nor fear, he
would move easily through life. And so whether
he saw the thing as comedy, or high tragedy, or
plain farce, he would affirm that it is what it
is, and the wise man can enjoy it.30

For modern man, the acceptance of intrinsic authority
in some "higher law" or divine sanction was impossible;
man's own nature, and that of the world which he lives, must
provide the guidelines. Man has the potential to become
mature, he thought, in the sense of being morally
disinterested. Yet, having stated this moral imperative,
Lippmann continued to doubt the multitude's ability to
accept it. Whereas Lippmann had once urged intellectuals to
become men of action, he now preached the virtues of "a
quiet indifference to the immediate and a serene attachment
to the processes of inquiry and understanding."31

Lippmann's faith in detachment against the indifferent
storms of a pluralistic universe was jolted by the explosion
of moral and intellectual energy accompanying the early
years of the New Deal. The excitement of observing intelligence at work in public decisions began to rekindle Lippmann's earlier faith in the rationality of society. The "ideal of a consciously controlled society was seen to express the deep instinct of men for the unity of civilization."^{32}

Two key books of the early 1930s exemplified Lippmann's evolving position. In *The Method of Freedom* (1934), he expressed a confidence in human capacity to devise intelligent, compensatory policies; it thereby socialized the role of the intellectual.^{33} The following year, in *The New Imperative* (1935), he reaffirmed his belief in the possibility of rational, orderly planning. Toward the end of 1935, however, Lippmann began to lose confidence in Roosevelt's policies. Though he retained a faith in ultimate patterns, he recoiled from the expression of such patterns in social planning.

In *The Good Society* (1937), Lippmann's quest for a unifying vision went far beyond individual disinterestedness to embrace a higher, more objective authority. Under the influence of Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, he issued a broad indictment of "nearly every effort which lays claim to being enlightened, humane and progressive" and involving "the premise of authoritarian collectivism."^{34} True liberalism, argued Lippmann, hinges on two mechanisms that are threatened by the collectivist order—the free market
and the law. Yet neither the market nor the law was, in itself, sufficient as an impersonal means by which society could be regulated. Far from guaranteeing unity in society, this only pushed the problem back a step further—to man himself.

It was not until the publication of *The Public Philosophy* (1955) that Lippmann affirmed the viability of a transcendent ethic founded, not on the moral constitution of man (as in *A Preface to Morals*), but on the moral necessities of the universe. The text revealed Lippmann in his most anti-majoritarian mood. Mass opinion had corrupted government and contributed to "a morbid derangement of the true functions of power." Democracy was paralyzed inasmuch as the people imposed a "veto upon the judgments of informed and responsible people." Not only were the people incapable of exercising their acquired power, but the governments they elected had lost the power which they must recover if they are to govern.

Lippmann's solution moved along two fronts: strengthening executive power and limiting sovereignty on the basis of natural law. A reinvigorated executive would emancipate governments from the stranglehold of special interests. A concern for natural law reflected Lippmann's contention that a large pluralistic society could not be governed "without recognizing that, transcending its plural interests, there is a rational order superior to canon
law. It became the responsibility of the intellectuals to propagate "a common conception of law and order which possesses universal validity" and which would provide a standard for the public philosophy.

Even though Lippmann may not qualify as an original philosopher, he viewed the sphere of practical politics as his "laboratory" and used the insights gained from his years of activism to probe beneath and beyond the headlines. He relentlessly attacked enduring moral and political controversies, always taking care to link even his most abstract works to the rhythms of political experience. Much of Lippmann's lasting appeal derives from the lifelong tension in his work between the committed activist and the detached thinker. Commenting on his reputation as both journalist and political thinker, one observer has concluded:

From the biographical standpoint alone, Lippmann's immersion in the abstruse problems of political philosophy is of utmost interest. The ambitiousness of his speculative projects, and his readiness to invoke concepts and dwell upon thinkers rarely deemed apropos of the discussion of power in Washington, indicate he derived rewards of a very special order from his communication with the ancients.

**Realism and International Politics**

Numerous critics of Walter Lippmann's intellectual orientation as it moved into the realm of international politics have argued against the possibility of specifying a consistent emphasis in his approach or philosophical
perspective. In fact, the confusion and ambiguity surrounding his philosophical roots and their relevance for American public policy are often seen to mirror periodic shifts and transformations in his viewpoints on the history and conduct of American diplomacy.

A typical reading of Lippmann's career might be cast in the following terms. Lippmann's pre-World War I optimism expressed the belief in a world subjected to the steady process of pacification through reason, science, and the universalization of the democratic process. Following the war and throughout the 1920s, he inveighed against the dangers of public opinion and embraced a posture of Stoic detachment. In the 1930s, Lippmann retreated to a policy of isolationism in foreign affairs, shifting to a Machiavellian policy of Realpolitik as World War II unfolded. Finally, in the Cold War era, he developed a "natural law" philosophy with authoritarian overtones, a position which amounted to a confession of bankruptcy regarding his youthful reformism and radicalism.

While it is possible to identify a variety of intellectual facets shaping Lippmann's analysis of American foreign policy over a half-century, the emphasis in this section will focus on his contribution to the emergence of "political realism" as a new and distinctive American approach to global affairs. How do such seminal themes as national interest, power, balance of power, and diplomacy
relate to the rise of America as a global power in the postwar setting? To what extent can Lippmann's realism be considered a reformulation or adaptation of the age-old principles associated with European raison d'état? Specific consideration will be given to the arguments presented by Lippmann in his U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic (1943); U.S. War Aims (1944); Isolation and Alliances (1952); The Cold War (1947); The Communist World and Ours (1958); The Coming Test With Russia (1961); and Western Unity and the Common Market (1962).

With the publication of U.S. Foreign Policy, Lippmann moved away from the themes of internationalism and isolationism that characterized much of his work in the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, the text may be rightly judged to represent one of the earliest attempts by an American to develop a "realist," if not geopolitical, sketch of the past, present, and future of American statecraft. The shift in Lippmann's orientation is affirmed by a revealing self-assessment in the opening pages:

...with the hindsight I am criticizing others for...a lack of foresight of which I also was guilty...I should like to make it as plain as possible...that nothing could be further from my intention than to say to anyone that I told him so. For the conclusions I have set down in this book are drawn from experience....I have come to them slowly over 30 years, and as a result of may false starts and serious disappointments.42

Reacting to the international conquests of Hitler along with the militarization of Japan, Lippmann argued that U.S.
foreign policy was "insolvent," our former apparent security as a nation "uneared." At the core of his thesis was an inquiry into both the historic origins, as well as the future prospects, of the American national interest.

According to Lippmann, the primary actor in international affairs is the sovereign nation state. While acknowledging that international commerce and contacts have been corroding frontiers, he observed that the conditions of multiple sovereignty at the heart of international politics were given and unalterable for practical purposes, at least for the foreseeable future. With no higher authority above the nation state, the instrumentalities of coercion and violence represent enduring attributes in the rivalry among nations. While it may be feasible to mitigate the lawlessness and brutality of the struggle, any effective program for peace must be based on the assumption that there will be sources of international conflict as far as men can foresee.

The precarious nature of American security on the eve of World War II was due, in no small part, to fundamental misperceptions regarding the objective content of American national interests since the dawn of the Republic. Since the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, argued Lippmann, Americans gradually succumbed to the illusion which had brought the nation into mortal peril—"that concern with our frontiers, our armaments, and with
alliances is immoral and reactionary." A century of isolation from Old World politics, combined with the idealistic pretense that America's privileged position was a reward for moral superiority, had blinded Americans from the recognition that hard work is a necessary sacrifice for security. The illusion would now have to be redeemed with American blood and treasure at a time when America could no longer stand aloof and isolated from world affairs.

Moreover, Lippmann emphasized that the broad contours of U.S. diplomatic history reveal that American foreign policy interests have largely been shaped by factors external to America's own sense of "separateness" and moral accomplishment. He reminded his countrymen that even the American War of Independence had been waged with the assistance of the French, Spanish, and Russians. In addition, a careful reading of history would illustrate that the United States had been more or less involved in every war since the seventeenth century in which the order of power in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans was at stake: the wars of 1688-1697, 1701-1714, 1740-1748, 1756-1763, 1812, 177, and 1741.

The viability of the Monroe Doctrine was predicated on the assurance of the British Foreign Secretary that the British Navy would defend the independence of the nations of the New World. After Monroe, Lippmann was only willing to praise Theodore Roosevelt for possessing a firm grasp of
America's overseas commitments and vulnerability. Furthermore, the legalistic-moralistic approach of President Woodrow Wilson's Administration obscured the extent to which American security, prior to World War I, depended on British maritime supremacy and the maintenance of a balance of power in Europe. In the years ahead, these circumstances left Franklin Roosevelt unable to pursue rearmament until China and England stood alone against the Axis powers.

Meanwhile, the "stakes of diplomacy" had grown astronomically since Lippmann first invoked the phrase thirty years earlier; ignorance about them or a concomitant failure by the United States to create a sound post-World War II foreign policy would be disastrous. According to Lippmann, the components of a new, postwar foreign policy were to be defined according to a strict accounting of American national interests, involving a measured assessment of international objectives most vital to the country's security and well-being. Lippmann's dictum that a workable foreign policy "consists in bringing into balance, with a comfortable surplus of power in reserve, the nation's commitments and the nation's power" became a classic definition. Expressed in these terms, Lippmann's arguments can be taken to imply that in diplomacy the national interest is a consideration superior to all others; it is an absolute value to be vigorously defended according to the logic of Realpolitik.
At the same time, however, Lippmann conceded that the national interest often defies precise calculation and is seldom uniform in its application to a wide range of foreign policy situations. More often than not, several interests may present themselves as potential objectives of national policy.\textsuperscript{53} A government must, therefore, limit its objectives, arrange them in order of importance, and carefully work out a system of priorities. While it is true that some of the factors involved do not lend themselves to reliable quantitative measurement, prudent men must make informed guesses and estimates as to how such equations balance.\textsuperscript{54}

Even though Lippmann defined the national interest with a strong accent on the variables of power, he admitted that national power may be seen as a combination of both tangible and intangible factors. The acid test of whether a foreign interest is a vital national interest lies in whether or not the people consider it worth defending at the risk of war.\textsuperscript{55} The supreme national interest, he said, is survival—security of the nation in peace and war. The important material factors that contribute to a nation's defense of its security include: its armed strength, its strategic-geopolitical position, and its alliances.

While strategic and military components may be viewed as the frontline of any nation's power, Lippmann assigned secondary importance to such intangible components as a
nation's morale and constellation of values. Indeed, his definition of survival does not end with mere physical existence; it means "...their families and their homes, their villages and their lands, their countries and their own ways, their alters, their flags and their hearths." Moreover, Lippmann cautioned that any government would be foolish to disregard the potential impact of ideals in its calculations of foreign policy. In order to survive—to preserve its physical integrity—a nation must advance its faith, its moral values, its ideals, and develop a friendly international environment. Yet he also warned that ideals often fail as either good or achievable goals of policy; they must be translated into concrete terms to be realized. Finally, even though honest men may differ on the relative importance of moral and material factors in the calculation of the national interest, they cannot deny that physical survival is a prerequisite for either, and is, therefore, the first and foremost constituent element of the national interest.

Lippmann's approach to both the balance of power and diplomacy begins with the recognition that ensuring national survival and upholding lesser interests presupposes America's ability to defend them against foreign encroachment. The instrument of both defense and aggression is power defined as a nation's ability to persuade others to do its will. The conflict of interests
among states reduces to a struggle for power; armaments lead to counter-armaments, alliances to counter-alliances, and issues tend to be judged not on their individual merit, but in light of the ups and downs of relative power positions. Lippmann believed that nations, like individuals, tend to restrain their ambitions and see the light of reason when they know that their ability to get what they want is limited, checked, and balanced—that force will be met by force.\textsuperscript{11} In surveying events both during and after World War II, Lippmann considered the balance of power as the best available means by which a nation could safeguard its independence, and by which a group of nations could hope to prevent a great, dynamic and aggressive power from establishing hegemony over them.

A number of Lippmann's biographers have pointed to the often contradictory ways in which he employed the balance of power concept. Following World War I, he frequently used the term in a negative sense to refer to the old European order, wherein, he believed, international relationships had been structured by bloc diplomacy and competitive armaments.\textsuperscript{12} At the same time, he could use the term in a more favorable light: "I realize that this sounds...like the doctrine known as the balance of power. That is just what it is, and there is no need to be afraid of a bad name."\textsuperscript{13} Even prior to his conversion to "realism" during World War II, Lippmann would assert: "Where coercive force exists, it
must either be neutralized by force or employed in the interests of what we regard as civilization." This favorable sense in which he cited the balance of power represented an attempt by Lippmann to project a concept drawn from his understanding of domestic politics into international relations. Despite the varying use of the concept, one central theme radiates through Lippmann's work on America's foreign policy prospects following World War I: "The old European order had collapsed, and America could no longer stand aloof and isolated from world affairs."

It was not until the spread of totalitarianism across Europe in the 1940s that Lippmann was inspired to re-evaluate more fully the balance of power principle, in contrast to the Wilsonian worldview that influenced U.S. foreign policy thinking well into the 1930s.

There is the idealistic tradition...that this country cannot with a good conscience recognize any settlement which rests on a balance of power and the existence of spheres of influence. The tradition holds that only one world of like-minded states is tolerable, and all the arrangements that the diplomatists have made in the past, to accommodate the perpetual rivalry of nations, are intolerable. This tradition...is not compatible with peace in a world where great powers are not like minded, and do not mean to be so.

Instead of responding to events with no guiding principle other than a pragmatic sense of what seemed feasible in each situation, he worked out a more consistent diplomacy based on military power, alliances, spheres of influence, and a "cold calculation" of American national interests.
Combining Admiral Mahan's view of sea power with Nicholas Spykman's geopolitics and Clausewitz's conception of war as the military conduct of diplomacy, Lippmann emerged as the new apostle in the United States of hardheaded Realpolitik.  

Of paramount importance in the postwar era was the establishment of alliances sufficiently potent to deter would-be aggressors. In 1943, Lippmann outlined three requirements for a successful postwar settlement: (1) the formulation of a grand nuclear alliance between the Soviet Union, Britain, and America to preserve European security; (2) the neutralization of prewar Eastern European states as a mutual guarantee to both the Soviets and nations of Western Europe of their peaceful intention toward one another; and (3) the cooperation of all members of the nuclear alliance in a wider association of nations. It was logical then that in December 1944, Lippmann endorsed the grant of "veto" to the members of the proposed Security Council of the future United Nations. Popular opinion, he further counseled, had to become increasingly "realistic" and understand the necessity of great power collaboration, since the "elementary means by which all foreign policy must be conducted are the armed forces of a nation, the arrangement of its strategic position, and the choice of its alliances.

Underlying Lippmann's proposal of an alliance system
among the major powers was the assumption that the idea of peace can only be achieved by making a series of moves over a long period of time in order to establish and perpetuate a balance of power between the great rival states.\textsuperscript{71} In the absence of such a balance, it is possible to talk about the surrender of one side to the other, but not a satisfactory negotiated settlement.\textsuperscript{72} The basic idea, as Lippmann was to express in 1955, is that "when the ponderable forces are in balance, neither being able or willing to exert decisive force, the imponderable means of reason become efficacious."\textsuperscript{73}

While affirming the importance of the balance idea for postwar security among the leading powers, Lippmann was no less insistent in suggesting that the existing balance of power in the late 1940s was "unstable and unsatisfactory." Responding to Soviet designs in Eastern Europe and Asia, he cautioned that the United States should seek the withdrawal of the Red Army from Europe and, at the same time, should develop the power to strike at the vital centers of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{74} The need for the United States to redress the existing balance was prompted by Soviet moves to incorporate Finland and Czechoslovakia into its strategic orbit and dominate by force the area which the West would need to use its superior military weapons. Lippmann believed the Soviet moves so greatly imperiled Western security as to warrant immediate American mobilization—the
restoration of selective service, the re-establishment of war power over industry, the resumption of lend lease, and the declaration of a state of national emergency.71

Lippmann's perception of Moscow's intention to upset the existing balance of power and render ineffective American deterrent capability was reiterated over the next twenty years. In 1950, he noted that the Soviets were trying to develop their air defenses to the point of being able to neutralize American power.72 The logic of the situation required that the United States must keep its striking power superior to Soviet defenses; the development of American defensive techniques must always stay ahead of Soviet offensive capability. Following his much publicized meeting with Khrushchev in 1958, Lippmann gained the impression that the Soviets were unwilling to make any concessions that would give the United States even a slight tactical advantage, not to speak of a strategic advantage, in case of war.73 Again in 1962 and 1963, following the repeated failure of negotiations for a nuclear test ban treaty, he observed that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was prepared to trust each other with nuclear superiority.74 Each power believed that it must have supremacy in order to have security. Again, in commenting on the Soviet-backed conflict in Korea, Lippmann greeted President Truman's decision to send American troops by saying: "Now that force is being used to upset the existing
balance of power in the Far East, force must be used to
right it again."

Several key considerations shaped Lippmann's emphasis
on the balance of power throughout the postwar years.
First, when Lippmann advocated a policy of balance of power
for the United States, he meant the establishment of a
balance that would be decisively favorable to America.
Second, he often submitted that the "third states" which
might act as balances between American and the Soviet
interests are bound to appear on the world political scene.
In 1950, he argued that the hazards inherent in the existing
bipolarization of power could be minimized only by the
"reappearance of independent powers, who have the energy and
will to take their own course." Supporting Winston
Churchill's plea for a "supreme effort to bridge the gulf
between the two worlds," he observed that the world needed
more than two spheres of influence.

Third, while the political organization of the world
remains unchanged, the balance of power represented the best
available instrument which nations can employ to defend
their vital interests. While complicated and often
difficult to operate, it is a more reliable method of
defense than such institutional arrangements as collective
security. The larger the number of great powers that can
act as balancers, the greater the chance that the system
will endure and that the independence of member states will
be preserved. The balance of power represented the best available means by which a nation can safeguard its independence and counter the aggressive ambitions of a hegemonic power.\textsuperscript{33}

Equally important for the maintenance of international equilibrium was Lippmann's approach to the problems and prospects of postwar diplomacy. It will be useful to recall that his formula for a solvent foreign policy was based on the following prescription: The statesman intent on upholding peace must give his first attention to the cold calculation of organizing power. Lippmann's writing on both the meaning of diplomacy, as well as viable diplomatic options, offer a number of valuable insights into his understanding of both the legitimate and illegitimate projection of American power abroad in service of the national interest. In particular, the conduct of American diplomacy in the nuclear age provided Lippmann with a theme by which he was often critical of the periodic inability of American decision-makers to find a reasonable balance between their commitments (or opportunities) and their power. A number of historical examples may be cited to illustrate Lippmann's position.

Lippmann sharply attacked the policy of "containment" of the Soviet Union, as that policy was formulated in an article signed "X" in the July, 1947 issue of Foreign Affairs. In The Cold War: A Study of U.S. Foreign Policy,
he argued that a policy of containment would commit the United States to an "ideological crusade" designed to make "Jeffersonian democrats out of peasants...and tribal chieftains." Taking issue with George Kennan’s proposal to contain Russia with "unalterable counterforce at every point," Lippmann objected to the implicit suggestion of globalized military confrontation with the Soviet Union. Such an approach to great power rivalry would require a virtual garrison state and bring the United States to "a policy of ceaseless intervention in the affairs of weaker and disorderly states."

Rather than containment on the periphery, Lippmann urged that America and the Soviet Union commit all their diplomatic energy to a political settlement in Europe. Specifically, he exhorted American leaders to propose a joint withdrawal of Soviet and American troops, encompassing a reunified Germany with strict guarantees of demilitarization. The history of diplomacy, he reminded Kennan, is "the history of relations among rival powers, which did not enjoy political intimacy, and did not respond to appeals to common purposes." Diplomacy is simply a method of managing relations among rivals, with the goal being a condition of balance wherein no power has the prospect of successful aggression. Furthermore, Lippmann pointed out:
Nevertheless there have been some settlements. Some of them did not last very long. Some of them did. For a diplomat to think that rival and unfriendly powers cannot be brought to a settlement is to forget what diplomacy is all about. There would be little for diplomats to do if the world consisted of partners, enjoying political intimacy, and responding to common appeals.

The policy of containment, in short, would imply the abandonment of diplomacy and the destruction of the United Nations. Through diplomatic channels, Lippmann urged the United States to reaffirm its commitment to the United Nations, to the autonomy of all nation states, and to the assistance of the economic reconstruction of Europe.

Lippmann echoed a similar theme in his criticism of U.S.-Soviet relations throughout the 1950s. While he accused the Truman Administration of foreign policy by manufactured crises, he was no more enthusiastic about the doctrine of "brinkmanship" and the threat of "massive retaliation" developed during the Eisenhower years. Once again, Lippmann questioned whether the Administration’s strategic doctrine was in balance with the proliferation of defense treaty commitments as a means of rolling back the Communist menace. The disparity was vividly displayed by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles’ suggestion that the United States might resort to dropping a few atomic bombs on the Vietnamese in 1954, and to rattling the bomb at Peking for shelling two Chiang-held islands off the China coast. A foreign minister, he reminded Dulles, was "one who uses
words precisely which mean genuinely what they say," while a diplomat who peddled propaganda was "like a doctor who sells patent medicine." As a behind-the-scenes advisor to Adlai Stevenson in 1956, Lippmann stressed that the incumbent administration should be taken to task for "our militarized diplomacy," Japan's drift toward neutralism, the "alienation" of India, and Soviet "political penetration" of the Middle East.

That diplomacy must supplement any balance of power among the superpowers reflected Lippmann's belief that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union could win in a direct war, in any conventional or meaningful sense of the term. After interviewing Khrushchev in 1958, he found the Soviet leader to be a highly skilled political strategist, who utilized ideology in service of the nation's interest. Recognizing the reality of power and balance of power, Khrushchev was a man who could be dealt with through negotiations and diplomacy. While a revival of collaboration typical of the war years was impractical, Lippmann pointed to the principal diplomatic objectives on the American foreign policy agenda: (1) the necessity of reaching agreement with the Soviets on demilitarizing Central Europe and removing nuclear weapons from the area; (2) the need for viable diplomatic initiatives to counter the influence of the Soviet and Chinese examples for the developing nations; and (3) the imperative of avoiding
costly and unmanageable overseas commitments (i.e., in addition to America's rightful defense needs within the Atlantic Alliance) which would require the nation to "stake our own security and peace of the world upon satellites, puppets, clients, agents about whom we can know very little."\textsuperscript{1}

In wars of national liberation, Lippmann suggested that the intervention of American military force must only be used in subordination to diplomacy and the goal of a negotiated settlement. "The test of any extension of war is whether it produces a negotiation."\textsuperscript{2} Moreover, the scope of any negotiated settlement in remote areas is contingent on the extent to which vital American interests are at stake as well as the impact of conditions supporting a local or regional balance of power. As a prominent and outspoken critic of President Johnson's Vietnam policy, Lippmann found such calculations absent from the stated objectives of American decision-makers. In supporting a gradual withdrawal of troops as the only tenable solution, Lippmann remained unconvinced that vital American security interests were in jeopardy or that American military capability was adequate to sustain protracted guerilla warfare in Southeast Asian jungles.\textsuperscript{3}

The lesson of Vietnam only dramatized Lippmann's familiar assertion that American foreign policy has never reached a "stopping point" between the two alternatives of
"globalism" and "isolationism." Administration officials were blind to the reality that China was the dominant power in that region of the world. For the United States to have expected South Vietnam to survive within the confines of a Chinese sphere of influence, and expect security from retaliation, constituted a violation of the ground rules of diplomacy. Successful diplomacy, according to Lippmann, should seek accommodation between rival powers rather than provocation. For the United States to extricate itself from a war that could not be won, Lippmann saw only one rational solution: first, to disentangle American military commitments from Southeast Asia since they were overextended; and secondly, to seek a political settlement with China regarding the entire area.

Lippmann's conversion to a more "realistic" stance in international affairs (during and after World War II) can be interpreted as a clarion call to the nation to shake off the final vestiges of immaturity and prolonged innocence in a world from which America could no longer quietly escape. Whether in his weekly column or in the presence of world leaders, his message was powerful and straightforward: power and not protestations of morality are the basic ingredients of diplomacy. Peace and stability were not the result of promulgating grandiose schemes involving no real commitments, but the product of continually maintaining an ever-fragile balance of power. In commenting on the
traditional American distrust of power politics, Lippmann warned:

There is no place in this ideal pattern of the world for the adoption of limited ends or limited means, for the use of checks and balances among contending forces, for the demarcation of spheres of influence and of power and interest, for accommodation and compromise and adjustment, for the stabilization of the status quo, for the restoration of an equilibrium. These are the substance and matter of an efficient diplomacy.

Realpolitik Reconsidered: Morality and American Diplomacy

In calling upon the United States to face up to the often harsh realities of international life, Lippmann has frequently been associated with other "realists" advocating a return to the methods and precepts of classical diplomacy as the only viable modus operandi for America as a great power. In fact, Lippmann considered such an objective to be the only responsible basis for a settlement between the United States and the Soviet Union in the postwar period.

If we will not or cannot use the classic procedure of diplomacy which is always a combination of power and compromise--then the best we can look forward to is an era of disintegration in the civilized world, followed by...a war which once begun, would be savage, universal, and indecisive.

National preparedness, not vaporous hopes for world peace, was to Lippmann's mind the appropriate American foreign policy posture in the postwar world; henceforth, the country would have to be vigilant in augmenting its security--which in itself was an invaluable contribution to the cause of world peace.
At this juncture, it will be important to inquire into the philosophical roots underlying Lippmann's affirmation of a consistent diplomacy based on military power, alliances, and spheres of influence. More specifically, do the formative intellectual sources in his international thought distinguish him as a modern proponent of Realpolitik in world affairs? In view of the fact that European raison d'état rested on a number of central tenets adapted to varying geographical and political circumstances, how was Lippmann able to reconcile the earlier tradition and assumptions with American foreign policy prospects following World War II? Finally, to what extent can the Realpolitik elements in Lippmann's approach be construed as a ruthless assault on the democratic ideology that underlay the doctrinaire moralism typical of Wilsonian internationalism?

Lippmann discovered a practical, if not pragmatic, justification for a philosophical approach to the lessons of American foreign policy:

For if, as our society insists, philosophy is the guide to life, then in philosophy we ought to find the guide to the great difficulty which the American people have experienced--particularly in the last forty years--in forming a good and workable foreign policy. I have come to think that the root of our difficulty is to be found in our philosophy.

In surveying American diplomatic history from Wilson's Fourteen Points to Truman's emphasis on containment, Lippmann was struck by an extraordinary paradox: the contrast between the American rise to preeminence and the
subsequent inability to deal successfully with the actual course of events. That American diplomacy has frequently miscarried can be attributed to the absence of any coherent vision for deciding when, where, how, and for what ends such enormous power should be exerted. The diplomatic debris and wreckage of hopeful policy declarations commensurate with America's emergence as a superpower are symptomatic of erroneous assumptions and beliefs about the prevention of war and the maintenance of peace in a world with few recognized moral absolutes.100

The failure of American diplomacy, asserted Lippmann, was not to be found in material circumstances but in "our own habits of thought" and "ideological picture of the world." The prevailing American worldview constituted a "philosophical framework of preconceptions" which "misrepresent the nature of things, falsify our judgments of events, and inhibit the formation of workable policies by which available means can be devoted to realizable ends."101 Indeed, such preconceptions are the byproduct of "our age of innocence...when we were isolated, and when we were sheltered from the rivalries of states and empires."102 That Lippmann judged the American preoccupation with legalistic-moralistic norms in international affairs to be both "imaginary and false" is supplemented by his own vision of human nature as well as the nature of international society.
Although Lippmann's inquiry into the ethical basis of human action exhibited periodic intellectual shifts and frequently contrasting viewpoints, he affirmed the centrality of human nature for any understanding of domestic or international politics. In *A Preface to Politics*, Lippmann acknowledged that each of the political philosophers of the past, from Plato down to Bentham and Mill, had his own view of human nature which formed the basis of his deliberations on politics. Too often political scientists were inclined to discuss political institutions without an accompanying analysis of "man" who makes them and lives under them; indeed, Lippmann condemned this indifference to the study of human nature and argued that observations on the subject are the only part of the thought of the past and present which can claim lasting merit.

In spite of the almost radical changes which Lippmann's view of human nature underwent from 1913 to 1955, his estimate of the common man's moral and intellectual ability remained practically unchanged. Except in rare cases, most men cannot comprehend the reality of complex things; they are ever-insurgent against reason, and their natural impulses cannot be trusted to create the good life. The politics of human reconstruction, Lippmann warned, can bear fruit only among people who are educated and who are willing to subject their prejudices and traditional ways of thinking
to critical examination. In vivid contrast to the "mature man" whose reason rules his lust and impulses, the vast majority of men is uncivilized—foolish and refractory against reason—or only partially civilized. Most individuals never face the fact that "...there is evil which is as genuine as goodness, that there is ugliness and violence which are no less real than joy or love." Among the immature, argued Lippmann, the belief that evil is unreal becomes a deep preference for not knowing the truth, an habitual desire to live out in utopia.

The distinction Lippmann developed in his later work between man's first and second nature provides an important nexus to his outlook on the nature and structure of international society. In *The Public Philosophy*, he defined reason as an instrument for the fulfillment of impulses. When reason no longer represents society within the human psyche (i.e., indicating the ends of action and providing criteria of judgment), then it becomes a victim of appetite and passion. At this stage of his work, Lippmann no longer regarded the natural impulses of man (his first nature) as pure, innocent and neutral. In the so-called tradition of civility, they must be subordinated to man's second, acquired and more rational nature.

It is important to note that Lippmann traced the feeling of nationality to the loves, hates, and prejudices of man's first nature. It gives men self-confidence and a
sense of belonging to a higher and greater authority than their own individual personality.¹⁰ Like a magnet, the nation attracts that vast fund of loyalty that men desire to bestow on an entity more permanent and extensive than their personal lives.

National patriotism, where it is directed against foreign powers, unites men otherwise divided by religion, by party, by class and occupation. Nationalism is more powerful, being rooted so profoundly in human nature, than any ideology which has recently been propounded by a party congress and is being imposed by propaganda on the top of men's heads....Being so powerful, nationalism is, of course, powerful both for good and evil.¹⁰

By emphasizing the separateness and sovereignty of nations, the weight of nationalism stands in contrast to the utopian idea of a civilized world state in which diverse nationalities find liberty and justice under a system of equal laws. As a result, international politics will reflect a division of the world into sovereign nation states with different, and often conflicting, interests.

In addition, the popular American philosophy refuses to recognize that "rivalry and strife and conflict among states, communities, and factions is the normal condition of mankind."¹¹ The political philosophy that informs the public conscience was viewed by Lippmann as a remnant of democratic idealism, conceived in the eighteenth century and defective as a realistic estimate of both power and interest in the political sphere in general and in foreign policy in particular.¹¹ American foreign policy, he added,
oscillated among three patterns of conduct: (1) in a posture of neutrality which assumes that struggle can be ignored or avoided; (2) in self-righteous moral crusades which assumes that by defeating the chief troublemaker the struggle for existence will be non-problematic; and (3) in the sponsorship of a universal society which assumes the struggle can be legislated out of existence. Such illusions have spawned an American ideology that:

...distorts our judgment when we deal with the problems of power. It distorts our judgment when we determine our aims. It distorts our judgment when we have to calculate how a balance can be struck between our aims and our power to realize them.\(^1\)\(^1\)\(^2\)

Expressed in the terms above, Lippmann's arguments can be taken to imply that the national interest is a consideration superior to all others, that it is an absolute value to be defended according to the logic of Realpolitik. By emphasizing the ubiquity of power and conflict as well as the primacy of the national interest, had Lippmann spoken in a way to justify the doctrine that "might makes right?" Had he arrived at a theoretical justification for another variant of oppression, for the projection of unbridled American ambition, self-defined and self-regulating, on a weakened world? Had he propounded a modern apology for Machiavellian raison d'état—that nations were in the hands of demonic forces, with little margin if any to rescue moral values from a sea of tragic necessity?

These questions were put to Lippmann by the French
philosopher Jacques Maritain during an extraordinary exchange of letters in 1943. At issue was whether Lippmann had succeeded in preserving the distinction between "true realism, grounded on justice and moral standards," and "pseudo-realism" or "Machiavellianism." Specifically, Maritain pressed Lippmann on the subject of why he avoided addressing "the ultimate end" toward which the Western world should aspire. For the "realistic alliance" would, in the estimation of Maritain,

be liable to failure and a risk of new wars, if it did not embody a solemn pledge to prepare a world organization, a federation of peoples, inspired by a heroic ideal; if such a dynamism of the ultimate were lacking in the work of peace, the fear of utopia would become more utopian than utopia itself.113

While Lippmann conceded that the problem of the "ultimate end" represented an unresolved consideration in U.S. Foreign Policy and U.S. War Aims, he advised Maritain that the question could not "be approached unless military power has first been organized for security against the threat of great wars."114 Moreover, he took exception to Maritain's belief that a military and political settlement in Europe could somehow substitute for the creative work of civilization in constructing the good life. The policeman is not always a potential priest; indeed, he should be confined to the task of preserving an order within which the priest and teacher can proceed.115 In a revealing passage, Lippmann elaborated on why his endorsement of alliance among
the victors excluded the possibility of awarding America carte blanche to impose its own vision of spiritual development worldwide:

If I was to propose...the ultimate temporal end of society, I would hope to make an historical and philosophical argument against the notion that it was the mission of the allied powers to rule the world in order to promote my end. My view...is that security against aggression and not promotion of civilization is the function of the great power alliance....In view of the fact that power corrupts men’s minds, I was...concerned to avoid the suggestion that the power we must exercise is an instrument for the attainment for ultimate ends. That could lead only...to a new version of Kipling and the white man’s burden.

At the same time, however, Lippmann was far from warmly embracing the position that the "necessity of the state" deprived statesmen and nations of a margin of freedom to choose the right path (i.e., to decide for the good ends and pursue them with the least evil of available means) in their external conduct. That there is a degree of compatibility between service to the national interest and moral choice in foreign policy represented a persistent, if not sometimes ambiguous, theme in his observations on the role of ideals and values in international politics. Even as a harsh critic of Wilson’s internationalism and the excessive moralism during the interwar years, Lippmann was always sensitive to both the strengths and weaknesses of American values projected abroad.

In both Public Opinion and The Public Philosophy, Lippmann argued that ideals can be a powerful factor in both
domestic and international politics. Between man and his environment, he observed, there exists a pseudo-environment which consists of the ideas and images of the world. From this pseudo-environment, man receives the stimuli that move him to action. Indeed, the way in which the world is perceived may determine at any given time what men will do, what direction their efforts will take, and where their hopes will be focused. It follows that no political scientist can afford to disregard the power and influence of ideas, ideals, and ideologies in the affairs of men.

The belief, at times expressed by Lippmann, that the United States was a cultural and political backwater had been shattered by the events in Europe. Certainly with the fall of France in 1940, America took on new luster as the repository not only of material and military strength but of the imperiled spiritual life of the West as well. In U.S. War Aims, Lippmann defended the pervasive national values that shaped the history of American foreign policy:

The persistent evangel of Americanism in the outer world...reflects the fact that no nation, and certainly not this nation, can endure in a politically alien and morally hostile environment; and the profound and abiding truth is that a people which does not advance its truth has already begun to abandon it.

Both the Monroe Doctrine and the Open Door stood for the American way of life projected abroad. The fact that the United States supported China and sympathized with the struggle of colonial people reflected that "Americans...are
opponents of imperialism wherever they encounter it."\textsuperscript{122} Lippmann concluded that United States foreign policy commitments are supported, in the final analysis, not by the instruments of diplomacy—treaties and declarations—but by the fact that they enlist underlying liberal and democratic norms.\textsuperscript{123}

Many of these same themes were espoused by Lippmann in the context of the emerging Cold War between the two superpowers. In particular, he suggested that "friendly" relations between the two countries could not develop until:

...the basic political and human liberties are established in the Soviet Union. Only then will there be full confidence and free intercourse on the basis of full equality. For between states that do not have free institutions and those that do have them, international relations must necessarily be special and restricted.\textsuperscript{124}

In fact, as early as 1919, Lippmann opined that cordial relations cannot exist between countries whose foreign policies are motivated by incompatible ideals and belief systems.\textsuperscript{125} The "inequality of diplomatic discourse" between the two major powers means there can only be a "\textit{modus vivendi}, only compromises, bargains, specific agreements, only a diplomacy of checks and balances."\textsuperscript{126} While Lippmann harbored no illusions about the Soviets as skilled practitioners of power politics, he nonetheless urged United States decision-makers to counter Soviet ideological fervor with the vigor of American idealism. "They must develop and apply their principles, not abandon
Many of these propositions would seem to enfeeble Lippmann's assertion, noted earlier, that a government should pursue the national interest largely to the exclusion of idealistic criteria. Yet that this contradiction may by more apparent than real is suggested by two prominent themes in evidence throughout much of his work. First, Lippmann was indisputably an "internationalist" from first to last. Although a tireless dissenter from Wilson's global pretensions, he attempted to build a blueprint of defense for the postwar generation that would more effectively harmonize American declarations of policy and the power to achieve them. Integral to his international vision was a recognition of the limits governing the projection of American power and national principles abroad. Second, the geopolitical teachings of Nicholas Spykman were influential in Lippmann's attempt to calculate the relative weight and significance of moral principles in the formulation of American national interests. Lippmann argued that the ratio of principle to power in statecraft will be predicated on the timeless assumption that it is impossible to abolish the rivalry of nations and establish a universal identity of interest in world peace.

Lippmann's stature as an internationalist can be distinguished by his life-long commitment to a "cosmopolitan" vision of world affairs. In commenting on
Lippmann’s search for a cosmopolitan philosophy responsive to twentieth-century problems, one leading scholar points out:

The designation means...that his views were unconstrained by the preoccupations and prejudices of his homeland; that he was receptive to diverse currents of opinion from abroad; that the values, ideals, and interests of many societies were interwoven with his methods and conclusions; and that he pleaded for widespread adoption of such a mental outlook by his contemporaries.1

Lippmann believed that under the imperatives of modern warfare, people everywhere abandoned their belief in reasoned discourse, in the free exchange of ideas and values, and in the possibilities for collaboration among diverse societies. Throughout the world, the multiplication of more sophisticated weaponry supplanted the former search for spiritual fortification; even the domain of ideas had been swamped by the logic of fear to which military preparedness responded.130

Indeed, the Realpolitik theories of the 1940s truly make sense when they are interpreted as defending Lippmann’s cosmopolitan ideals. The odious features he found in authoritarian societies—their disregard for the variety of human personality and motivation, their axiomatic combativeness—shaped Lippmann’s subsequent thinking on the strategic and tactical problems of the postwar era. Identifying totalitarianism as the arch-enemy of all cosmopolitan virtues, he was never reluctant in portraying
the Allied cause as the protector of these same virtues. In fact, the language of military power and balance of power strategy prominent in both U.S. Foreign Policy and U.S. War Aims functioned as a self-activating brake on renegade actors who dared to foist their aims on the world through militant aggression and the irrational resort to force.

Interestingly enough, Lippmann's balance of power codes, couched in the language of American military strength and devoted to cosmopolitan goals, could also function as a de facto regulator of presumptive American omnipotence—of adventurism, imperialism or belligerence from this side of the Atlantic. To speak, as he did, of great power combinations and countering force with force was to imply that the conditions that preempted aggression by America's enemies also circumscribed America's own foreign policy behavior. His balance of power theory allowed that there may be a modicum of reason or legitimacy in the position of an adversary. No nation can lay claim to a monopoly of truth and justice. It was this larger cosmopolitan vision, grounded on a realistic appraisal of American power, that gave Lippmann's postwar commentary on international relations its distinctiveness and unique flavor.

Contemporary U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda
Before turning finally to an assessment of Lippmann's philosophy of international politics, it may be useful briefly to examine his position on a number of fundamental
issues that have assumed increasing significance on the American postwar foreign policy and diplomatic agenda. Specifically, consideration will be devoted to: (1) nuclear proliferation and arms control; (2) international organization and global security; (3) American diplomacy and the Third World; and (4) human rights in American foreign policy. While it would be feasible to expand the inventory of postwar policy topics that received thoughtful attention by Lippmann, these four substantive concerns represent recurrent themes throughout his published work. Moreover, it should be noted that, for all practical purposes, Lippmann's commentary on United States foreign policy and international politics ended with his criticism of American involvement in the Vietnam War.

The concept of a nuclear alliance at the core of a reinvigorated Atlantic community grew out of Lippmann's condemnation of his own participation, along with so many others of his generation, in the push for disarmament and for collective strategy through the League of Nations in the 1920s. As he frequently pointed out, it was the nuclear "balance of terror," not the United Nations or any abstract disarmament schemes, that kept America and the Soviet Union from war. He advised that the United States should hold onto the bomb as the "one most dependable guaranty that atomic weapons will not be used against us." Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Lippmann endorsed the American monopoly of
nuclear power (and in opposition to French President Charles DeGaulle's proposed *force de frappe*) as an indispensable prerequisite for the security and prosperity of the Atlantic alliance.

We cannot allow this power to be set in motion by others. We must keep the ultimate right to decide whether and when it shall be used. A weak and independent nuclear force within the Western alliance, a force which could start a world war but could not finish it, would be a danger to the peace of the world and to our own national security.\(^\text{136}\)

Reflecting on his own experience in the 1920s and 1930s, Lippmann could never again see disarmament as a way of preventing war. His postwar pessimism was rooted in several key factors. First, it would be virtually impossible to supervise and control far-reaching arms reduction accords effectively.\(^\text{137}\) Specifically, no supranational organization or agency could ever hope to acquire the delegated authority to take appropriate action against those who might violate the terms of an agreement. Second, disarmament initiatives in the service of global harmony are frequently self-defeating, inasmuch as they fail to recognize the struggle for power as the supreme and inexorable fact of international politics in a world which is organized into nation states. Furthermore, Lippmann argued that "arms control" or "arms limitation" can never be separated from a general settlement of the outstanding political or territorial questions that divide major powers.\(^\text{138}\) In railing against the pacifists of an earlier
era, he pointed out that a more studied objective would be to "confront power with power at a selected point where a decision is in a military sense possible, and then to use the unstable and delicate equilibrium as an opportunity to be seized for constructive and magnanimous negotiation."  

The inescapable dilemma of balancing morality and geopolitical factors is also illustrated by Lippmann's outlook on the contribution of international organization to an orderly world society. Americans, he said, had a traditional distrust of power politics and believed that "security and peace require a universal order of equal laws, and can never be had in a mere equilibrium of sovereign states." Since the supreme authority in human affairs is the universal law of nature, men should not live their lives in so many "civic republics" separated from one another by different systems of justice; they should all be fellow citizens in "one life and one order" under one joint law.

It is a vigilant dream which must be realized if this planet is to fulfill man's best hopes. It is clearly the goal of human political endeavor, and no civilized man can afford to sneer at it, or lay it altogether outside his mind.

Yet such a cosmopolitan assessment can only serve as an intellectual point of reference by which the makers of policy must formulate "workable" policies in the face of immediate reality, where the majority of men act without recourse to reason and seek to realize their desires by the resort to force. In opposition to the idealist belief in
world law and international parliaments, Lippmann stressed that peace lay in great power cooperation (e.g., in a nuclear alliance), not in resolutions from international assemblies. "The great object of international organization in the next generation is to hold together the alliance and to hold it together at any cost."¹⁴² Lippmann remained pessimistic in expecting that the major powers would willingly delegate responsibility to a world society which does not exist or has just barely been organized.

In answer to those who saw the United Nations as an instrument for containing the Soviet Union, Lippmann insisted that peace had to rest ultimately on great power arrangements and respect for spheres of influence. He maintained that an organization such as the United Nations should be viewed as a meeting place for the plenipotentiaries of national governments, as a "voluntary association of diplomats who confer."¹⁴³ In addition, it should refrain from taking up the substantive problems of international peace and security; it should eschew issues which bear on the vital interests of states, with the possible exception of those on which the great powers are willing to cooperate.¹⁴⁴ In short, Lippmann sought to limit UN activity to such non-political functions as promoting cultural and scientific exchanges among member states as well as encouraging international cooperation in the solution of economic, social, and educational problems.
facing mankind. The United Nations should be devoted to the "arts of peace" and attempt to solve the problems of individual rather than national security.

Both in the immediate postwar era and over the next twenty years, Lippmann exhibited little sustained interest in the panoply of problems indigenous to the emerging nations of Africa, Asia or Latin America. Immediately after World War II, he stated that the primary area of American responsibility was limited to the Atlantic basin on both sides, and the Pacific islands—in other words, the Atlantic community plus a "blue water" strategy of naval bases and roaming fleets. Along similar lines, he took exception to those interpretations of the Truman Doctrine that would commit "American power to the defense of a heterogeneous collection of unstable governments and contending parties and factions which happened to be opposed to the Soviet Union. Intervention in the name of the balance of power was justified and necessary; indiscriminate intervention in support of unstable client regimes was wasteful and dangerous. In viewing the theme of containment in relation to the developing countries, he concluded that the greatest danger in Africa and Asia was not Soviet expansionism, or even subversion, but a too-hasty collapse of former empires.

However, Lippmann's general approach to American intervention and influence in the Third World was marked by
contradictions. As early as 1950, he urged America to recognize the rising strength of the "nonaligned powers" and "work to assist their development, both for their interests and our own, in a world passing out of the nightmare of a two-power world." Emphasizing the hazards inherent in the prevailing bipolarization of power, Lippmann added that a settlement between the two powers could endure only if both sides acknowledged "the right and need of many smaller powers to exist, and act as buffers and mediators, and...as guardians of the balance of power." 

While the break-up of the two-power system may have been "predestined and appointed," Lippmann continued to harbor doubts regarding the capacity of new entrants in the arena of world politics to occupy the position of "balancer" among the rival powers. In particular, he appeared to challenge his own assessment by observing that technological developments in the mid-twentieth century rendered the small states altogether too small to manipulate the balance of power or even to pursue an independent policy. Beyond the suggestion that emerging powers might, at some point, challenge the dictates of Moscow and Washington, Lippmann provided few specifics regarding the future economic and diplomatic agenda of either Third World or nonaligned nations.

The same sense of equivocation prevailed in Lippmann analysis of the limits governing American intervention in
emerging nations threatened by Soviet-backed forces. On the one hand, he argued that nationalism was far more powerful than ideology in many developing countries and that global containment of communism by the United States would lead to unending wars of intervention and support for weak client regimes. Nonetheless, he supported aid to the Greek monarchy, air and naval intervention in Korea (though not troops), and backing for the French in Indochina. Whenever containment was put to the test as a policy choice where the balance of power seemed to be involved, he went along with the containment strategy. His only important qualification was that American troops not be sent to fight proxy wars, as in Korea.\(^1\)\(^{15}\) The battalions of what he once called "Western Christendom" should not be committed until the Soviets sent their own. He believed America's Cold War policies were essentially defensive and that the problem of containment was primarily one of execution rather than conception.\(^1\)\(^{15}\)

Even in Lippmann's latter years, when he emerged as a staunch critic of the Johnson Administration's Vietnam policy, he acknowledged that the real problem was not simply containing communism in Southeast Asia. Indeed, he could never completely bring himself to absolve the United States of all responsibility from aiding various developing countries on the verge of a communist takeover. Rather, American policy-makers had fallen victim to the illusion of pursuing a military victory while eschewing diplomatic
leverage that would permit negotiations to achieve a truce of sufficient duration to allow Vietnamese national reconciliation and to prevent it from becoming a military appendage of China. While he sharply challenged a "globalist" strategy of containment during the first five years of the Cold War, after 1950 and until 1965 he essentially accepted the consensus underlying containment, even while criticizing some of the ways it was implemented.

Although Lippmann's declining health and subsequent death precluded any contribution to the debate over human rights and American foreign policy which gained momentum in the late 1970s, his preoccupation with the limits and opportunities of the so-called American mission abroad yield a number of interesting conclusions. In his approach to the moral content of the American national interest, Lippmann started with two major propositions about the nature of man—one normative and the other empirical. The ethical goal of human development is maturity, which is the stage where reason governs human conduct. In fact, Lippmann understood reason to be the supreme authority in the "ideal" state of human affairs. The dictates of reason are both universal and valid; its authority must be coextensive with mankind. Pressing this point to its logical conclusion, Lippmann argued that a world state predicated on the law of reason—or the Law of Nature and of Nature's God—must be the ultimate ideal of all rational men. From an exclusively
ethical standpoint, Lippmann could suggest that nationalism is barbaric, the rivalry of nations is criminal, and the balance of power is the structural principle of public order in the good society. 

In the same breath, however, Lippmann acknowledged that in ethics there is always a political dimension, for dead men only walk in ghost stories. In looking at the immediate reality, he found that most men are immature, that they seldom reason, and that both individuals and groups seek to realize their desires by force. In the context of human nature as it is, in a world where rivalry and strife are a fact, survival cannot be ensured unless power is confronted with power, unless it is checked and balanced. Since survival must be a prerequisite for the realization of other ideals and values, a policy which imperils survival (as well as the prospect of progress toward the ideal) is both inexpedient and immoral.

The American "fundamentalist mentality" in foreign policy for which he reprimanded Wilson was precisely what the country had to avoid in the ensuing years; not fervid chest-thumping, not missionary work on behalf of the American way of life; and not jingoism disguised as a plan for universal salvation should underpin United States diplomacy. The lesson of Wilsonianism, Lippmann believed, was that America's international commitments could no longer be animated by the same dispositions and values
that nurtured the nation's isolationism and parochialism formerly. While fundamental human rights and traditional American values may constitute noble diplomatic goals, Lippmann warned that diplomacy, where the stakes can be life and death, calls for practical judgments whose criteria are always relative.

Whatever the wealth, the power and the prestige of a nation may be, its means are always limited. The problem of the maker of policy is to select objectives that are limited—not the best that could be desired but the best that can be realized without committing the whole power and the whole wealth and the very existence of the nation.

Lippmann, Realpolitik, and Realism

In a long career punctuated with periods of both political activism and detached political reflection, Lippmann consistently informed public opinion on the intricacies and complexities of international relations. As a responsible and thoughtful critic, his condemnation of the American inclination to moralize and substitute noble intentions for effective and realistic action has been salutary. The old pacifism and isolationism of the interwar years were given severe jolts in the post-World War II period, and Lippmann played a leading role in supplying the coup d'grace. Perhaps even more significant was his insight into the functions and possibilities of diplomacy in seeking to maintain a stable balance of power for a perilous atomic age. Indeed, Lippmann may be rightly judged to have been in the historical forefront in helping to lift Americans out of
the ideological stupor of an earlier "Age of Innocence" and introducing a subsequent generation of Americans to the principles and assumptions necessary for national survival in a world of hostility and armed might.

By way of conclusion, an attempt will be made to summarize briefly the distinctive attributes of Lippmann's political realism in its relation to American foreign policy and a theory of international politics. Of critical importance is the extent of his intellectual debt to the various precepts and principles of European raison d'État. In view of the fact that numerous historians and scholars have interpreted his U.S. Foreign Policy and U.S. War Aims as contemporary renditions of Realpolitik, in what ways did Lippmann adapt the norms of the European tradition to the emerging prospects and limitations of American foreign policy following World War II? Was his invocation of classical diplomacy, couched as it was in the language of military power and alliance systems, little more than a cynical celebration of hard-headed power politics exorcised of all moral content?

In his writings on the past and future of American foreign policy, Lippmann never claimed to be a "theorist" of international politics. Despite various incursions into the realm of moral and political philosophy, he never developed what could be described as a systematic or comprehensive system of thought. In attempting to analyze the nature and
structure of the "state system," he tried to bring a knowledge of political, historical, economic, demographic, geographic, and strategic factors to bear on the effort to understand the actual evolution of foreign policies among the major powers. While it could be argued that Lippmann often presented an insightful analysis of trends and patterns of international politics relevant to certain key concepts, his methods reflected a more specific interest in United States diplomatic history. It was typically from the standpoint of the "lessons of history" approach (particularly among the "great powers") that his thought moved on to encompass such new concepts and categories as nationalism, imperialism, regional integration, arms control, and propaganda. Unfortunately, it was Lippmann's own death in the mid-1970s that probably prevented a more sustained critique, not only of the novel sources of change and transformation within the international system, but also of new strategic and economic developments on the American foreign policy agenda.

At the core of Lippmann's message was a commentary on the traditional American distrust for power politics and the substitution of legalism and moralism for effective political strategy in an anarchic global arena. American national security, as well as the survival and independence of its European allies, required the United States to establish and maintain a global equilibrium of power vis-à-
vis the Soviet Union. To insure the future defense of America's vital interests, Lippmann promulgated a concept which he called the Atlantic Community. Because Western civilization now revolved around the nations of the North Atlantic, he thought it highly appropriate that America should provide the leadership to consolidate the entire area into a united entity which would have sufficient power to maintain the stability of the whole world.

Although the Atlantic Community has not progressed exactly as Lippmann envisaged, it constituted a grand vision of America's place in the world of the future. The possibility of America's reaching the status of a new Rome, capable of stabilizing the Atlantic world in much the same manner as the ancient Romans did the Mediterranean area, and the further possibility of being the conveyor of the "traditions of civility" as Rome transmitted the classical heritage, represented both feasible and worthy ideals to pursue. In placing these objectives before the American people, Lippmann sought to endow American idealism with a practical bearing which is thoroughly grounded in historic and geographic reality.

Supplementing Lippmann's vision of a united Atlantic Community was his interest in diplomacy--its nature, requirements, rules, and problems. While observing that Americans have looked with a jaundiced eye on the diplomatic tradition, he contended that negotiations have in large
measure stood the test of time. It is the fundamental purpose of diplomacy, wrote Lippmann, not to attempt the impossible but to deal realistically with the existing balance of power. It would be naive, he hastened to add, to assume that empires, alliances, and military power could be eliminated by the simple resort to reasoned discourse. The classic procedure of diplomacy—always a combination of power and compromise—entails the reconciliation of conflicting interests by careful negotiation. Insofar as the essence of diplomatic negotiations rests upon practical judgments of relative cost and benefit, the statesman's task is to select limited objectives that can be realized without jeopardizing the power and security of the nation. In short, Lippmann wanted the United States to build up strength and unity within the Atlantic Community and then make adjustments to other power blocs of the world to achieve peace and stability. This, he believed, could be achieved through negotiations and diplomacy rather than by global confrontation and armed conflict.

In addition, Lippmann differed from a number of other realists in maintaining throughout his thought a greater awareness of the actual limits of American power. Throughout the Cold War era, he suggested that American policy-makers ran the risk of setting their goals too high, politically, militarily, and ideologically. In Korea, Formosa, Yugoslavia, Poland, and China, the superpowers were
no longer able consistently to determine the outcome of events.

The Kennan approach to containment was criticized for over-extending American power in order to stop communism all over the globe. In a similar vein, he took exception to the Eisenhower Administration's promulgation of "massive retaliation," since it relegated the exercise of American nuclear power to a dangerous zero-sum game by which the forces of good and evil are clearly distinguishable. In objecting to President Johnson's Vietnam policy as "the greatest disaster that has happened to this country since the Civil War," he believed that it was an "impossible task" to reach across the Pacific and impose the American will upon such a remote (and non-vital) region as Southeast Asia. Instead, he maintained that America should seek to restrain itself to a more "normal and natural" sphere of operations.

Although it is possible to detect equivocation and ambiguity in Lippmann's observations on the nature and timing of U.S. intervention abroad (especially when the logic of containment was invoked), his basic critique of American foreign policy helped to give Americans a better insight and sense of proportion about the extent of the nation's capabilities to achieve its aspirations.

Unquestionably, Lippmann's often harsh and pessimistic assessment of the quality and efficiency of American diplomacy drew upon many of the central assumptions of
continental raison d'État. That a number of commentators have hailed his writings on American foreign policy both during and after World War II as a modern justification of Realpolitik is largely the result of his emphasis on: (1) the irrational constituent of human nature; (2) the permanence of rivalry and strife in both domestic and international politics; (3) the lawless character of international society; (4) the importance of classical methods of diplomacy; (5) the nation state as the operative and primary actor in world politics; (6) the supremacy of the national interest as a rational guide to foreign policy; and (7) the illusion of moral and ideological absolutes in interstate relations. As the previous discussion of raison d'État in the continental tradition indicated, however, it would be misleading to suggest that these postulates possess some self-evident meaning with respect to specific policy initiatives tailored to a particular period in the evolution of the Western state system.

In addition, the above themes in Lippmann's thought should be evaluated in the light of his own recognition of the gradual diffusion of power and political influence in the postwar international environment. Under such circumstances, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union could easily ignore the increasing limitations in their ability to shape events and outcomes in the smaller, less powerful nations around the globe. In looking back,
Lippmann found Wilsonian internationalism inundated with a horrid sense of provincial superiority, a doctrinaire moralism, and a patent disregard for the great diversity of new and developing societies. Wilson, and the strain of values for which he stood, reflexively looked inward when what the country demanded was just the opposite. In contemplating the future, Lippmann could conceive of no other realistic alternative than the superpowers acting to maintain a fragile balance of power through the demarcation of spheres of influence. Yet even the requirements of power politics were insufficient without the restoration of a diplomatic posture that made room for accommodation and compromise among rivals who do not live in the same moral order.

That Lippmann's repudiation of Wilsonian internationalism was seen by many critics to culminate in a cynical departure into ruthless "Machiavellianism," devoid of all moral standards, misrepresents his outlook on the objectives and limits of American power in the postwar setting. Responding to Maritain's query as to why he avoided discussing the "ultimate end" of the Western alliance, Lippmann retorted that security against aggression, and not the promotion of civilization, was the function of the great power alliance. He rejected the belief that out of the more limited and specific assignment of providing security against "world conquerors," the
creative work of civilization could evolve. Nothing could have been more anathema to Lippmann than attempts by the United States, or any power, in seeking to enforce its own version of political and spiritual development worldwide. The structure of the order which the Western allies could or should institute, the laws or covenants they could or should subscribe to, the procedures they could or should agree upon--these matters were left unresolved in his writing. Indeed, Lippmann ventured little further than the observation that "the great powers must become the organizers of an order in which peoples find...their liberties recognized by laws that the great powers respect and that all peoples are compelled to observe."161

While Lippmann may have been reluctant to discuss the ultimate civilizing task of the Atlantic alliance, he did distance himself from Machiavellian raison d'état by opposing the extension of self-defined American ambition and martial superiority on a vulnerable world. The traditional distinction between "realism" and "idealism" in international thought is of little service in trying to specify the intellectual referents which shaped Walter Lippmann's observations on the prospects of American foreign policy during and after World War II. Indeed, how can such broad labels explain the apparent contradiction between his recommendation that the national interest should be pursued largely to the exclusion of idealistic criteria and his
It was this sense of contradiction, this tension between the actual and the more illusive desirable, which marked the beginning and not the end of Lippmann's preoccupation with the power and purpose of American foreign policy. As a self-admitted internationalist, he attempted to reconcile the logic of power politics with his lifelong commitment to a cosmopolitan vision of world affairs. This resulted in his being unable to endorse provincial national sympathies and moral aims without a concomitant recognition of the values, ideals, and interests of many other societies. In particular, Lippmann believed that the globalization of military confrontation, as well as the technology of modern warfare, inhibited any kind of reasoned discourse which could sustain the free exchange of beliefs and values among diverse societies. The logic of fear, associated with the imperative of military preparedness, had brought civilization to the brink of disaster.

In short, the idea that Lippmann took his inspiration solely from Machiavellian raison d'État or Bismarckian Realpolitik is at best a half-truth. The methods of classical diplomacy and the enlightened calculation of American national interests represented the only practical means to defend and salvage his cosmopolitan ideals. The language of military power, spheres of influence, and
balance of power provided a system of checks and balances (though always precarious) designed to function as a self-activating brake on both imperial adventurism and the irrational resort to force. In a world where no nation can lay claim to a monopoly of truth and justice, Lippmann reminded his many readers that the resolution of political and territorial questions are inseparable from the successful pursuit of moral desiderata in foreign policy.
Endnotes


8. Thompson, Masters of International Thought, p. 130.


17. Thompson, Masters of International Thought, p. 140.


21. Lippmann was echoing James when he proclaimed that "no moral judgment can decide on the value of life, no ethical theory can announce any intrinsic good." See Walter Lippmann, A Preface to Politics (New York: Macmillan, 1913), ch. 6.

22. Commenting on Santavanan's Platonism, Lippmann wrote: "Platonism is a very refined and beautiful expression of our natural instincts, it embodies conscience and utters our inmost hopes." See Lippmann, A Preface to Politics, p. 159.


27. Ibid., p. 271.


30. Ibid., p. 263.

31. Ibid.


36. Ibid., p. 19.


41. Ibid.


43. Ibid., pp. 58-59.

44. Ibid., p. 137. See also Lippmann's earlier *The Stakes of Diplomacy* (New York: Henry Holt, 1915), p. 228.

45. Lippmann's thesis that rivalry and conflict are a normal condition of mankind has a strikingly Hobbesian flavor. However, a significant difference between the two positions should be noted. Hobbes maintained that the conflict of interests arises out of man's desire for self-preservation, which is the prime motive of human behavior. Conflict is a
permanent condition because it arises from forces inherent in the nature of man. Lippmann, on the other hand, would argue that rivalry and conflict stem from the inability of the vast majority of men to reason and thus establish a universal harmony of interests. In other words, Lippman, unlike Hobbes, keeps to door open (however slightly) for the ethical validity of the doctrine of the harmony of interests.

46. Lippmann, U.S. Foreign Policy, p. 8.
47. Ibid., p. 199.
48. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
51. Lippmann, U.S. Foreign Policy, p. 9.
52. Blum, Walter Lippmann, p. 129.
54. Lippmann, Public Philosophy, p. 144.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., p. 154.
59. Ibid., p. 69.
60. The one time that Lippmann went on record against the balance of power principle was in 1917, when he wrote that the world could not return to a system of the balance of power "unless supreme madness descends upon the English-speaking peoples." See Walter Lippmann, The Political Scene (New York: Henry Holt, 1919), pp. 40-41.
62. Ibid.
63. Lippmann, Stakes of Diplomacy, pp. 221-222.
64. Ibid.


68. Lippmann, U.S. Foreign Policy, pp. 147-154.


70. Lippmann, U.S. Foreign Policy, pp. 47, 49, 107. The two war-time books differed, however, in their version of the postwar balance of power. The earlier volume foresaw neutrality for Eastern Europe and an Atlantic Alliance that included Russia. When events proved this idea illusory, Lippmann charted a sphere of influence for the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, with the Atlantic nations forming a second orbit, and China ultimately a third.


73. Lippmann, Public Philosophy, p. 158.


76. T and T, September 21, 1950.


78. T and T, March 6, 1962.


81. T and T, February 16, 1950. In June 1953, Lippmann noted that the East Germans had rioted against the Soviet regime, and that Sygman Rhee had rebelled against American policy in Korea. He hailed these events as indicating that the two-power system was breaking up. This breakup, he said, was "predestined and appointed," because American and the Soviet Union had become superpowers in the extraordinary
postwar situation which found all the other great powers prostrate with the exhaustion of war. But these powers were now beginning to recover; and as they recovered, they were bound to challenge the right of Moscow and Washington to determine exclusively the destiny of mankind. See T and T, June 30, 1953.

82. For a sampling of Lippmann's thoughts on collective security and international peace-keeping, see Walter Lippmann, "How to Enforce International Agreements," Reader's Digest, April 1946, p. 140.


85. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

86. Ibid., p. 50.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid., pp. 50-52.


91. Lippmann, The Cold War, p. 23.


95. Ibid.


97. Ibid.

98. See Chapter One, pp. 3-15.

100. Ibid., p. 244.

101. Ibid., p. 245.

102. Ibid.


106. Lippmann, A Preface to Morals, p. 188.


114. Ibid.

115. Ibid.


117. See Lippmann, Public Opinion, ch. 1; The Public Philosophy, p. 92.

118. Ibid.


122. Ibid., p. 38.

123. Ibid., p. 154.

124. Ibid., p. 148.


129. Ibid., p. 11.

130. Ibid., p. 42.

131. Ibid., p. 141.

132. Ibid., p. 136.


139. T and I, April 15, 1947.

140. Lippmann, "How to Enforce International Agreements," p. 142.


143. Lippmann, U.S. War Aims, p. 84.


145. Lippmann to Quincy Wright, 22 July 1943, Lippmann Papers.

146. T and T, September 7, 1946.


148. Ibid.


152. Adams, Walter Lippmann, pp. 82-83.


156. Ibid.


158. Ibid.

159. Lippmann, "Philosophy and the United States Foreign Policy," p. 244.


161. Lippmann, U.S. Foreign Policy, p. 175.
CHAPTER III

TRANSCENDING SELF-INTEREST IN NATIONAL BEHAVIOR:
REINHOLD NIEBUHR'S CHRISTIAN REALISM

Certainly, Walter Lippmann may be counted among the first American realists who sought to adapt the canons of power politics and classical diplomacy to United States foreign policy objectives in the postwar era. Although Lippmann may be unsurpassed in seeking to rescue a generation of wartime Americans from the moralistic pretenses of the interwar years, it was a Protestant theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, who established a realist philosophy which synthesized his study of history and politics with a theory of human nature. Throughout his life, Niebuhr had a close relationship with and deep influence on the realist school of American politics associated with such thinkers as Hans J. Morgenthau, C.R. Marshall, George F. Kennan, and Kenneth W. Thompson. It is not without significance that these authorities owe an important intellectual debt to Niebuhr who, as early as 1932 in Moral Man and Immoral Society, elaborated a realist theory of international politics.¹

The indebtedness of these scholars and others has been widely acknowledged. Lippmann placed him "in the very
highest ranks of thinkers in this country during this century.\textsuperscript{2} George Kennan entitled Niebuhr "the father of us all."\textsuperscript{3} Hans Morgenthau considered Niebuhr "the greatest living political philosopher of America, perhaps the only creative political philosopher since Calhoun."\textsuperscript{4} Finally, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., summed up the views of a panel at the 1974 meeting of the American Political Science Association by saying: "No one has taken his place or the role he performed from the 1930s to the 1960s.\textsuperscript{5}

It should be noted that Niebuhr's work can be studied from the perspective of theology, ethics, or politics. For our purposes, however, special emphasis will be given to Niebuhr's commitment to what he termed "Christian realism" and its significance for his understanding of international political relationships. At the philosophical core of his position was an identification of the problems and limitations in relating an absolute, transcendent norm to the contingencies of particular political situations. With the increasing conflict and disintegration of international society in the 1930s and 1940s, Niebuhr became preoccupied with the perennial fusion of universal ideals and self-interest in national behavior. In brief, his Christian realism can be distinguished by its attempt to transcend the tension between the national interest as a primary fact of international politics and devotion to principles of justice and established mutualities in the community of nations.
To what extent did Niebuhr's political philosophy and his standard of Christian realism either subsume or take exception to the fundamental tenets of *raison d'état*? How did his preoccupation with the dramas of man and the dynamism of history contribute to the understanding of such concepts as power, national interest, and imperialism? If, in Niebuhr's words, "politics...is bound to be a contest of power," do the demands of self-interest and national self-protection override the moral impulse in foreign policy?

**Pilgrimage of a Christian Realist**

Only brief attention can be given to the many highpoints of Niebuhr's long and distinguished career. Born on June 21, 1892 in Wright City, Missouri, he received his formal education at Eden Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School. In 1915 he was ordained a minister in the Evangelical Synod of America and served until 1928 as pastor of Bethel Church in Detroit, Michigan. It was during his tenure as pastor for a working class congregation that he challenged the mighty Henry Ford and became concerned about problems of social injustice in a bourgeois democracy. During this early period, he wrote prolifically for the *Atlantic Monthly*, *The Christian Century*, *The Nation*, and published his first book, *Does Civilization Need Religion?*, in 1927.

In 1928, Niebuhr joined the faculty of the Union Theological Seminary in New York City where he remained
until retirement in 1960. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, he adopted a pacifist stance in global affairs and generally supported the domestic political agenda of the Socialist Party. His interest in social justice and liberal Christianity reached its peak in 1932 with the publication of Moral Man and Immoral Society. The text assailed laissez-faire capitalism and the ethics of a liberal society and church. This early stage of Niebuhr's career reached its culmination in 1934 with the publication of Reflections on the End of an Era.

Events in Europe during the 1930s, as well as a world depression, challenged both his pacifist and socialist convictions and marked a turning point in Niebuhr's career. His Christianity and Power Politics (1940) portrayed an affinity for political realism and a philosophy based on the equilibration of power. Such works as An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (1935), Beyond Tragedy (1937), and his two-volume The Nature and Destiny of Man (1941-43) established Niebuhr as one of the most significant political and social thinkers in the twentieth century. Integral to all of these seminal works was his attempt to formulate a Christian philosophy of history rooted in the dialectical tension between the law of love and the reality of man.

Niebuhr's literary achievements only intensified his lifelong interest and participation in public affairs. In addition to serving as the vice president for the Liberal
Niebuhr's intellectual productivity continued unabated both during and after World War II. Both The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (1944) and The Irony of American Democracy (1952) evaluated the American liberal and democratic legacy at a time when the Western democracies were facing fundamental ideological and spiritual challenges. His Christian Realism and Political Problems (1953) focused on such topics as Marxism, socialism, liberalism, and foreign policy in the nuclear age. In his last published book, The Structure of Nations and Empires (1959), he examined the whole sweep of history to show how the configurations of power in nations and empires seek justice and promote injustice at the same time and make history a continuous battleground in the struggle for power.

Following a series of small strokes, Niebuhr retired from his university position in 1960 and lived out a
turbulent decade in quiet fashion in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Though at a much slower pace, he continued to support a variety of civil rights organizations and opposed American military intervention in Southeast Asia. The recipient of many honorary degrees and awards, Niebuhr died on June 1, 1974.

Realism, Christianity, and Politics

While a number of interesting works more fully chronicle the evolution of Niebuhr’s philosophy and theology, this section is primarily concerned with how his standard of Christian realism contributes to his philosophy of politics. Christian realism, for Niebuhr, implied a clear recognition of the limits of morality and reason in politics; acceptance of the fact that political realities are power realities and that power must be countered by power; and awareness that self-interest is the primary datum in the actions of all groups and nations. Following a brief profile of the various intellectual currents that were influential in Niebuhr’s work during the 1920s and 1930s, consideration is given to the central propositions of his Christian realism and how these have impacted on his observations of American foreign policy.

Throughout the 1920s, Niebuhr’s approach to politics was shaped by his critical interest in twentieth century liberalism, as well as by liberal Protestant theology. Reflecting a rather conventional belief in liberal
philosophic assumptions (many of which he would later cast aside), he endorsed such liberal tenets as support for the League of Nations, racial tolerance, and sympathy for labor unions. Exemplifying the social idealism of liberal Protestantism—as expressed in the tradition of men like Washington Gladen, Francis Peabody, and Walter Rauschenbusch—Niebuhr reflected on the sorry predicament of the person swallowed up by an impersonal technocratic society. Witnessing the harmful impact of American industry on the laboring class of Detroit, he criticized Protestantism for stressing metaphysics at the expense of social ethics. The central task of social reconstruction, according to Niebuhr, involved resistance against the tendency of technocratic culture to reduce men to functions in a social process.

While Niebuhr never tired in his search for a social ethic exposing the moral crudity of laissez-faire capitalism, his writing in the 1930s steadily moved toward a more radical political orientation and a more conservative theological position. Observing the economic stoppages and social breakdown in the early 1930s, he became convinced that modern liberalism, whether in its secular or religious version, could not be expected to provide any relevant guidance for social and political reconstruction. Indeed, for a time, his earlier faith in "the growth of religiously inspired goodwill" gave way to a new social realism based on
the consequent appeal of Marxism. While Marxism ultimately proved to be a transient ally in Niebuhr's search for the basis of justice in society, it nevertheless propelled him to rethink forcefully the relation between ethics and politics at all levels of human existence.

As early as 1929, Niebuhr expressed his doubts on some basic liberal tenets, and by the time of the publication of *Reflections on the End of an Era* (1934), this critical approach had reached its full growth. Summarizing the diverse intellectual origins of American liberalism, Niebuhr fastened upon six articles of the liberal creed which blind it to the real world. The philosophical core of liberalism, he suggested, may be reduced to the following propositions: (1) that injustice is caused by ignorance and will yield to education; (2) that civilization is gradually becoming more moral; (3) that individuals, rather than social systems, will guarantee justice in society; (4) that appeals to love, brotherhood, and goodwill can be effective in the end; (5) that goodness makes for happiness and increased knowledge will overcome human greed; and (6) that wars are stupid and will yield to reason. The consequence is that modern, secular liberalism has failed to appreciate the power of self-interest in both individual and group relations, depreciated the significance of organic processes in the attainment of justice, and constructed abstract schemes irrelevant to the necessities of the concrete situation.
Nor did Niebuhr find Protestant liberalism and its characteristic expression in the "social gospel" movement to be any less bankrupt. According to Niebuhr, proponents of the social gospel progressed little beyond identifying the Kingdom of God with the ideal society which secular liberals expected to develop through a rational and evolutionary process. Their simple confidence in politically incarnating the absolute imperatives of the Gospel, and their radiant optimism about the moral plasticity of human nature, represented proof of the spiritual dependence of Christian liberals upon the secular piety of bourgeois idealism. In short, both secular and religious liberalism failed to acknowledge the exigent fact of power as the decisive reality in the relations between men.

It was not until the publication of Moral Man and Immoral Society (1932) that Niebuhr's indictment of secular and religious liberalism gave way to a new social realism, drawing much of its inspiration from Marxism. A far more "radical" and "realistic" understanding of the nature of power relations was necessary if the realities of the social order were to be clearly understood and if the Christian faith was to make any contribution to meaningful social and political reform. Given the self-regarding impulses that govern social relations, social justice will be guaranteed not by improved educational mechanisms or a more ethically rigorous religion but only by a system of checks and
balances designed to assure a more balanced equilibrium of power among competing groups in society. Niebuhr's contention was that the ordering of society is a matter of politics, not of pedagogy.

Niebuhr's growing disenchantment with modern liberalism was largely influenced by his attraction to fundamental Marxist precepts. The dogma of progress, the notion that power relations were a transitory phenomenon, the idea that social injustice could be resolved by appeals to love, reason, and the operations of the free market—these illusions were challenged by Marxist thought. Marxism came to seem to Niebuhr an "essentially correct theory and analysis of the economic realities of modern society, correct in its theory of class conflict," correct in regarding private ownership of the means of production as the basic cause of economic crisis and international war, correct in insisting that "communal ownership of the productive process is a basic condition of social health in a technical age." Yet Niebuhr's allegiance to Marxism throughout the 1930s was always limited. For example, he never harbored any illusions about the potential perils inherent in Marxist dogma. Even by the early 1930s, he alluded to the "demonry" which followed from the fanatical messianism engendered by the communist movement at home and abroad. Central to Niebuhr's rejection of Marxism as a messianic creed was his
belief that the communists found the Kingdom of God in history; they perceived the Soviet Union as an incarnation of the absolute. That he could simultaneously witness both the strengths and hazards of Marxist doctrine in his rejection of Christian liberalism resulted from a fleeting appreciation of the possible social value of the communist error as an indispensable myth working to rectify the injustice of capitalist society. By 1935, however, his tolerance for Marxist myth was repudiated with the sobering observation: "I once thought such a faith to be a harmless illusion. But now I see that its net result is to endow a group of oligarchs with the religious sanctity which primitive priest-kings once held."

In addition, the Marxist vision failed to satisfy Niebuhr's theory of power in intergroup relations. Not only did communist utopianism breed fanaticism and tyranny, but communist economic reorganization jeopardized the conditions of freedom. Marxism provided no more than a partial perspective, weakened by the belief that human conflict and struggle will end with the historical eclipse of capitalism. Specifically, Niebuhr distinguished between the capitalist aggravation of the problem of justice and its perennial nature in all human societies. By viewing the desire for power as man's ineradicable failing, he argued that efforts to establish "an economic equilibrium through social ownership" might well create "a new disproportion of
power....The new and stronger centers of political power will be new occasions for and temptations to injustice.\(^{26}\)

The Moscow trials of 1938 and the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939 were, for him, an unambiguous disclosure of the corruption at the very center of the international communist movement.

In terms of the American political landscape of the 1930s, Niebuhr's flirtation with Marxism and skepticism about the capacity of capitalism to resolve its own evils led him initially to underestimate the pragmatic character of the New Deal.\(^{30}\) At a time when Franklin D. Roosevelt was devising a compromise program based on the social aspirations shared by Niebuhr, the political philosopher found Roosevelt the politician hesitant and vacillating in his convictions. While Niebuhr was generally open to Marxist pessimism about bourgeois society during the first eight years of the Roosevelt Administration, it was not until the end of the decade that issues of foreign policy led him to see the dangerous irrelevance of the Socialist Party's isolationism. The impact of Stalin's purges and the rise of dictators across Europe led Niebuhr to appreciate Roosevelt's crafty expediency as precisely the kind of realistic exercise of power that he had always regarded as the mark of political sagacity. Perhaps no other error in Niebuhr's thinking has influenced so profoundly the development of the last or more pragmatic stage of his philosophy.\(^{31}\)
Niebuhr's effort to relate his political thinking to a more positive and conservative theological position initially coincided with his rejection of conventional Christian pacifism and his resignation from the Fellowship of Reconciliation in 1934. He accused his pacifist colleagues of falling victim to sentimental perfectionism, in thinking that the ethic of *agape* embodied in the Sermon on the Mount yields a proximate stratagem for action—"the politics of love"—relevant to social exigencies. For Niebuhr, nonparticipation in conflict was not so much a political alternative as it was an outright abdication from social and political responsibility. Once again, he reminded his liberal critics that the underlying dilemma of collective existence consisted of arranging a tolerable, if only temporary, armistice between competing factions within society and seeking ways to invoke coercive measures against those who would violate the armistice.

The main outlines of Niebuhr's theological convictions were carefully documented in *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* and expanded on in *Beyond Tragedy* and *Christianity and Politics*. Briefly summarized, Niebuhr found that the self-regarding and sinful propensity of man vitiated any reasonable prospect for implementing a social ethic derived from the self-emptying love, exemplified by the life and death of Jesus Christ. The ideal of love could not be realized in human history, yet it was relevant to that
history because it revealed the relativity of all other standards and lifted other norms to new heights. The tension between the ideal and real was overcome only in the Christian's faith. While Niebuhr cautioned that the ethic of absolute love was foreign to the needs of political life, it is one which "cannot merely be relegated...to the world of transcendence," since "it offers immediate possibilities of a higher good in every...situation." The ethic of Jesus, he believed, can direct man to a scrutiny of his intentions and actions more revealing than any appraisal based exclusively on political expediency and undisguised self-concern.

Both during and after World War II, Niebuhr's stature as a "Christian Realist" clearly emerged with his effort to link his evolving theological perspective with a theory of politics and history rooted in a firm appreciation of human nature. Shaping much of his subsequent political philosophy was a question that inaugurated his celebrated Gifford Lectures in 1939: "Man has always been the most vexing problem. How shall he think of himself?" Both Niebuhr's theology and philosophy approached the dilemma of human self-knowledge by seeking a "middle ground" between the uniqueness of man and his affinities with nature. On the one hand, man is a radically finite creature subject to the contingencies of other physical organisms in the natural order. On the other, man is not merely confined to his time.
and place. With a memory spanning the ages and a vivid imagination playing on the fringe of eternity, man can also rise above the structure and coherence of nature and history by making them the instruments of his intentionality. In brief, man performs an act of self-transcendence as the self makes itself the object of its own thought. It is precisely in this condition of being suspended between finitude and freedom that Niebuhr located the essential "problematic" of selfhood.

In terms of understanding political behavior, Niebuhr emphasized the psychological consequence of man's involvement in the paradox of finitude and freedom. Human anxiety is prompted by the individual's own sense of vulnerability to the self-regarding ambitions of others. Unable to precisely assess his creative intellectual potential and freedom because of the finiteness of his own reason, man seeks to augment his own security by seeking influence and power over others. However, the ultimate paradox in both human and group existence is that the restless quest for security stimulated by the "will to power" can never be completely satisfied. The margin of power is never enough to guarantee absolute security and the struggle for power spirals upward as both men and nations are caught in a tragic dilemma.

Moreover, the possibility of force or coercion is even more pronounced in the realm of man's collective behavior.
A sharp distinction must be made between the moral and social behavior of individuals and social groups; and this distinction necessitates political policies which a purely individualistic ethic must always find embarrassing. The origin and strength of collective egoism in human affairs, according to Niebuhr, is a direct result of the tendency of groups to express both the virtue and selfishness of its members. On the one hand, appeals are made to the patriotic devotion and self-sacrificial loyalty of the individual; on the other, the frustrated aggression of the masses compels man to project his ego upon the nation and to indulge his anarchic lust vicariously. Therefore, the egoism of the group or nation has a double force inasmuch as society "cumulates the egoism of individuals and transmutes their individual altruism into collective egoism." Integral to his political theory is the conviction that:

The relations between groups must...always be predominately political rather than ethical; that is, they will be determined by the proportion of power which each group possesses at least as much as by any rational and moral appraisal of the comparative needs and claims of each group.

Finally, Niebuhr's political philosophy was marked by increasing concern for the "pragmatic" criteria involved in relative moral judgments as well as the Christian dimension of his political realism. Before turning to his interpretation of Christian pragmatism, it is important to further develop the intellectual dilemma Niebuhr confronted in seeking to relate a transcendent biblical ethic to the
contingencies and irrational possibilities inherent in political life. The significance of his Christian perspective for the establishment of both justice and order within a political system is a prerequisite for assessing his estimation of the moral problem in foreign policy and international politics.

A philosophical perspective of politics based exclusively on the enduring elements of rivalry and strife in human relationships was hardly an acceptable endpoint for a self-proclaimed professor of social ethics. As much as Niebuhr railed against those theologians who interpreted the ethic of *agape* as an immanent historical possibility, he drew his inspiration from an attempt to salvage biblical faith (the "law of love") in full view of man's dignity before God. In commenting on the final norms of both individual and collective existence, Niebuhr acknowledged:

> The problem of the individual and the community cannot be solved at all if the height is not achieved where the sovereign source and end of both communal and individual existence are discerned, and where the limits are set against the idolatrous self-worship of both individuals and communities.43

Niebuhr approached the final norms for both individual and communal existence by drawing on ethical and biblical precepts that transcend the purely political sphere of human selfishness and collective ego. Man still lives and acts under a norm that transcends the fragmentary realities with which he must responsibly deal. Lust for power, while
universal, cannot be normative, for man is also a being who transcends himself indeterminably and is saved only as love draws him beyond self-love. Love is also the primary existential norm for the community, which it seeks to actualize (or approximate) in structures of justice. In brief, it is Niebuhr's approach to both the majesty and misery of man that led him to conclude that the discernment of agape represents the only viable norm for man in his freedom and leads to the establishment of conditions of justice for man in his time.

By always seeking to relate the dimensions of justice to culture and historical vitalities, Niebuhr arrived at a general formulation of justice by which the laws of justice, taking sinful self-interest for granted, aim to establish equitable divisions between conflicting interests. He was able to avoid a descent into nihilism and cynicism by holding up agape as a final standard against which interest and power can be measured, beguiled, and deflected for the ultimate end of creating the most inclusive community of order and justice. More importantly, a transcendent ethic of love nurtures a spirit of contrition and humility by which implacable contestants in the political struggle can emancipate themselves from self-centered pretensions and accommodate the fragmentary character of human values and interests.

Supplementing the effort to bring Christian realism to
bear on the tension between love and justice in political life was Niebuhr's evolving pragmatic orientation to matters of public policy. Owing a debt to such American philosophers as William James and John Dewey, Niebuhr endeavored to synthesize pragmatism with Christian theology. He once defined Christian pragmatism with the observation that:

...Christian pragmatism is merely the application of Christian freedom and a sense of responsibility to complex issues of economics and politics, with the firm resolve that inherited dogmas and generalizations will not be accepted, no matter how revered or venerable if they do not contribute to the establishment of justice in a given situation.**

The result of the pragmatic method in the world of contingent decision and action relativized all social programs in light of the absolute claims of the gospel. Yet theological absolutes could be corrupted, and Christian absolutes had been corrupted repeatedly; but properly used they could provide an ultimate intellectual defense against tyranny and anarchy.** Religion, therefore, could be a source of error as well as wisdom and light; its proper role should be to question and inculcate a sense of humility before the facts. Recognizing such precepts as the authority of God beyond the authority of all men as well as the moral law revealed as the law of love in Christ, Niebuhr found the pragmatic impulse an effective deterrent to the self-righteous dogmas of the left and right. His Christian pragmatism demanded that men, free of all ideological
illusions that their choices represent the appearance of pure good in history, make responsible decisions between political alternatives.\textsuperscript{50}

In summary, Niebuhr’s realism clearly points to the limits of morality and reason in politics as well as the ubiquity of self-interest in the actions of all groups and nations. Kennan’s observation that “he was the father of us all” reflects the fact that few colleagues ever equaled Niebuhr’s diligent effort to more precisely address the theological and philosophic postulates that shape the intellectual worldview of the political realist. According to Hans J. Morgenthau, Niebuhr’s contribution to political life in America takes shape as the rediscovery of political man in five different respects.

He has rediscovered the autonomy of the political sphere. He has rediscovered the intellectual dilemma of understanding politics and acting within the political sphere. He has rediscovered the moral dilemma of political action. He has restored the organic relationship between political thought and political action. Finally, he has rediscovered the tragedy which is inherent in the political act.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{International Politics and Christian Realism}

Reinhold Niebuhr’s root assumptions about man and political society culminated in a distinctive philosophical orientation by which to assess the nature of international politics, as well as the objectives on the American foreign policy agenda concomitant with its emergence as a preeminent power in the postwar world. As an admitted realist, he
sought to elevate the relationship between ethics and politics from a narrow-minded preoccupation with national self-interest or the instrumentalities of power; indeed, upon turning to either domestic or international politics, Niebuhr's thought emphasized the dialectical balance between the principles of morality influencing the responsible choice of policy initiatives. Following a brief account of the genesis of Niebuhr's political realism during the interwar years, attention turns to several recurrent concepts (i.e., national interest, power, and balance of power) providing him with the intellectual resources to relate theoretical reflection and policy recommendation. As will be seen in a subsequent section, the ethical criteria underlying the expression of American national interest in world politics provides a basis from which to compare and distinguish Niebuhr's realism from Machiavellian raison d'état.

At a minimum, it should be reiterated that Niebuhr's ambition to formulate the broad philosophical outlines of a realist approach to American foreign policy was a gradual and often ambiguous process that consumed the first thirty years of his adult life. Not surprisingly, most of his commentary on the principles and practice of American behavior abroad often mirrored shifting intellectual currents, reflecting the twists and turns in his political philosophy for well-over a half-century. Two particular
determinants, however, were authoritative for his subsequent international thought. The first was the uneasy balance of optimism and cynicism shaping his estimate of the political consequences of World War I. The second was the unavoidable participation of American in World War II, as well as the need to provide a defense of democratic foreign policy in the immediate postwar environment.

Although Niebuhr began by supporting the liberal and universal aspirations governing America's entry into World War I, he quickly became disenchanted with what he perceived as the discontinuity between the sterile idealistic rhetoric and bloody realities of war. Reflecting on the Versailles Conference and its political aftermath, he judged Wilson's diplomacy as inappropriate for what amounted to a contest for power dictated by selfish economic motives and the caprice of statesmen. By 1925, Niebuhr's position had evolved from "trying to be an optimist without falling into sentimentality" to "a realist trying to save myself from cynicism." At this early juncture, however, his profession of realism represented little more than a reaction to the moral incantations of a bankrupt liberal ideology rendered obsolete in the face of unrestrained self-interest and undisciplined power in both human and group interaction.

Several general observations can be made regarding the evolution and ambiguity of Niebuhr's incipient realism in
the first decade following World War I. First, his indictment of Wilson's reforming principles in foreign policy did not signal a complete disavowal of all ethical content and purpose in the service of American national interest. Specifically, Wilson's failure issued from an inability to harness liberal idealism and nationalism in such a way as to moderate the self-serving machinations of major European powers. The question of ethical desiderata in foreign policy, according to Niebuhr, must initially confront the enduring egoism of the nation state before it is possible to explore alternative policies transcending national self-interest.

Second, Niebuhr's post-World War I vision was marked by a lingering, if ill-defined, idealism. Following the 1919 peace settlement, Niebuhr expressed hope that the ideas being expressed would eventually mold reality even if, in the short term, they were being used cynically as ideology. "Man is not unwilling to make sacrifices, but he has never longed for more issues that will hallow his sacrifices and make them worth while." Yet Niebuhr could go little further than suggest a vague ethical potential for statecraft without more precisely stipulating the manner in which idealistic resources could be utilized to shape specific policy aspirations. While admitting that the only escape from cynicism encompassed the moral qualification of group egoism, he could only propose greater interaction of
rational and religious considerations as a qualification of blind national interest.97

Third, Niebuhr's early invocation of realism was itself qualified by a skeptical estimate of several concepts which would later become indispensable components of his more mature Christian Realism following World War II. For example, he distrusted the counsels of political prudence as a reliable guide to diplomacy.98 Conceding that the Triple Entente and Triple Alliance represented prudent measures in response to an anarchic international environment, he judged such alliances as partly responsible for casting Europe into war. Another familiar tenet of realism—the balance of power—was rejected by Niebuhr as an obsolete remnant of liberalism and incapable of improving the prospects for international concord. Although the balance of power, in time, would be a prescriptive cornerstone of Niebuhr's philosophy of international politics, he was initially reluctant to exploit fully the creative possibilities within the framework of traditional power politics.99

Throughout the 1930s, Niebuhr's realism gained in depth as a result of a number of intellectual breakthroughs, as well as being influenced by a deteriorating international climate that propelled the United States into a second world war. Particularly important was Niebuhr's Marxist-inspired critique of liberalism that further shaped his political ethic concerning the morality of individual and group
relations. Probing new avenues of restraint on the destructive potential of group egoism, Niebuhr invoked Marxist class consciousness to moderate national passions. More importantly, his acceptance of the Marxist perspective on class conflict and the catastrophic demise of capitalism made it impossible for him to deny the possible resort to violence among forces pressing for social change. All claims for social morality by both individuals and groups had to be judged according to criteria of self-interest.

Niebuhr's ethic was in harmony with Marx, the socialist, who emphasized the need for public ownership and planning, but it was in opposition to Marx, the utopian revolutionary, who envisioned a society without injustice and conflict. As our earlier review of his political philosophy suggested, Niebuhr accepted a "frank dualism" in ethical matters by pointing to the tensions between the transcendent Christian law of love and the contingencies of political life understood in Marxist terms. Such a dualistic ethic pointed to a sharp distinction between the standards of individuals and group morality. The ethic of Jesus and self-sacrifice was a possibility for the regulation of personal life beyond the requirements of social coercion in the political order; however, moderating group egoism in the political arena was much more the product of relative political and moral judgments. The essential independence of a Christian ethic from political
culture led Niebuhr to resurrect the balance of power as the kind of prudential response, appropriate for the realization of justice in society. Paradoxically, as expressed in Moral Man and An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, the development of Niebuhr's theology and philosophy led him to endorse certain principles of political realism (e.g., prudence, proximate moral judgments, and the equilibration of power) he had once considered dubious.

Throughout the 1930s, the gathering war clouds in Europe and Asia drove Niebuhr to challenge interwar isolationist sentiment and jettison many of the lingering Marxist remnants that shaped his view of domestic and international political rivalries. During the early 1930s, Niebuhr espoused a policy of strict American neutrality toward the emerging political and economic rivalries of Europe.*3 While critical of German and Italian fascism, he also saw the United States as a potential threat to world peace if its own military power tempted America to protect and expand economic profit abroad. However, by the time of the Munich Agreement (1938) and the Nazi invasion of Poland (1939), Niebuhr was less sanguine about American abstention from the enveloping conflict. He accepted the possibility that capitalist economic motivations would likely draw America into the war.*4 In addition, experience in Manchuria, Ethiopia, Spain and China illustrated that the democracies were ill-equipped to make collective security
By 1940, Niebuhr had modified his stance by supporting Roosevelt's program of military preparedness and calling for extensive American aid. With the Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor in 1941, however, history had overtaken the debate between isolationists and interventionists, and Niebuhr was compelled to accept the necessity of war. He actively supported resistance to the Nazi threat and considered the defeat of Hitler as the *sine qua non* for a return to health of Western civilization.

While Niebuhr's reflections on American diplomacy during the interwar years were often overshadowed by fundamental shifts in his philosophy and theology, his writing after 1945 more specifically focused on the operative concepts integral to the realist worldview of international affairs. With the expansion of American power and prestige abroad, these concepts provided a useful vehicle by which he could integrate theoretical reflection with policy evaluation. Moreover, concepts such as national interest and the balance of power proved useful for Niebuhr's effort to differentiate between historical particulars and the more enduring patterns of international politics.

Before turning to his analysis of central foreign policy concepts, it is important to note a number of features and limitations which distinguish his thought from
the contributions of other realist scholars. First, Niebuhr’s far-reaching intellectual interests sustained an approach to foreign policy which freely draws on the perspectives of theology, ethics, and political philosophy. Few realists can claim to have plowed the intellectual depths of their tradition so deeply.

Second, the current tendency to bifurcate international political theory into normative and empirical halves obscures the extent to which Niebuhr judged both facets relevant to his task. More so than many of his colleagues, he staked out a clear and moderate position in anticipation of the debate between the so-called "scientists" and "traditionalists" in the discipline of international relations. On the one hand, his thought on American foreign policy was heavily influenced by his broader philosophical treatment of politics (e.g., assumptions about man’s purpose and destiny); however, he also argued that theological and moral reflection must always be supplemented by empirical studies in spheres where political choices are often swayed by powerful ideological appeals.

Third, much of Niebuhr’s writing on American foreign policy in the postwar period took the form of abbreviated political essays. Few other realists, with the possible exception of Lippmann, exhibit the kind of tension between broad philosophical reflection in the standard texts and commentary on immediate political topics often subject to
the exigencies of editorial deadlines. In trying to chronicle the general development of Niebuhr's thought at any one stage, it is important to grasp how he starts with a general principle or moves from the particular in the direction of principle.

Fourth, Niebuhr's interpretation and definition of political realism is often less exact and precise than the approach taken by other American realists. For example, Niebuhr does not define politics with the precision of a Morgenthau, who speaks of politics as the "pursuit of interest defined in terms of power." Perhaps one reason that could be suggested for the absence of systematic expression in Niebuhr's thought was his preoccupation with the irrational side of politics, a world ripe with limitless contingencies that make the application of moral precepts to group behavior both precarious and tentative.

The first few steps taken in the direction of "theorizing" about recurrent patterns in foreign policy grew out of efforts by a number of American realists to identify the fundamental characteristics of international politics. Influenced largely by philosophical assumptions about man and politics, these scholars sought to illumine analytical categories useful for investigating the relation between generalizations about state behavior and the actual facts of specific political actions. While the realist interpretation of theory has invited considerable criticism
on a number of counts, the problem of national interest as a theoretical justification of state behavior continues to perplex and divide commentators on American foreign policy.

The strength of Reinhold Niebuhr's appraisal of national interest followed from his efforts to differentiate between, and ultimately synthesize, a policy-oriented focus and an approach emphasizing desirable moral gains in foreign policy. In terms of policy formulation, the national interest often functions as a negative restraint on decision and action; it can broadly define the outer boundary beyond which no statesman dare venture in the interest of his nation's security and survival. The contribution of the realist, Niebuhr pointed out, is his awareness of the omnipresence of self-interest. Reflecting on the American decision to build the hydrogen bomb, he stipulated that "no nation will fail to take even the most hazardous adventure into the future, if the alternative...means the risk of being subjugated." While the explicit renunciation of national sovereignty may be beyond the moral competence of any nation, Niebuhr was equally cautious in suggesting that national security and survival are not fixed points on the political terrain. In fact, he rejected attempts to portray the national interest as an inviolable, self-evident principle by which nations conduct their foreign policy. The foreign policy methods a nation chooses in order to
survive and preserve its integrity are often guided by the perceptions of national actors at any one time.

While Niebuhr's approach to moral values in foreign policy will be discussed at greater length in a future section, it will suffice to briefly mention his outlook on the national interest as a problem in political ethics. At the outset, Niebuhr argued that a foreign policy geared to the national interest presents the statesman with a genuine paradox.

Every nation is guided by self-interest and does not support values which transcend its life, if the defense of those values imperils its existence. A statesman who sought to follow such a course would be accused of treason. On the other hand, nations do become bearers of values which transcend their national interests.73

At issue is the dilemma of reconciling necessity with principle: the necessity is that of protecting the interests of a group for which one serves as trustee, and the principle is that of undifferentiated loyalty to such values as justice and liberty. In fact, Niebuhr raised the ethical problem of raison d'État by pointing to the difficulty of adjusting moral claims laid upon the statesman by his allegiance to the national community with rival claims that derive from his loyalty to communities transcending the national community. Although the relation of Niebuhr's ethical dualism to a similar standard embodied in raison d'État74 will be explored in later pages, his thought continually emphasized both the limitations and
opportunities associated with the moral justification of a nation's interest in world affairs.

National self-interest, on the one hand, constituted an inescapable reality from which no state could demur.

Society...merely cumulates the egoism of individuals and transmutes their individual altruism into collective egoism so that the egoism of the group has a double force. For this reason no group acts from purely unselfish or even mutual interest, and politics is therefore bound to be a contest for power.76

Yet he was also convinced that no state can adhere to self-interest without claiming to do so in obedience to some general scheme of values. The very behavior of nations proves their periodic acknowledgment of a higher loyalty than that of self-interest. Few states fail to legitimize self-interested motives by claiming that such policies serve mankind, universal values, or a civilization transcending that of a nation itself.77 He concluded that cynicism and pretension are two parts of a single problem—a continuing ambivalence toward the responsibility of nations seen at one moment as having no obligations beyond their own interests and, at the next, engaging in a high moral crusade without regard for selfish concerns.78

As a moderate or pragmatic realist, Niebuhr defined American national interests following World War II in rather broad and flexible terms. He interpreted national interest to represent the goals of foreign policy given shape by the political, economic, and cultural heritage of each national
actor. The primary goal of United States foreign policy in the postwar era, according to Niebuhr, hinged upon the need to preserve international order through the maintenance of a relatively stable balance of power. Yet he was also cognizant that such a statement of American national interest raised a number of difficult questions regarding the responsibilities and limitations on the exercise of United States power abroad.

In particular, he was skeptical whether America possessed either the will or the capacity to police the world and successfully moderate all the fires of revolutionary sentiment in distant regions. Relevant here, for example, was Niebuhr's concern that the globalization of Cold War hostilities would effectively sacrifice the national objectives of developing societies at the expense of unbridled Soviet and American imperialism. Beyond the avoidance of nuclear annihilation, he also suggested that American national interest encompassed the preservation of open societies that have not succumbed to Communist control. In general, the bulk of his writing on international politics pressed for reform in trade policies and international organizations, and for the lessening of international rivalries while, at the same time, preserving the system.

It remains to briefly consider how Niebuhr's general observations on the national interest of the United States
was more specifically affected by his reaction to several major events and developments in American foreign policy throughout the postwar period. Selective attention is, therefore, devoted to Niebuhr's views on: (1) NATO and the Marshall Plan; (2) American intervention in Korea; (3) Allied disunity and the Suez Crisis; and (4) American objectives in Vietnam.

Niebuhr's support for the stationing of American military forces on European soil under the aegis of NATO in 1949 followed from his belief that world peace would have to be maintained for years to come by the preponderance of power in the Western world. Beyond purely military considerations, however, Western power consisted primarily of the moral unity and economic health of that world. Describing the Marshall Plan as "a kind of turning point in postwar history," Niebuhr wrote:

America could function in the interest of democracy only if it were ready to give economic support to the continent without seeking to prevent the establishment of systems which sought to combine collective forms of economy with political freedom. This is...the only possibility of preventing the continent from turning to bolshevism."

The American commitment to the revitalization of democratic forces in Europe represented an act of statesmanship in which "prudent self-interest was united with concern for others in a fashion which represents the most attainable virtue for nations." Admitting a mix of idealistic and selfish motives in American policy, Niebuhr
was quick to point out that the deciding factor in initiating the Marshall Plan was the belief that economic aid to Europe would promote the political and economic interests of the United States. Warning against the familiar American temptation to rely exclusively on the wellsprings of generosity to explain United States foreign policy behavior, he argued:

Generosity is probably beyond the moral capacity of collective man. It is...foolish for powerful nations to pretend to it. The pretension will merely elicit cynical reactions. But it is not impossible for nations to find their point of concurrence between self-interest and a wider interest than their own.**

The Korean War was a new kind of experience for the American public, inasmuch as the conflict represented an early case study on the responsibilities and limitations of America's new position in the world. Although supportive of efforts by the United States to resist communist aggression, Niebuhr was more specifically concerned with the manner in which the war was fought and its ramifications for the global containment of communism. Military hostilities in Korea took the form of a limited war fought for limited purposes with limited weapons. This stands in vivid contrast to America's great wars waged for more or less unlimited purposes, for independence and freedom, to make the world safe for democracy, and for unconditional surrender.*** Niebuhr admitted that the military containment of communism, while a necessity, would not ultimately
resolve the growing instability among the African and Asian nations; nevertheless, the security of the world depended on American resolution in conducting a limited war for limited purposes.

The debate precipitated by General MacArthur’s desire to expand the war by air attacks on China exposed the danger of failing to gauge the limits of military power in opposing communism. By viewing the struggle in Korea in almost exclusively military terms, MacArthur became a symbol of American heedlessness by conveying the impression that the United States was more concerned with winning the next world war than preventing it. To military power, according to Niebuhr, must be added the moral and political wisdom that international problems yield few final solutions. The patience to bear the restraints of great power must be supplemented with an ability to differentiate among the different dimensions (i.e., political, ideological, military and economic) in the American struggle with international communism.

Niebuhr’s writing on the Suez Crisis of 1956, perhaps more than any other postwar event, reflected the many intellectual facets in his assessment of both the errors and strengths of the American approach to foreign policy. Our consideration must be limited to Niebuhr’s identification of the foreign policy failures characterizing the Eisenhower Administration’s reaction to British and French military
intervention in Egypt. His indictment of Dulles-Eisenhower diplomacy exemplified an underlying concern for the requirements of power and morality influencing America's role as leader of the Western world.

In brief, Niebuhr joined other realists such as Ernest Lefever and Hans J. Morgenthau in objecting to the moralism and legalism which shaped the Eisenhower Administration's attack on its strongest allies. By trying to force the Israelis, French, and British to honor the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Administration signaled the relaxation of American leadership of the Western alliance in order to pose as a benign moderator in the East-West struggle. Niebuhr noted several drawbacks associated with American policy and action.

First, the Administration perpetuated the misconception of the United Nations as a system of world government. "Our devout expressions of loyalty to it...became but a screen for our irresponsibility; for the United Nations can do nothing without the leadership of the Western powers." What drove Britain and France from Egypt was not international moral sanction but the implied threat of force behind a Soviet-American alliance.

Second, Niebuhr also objected to the pacifist sentiment involved in the Administration's position disavowing the use of force to resolve international disputes. To retreat to a new isolationism from the unthinkable nature of nuclear war
played into the hands of the Soviets and strengthened Nasser’s intransigence. The ultimate bankruptcy of the Administration’s position was revealed by preaching moralistic homilies about the use of force to her allies at the very moment when Russian troops were crushing a Hungarian challenge to Soviet military and political domination of Eastern Europe.

In commenting on the Administration’s misapplication of ethics in foreign policy, Niebuhr advised that "evidence has been accumulating for some time that the President has some very naive ideas about the relation of power to morality in politics." Both Eisenhower and Dulles viewed the crisis from a legalistic-moralistic perspective that reflected the liberal-democratic theory of reliance on collective security. Legalistic platitudes invoking the language of the UN Charter and its emphasis on a "community of mankind" left little room for diplomacy which recognized American self-interest, in addition to such other factors as Soviet penetration in the Middle East and escalating Egyptian nationalism. As a result, the Administration’s preoccupation with absolute moral values obscured the need for more discriminating and proximate moral judgments which the complexities of the modern political world required. Shortly after the Suez Crisis, Niebuhr concluded:
Something has certainly gone wrong with the moral influence theory of diplomacy....The moral is that idealism in politics is ineffective if it is not implemented in detailed policy. It is...dangerous when a great imperial power greater than that of Rome, namely, our own nation, is informed by such vague and fatuous idealism. Perhaps one ought to add that Marcus Aurelius was, in addition to his other virtues, an internationalist who said "as an Antonine my city is Rome but as a man my city is the world," but the world did not profit by the confusion in which he left Rome.¹

During the last years of his life, Reinhold Niebuhr emerged as an outspoken opponent of escalating American military intervention in Vietnam. The French legacy in Indochina, he argued, revealed the inability of the West to contain the rising forces of nationalism and hold positions in Asia with military power after the disappearance of moral prestige.² By the early 1960s, Niebuhr questioned United States support for the corrupt regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem and challenged successive administrations to define more precisely the nature and extent of American security interests in Southeast Asia. Although his criticism of United States foreign policy deepened throughout the 1960s, he did not see how America could have avoided some kind of military response to communist gains in Southeast Asia.³

At the outset, his objections were directed more at the various particulars of America's Vietnam policy than at the general need for United States power to oppose communist expansion.⁴ Niebuhr's acknowledgment of the need for United States policy actively to assist developing societies resist communist infiltration made it impossible for him to
accept defeat at the hands of the Viet Cong or to advocate immediate American military withdrawal. However, his more specific objections concerning the limitations of American power in Southeast Asia suggested, at the very least, some qualification of America's obligation to promote free and open societies abroad.

A number of considerations entered into his critique of the Johnson Administration's escalation of United States troop presence in Vietnam. Niebuhr attacked the Administration's pretense of virtue in the conflict; and he believed it unlikely that America could either extricate itself from a policy of growing escalation or achieve a decisive military victory. In addition, Niebuhr rejected the idea that principles of democracy and self-determination were being valiantly defended in Vietnam. American foreign policy became increasingly "ideological" by its hypocritical use of moral language to obscure other geopolitical interests. On the one hand, he admitted that concern with a viable "defense perimeter" in Asia might serve a number of purposes such as: access to harbors, forward bases in any conflict with China, and a basis from which to supply and aid non-communist states on the Asian periphery. On the other, he claimed that such interests were not worth the price being paid to maintain them and that the American military effort failed to meet the test of proportionality. Short of unconditional withdrawal,
Niebuhr hoped for a lessening of the ideological issues and a compromise diplomatic settlement that would be responsive to the national interests of China, Russia, and the United States.

Niebuhr's views on these and other issues of contemporary foreign policy reflected his underlying philosophical outlook on two key concepts: power and the balance of power. While several modern American realists surpassed Niebuhr in trying to subject these two concepts to more rigorous and systematic definition, few have failed to endorse his insights on the moral ambiguity of power or the relation of balance of power to the problem of political justice.

The contest of power, according to Niebuhr, is the core of political life. To understand politics is to recognize the various elements of power which underlie all social structures—the play of power which may be obscured or submerged, but which cannot be denied. However, his political philosophy exemplifies various approaches to the concept of power. From one perspective, power represents a field of vitality, elaborated in many forms which are related to each other in terms of both mutual support and potential conflict. Both the spiritual and physical faculties of man create an endless variety of types and combinations of power, from that of pure reason to pure physical force.
But power cannot be evil of itself unless life itself is regarded as evil. For life is power. Life is never pure form or reason. It is inherently dynamic. Even the purest reason is power. According to the Christian faith perfect power and goodness are united only in God.  

A more limited understanding of power emphasizes the selfish side of man's ego and his attempt to gain security by dominating others. From this horizon, power is equivalent to force and reduces to the imposition of one man's will on others. The potential for coercion in social relations is rooted in two characteristics of the human self. Niebuhr identified the first attribute as "the unity of vitality and reason, of body and soul." This component testifies to man's rational capacity to transcend the particular interests of the self and control egoistic purposes through moral and legal restraints. "The force of reason makes for justice, not only by placing...restraints on the desires of the self...but by judging the claims...of individuals from the perspective of the total community."  

The second characteristic is the persistent human inclination to sin, the tendency "to regard ourselves as more important than anyone else and to view a common problem from the standpoint of our own interest." Even reason is always to some extent the servant of self-interest and may be the instrument of the ego in advancing its claims against another. A rational solution to a conflict may be a very unjust one, if the more robust has "overpowered" the weaker intellect.
...the perfect accord between life and life is constantly spoiled by the inordinate concern of each life for its own weal, especially as expressed in the corporate egoism of contending groups. Human society is full of the friction of cross purposes. Indeed, it is in a perpetual state of war.10a

While the moral connotations of power exhibit some variety in Niebuhr's writing, the importance of the concept for his political thought must be emphasized. Specifically, he regarded political power as "the ability to use and manipulate other forms of social power for the purpose of organizing and dominating the community."10b The struggle for power in the political arena is a purposive activity by which individuals seek control of institutions and forces in order to maximize self-interest. The preponderance of political power in any society is usually held by those who command the most significant type of non-political power; these include military prowess, priestly prestige, economic ownership and an ability to manipulate the technical processes of the community.10b

In addition, political power can be achieved by either force or authority. "Power, though it is the initial element in establishing leadership, cannot maintain itself very long if prestige is not added as a source of authority."10b Reflecting on the balance between force and authority in foreign policy, he responded to American intervention in Vietnam by saying:
No doubt military action must frequently be the ultima ratio in a struggle with a foe. We saved the whole situation by prompt military action in Korea. But the...situation in Vietnam should...instruct us on the limits of military power in the cold war....Military power is...ineffective when it lacks a moral and political basis.110

Two of the most important sources of prestige for a large nation, according to Niebuhr, include a reputation for justice based on achievement and a reputation for prudence in the exercise of power.

Niebuhr's realist philosophy stressed the endless variety and combinations of power in human society. The main forms of social power (e.g., military, priestly, economic, and ideological) are determined by a variety of historical developments from the technical to the religious level of existence. Particularly relevant here was Niebuhr's conviction that Marxist theory floundered on the assumption that economic power represents the dominant form of power from which all other types are merely derivative.111 In general, the Marxist solution to the problem of private property was burdened with two illusions. First, its utopian ideals of idyllic relations in post-revolutionary society underestimates the perennial character of human egoism in group relations and the necessity for coercive measures to preserve political order. Second, it identifies economic power too absolutely with the power of private ownership. The development of a managerial class in the Soviet Union, combining economic with political power,
is a historic refutation of the Marxist theory.\textsuperscript{112}

Niebuhr's reliance on the balance of power principle reflected his concern for the relation between order and security in both domestic and international politics.

Some balance of power is the basis for whatever justice is achieved in human relations. Where the disproportion of power is too great and where an equilibrium of social forces is lacking, no mere rational or moral demands can achieve justice.\textsuperscript{113}

...the domination of one life by another is avoided most successfully by an equilibrium of power and vitalities, so that weakness does not invite enslavement by the strong.\textsuperscript{114}

The statesman, as the artful contriver, avoids tyranny by balancing the vitalities, powers, interests of life into a tolerable equilibrium.\textsuperscript{115}

Moreover, the successful operation of the balance depends on an organizing center within a given field of social vitalities. By means of both power and prestige, the center must coerce submission to the social process by superior power if reason and moral incentives fail to suffice; and it must seek to redress the disproportions of power by conscious shifts of the balance whenever they make for injustice.\textsuperscript{116}

Furthermore, Niebuhr's reflection on the balance of power was informed by a number of important qualifications. First, the equilibrium of power constituted a conscious political contrivance in human history to mitigate conflicts and enlarge the mutualities of social existence. Niebuhr's estimate of the higher possibilities within human nature never permitted him to treat the balance principle as the
end or final norm of human existence. Generally, he considered the balance of power as a minimum precondition facilitating the subsequent utilization of moral and normative restraints for preventing injustice and enslavement.\textsuperscript{117}

Second, Niebuhr rejected all rigid, static, and unidimensional interpretations of the balance of power and cited a number of potential problems in trying to achieve perfect equilibria of power. That the balance could assume various forms and structural configurations followed from his observations on the many modalities of power and their indeterminate combination in political society. On the one hand, the balance may degenerate into domination and tyranny by creating a coerced unity of society in which the freedom and vitality of its members are impaired. On the other, an equilibrium has the peril of anarchy in it if it is not continuously manipulated and directed. Commenting on the uneasy relations between the balance of power and higher moral possibilities in human existence, Niebuhr cautioned:

\begin{quote}
It is important to recognize the higher possibilities of justice in every historic situation and to know that the twin perils of tyranny and anarchy can never be completely overcome in any political achievement....There is no possibility in making history...safe against either occasional conflicts of vital interests (war) or against the misuse of power which is intended to prevent such conflicts of interest (tyranny).\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

Although the balance of power does not figure as prominently in Niebuhr's writing on foreign policy as it
does in the thought of some other realists, its role is very significant. In the sphere of international politics, the balance of power represents an accommodation of interests of nations relative to their power which is sufficient to prevent major outbreaks of war. His general identification of the functional necessity of the balance of power in world politics was a logical outcome of his concern with the importance of power at all levels of social organization, in addition to the moral ambiguity of national self-interest.

...the internal justice of a community is never so perfect and the accommodation of interests so complete that any society could dispense with the alloy of coercion in the amalgam of its social peace. Nor is it possible to secure the external peace of a community in the partial, and sometimes total, anarchy of nations, without balancing power against power in times of peace and without setting power against power in times of war.

In his evaluation of the international balance of power, Niebuhr drew on the contributions of David Hume and Edmund Burke for a realistic account of the structures of power that stand between the nation and the community of mankind. For example, Hume grasped the underlying rationale for the balance of power by recognizing that the statesman is forced to differentiate between the morality of individuals and nations.

There is a maxim very current in the world, which few politicians are willing to avow, but which has been authorized by the practice of all ages, that there is a system of morals calculated for princes, much more free than that which ought to govern private persons...
Niebuhr admitted the need for such a distinction; yet the realist falls prey to the dangers of Machiavelli if he makes the disparity too great or absolves the state from all ethical obligation.

In addition, both Hume and Burke offered classical estimates of the balance of power in opposition to the universalism and self-righteousness of democratic liberalism. Judging self-interest to be an unchanging attribute of state behavior, Hume observed:

But whether we ascribe the shifting of sides...to jealous emulations or cautious politics, the effects were alike and every prevailing power was sure to meet with a confederacy against it, and that often composed of friends and allies.122

Burke, informed by the same realistic estimate of the possibilities and limitations of international morality, spoke of the duty of nations to enforce common standards of justice (e.g., against Napoleonic imperialism) and declared:

If England shows herself indifferent or unconcerned when these powers are combined against the enterprises of France she is to look with certainty to the same indifference of these powers when she may be at war with that nation.123

Moreover, Niebuhr suggested that Burke's principles of confederation and cooperation which prompted the alliance against Napoleon also describe the motives behind the postwar Western alliance against the Soviet Union. America's postwar national interest, according to Niebuhr, required the creation of a new and stabilizing balance of power as the only realistic alternative to the danger of
international anarchy.

The world must find a way of avoiding...anarchy in international life; and America must find a way of using its great power responsibly. These two needs are organically related; for the world problem cannot be solved if America does not accept its full share of responsibility in solving it."124

At this point, however, it is important to note that Niebuhr's treatment of the balance of power in international politics was often vague and insulated from systematic investigation. First, he devoted little attention to how the structural and operational features of the "new" postwar balance differed from its traditional application during the heyday of classical diplomacy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Second, he neglected to consider the wide array of conditions and forces affecting the potential stability and instability of a balance of power tailored to the trends and transformations of global politics in the postwar years, especially the emergence of the "Third World." Finally, his definitions of power and equilibrium were largely developed within the domain of political philosophy, thereby endowing them with only limited relevance for the many internal and external determinants impinging on a state's foreign policy at any one time.

In fact, Niebuhr went little further than observing that the new balance of power is global, bipolar, and enforced by nuclear terror. It resulted from the Soviet Union and the United States assuming responsibility for a
double hegemony of political authority and military influence in the world community. Much of his postwar writing emphasized three distinctive themes relevant for the type of foreign policy commitments any prospective balance of power might serve. First, Niebuhr stressed the primacy of European security for American foreign policy and based his case on the fact of a shared culture and kindred constitutional systems. Second, he argued that America’s pursuit of power in distant parts of the world was limited by the degree of soundness of the political regimes she supported. Finally, Niebuhr looked to the “nuclear umbrella,” a metaphor he coined, as a potential source of restraint and moderation in the superpower military balance. Since only the great powers had the capacity to launch a war ending in nuclear annihilation, they must learn to respond circumspectly to one another’s diplomatic and military initiatives.

Continuing Moral Dilemmas on the American Foreign Policy Agenda

In this section, selective and brief examination is given to such topics as: (1) nuclear war and disarmament; (2) American influence in the Third World; and (3) international organization and world community. Since Niebuhr approached many of these topics from the standpoint of realist ethics, it will be useful to develop a concluding assessment on how his concern for the moral potential in
foreign policy either affirms or denies the assumptions of classical raison d'état. In what ways does his Christian ethic point to practical moral possibilities beyond the narrow fixation with national self-interest?

For the most part, Niebuhr's reflections on morality and foreign policy in the postwar period revealed a concern for a bipolar world dominated by heightened Cold War tensions and superpower rivalry. To some degree, his more specific observations on the opportunities and limitations shaping American foreign policy in the late 1950s and 1960s have been eclipsed by more recent international political trends over the last decade. Critics point out that Niebuhr never appreciated the forces making for incipient multipolarity in world politics; and perhaps he underestimated the willingness of the superpowers to engage in meaningful dialogue with respect to the dangers of an unrestrained arms race. An even more conspicuous omission was Niebuhr's virtual neglect of current trends in the world economy and the many issues which have since characterized the emerging North-South debate. While contemporary events have often outdistanced Niebuhr's vision, diplomats and scholars can surely profit from his more general investigation of the use and abuse of moral norms in national behavior.

The long history of conflict among communities, whether national or imperial, reached a critical turning point in
the Cold War and the nuclear dilemma of the present day. Nuclear military capability has raised military destructiveness to a level of such suicidal and lethal efficacy that neither superpower has yet been tempted to instigate the "unthinkable." On a more profound level, the balance between the creative and destructive possibilities inherent in man's mastery over natural forces would seem to have been destroyed.\textsuperscript{127} Summarizing the moral predicament of statesmen in the nuclear age, Niebuhr declared:

\begin{quote}
We have come into the tragic position of developing a form of destruction which, if used by our enemies against us, would mean our physical annihilation; and, if used by us against our enemies, would mean our moral annihilation....Yet we are caught in the dilemma of doing the "evil that we do not want," namely, running the risk of annihilation in a global nuclear war.\textsuperscript{128}
\end{quote}

The challenge confronting policy-makers has been to discover some fragile middle ground between nuclear war and capitulation to tyranny. Niebuhr rejected grandiose pacifist schemes for complete disarmament on two counts.\textsuperscript{129} First, they erroneously assume that nations can simply renounce the power of their defense and avoid destruction. Nations, unlike individuals, seldom possess the altruistic capacity for self-sacrifice. Second, pacifist proposals often carry an untenable assumption about human nature. "Man cannot win freedom by renouncing the freedom to destroy, he can win freedom only by mastering that freedom."\textsuperscript{130} Niebuhr looked to the wisdom in the Gospel of divine mercy over illusory dreams of imminent earthly
redemption by man becoming more "pious" and "scientific" in his quest to resolve the perplexities of human existence. Indeed, the possibility of even limited, proximate moral gains in the nuclear struggle depends on the recognition that any final solution is beyond the competence of moral men.131

At the same time, the ultimate moral ambiguity of the nuclear nightmare did not prevent Niebuhr from endorsing a number of general measures to facilitate meaningful negotiations on arms control. At a minimum, negotiations on strategic levels could not be conducted in isolation from other diplomatic and military pressure points in the Soviet-American global struggle. Both the United States and the Soviet Union, according to Niebuhr, would likely "view the disarmament problem in terms of their total power relations, which includes both military capacity and the political prestige of each in and across the continents of the world."132 He called upon American leaders to pursue a balanced defense program to counter both Soviet diplomatic gains in the Third World and their strategic advantage in large ICBMs. The capacity of the superpowers to wage all-out nuclear war may deter the outbreak of the "ultimate war"; yet, he argued that the American ability to deter expansive communism depended on an ability to wage limited war with conventional weapons.133 Finally, the prospects for peace would be enhanced if both major powers "were not
only more conscious of the common danger which transcends their enmities, but also if they refrained from attributing to the other side the intention of beginning an atomic conflict, which neither side really believes of the other."13*

Niebuhr's writing on American foreign policy prospects among the developing nations of Africa and Asia was similarly shaped by the exigencies of Cold War competition between East and West. The specific challenge confronting America's national interest was to encourage the liberating movements of nationalism and modernization while seeking to preserve open societies from external communist control. Yet Niebuhr was also cognizant of the limitations confronting efforts by American policy-makers to realize both objectives in tandem. For example, he regarded both liberal-democratic and Marxist ideologies as unsuitable for the needs of developing societies; he stressed that each country possessed its individual needs and urged that dogmatism about developmental patterns be avoided.13® Moreover, he cautioned the West against overestimating its own moral authority among the new nations. Indiscriminate military intervention to oppose all communist overtures in the Third World could function to obscure other important economic and diplomatic dimensions in the Western conflict with communism.

The problem of exporting democracy to Africa and Asia
also raises fundamental questions about reconciling competing political values within developing societies that are in various stages of revolt against the trappings of Western technology and civilization. At least in the short term, Niebuhr considered democracy to be a dubious proposition for many new nations lacking the essential conditions for attaining justice and stability within the framework of a free society. Many developing countries do not have a religious or cultural foundation that would promote a wide variety of individual liberties. Even assuming that an appreciation for the value of the individual could emerge in time, the problem then becomes one of balancing individual liberty with the requirements of communal justice and order. The impact of modern technical civilization on these older organic cultures often renders the feudal structure of these societies morally and politically untenable.

On the whole, Niebuhr's conclusions about the prospects of liberal-democratic government in the developing nations were not overly optimistic. While his preference was clearly for open societies based on representative institutions and restraints on governmental power, he conceded that some form of socialism was probably necessary to insure that a large percentage of the gross national product would be invested in machine tools and industrial infrastructure. Yet the wellsprings of nationalism could
function as a break on the political excesses of communism much as the need for capital accumulation would counter the liberal emphasis on unrestrained individuality in the free market. By the mid-1960s, Niebuhr judged that the developing nations were entering a post-liberal and post-Marxist age, in which the claims of both capitalism and communism were largely irrelevant to the variety of developmental patterns and changing social structures. Ultimately, he argued that the American national interest could best be served by countering overt communist imperialism, as well as by allowing the new nations to evolve their own answers to meet their singular needs.

During World War II, Niebuhr looked favorably on prospects for increasing national interdependence and economic integration within Europe following the defeat of Hitler. However, in the aftermath of the war, he became much more vocal about the many obstacles inhibiting genuine political and economic unification on a global basis. He pointed to such practical constraints as: (1) the uneven distribution of political, economic, and military power in the postwar world; (2) the resurgence of nationalism among developing societies; (3) the lack of positive incentives for the voluntary sacrifice of national sovereignty by strong and weak powers alike; (4) the globalization of Cold War hostilities; and (5) the attraction of competing ideologies among the most diverse political cultures.
his brief role as advisor to Kennan's Policy Planning Staff at the State Department, he played the role of unflappable critic when proposals for world government were debated.

Niebuhr's critique of world government emphasized two major themes. The first is that governments are not created by fiat (though they can be imposed by tyranny).¹¹ His philosophy stressed the organic factors creating national communities, rather than legal structures finding expression in modern social contract theories. Communal authority is not so much the product of a contract as it is a reflection of such vital organic ties as economics, language, race, religion, and a shared historical consciousness.¹² Niebuhr saw few such organic cohesions beyond national borders that would sustain the type of consensus legitimizing supranational political authority for an integrated world community.

A second fallacy of world government is that governments are efficacious instruments in integrating a political community.¹³ The community, according to Niebuhr, is prior to law; government is a function of community and only secondarily a creator of it. In the long run, some rudimentary form of international community may evolve from accelerated economic interdependence, fear of a nuclear disaster, and a sense of obligation that enlightened men have about a common fate.¹⁴ But Niebuhr regarded these forces as minimal when measured against the strength of
persistent national self-regard.

Unfortunately, Niebuhr's air of pessimism about world government tended to overshadow a more balanced and charitable account of the United Nations as a productive forum for international diplomacy. While unable to prevent war or legislate morality, its specialized agencies do valuable work in promoting cultural understanding and devising "functional" solutions to a variety of technical and economic problems affecting member states. In the realm of superpower relations, the UN provides a diplomatic bridge keeping the lines of communication open between the West and Russia. It furnishes the meeting ground for the free nations; the aegis for ad hoc arrangements for defensive communities; and as a forum for world opinion to check the policies of would-be aggressors. However, Niebuhr warned that the UN was ill-fitted to promote more traditional diplomacy. Indeed, diplomacy by microphone can easily degenerate into histrionics and give rise to inflexible positions among disputants.

Attempting to bridge the gap between power and moral principle, he affirmed the loyalty of the Christian churches to the purposes of the United Nations as outlined in its charter. Yet such loyalty, he believed, becomes problematic if it functions as an abstract substitute for "concern for those acts of daily fidelity through which an international community comes into being." Emphasizing the relation
between Christian ethics and international responsibility, Niebuhr argued:

We ought therefore as churches, emphasize not so much the abstract principle of international responsibility, as we ought to bring Christian resources to bear upon the tremendous problem of a great and rich nation relating itself tolerably to a weakened and impoverished world.147

Certainly Niebuhr spoke as a realist on matters of international politics and American foreign policy. It must be emphasized, however, that his writing on the responsible and prudent exercise of American power represents not so much a celebration of classical raison d'etat but the call for a reinterpretation of American idealism.

Niebuhr's reflections on Machiavelli and his philosophy of raison d'etat illustrate his concern for the errors resulting from an overly consistent realism or idealism. In particular, he cited both Machiavelli and Hobbes as leading examples of secular realists who were excessive in their estimate of the egocentricity of man. Both thinkers failed to recognize that human rational faculties always display both creative and destructive tendencies.148 It will be recalled that Machiavelli advised the prince of his city state how to achieve and maximize power in his dominion; and Machiavelli suggested it is sufficient to observe the outward forms of morality if the prince's policy is actually in the service of the state. Post-medieval political realism, whether expressed in the cynical terms of Machiavelli or the materialistic terms of Hobbes, culminated
in an irresponsible attitude toward the problem of achieving standards of discriminate justice in the political order. The deficiencies of *raison d'état* as an approach to the moral issue in politics were affirmed by Niebuhr, who argued:

The realists were all proponents of the parochial community; and the problem of the larger order between parochial communities disappears from the moral horizon. The realities of power and interest are recognized but only for the sake of justifying a coercive power which will bring order into the conflict of interests....In a sense, the bridging of this chasm by pulling political realism into the service of justice...remains one of the paramount problems of an adequate political ethics.

Machiavellian *raison d'état* exposes the danger of a cynical preoccupation with the sources of individual and collective egoism, to the exclusion of moral resources and possibilities in human nature. While Machiavelli viewed man's moral potential as issuing in a hypocritical pretense of dubious virtue, Niebuhr pointed out:

Self-deception and hypocrisy is an unvarying element in the moral life of all human beings. It is the tribute which immorality pays to morality; or the device by which the lesser self gains the consent of the larger self to indulge in impulses...which the rational self can approve only when they are disguised....The dishonesty of nations is a necessity of political policy if the nation is to gain the full benefit of its double claim upon the loyalty and devotion of the individual, as his own special and unique community which embodies universal values.

In contrast to Machiavelli's secular realism, therefore, Niebuhr understood the egoism of nations as a characteristic of the spiritual life and not just the
expression of the natural impulse for survival. The spiritual manifestation of national egoism is exemplified by such typical expressions of behavior as lust for power; pride (including considerations of prestige and honor); contempt toward the other; hypocrisy (the pretension of conforming to a higher norm than self-interest); and the claim of moral autonomy by which the self-deification of the social group is made explicit by its presentation of itself as the source and end of existence. Nations, like individuals, are caught in the fundamental predicament of justifying self-assertion by the primary right of survival, while claiming to be the bearer of interests and values larger than their own. Since nations constitute an extreme case of the sinful pride of groups, Niebuhr could only hope that "they will moderate their hypocrisies by a slight measure of real international achievement and learn how to accommodate wider interests than their own." The relevance of moral claims to politics can be established only when certain limitations are observed. First, the international environment is largely anarchic and devoid of any moral or political agency able effectively to formulate and enforce community-wide objectives. In such a situation, nations have little recourse but continually to reinforce their security by adding increments of power at the expense of rivals and allies alike. Morality, then, becomes little more than an ideological ally in the quest
for superior power.

Second, under conditions of global anarchy, a nation's pursuit of self-interest is increased by the interests of its citizens. Social unity is built on both the virtuous and selfish side of man's nature; the twin elements of collective strength of a nation become self-sacrificial loyalty and the frustrated aggressions of the masses.\footnote{It follows that international politics is the more contentious and ruthless because of the unselfish loyalty and commitments of group members, loyalties that become laws unto themselves, unrestrained by their obedient and worshipful members.}\footnote{A third problem is the tendency of moral values in a nation's foreign policy to provide an expedient rationale for the selfish ambitions of subnational and influential institutional forces within the national community. The "national interest" is neither self-evident nor formed within a vacuum. Beyond the question of preserving territorial integrity and sovereignty, decision-makers in both democratic and authoritarian societies can seldom achieve the goals of a nation without reference to the sometimes conflicting aspirations of powerful domestic lobbies or entrenched interests within a governmental bureaucracy. Even a national interest seemingly at odds with more sensitive moral estimates may have the effect of promoting vested political and economic interests within a}
A final factor limiting the moral impulse in global politics is the relative absence of sanctions and incentives able to subdue the potential anarchy of interests into a tolerable harmony. In particular, the forces of law, custom, and religion which may be operative in the personal relations of more intimate communities elicit few consensual moral standards among nations. In reflecting on the prospect of any genuinely "ultimate" judgment for historically-conditioned man, Niebuhr concluded:

Modern history has given us a vivid illustration of the fact that the history of community accentuates, rather than mitigates, the moral ambiguities of our existence, particularly the ambiguities of our common life. Only a religious faith and humanism more powerful than many extant varieties can make sense out of...those facts which prove that all historic responsibilities must be borne without the certainty that meeting them will lead to any ultimate solution of the problem.\footnote{\textsuperscript{12}}

Niebuhr argued that the moral issue in international politics revealed itself along two dimensions: (1) should the nation be bound by any moral principles\footnote{\textsuperscript{13}} and (2) how can the nation be prevented from claiming inordinate virtue for its actions? At the outset, Niebuhr rejected classical philosophical standards which define the good as equivalent to a pre-established ontological pattern of being.\footnote{\textsuperscript{14}} In the realm of social ethics, he recognized that the freedom of man, and the wide variety of historic patterns he is able to elaborate, make it necessary to strive for a more
flexible definition of the good. This moral ambiguity is raised to a special height in international politics "because the national community is so large and imposing, from the viewpoint of the individual, that it constantly makes claims upon his conscience, according to which its good is the end of the moral question."*** In an era shaped by both growing interdependence and new forms of conflict, the ultimate challenge for men and nations is how the good of the nation may fit into a more general and universal scheme of values.

In approaching the moral dilemma for nations, Niebuhr drew on both the resources of transcendent Christian faith and a pragmatic outlook on the values of the American liberal-democratic heritage. The overarching good for the community of nations can tentatively be defined in the phrase of Santayana as "the harmony of the whole which does not destroy the vitality of the parts."*** This definition excludes all tyrannically-enforced harmonies; and it makes freedom of each party to assert its own vitality the criterion of moral value. Translating this to the level of world politics, Niebuhr admitted that the national interest may ultimately be a source of discord; however, its expression is necessary to prevent the harmony of the whole from destroying the vitality of the parts. He emphasized the need for an approach to global harmony which makes justice, informed by the transcendent principles of liberty.
and equality, the criterion of international morality. Moreover, both liberty and equality are only regulative
principles of justice. Community at any level is not possible without a certain degree of subordination of one
member to another, and without a modicum of coercion. Given the persistence of individual and collective self-interest,
the responsible exercise of power provides a counterweight against power in the interest of justice as well as the
necessary coercion underlying the order of a community.

Niebuhr warned that the pursuit of the national interest must be harnessed with the interests of others in
order to be moral. Recognition of the equal claims of others represents the beginning of moral reflection in
statesmanship. It was the famous dictum of George Washington that "a nation was not to be trusted beyond its
own interest." Washington's insight, according to Niebuhr, represented a half-truth and ought to be supplemented by the
wisdom that excessive concern for the national interest obscures another side of the equation—that self-concern can
be as defeating in collective as in individual life.

Nations as well as men stand under the law: "Whoever seeketh to gain his life will lose it." Only a faith
that gives due regard to the evil of self-interest in national behavior can moderate the moral pretensions of
contestants.
Nations are, on the whole, not generous. A wise self-interest is usually the limit of their moral achievement; though it is worth noting that nations do not achieve a wise self-interest if generous impulses do not help to drive them beyond the limits of a too narrow self-interest. 1

In summation, the statesman cannot reasonably be expected to ignore the demands of self-interest; however, his moral obligation is to recognize that since all nations live under a common peril as well as under one ultimate norm, he must pursue policies which transcend, as they fulfill, the national interest. The art of statecraft, therefore, is to seek a pragmatic balance, the point of concurrence, between the national and international common good. 1

Conclusion

By his own admission, Niebuhr never attempted to formulate an all-inclusive theory of international politics and foreign policy. His writing on the subject was more specifically directed toward churchmen, policymakers, and members of the educated public. Certainly his works have been widely cited by international relations scholars for the purpose of either defending or criticizing various perspectives in theory and methodology. However, he remained skeptical of all single-factor approaches and "master key" theories seeking to explain and predict all international behavior. Niebuhr took exception to the grand designers, whether Marxists or World Federalists; and he
objected to more scientific and quantitative efforts that reduced contingent political behavior to a group of parsimonious, systemic formulas. Interestingly enough, he was equally uncomfortable with the arguments of a number of other realists, including Morgenthau's claim that the politics of nations could achieve systematic and empirical expression by simply following the dictates of interest defined in terms of power. At best, Niebuhr approached the debate about applicable theory in international politics as an ongoing dialogue from which to evaluate the philosophical assumptions of both the realist and idealist worldviews. His contribution, however, was made through his influence on the realist school and his study of human nature and the role of normative thinking in international politics.

In addition, critics point out with some justification that Reinhold Niebuhr's treatment of realism and idealism poses a number of problems for the development of a theory of international politics. The strength of any theory is its capacity to impart order and meaning for a mass of data which would otherwise be unconnected. Students of international politics are obliged to wonder how Niebuhr's rather vague definition of realism (i.e., accounting for all factors in a social or political situation that offer resistance to established norms) contributes to serious theoretical investigation. At a minimum, his definition
fails to suggest viable standards by which to differentiate the study of politics from other disciplines such as economics, sociology, or aesthetics. More substantively, what did Niebuhr mean by "established norms" and their relation to a concrete political situation? What does the norm of justice (which Niebuhr construed as requiring that each man be given his due) mean in practical terms? What established norms are operative in a world of sovereign states threatened by the peril of global anarchy? What, for instance, is due a South African regime which lives on a painful legacy of apartheid and a disenfranchised majority of its citizens barricaded in "homelands" and labor camps? Niebuhr was certainly correct in suggesting that the moral dilemma in politics frequently entails proximate and "on balance" choices among competing understandings of right and wrong. What troubles some of Niebuhr's most devoted students was his inability to specify more fully the means by which moral standards can be made more accessible to self-interested participants in the political arena.

Niebuhr's credentials as a moderate realist can be substantiated by his use of such recurrent concepts as the national interest, power, and the balance of power. He judged national interest to be the primary datum of international politics and opposed efforts to define a nation's foreign policy goals in static and unchanging form. An enlightened approach to United States national interest,
from Niebuhr’s perspective, was one that attempted to maximize the degree of mutual interests, while defending American culture and political institutions. The concept of power was central to Niebuhr’s political thought inasmuch as it involved the capacity for the maximization of certain self-interests whether by authority or force. On the level of international politics, he stressed the limitless combination of factors which produce power and how the national interest may be enhanced by military, religious, economic, and ideological resources. Finally, Niebuhr found the persistence of the national interest so strong in world politics that the only possible harmonies were those managing to neutralize rival forces through balances of power. In general, he treated the balance of power as a means to accommodate the relative power positions of nations in order to prevent the outbreak of a major war. The postwar balance differed from all previous balances in that it was global, bipolar, and based on the theory of the assured destruction of major powers in a nuclear confrontation.

While often suggestive, Niebuhr’s conceptualization as a political realist suffered from the lack of rigorous definitions and from a general reluctance to consider new theoretical horizons that might make his concepts more meaningful for the actual conduct of foreign policy. Several examples may be briefly mentioned. With other
realists, Niebuhr's habit of explaining foreign policy events by reference to the requirements of national interest obscures how foreign policy is actually made and executed. His neglect of any kind of decision-making framework results in an inability to identify the particular mix of domestic and external pressures (including the perceptions of key actors) operative in either the formulation or execution of foreign policy initiatives.

Moreover, Niebuhr's rather vague reflections on the significance of the postwar balance of power failed to clarify several important considerations. He viewed the balance of power as roughly equivalent to the nuclear balance of terror perpetuated by the superpowers. From such a perspective, the balance becomes more a matter of military and strategic calculation than a basis for creative diplomatic efforts. While Niebuhr recognized that Soviet-American rivalry was played out on various levels, he stopped short of assessing the relative weight of economic, political, and ideological variables in the evolving global balance. What kind of power was being equilibrated and under what specific conditions? Niebuhr never fully appreciated the relevance of new, non-military, sources of power available to both the developed and developing nations alike. Never comfortable with the prospects of détente between the major nuclear actors, his tendency to cast the balance of power in bipolar and global terms often
misrepresented the extent to which American foreign policy actually promoted the stabilization of more regional balances and defensive arrangements. At the end of a long and distinguished career, Niebuhr provided few insights on how future prospects of the balance and its bipolar character would be shaped by the proliferation of nuclear actors, as well as by emerging political and economic strength in Europe and Asia.

Despite theoretical and conceptual difficulties inherent in Niebuhr's political realism, few have surpassed his penetrating analysis of the moral dilemma in individual and group behavior. He exposed the hypocritical use of morality as ideology and tried to discover a way to make moral claims relevant to international politics. Niebuhr viewed political life as morally ambiguous and contingent because of his respect for an absolute love ethic and the degree to which history proves all principles of social morality relative. Yet Niebuhr never permitted the persistence of self-interest to obscure the latent capacity for moral action on the part of self-regarding men and nations.

In particular, Niebuhr judged Machiavellian raison d'état as a deficient standard for postwar American foreign policy. The egoism of the state is recognized, but it cannot be accepted as normative. It is the recognition of norms beyond the self-interest of nations which helps to
qualify a nation's egoism and prompts statesmen to act for the good of the whole community. For Niebuhr, moral reflection in foreign policy begins with the recognition of the equal claims of others and the accommodation of conflicting interests. While nations cannot be expected to espouse a more universal value at the expense of its interests, the possibility of realizing proximate moral standards in foreign policy hinges on efforts of the prudent statesman, who realizes that the moral act is the wise act which considers the interests of those affected by the act. Summarizing Niebuhr's preoccupation with the moral problem in politics, one perceptive scholar has written: "The ideal of the love of Christ and the reality of Machiavellian politics are the poles within which he discusses man's social hopes and political strategies."
Endnotes


3. Ibid., p. 368.


5. Quoted in Thompson, Masters of International Thought, p. 32.


16. Ibid., p. 15.


21. Reflecting on his early years, Niebuhr wrote: "My early writings were all characterized by a critical attitude toward the liberal world view, whether expressed in secular or Christian terms. There was...little difference between the secular and Christian versions of the optimism of the nineteenth-century culture....I found each with a sense of superiority over the other either because it possessed, or had discarded, the Christian faith. But this contest was ironic because...both were obviously irrelevant to the ultimate realities, whether in terms of mankind's collective behavior or in terms of individual man's ultimate problems. See Reinhold Niebuhr, "Intellectual Autobiography," in Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, eds., *Reinhold Niebuhr*, p. 7.


25. Ibid.

26. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Niebuhr treated the Marxist myth of the immanent redemption of man and society as a "very valuable illusion for the moment; for justice cannot be approximated if the hope of its...realization does not generate a sublime madness in the soul." Yet his philosophical insight into the potential value of Marxist imagery was tempered by his warning that "only a sentimentalist could be oblivious of the possibilities of Napoleonic ventures in the forces which are seething in Russia." See Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, pp. 276-277.


30. For an example of how Niebuhr's abstract idealism blinded him to the creative aspects of the pragmatic revolution of Roosevelt's New Deal, see Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Domestic Situation," *Radical Religion* 3 (Summer 1938): 4.


34. Ibid., p. 148.


36. Contrary to both the classical and modern secular view of man, Niebuhr wrote:

"Modern, like classical, humanism removes every mystery from human existence. Christianity, on the other hand, declares that man stands far above and beyond all relations of nature and reason and that he can understand himself only in his
relation to God. Modern humanism tends to equate the dignity of man with his virtue. Christianity, on the other hand, recognizes that the dignity of man consists precisely of that freedom which makes it possible for man to sin." See Reinhold Niebuhr, "Christianity and Humanism," *Messenger* (September 19, 1952), p. 7.


38. Ibid.


40. Ibid., pp. 83-84.


57. Even at this early stage of his thought, Niebuhr was occasionally susceptible to being influenced by the very cynicism he hoped to avoid. By 1927, he felt that Western civilization was completely secularized and that its dominant motives were beyond the influence of ethical considerations. See Reinhold Niebuhr, "Our Secularized Civilization," *Christian Century* (April 22, 1926), p. 508.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., p. 73. Even at this point, however, Niebuhr was skeptical about the redemptive effects of violence in the class struggle. He continued to endorse tactics of non-violent social change whenever possible. See Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, pp. 251-254.

61. Ibid., p. 80.

62. "Whenever religious idealism brings forth its purest fruits and places the strongest claim upon social desire, it results in policies which, from the political perspectives, are quite impossible." Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, p. 270.


66. While Niebuhr wrote relatively little on the precise strategy and tactics by which the war was prosecuted, his concern for the nature of international politics and American foreign policy in the coming postwar era is evidenced by the attention he devoted to such topics as: (1) restoration of Europe and German unification; (2) disarmament of nations; (3) reorganization of national and international economic systems; (4) world political order and supranational international organization; and (5) colonialism and security for small states. See Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Christian Faith and the World Crisis," Christianity and Crisis (February 10, 1941), pp. 3-6; "Plans for World Reorganization," Christianity and Crisis (October 19, 1942), pp. 3-6; and "Toward a Christian Approach to International Issues," Christianity and Crisis (December 9, 1946), pp. 1-2.


75. Quoted in Thompson, Masters of International Thought, p. 29.


81. Ibid., p. 174.


86. Ibid., p. 201.


89. Ibid.


92. Ibid., p. 192.


94. Ibid., p. 175.

95. Ibid., p. 195.


100. Davis and Good, eds., *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics*, p. 92.


105. Ibid., p. 92.


110. Ibid.


114. Ibid., p. 107.
115. Ibid., p. 106.


118. Ibid., p. 254.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
125. Davis and Good, eds., Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics, pp. 302-308.
126. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
133. Ibid., p. 280. At the same time, however, Niebuhr took exception with Dr. Henry Kissinger’s assumption that tactical nuclear weapons could be useful instruments in a limited military confrontation between NATO forces and Soviet troops in Europe. See Henry Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (New York: Harper Brothers, 1957).

134. Ibid., p. 273.


139. Ibid.

140. For example, see Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Myth of World Government," Nation (March 16, 1946), p. 312; "Can We Organize the World?", Christianity and Crisis (February 2, 1953), p. 1; and "One World or None," Christianity and Crisis (February 16, 1948), p. 9.


142. Stone, Reinhold Niebuhr: Prophet to Politicians, p. 117.


147. Ibid.


149. Ibid., p. 144.

150. Ibid.


156. Ibid.


160. Ibid., p. 328.

161. Ibid., p. 327.

162. Ibid., p. 328.


164. Ibid. See also Reinhold Niebuhr, "Our Moral and Spiritual Resources for International Cooperation," *Social Action* 22 (February): 17-18.


CHAPTER IV

HANS J. MORGENTHAU AND A THEORY OF POWER POLITICS

Both Niebuhr and Lippmann clearly rejected classical raison d’état as an appropriate standard for United States foreign policy; at the same time, however, they deplored the tendency of idealists to sacrifice the prudent calculation of American national interest for promoting moral absolutes in international politics. In summarizing the rise of political realism as it applied to American foreign policy in the postwar era, one scholar has written:

...ideal goals are not obtained in the real world of conflicting national purposes by moral fervor alone but only by a pragmatic calculation of the means to an end, by a rational anticipation of the actual consequences of a given action.¹

As an emigré who fled Nazi Germany, the career of Hans J. Morgenthau stands as a vivid testament to realism’s moral sensibility to American self-interest in world affairs. Unlike Lippmann and Niebuhr, Morgenthau was a professor of political science whose writings in the field of international politics has been at the forefront of the discipline for well-over thirty years. Throughout his long career, Morgenthau reminded his colleagues of the normative element in all political analysis and illustrated how the commitment of a "value free" political science is itself a
philosophical predisposition rooted in beliefs about man's nature and the meaning of his political existence. For Morgenthau, political science is based upon a total worldview—religious, poetic, as well as philosophic in nature—the validity of which it must take for granted.2

Morgenthau drew upon the resources of both classical and modern political philosophy in developing a theory of politics. Both his critique of modern social science in Scientific Man vs. Power Politics (1946) as well as the "six principles of political realism" outlined in Politics Among Nations (1948) specify the content and boundaries of an American philosophy of power politics. The point of departure for Morgenthau's realist philosophy is the proposition that "power politics, rooted in the lust for power, which is common to all men, is... inseparable from social life itself."3 The truth of political science, he claimed, is the truth about power, its configurations, and its laws.

Morgenthau applied to practical affairs a philosophy of international politics that recognized the many forms, and stressed the limits, of power. Diplomacy, peace, and war—the conditions of their existence and the reasons for their success or failure—were for him the fundamental ingredients of international life.4 His many books and essays probed the limits and possibilities of statesmanship for a postwar world in which American policy-makers face the increasingly
difficult task of reconciling security interests with transcendent principles that have sustained the country's previous projections of power abroad.

In addition, Morgenthau was perhaps the first realist to develop a systematic and broad-gauge theory of international politics. Any international political theory, he argued, is a reflection of certain philosophic propositions. In discussing the normative element of political theory and the moral commitment of the political scientist, he suggested: "For without...the assumption that objective, general truths in matters political exist and can be known, order and justice...become the mere by-products of ever-changing power relations."

This chapter assesses Morgenthau's theory of international politics and its relation to the philosophy of raison d'état. To what extent did his political thinking draw on the insights of either Machiavelli or Hobbes in order to justify America's pursuit of power in postwar international politics? While sometimes portrayed as an advocate of Realpolitik in foreign policy, how was Morgenthau able to reconcile the reformist values of the American diplomatic tradition with his affirmation of the sovereign national interest and the relevance of balance of power techniques in today's changing world? From Morgenthau's perspective, what are the ethical obligations of the statesman and how do these affect his understanding
of the limits of power in American diplomacy?

The Education on an American Realist

While often vilified by his critics as an expositor of "Old World" power politics, Morgenthau's career can be considered something of an American success story. Much of his reputation was earned by pointing to basic problems with the principles and problems of American foreign policy. Against a crusading, ideologically-oriented foreign policy, he called for a more realistic worldview emphasizing national interest in terms of a nation's power vis-à-vis other nations. Morgenthau also clearly valued America's liberal and democratic heritage. One of his least read, but most important volumes, The Purpose of American Politics (1960) affirmed his strong commitment to America's unifying national purpose, which he defined as, "achieving equality in freedom."* In his revealing interview with Bernard Johnson, Morgenthau concluded with the rather sentimental conviction that:

There is no doubt...that I would never have been able to establish myself as a scholar were it not for the opportunity offered me by the United States....I did have the opportunity to show what I could do and by showing it, was able to advance. It is this uniqueness which from the very beginning has been the most distinctive characteristic of American society."

Morgenthau was born in 1904 in Coburg, a small town in central Germany and now part of northern Bavaria. Morgenthau's own reflections of his early life were clouded
with painful disappointment and frustration. While exhibiting a promising young mind in the classroom, he suffered from frequent illness and inveterate shyness. Raised a Jew in an authoritarian family committed to uneasy coexistence in German society, he was often the victim of gross anti-Semitic provocations and discrimination. Unlike Lippmann who retreated from his Jewish roots, Morgenthau's sense of deep injustice over religious persecution remained a prominent concern throughout his life. The support he would later offer to a Jewish homeland with secure borders was strengthened by many of these early memories.

Morgenthau's formal academic training began in 1923 when he enrolled at the University of Frankfurt. He transferred in 1924 to the University of Munich in order to concentrate in the fields of public law and European diplomatic history. In particular, the heritage of Bismarck's diplomacy was especially significant for Morgenthau's thinking on the principles of foreign and military policy. "For the first time, I felt the impact of a coherent system of thought...a distillation of Bismarck's Realpolitik." In addition, Max Weber's social and political philosophy provided Morgenthau with a model for the practicing political scientist. He summarized Weber's importance by writing: "While as a citizen he was a passionate observer of the political scene and a frustrated participant in it, as a scholar...viewing politics without
passion...or political purpose beyond the intellectual one of understanding."

After passing his law exam in Munich, Morgenthau returned to the University of Frankfurt in 1929 to obtain his doctorate. The title of his dissertation read: "The International Judicial Function: Its Nature and its Limits." Against those who sought to outlaw war by noble covenants, Morgenthau argued that what really mattered in the relations of nations was not international law but international politics and the pursuit of power.

With Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, Morgenthau left Germany to teach in Madrid from 1935 to 1936. His emigration to the United States in 1937 led to teaching appointments at the University of Chicago (1943-1971) and the New School For Social Research in New York (1975-1981). His lectures on American foreign policy were always contentious forums of debate concerning America’s military and diplomatic responsibilities in a postwar world. In addition, his commitment to a philosophy of politics and distrust of a quantified political science represented a sharp departure from the discipline’s prevailing orthodoxy of behavioral science.

Morgenthau exemplified the political scientist who stood both within and outside the political arena. Encouraged by George Kennan, he joined Niebuhr and others as a consultant to the State Department’s Policy Planning
Staff. For all practical purposes, however, his association with the State Department came to an abrupt halt in 1951. He also served as a consultant to the Pentagon from 1962 to 1965, only to be fired because of his opposition to the Vietnam War. In fact, his criticism of American intervention prompted the Johnson Administration to establish a desk known as "Project Morgenthau," an in-house operation to discredit him for which, he claimed, McGeorge Bundy and Zbigniew Brzezinski became the official spokesmen. In his final years, Morgenthau grew increasingly skeptical about the power of truth to move men.

In the area of international politics, Morgenthau's scholarship helped to set an agenda of theory and research for political scientists. His distinctive contribution to the study of international politics was twofold. First, such works as Scientific Man vs. Power Politics probed the underlying philosophy for a realist theory of politics and its relevance to the relations of states that define their national interest in terms of power. Second, his commentary on American foreign policy (e.g., In Defense of the National Interest and A New Foreign Policy for the United States) exposed the intellectual confusions about the realities of the international environment in which the United States would have to pursue its security after World War II.

Morgenthau's Philosophy of Power Politics

While best known for his contributions to international
politics and American foreign policy, Morgenthau's primary intellectual interest from the outset of his career has not been foreign policy or even politics in general but philosophy. Following World War II, his decision to focus on American foreign policy was based on the practical conviction that "the existence of the United States and...mankind depended on a sound foreign policy." He saw little point in philosophic speculation for a world that could be reduced to radioactive rubble in a matter of years or decades. Commenting on the consequences of those political scientists who seek to emancipate the scientific study of politics from "value-laden" political philosophy, Morgenthau warned:

"Contemporary political science, predominately identified with a positivistic philosophy which is itself a denial of virtually all of the philosophic traditions of the West, has...mutilated itself by refusing itself access to the sources of insight available in the great philosophic systems of the past."

For the limited purpose of our study, specific attention will be devoted to the assumptions and principles of Morgenthau's realist philosophy of politics.

According to Morgenthau, politics is inherently a philosophical discipline in that "man...cannot live without a philosophy which gives meaning to his existence...." Yet he was equally cognizant of several limitations affecting the philosopher's contribution to political life. First, the requirements of formal political philosophy are
different from those which inform political reality. Philosophy interpreted as a rationally consistent set of intellectual assumptions is typically static and often betrayed by a political reality replete with empirical contingencies and systemic irrationalities. Second, political philosophy is exposed to two kinds of corruption: either of becoming subservient to the existing political reality by rationalizing it, or of becoming subservient to an anticipated and desired future reality by justifying it. From this standpoint, political philosophy fails when it is reduced to either ideology or utopia.

In view of the contrast between the systematic rationality of philosophy and the contingencies that determine the reality of politics, Morgenthau argued in favor of an "issues oriented" philosophy that applies the theoretical principles of politics to a wide variety of political issues. Seeking to reconcile the dispassionate contemplation of the philosopher and the practical art of the statesman, Morgenthau wrote:

The sum total of such reflections constitutes a political philosophy in substance; for these relations seek in an issues-oriented form the same kind of coherent theoretical understanding which is the obvious aim of systematic philosophies. They try to compensate for the lack of systematization with their avoidance of the more obvious ideological and utopian temptations and with their direct relevance for the political concerns of the time.

In an attempt to speak the truth to power, he assessed political action not by the levels of expediency but
according to certain higher standards and principles that are true but can never be fully realized in practice.

Noteworthy also was Morgenthau's powerful dissent from almost all of the prevailing beliefs shaping the theory and practice of contemporary social science. His *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* was much more than a narrow treatise on methodology; rather it sought to evaluate the many philosophic currents that brought the scientific study of social phenomena into being. Referring to the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, Morgenthau found that the political crisis confronting the West in the first half of the twentieth century resided in "the general decay in the political thinking of the Western world." Specifically, Morgenthau took exception to "the belief in the power of science to solve all problems and, more particularly, all political problems which confront man in the modern age." The underlying philosophy of modern Western civilization (whether in the guise of "rationalism," "scientism," "liberalism," or "pacifism") sought answers for the great human problems with abstract mechanical formulas, blind to the fact of evil still at work in the world and, therefore, disarmed by it.

Morgenthau's sweeping and often loosely-worded indictment of the social and political philosophy of modern Western thought was based on a number of derivative and corollary ideas which can be briefly identified:
The modern philosophy of rationalism is rooted in two erroneous assumptions: the conception of the social and physical world as being intelligible through the same rational processes, and the conviction that understanding in terms of these processes is all that is needed for the rational control of the social and physical world.

The rationalist mode of thought supports a philosophical structure which gives the appearance of yielding eternal verities. The principles of scientific reason are always simple, consistent, and abstract; by contrast, political society is always complicated, incongruous, and concrete.

Modern liberal reason misunderstands both the nature of man and his political existence. It does not see that man's nature has three dimensions: biological, spiritual, and rational. By neglecting the biological and spiritual facets, it misconstrues the function reason fulfills within the whole of human existence, distorts the problem of ethics, and perverts the natural sciences into an instrument of social salvation. This approach fails to recognize that the irrational pursuit of self-interest and power is inseparable from social life itself.

Modern rationalism treats the social scientist as a detached, passive observer of social events; but this
obsures the impact of "purposive action" and "the creative influence of the human mind" on the initial stages of knowing the social world. Nature is subject to human action; it is the human mind which actually creates it, and the creation must bear witness to the quality of the creator.

--It is the mega thaumazin--the "great wonderment," the shock of incongruity--which according to Aristotle is at the beginning of all philosophy. That shock feeds on two common experiences--one intellectual, the other moral. The intellectual experience is doubt about the meaning of history in terms of its recurrent and unique elements. The moral dilemma results from the tendency of man to claim for his position in history more in terms of his moral dignity than he is entitled to.\textsuperscript{33}

A realist political philosophy, according to Morgenthau, is distinguished by several important principles. First, the realist believes that politics forms an "autonomous" field of behavior and inquiry. Against those who would apply natural science methods to the study of political behavior, the realist holds that the historic arena--the human universe--is essentially different from the natural universe. Therefore, the intellectual methods which are capable of understanding politics and society are bound to be different from the methods which apply to the discovery of the secrets of nature.\textsuperscript{34} The concept of power
allows the observer "to distinguish politics from other social spheres, to orient himself in the maze of empirical phenomena which make up the field, and to establish a measure of rational order within it."29

Second, a realist theory of politics evolves from certain philosophical conceptions about the nature of man and political society. In rather simplistic fashion, Morgenthau reduces the history of Western political thought to the story of a contest between two schools which differ in their conception of man, society, and politics. One—the horizon of political idealism—assumes the essential goodness and infinite malleability of human nature; it blames the failure of the social order to measure up to the rational standards of a progressive society on lack of knowledge and antiquated institutions.28 By contrast, the tradition of political realism acknowledges that forces inherent in human nature prevent man from achieving a thoroughly rational or moral political order.27 The realist views man as a self-interested creature whose ego is inevitably contaminated by the propensity for sin and evil. In seeking fundamental political changes, the statesman "must work with those forces, not against them."28

Third, the realist believes that politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. For realists the possibility exists, therefore, of developing a rational theory of politics that reflects.
however imperfectly, these objective laws. For Morgenthau, the concept of power "provides a kind of rational outline of politics, a map of the political scene." In commenting on the rational requirements of any political theory, he observed:

Such a map does not provide a complete description of the political landscape as it is in any particular period of history. It...provides the timeless features of its geography distinct from their ever-changing historic setting....

In expounding his theory of international politics, Morgenthau exhorted the student to assume the position of the statesman who is called upon to meet a certain problem of foreign policy under specific circumstances. In so doing, "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...is likely to choose." The validity of a realist theory, Morgenthau believed, does not hinge on its strict conformity to preestablished methodological criteria; rather, it is subject only to the "pragmatic" requirement that it broaden our knowledge and deepen our understanding of what is worth knowing.

Fourth, Morgenthau's theory of international politics also contains a normative element. The political realist values the rational elements of political action for practical reasons: Political realism assumes that a rational
foreign policy is, of necessity, good foreign policy. It minimizes risks and maximizes benefits and, hence, complies with the moral precept of prudence and the political requirement of success.\textsuperscript{33}

Fifth, realism treats the concept of interest defined as power as an objective category which is universally valid, but it does not endow the concept with a meaning that is fixed once and for all.\textsuperscript{34} Taken in isolation, the determination of a nation's interest in a concrete situation is relatively simple; it encompasses the integrity of a nation's territory and political institutions, and of its culture.\textsuperscript{35} However, an objective determination of a foreign policy designed to insure national survival in a particular period depends on the specific mix of political and cultural factors impacting on the decision-making process.

Morgenthau warned:

While the realist...believes that interest is the perennial standard by which political action must be directed, the contemporary connection between interest and the nation state is a product of history, and is...bound to disappear. Nothing in the realist position militates against the assumption that the present division of the...world into nation states will be replaced by larger units...in keeping with the...potentialities and the moral prerequisites of the contemporary world.\textsuperscript{36}

Sixth, political realism holds that multiple factors affect moral reasoning and that "universal principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract...formulation, but...must be filtered through the
concrete circumstances of time and place." Therefore, moral principles can never be fully realized, but can only be approximated through the temporary balancing of interests and the precarious settlement of conflicts. Whereas the individual may justly claim the right to self-sacrifice in defense of moral law, the state has no right to let its moral disapprobation get in the way of successful political action. For Morgenthau, there is no genuine political morality without the prudential consideration of the probable consequences following from different courses of action.

Finally, political realism does not identify "the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe." Morgenthau held that crusading and pretentious idealism contains two principal defects. On the one hand, the idealist falls victim to world-embracing ideals which, because of their vagueness and generality, can provide no national guidance for resolving concrete political problems. On the other, the idealist dresses parochial interests in the garb of universal moral principles and then presumes that the rest of the world, in refusing to grant his policy cosmic righteousness, is ipso facto less moral (or rational) than he.

Morgenthau's observations on a just world community and operative supranational values in relations between states raises a number of problematic questions, not least of which
was his judgment of *raison d'état* as a basis for American diplomacy both past and present. While this theme will be explored at greater length in a following section, it will be useful to introduce his approach to the moral dilemma of international politics. At a minimum, Morgenthau's thought exhibited a curious ambivalence and sense of contradiction regarding the gap between national interest and viable norms transcending state interest.

In a more pessimistic assessment, Morgenthau once wrote: "There is a profound and neglected truth hidden in Hobbes' extreme dictum that the state creates morality as well as law and that there is neither morality nor law outside the state." Universal moral principles, such as justice and equality, apply to concrete situations only in the measure in which they are given content by a particular society. Reflecting on what has euphemistically been termed the "society of nations," Morgenthau remarked:

> Not only are there no supranational moral principles concrete enough to give guidance to the political actions of...nations; there is also no agency on the international scene to promote the interests of the individual nations themselves.

Yet, in opposition to those critics who have portrayed his international thought as Machiavellian or Hobbesian, Morgenthau retorted: "I have always maintained that the actions of states are subject to universal moral principles and I have been careful to differentiate my position...from that of Hobbes." He consistently stressed that moral
reasoning in the political sphere does not imply a simple choice between a moral principle and a standard of action which is morally irrelevant or even immoral.

Moral rules do not permit certain policies to be considered at all from the point of view of expediency. Such ethical inhibitions operate in our time on different levels and with different effectiveness. Their restraining function is most obvious...in affirming the sacredness of human life and peace in our time.

A Realist Theory of International Politics

As the previous chapters emphasized, the realist worldview was informed by philosophical convictions regarding the nature of man, his existence in political society, and the moral problem in a decentralized world of sovereign nation states. More so than his predecessors, however, Morgenthau utilized the philosophical and moral resources of realism in order to specify the limitations and prospects of a theory of international politics. His attention focused on such objectives as: (1) identifying key concepts and categories of analysis; (2) weighing the impact of science, philosophy, and ethics on generalizing about international political behavior; and (3) stipulating the intellectual and political functions a theory of international relations ought to perform.

Before examining Morgenthau's conceptual framework, it is necessary to discuss briefly his position regarding the possibility of theorizing about international politics. Morgenthau cited a number of intellectual and historical
factors to explain why, until very recently, no explicit theory of international relations has existed. One reason for the absence of international political theory can be found in the philosophic outlook that prevailed until the end of the Napoleonic Wars. From this perspective, relations among nations were seen as a fact of nature or a datum of history impervious to human will and control. The best the political philosopher could hope to achieve was to describe the state of nature (which resulted from the nature of man) as well as the precarious legal order presumed to exist among nations.

...the intellectual possibility of a theory of international relations depended on the recognition that relations among nations are not something which is given to man....rather, it is that the relations among nations have been created by the will of man and...can be manipulated and changed...by the will of man.

Theorizing about international relations was also stifled by the reformist orientation that pervaded commentary on foreign policy in the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century. The main theoretical concern focused on developing legal entities and supranational agencies that would supersede the evils of traditional "power politics."

Another factor inhibiting the development and usefulness of international theory concerns both the rational and contingent elements inherent in political behavior. Morgenthau argued that there is a rational dimension in political life (e.g., interest defined as
power) that makes politics susceptible to theoretical analysis. His commitment to international theory was rooted in the belief that "international politics is the realm of recurrence and repetition." The repetitive character of international politics—the configurations of the balance of power—lends itself to theoretical systemization.

Yet Morgenthau was equally sensitive to those contingent and unforeseen elements which may obviate the possibility of theoretical understanding. The forces of irrationality and insecurity affect the choice to be made among several possibilities. The theorist seeking to disclose the rational demeanor of any specific political act must take account of Morgenthau's caveat that:

The statesman must cross the Rubicon not knowing how deep and turbulent the river is....He must commit himself to a...course of action in ignorance of its consequences, and he must be capable of acting decisively in spite of that ignorance....Rather than seeking unattainable knowledge, he must reconcile himself to ineluctable ignorance.

Ultimately, Morgenthau advised that a rational theory of international politics or foreign policy "must abstract from those irrational elements" and seek "to paint a picture of foreign policy which presents the rational essence to be found in experience." A theory of international politics can do no more than review the likely consequences of choosing one alternative as opposed to another; and it must involve calculations concerning the conditions under which one alternative is more likely to occur, and be successful,
than the other.\textsuperscript{52}

For Morgenthau, the calculus of the national interest functions as the central concept for a theory of international politics. "All successful statesmen of modern times from Richelieu to Churchill," he wrote, "have made the national interest the ultimate standard of their policies."\textsuperscript{53} In international politics, the national interest is shaped by the "struggle for power...for national advantage." For general purposes, Morgenthau's observations on the importance of national interest in world politics can be classified according to three criteria: (1) problems of definition and classification; (2) American diplomatic history and competing versions of American national interest; and (3) American national interest in a changing postwar global setting.

It should be noted that Morgenthau refused to consider the national interest as a static, self-evident principle of statecraft whose formulation is immune from the complex interaction of domestic and external influences on the decision-making process in foreign policy. Like the "great generalities" in the United States Constitution (e.g., due process and general welfare), the concept of the national interest "contains residual meaning...inherent in the concept itself, but beyond these minimum requirements its content can run the whole gamut of meanings that are logically compatible with it."\textsuperscript{54} Therefore, the specific
content of the national interest is affected by the political traditions and the overall cultural context within which a nation formulates its foreign policy.

Morgenthau emphasized that the concept of national interest contains two elements, one that is logically necessary and relatively permanent, and one that is variable according to changing circumstances. What he regarded as the permanent "hard core" of the national interest stems from three criteria: (1) the nature of the interests to be defended; (2) the international milieu within which the interests operate; and (3) the rational necessities limiting the choice of means and ends by all foreign policy actors. The survival of the political identity of the nation is the irreducible minimum, the necessary element of its interests vis-à-vis other nations. In a global setting where a number of sovereign nations compete for power, the foreign policies of all nations strive to protect their physical and cultural identity against the aggressive designs of rival forces. Moreover, Morgenthau stipulated that the nature of the threat to which the hard core is exposed remains relatively constant over long periods of time. For example, the successful defense of American national interest has encompassed such goals as unrivaled American superiority in the Western Hemisphere and preserving a balance of power in both Europe and Asia.

The rational character of the national interest derives
from the reasoning by which the statesman translates abstract goals into concrete foreign policy options. Governments throughout history attempted to uphold a nation's core interests by pursuing such policies as competitive armaments, balance of power tactics, defensive alliances, and subversion. In commenting on the relation between rational necessities of foreign policy (i.e., selecting one of a limited number of alternatives through which to bring the nation's power to bear upon the power of other nations) and the universal character of the national interest, Morgenthau remarked:

It is this assumption of universality of the national interest in time and space which enables us to understand the foreign policies of Demosthenes and Caesar, Kautilya and Henry III, of the contemporary statesmen of Russia and China. Regardless of all the differences in personality...and environment, their thinking was predetermined...when they were faced with...protecting...the rational core of the national interest."

In brief, Morgenthau calculated that the rational character of the national interest could be detected and understood by thinking as the statesman must have thought and by theorists "putting their thoughts into the context of their personalities and social environment."

Morgenthau's identification of the criteria serving as the relatively permanent hard core of the national interest raises the question of their applicability in terms of actual choices in specific foreign policy situations. He pointed to the difficulty of measuring accurately all the
crosscurrents of personalities, public opinion, and partisan politics that impact on the formulation of a nation's interest at any one time. The national interest can function as a meaningful standard in foreign policy only if statesmen impose some hierarchical order upon the values that make up the national interest and among the limited resources committed to them.

The precondition for this rational assessment, according to Morgenthau, "is a clear understanding of the distinction between the necessary and variable elements of the national interest." Especially in democratic countries, where the variable elements of the national interest tend to be the subject of contentious debate, a rational conception of the national interest requires that all external objectives (actual or potential) be subjected to scrutiny and assigned an approximate place in the scale of national values.

In his lengthy writing on United States diplomatic history, Morgenthau emphasized that history represented an essential foundation for the study of international politics and foreign policy; indeed, historic events important for an understanding of international politics are generally manifestations of social and political forces that reflect the timeless principles of human nature. His attempt to outline distinctive "phases" of American diplomatic history was largely based on the extent to which policy-makers
justified American conduct abroad by reference to the permanent and variable elements of the national interest. In this respect, he took exception with those who sought to characterize the American national purpose as exempt from the self-interested pursuit of power and national advantage that shape the struggles of international life.

Morgenthau focused upon opposing realist and idealist conceptions of international politics in American experience. For example, the idea that "a nation can escape...from power politics into a realm where action is guided by moral principles rather than by considerations of power is deeply rooted in the American mind." From Washington's Farewell Address to Woodrow Wilson's global democratic crusade, American statesmen distinguished their foreign policies from other nations in terms of moral superiority. The toils of European rivalry and ambition offered a striking contrast to American diplomacy which appeared as altruistic and seeking the general welfare of mankind. Commenting on the American inclination to invoke abstract moral principles to justify concrete national interests, Morgenthau wrote: "We have acted on the international scene, as all nations must, in power-political terms; but we have tended to conceive of our actions in non-political, moralistic terms."

Morgenthau's belief in the enduring importance of power and self-interest in American foreign policy was based on
the notion that "underneath this political dilettantism, nourished by improvidence and a sense of moral mission, there lives an almost instinctive awareness of the perennial interests of the United States." On the basis of these two opposing conceptions, Morgenthau specified three periods of American foreign policy: (1) the realistic—thinking and acting in terms of power; (2) the ideological or utopian—thinking in terms of moral principle but acting in terms of power; and (3) the moralistic—thinking and acting in terms of moral principle.

Morgenthau praised the Federalist leadership of the 1790s for recognizing the primacy of interest and power in world affairs. In his "Pacifucus" and "Americanus" essays written in support of Washington's proclamation of neutrality in the War of the First Coalition against France, Alexander Hamilton invoked the interest of the United States:

Self-preservation is the first duty of a nation; and though in the performance of stipulations regarding to war, good faith requires that its ordinary hazards...be fairly met...yet it does not require that extraordinary and extreme hazards should be run.

Hamilton's emphasis on American national interest was rooted in the conviction that the United States would gain little and risk everything by siding with France against almost all of Europe.

The ideological phase of American foreign policy began with Jefferson's accession to the presidency and lasted
until the Spanish-American War at the close of the nineteenth century. In many public utterances, Jefferson's dedication to abstract morality contributed to his contempt for the European balance of power and support for the egalitarian aspirations associated with the French and American revolutionary causes. However, in the final decade of the Napoleonic Wars, Jefferson's international thought pointed to the ever-changing distribution of power in the world rather than immutable moral principles. Speaking in 1812, Jefferson said: "We...ought to pray that the powers of Europe be so poised and counterpoised...that their own security may require the presence of all their forces at home, leaving the other quarters of the globe in undisturbed tranquility."

John Quincy Adams represented "the classic example of the political moralist in thought and word, who cannot help being a realist in action." During the Adams Administration, the legal principle of freedom of the seas became a weapon to safeguard American independence from the British fleet; the principle of non-intervention in the Monroe Doctrine was a negative condition for the enduring greatness of the United States; and the idea of Manifest Destiny became a moral justification for the westward expansion of the United States.

The moralistic phase of American diplomacy began with American involvement in the Spanish-American War and reached
its zenith in the political thought of Woodrow Wilson.

Seeing the hand of God in America's decision to annex the Philippines, William McKinley committed American power beyond the confines of the Western Hemisphere, ignorant of the bearing of this step on the national interest.7

Wilson's thought not only rejected the national interest but was explicitly opposed to it on moral grounds. As early as 1913, Wilson alluded to the moral failure of the national interest in world affairs:

> We dare not turn from the principle that morality and not expediency...must guide us and that we will never condone inequity because it is...convenient to do so....It is a very perilous thing to determine the foreign policy of a nation in...terms of national interest.6

In conceiving of American national interest in moral and legal terms, Wilson led the United States to war, not to secure the balance of power, but to protect international law and morality. Wilson failed at Versailles, Morgenthau believed, because he faced the Allied powers with moral principles to the neglect of the nation's historic interest in the politics of Europe.67

Morgenthau's outlook on American foreign policy during the interwar years examined the impact of two forms of utopianism, isolationism and internationalism. The fallacy of isolationism, Morgenthau suggested, was in viewing isolation as a fact of nature, where freedom from entanglement in Europe followed from the mere act of abstention.70 By contrast, the early political realists
treated isolation as an objective of policy, resulting from both political conditions outside the Western Hemisphere and policies contrived and executed in their support.

When internationalism triumphed in the late 1930s, it did so by reviving the moral horizon Wilsonianism. The relevance of the balance of power and spheres of influence for American national interest was rejected and subordinated to illusory expectations regarding the promotion of democratic reform throughout the world. In short, the debate between isolationism and internationalism in the 1930s turned on whether the United States had a moral obligation to promote peace by joining the League of Nations or whether it was morally incumbent on the United States to oppose Fascism in Europe and uphold international law in Asia.

Similarly, Morgenthau was critical of the moral postulates shaping American policies during and immediately after World War II. Beyond the goal of "unconditional surrender" of the Axis powers, Americans looked to a brave new world free of war and the struggle for power. Returning from the Moscow Conference in 1943, Secretary of State Cordell Hull declared that new forms of international organization would cast aside balance of power politics and usher in a new era of international cooperation. Finally, the American commitment to a total military victory ignored the many concrete political issues dividing the victorious
Allied powers at the war's end.7 While American national interest was served by the military defeat of Germany and Japan, it was jeopardized by the failure to address the problem of creating a new, viable postwar balance of power.

In contrast to his assessment of United States diplomatic history prior to World War II, Morgenthau’s writing on American national interest in the postwar setting gave greater weight to specific foreign policy outcomes and their implications for American power in a changing international environment. Considerations of space prohibit comprehensive treatment of Morgenthau’s observations on all the diplomatic and international developments affecting American national interests throughout the postwar era. A later section of this chapter will more fully assess Morgenthau’s conception of the national interest in terms of such contemporary foreign policy problems as nuclear strategy, American intervention abroad, Third World relations, and human rights.

Until World War II, the United States could pursue its national interests within the framework of the traditional state system. Since the sixteenth century, this system was characterized by conflicts among several European nations of approximately equal strength. Nations promoted their interests by joining alliances and coalitions to surpass the strength of would-be aggressors and equalize the balance of power. What transpired in Africa or Asia simply mirrored
the underlying struggles for power among major European powers. Since the beginning of this century, the Eurocentric state system has been so transformed that today hardly anything is left of it.

Morgenthau pointed to four basic changes in the traditional Western state system after World War II, that had radical consequences for the national interests of nations both within and outside Europe. First, what was once a European political system has been transformed into a world system where all the nations of the world have become vocal participants in the struggle for power. Second, the system has been transformed qualitatively in that Europe has lost its political predominance in the world. Third, the traditional balance of power system composed of a multiplicity of states with approximately equal strength has been replaced by a bipolar system of world power. Fourth, the collapse of colonial empires foreclosed the opportunity for European powers (including the United States and Soviet Union) to seek profitable overseas expansion without necessarily interfering with each other's interests.

In view of these revolutionary developments in international politics, Morgenthau maintained that the United States had one primary national interest in its relations with other nations: the security of its territory and political institutions. Beyond this basic requirement, however, the United States had a number of secondary
interests in the world, such as promotion of peace and security everywhere, support for democratic governments, the containment of communist governments, the relief of poverty, hunger, and disease. However, these more variable interests are subject to two limitations. They should never be pursued at the expense of the primary interest of national security and they can be pursued only within the narrow limits of available wisdom and power.

The primary interest of national security in the postwar period required the United States to reaffirm its traditional commitments of maintaining American superiority in the Western Hemisphere and preserving a balance of power in Europe and Asia. Regarding Soviet-American rivalry, "the basic objective of our policy is to contain...the Soviet Union within the limits...established by the lines of military demarcation at the end of the Second World War." Morgenthau heralded the initial formulation of containment, the Truman Doctrine, and the Marshall Plan as evidence of America's pragmatic ability to act decisively in the face of an obvious peril. Yet the creative improvisation distinguishing American foreign policy in 1947 was short-lived. Ever since the Korean War, he argued, successive presidential administrations "transformed military containment and foreign aid, devices which in 1947 successfully met specific situations, into remedies of absolute validity, adequate for any and all international
Commenting on the new challenges to American foreign policy in the 1950s and 1960s, he wrote:

The great innovations of 1947 became the routine responses of the fifties and sixties...unable to meet the need for new policies, as presented...by Khrushchev's new foreign policy, or the opportunities for such policies, as presented...in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the disintegration of the colonial empires...and the pre-revolutionary state in which much of Latin America finds itself.77

Perhaps the central tenet of Morgenthau's criticism of United States foreign policy since the end of World War II was that American policy has "aimed at standing still" and preserving an indefensible status quo in the nations of Africa and Asia. When military containment shifted to Asia after the Korean War, Morgenthau stressed the limits of military power, both as an instrument of policy and as an analytical tool for understanding the realities of international life.78 Morgenthau's staunch criticism of United States involvement in Vietnam was based on the American government's neglect of a proper conception of the national interest, defined in terms of the balance of power.79 Not only did he judge the conflict as only marginally related to American security, but he also found the logic of containment of dubious value in seeking to resolve a national revolution on the periphery of Asia.

Equally important for Morgenthau's theory of international politics is the concept of power. In speaking of power, Morgenthau meant "man's control over the actions
and minds of other men. At the international level, the relatively constant relationship between power and national interest is the basic datum for purposes of theoretical analysis and political practice. According to Morgenthau, the struggle for power in service of a nation's interest crystallizes into three basic patterns: to keep one's power (policy of the status quo); to increase one's power (policy of imperialism); and to demonstrate one's power (policy of prestige). In general, he contended that the struggle for power could be waged by two different means: diplomacy and military force. When nations militarily compete for power, they engage in an armaments race or war. Alternatively, sustained peaceful interactions among them contribute to a process of institutionalized diplomacy.

Morgenthau's typology of national power included both tangible and intangible components. Foremost among the former are geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness, and population. Important intangible factors include national morale, national character, quality of diplomacy, and quality of government. In an age haunted by the specter of global nuclear devastation, he criticized attempts to stress military force or material strength over more intangible facets of national power. Especially during the 1960s and 1970s, Morgenthau pointed to the increasing ideological embodiment of power in world politics and wrote:
The ideological contest between hostile philosophies, social and political systems...will ultimately not be decided by political, military...and economic interventions of the contestants in the affairs of other nations, but by the...virtues and vices of their respective political, economic, and social systems.

Commenting on the transformation of American foreign policy since the end of the Second World War, Morgenthau singled out the quality of a nation’s diplomacy as perhaps the single most important factor in calculating national power. "The United States," Morgenthau believed, "must resort to the time-honored diplomatic method of fashioning a legal and viable community of interests" to secure the coherence of the Western alliance, accommodate the economic and political development of Germany and Japan, and counter communist control of colonial revolutions throughout the Third World.

Morgenthau’s view that postwar developments required the vigorous application of traditional diplomatic practices followed, in large part, from the revolutionary impact of nuclear weapons on the use of force in international politics. Prior to 1945, conventional weapons could be used as a rational instrument of foreign policy. After the acquisition of unlimited nuclear power by both the United States and the Soviet Union, however, Morgenthau observed:
...the rational relationship that existed, prior to 1945, between force as a means and the ends of foreign policy does not apply to nuclear weapons....If they were used as instruments of national policy, nuclear weapons would destroy the tangible objectives of policy and the belligerents as well. In consequence, they are not susceptible to rational use as instruments of national policy.**

In the nuclear age, Morgenthau argued that a rational defense policy must move on two different and separate levels: the conventional and the nuclear. Even in the nuclear age, "it is impossible to support national interests effectively without the ultimate resort to military force."*7 Morgenthau never called on American leaders to impair or dismantle the system of mutual deterrence; he warned that deterrence must be stabilized to the point that no one power felt safe enough to seriously threaten an effective first-strike without fear of a paralyzing response. Yet, nuclear weapons in the hands of both superpowers only provides assurance that national interests must be supported by conventional diplomatic and military methods.** That America could fight a limited nuclear war in conventional fashion was the arguable premise of such proposals as the "clear" H bomb, tactical nuclear war, graduated deterrence with "firebreaks," and counterforce strategy.**

An important corollary of Morgenthau's conception of power is the principle of the balance of power. In his view:
A configuration, such as the balance of power, is a general social phenomenon to be found on all levels of social interaction.\textsuperscript{40}

...the balance of power, far from being just an arbitrary device of diplomats and Machiavellian scholars, is the very law of life for independent units dealing with other independent units—domestic or international—that want to preserve their independence.\textsuperscript{41}

The aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying either to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a configuration...called the balance of power and to policies aimed at preserving it.\textsuperscript{42}

Over the years, Morgenthau’s analysis has emphasized: (1) the main patterns of the balance of power; (2) the different methods of the balance of power; (3) the changing structure of the balance of power; and (4) the inflexibility of the new balance of power.

On the basis of the historical evidence, Morgenthau identified at least five requisite conditions for the successful function of the classic balance of power.\textsuperscript{43}

First, there was a sufficiently large number of independent states to make alliance formation and dissolution readily possible. Second, European diplomats shared in a common political culture that permitted a moral consensus regarding the rules of the game to be observed in both peace and war.

Third, the international system was limited to a geographically confined area of the globe. Societies in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia were important only insofar as they fit within the objectives of European foreign policies. A fourth requirement was the availability of a weapons
technology which inhibited quick mobilization for war, prevented the pursuit of prolonged wars, and reduced the prospects of wars of annihilation. Fifth, there was freedom of action for the central decision-makers of the states in the system. These elites were largely unaffected by the dictates of public opinion, the need to consider ideological values, or the domestic costs of foreign policy commitments.

In conjunction with these primary conditions, several other aspects of the classic balance of power can be identified. As a rule, Great Britain played the traditional role of the "balancer" as it threw its support toward one or another coalition to assure that no one bloc achieved predominance. In addition, the balance of power was regularly interpreted as a mechanical, self-regulating principle (i.e., a system-derived impulse toward stability that occurred automatically). Furthermore, alliances in the classic balance of power were not based on friendships or permanent loyalties, but on ever-changing "interests" and "capabilities."

The balance of power of that period was amoral rather than immoral. The technical rules of the art of politics were its only standard. Its flexibility was the result of imperviousness to moral considerations, such as good faith and loyalty, a moral deficiency which to us seems deserving of reproach.

Before turning to Morgenthau's analysis of changes in the balance of power structure over time, it bears repeating that he considered the maintenance of the balance of power
in the Western Hemisphere, Europe, and Asia as America's fixed national interest. As his survey of American diplomatic history suggested, even American statesmen (e.g., Jefferson, Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt) who rejected the principle in thought were somehow compelled to accept its inescapable logic in practice. The United States, Morgenthau asserted, entered both world wars (regardless of the ideological justification) with the conviction that the triumph of any one nation in Europe would put the very safety of the United States in the Western Hemisphere in jeopardy. In addition, he argued that the balance of power rationale shaped America's military and political containment of the Soviet threat, armed intervention in Korea, and diplomatic goals in the Middle East. His opposition to American involvement in the Vietnam War stemmed in part from a conviction that policy-makers lost sight of the traditional goal in Asia, which would require a spheres of influence agreement with Red China—preservation of the balance of power.

The century-and-a-half from 1815 until the Second World War saw the gradual extension of the European balance of power into a worldwide system. Morgenthau referred to three important structural changes in the traditional or classic balance of power.

The reduction in the number of states able to play a major role in international politics has deprived the
balance of power of much of its flexibility and uncertainty. The flexibility of the classic balance of power resulted from the unreliability of alliances which made it imperative for the major actors to be cautious and limited in their moves. The disparity in power between major and minor nations is so pronounced that the latter have lost their ability to tip the scales or provide effective barriers to the limitless aspirations for power.

No nation or combination of nations can be expected to perform Great Britain's traditional role of "balancer" in the bipolar distribution of power. Following the Second World War, Morgenthau doubted whether any third force (e.g., DeGaulle's France, a united Europe, or nonaligned Third World) was similarly detached and strong enough to exert a decisive influence on the foreign policy of either superpower.

The disappearance of the colonial frontier throughout the twentieth century has rendered the classic balance of power obsolete. Prior to the First World War, great powers could deflect their rivalries from their mutual frontiers to the politically-empty spaces of Africa or Asia. As the balance of power became worldwide, however, the dichotomy between the center and the periphery disappeared. In the developing world, the issue is not primarily the projection of diplomatic
leverage or the conquest of territory, but rather a struggle between conflicting ideologies and ways of life.\textsuperscript{100}

Morgenthau's assessment of the balance of power and its applicability to postwar international politics is both enigmatic and ripe with ambivalence. Admittedly, he acknowledged that the proliferation of nuclear capability has led to a much more complex distribution of global power. However, "the instability of the international balance of power," he believed, "is due not to the faultiness of the principle but to the particular conditions under which the principle must operate in a society of sovereign nations."\textsuperscript{101} Paradoxically, Morgenthau discussed the eclipse of the classic balance of power and simultaneously affirmed that the "underlying principles" involved in maintaining the balance of power remained valid throughout time.

While convinced that the principle of balance of power can be found at all levels of social interaction, Morgenthau is much less instructive regarding its function and value in postwar global affairs. His own inventory of the limitations and weaknesses of the concept is divorced from any sustained discussion of how the balance may be expected to operate in light of developments that point to its obsolescence. Four basic limitations may be cited.

First, the idea of the balance of power "is a metaphor
taken from the field of mechanics...." However, any such mechanical equilibrium must possess a recognizable quantitative criterion by which power can be compared. What makes the balance of power inherently uncertain, Morgenthau believed, is the relative imprecision involved in calculating such intangible components of power as national morale and character of government.102

Second, Morgenthau believed that "the uncertainty of all power calculations not only makes the balance of power incapable of practical application but leads...to its very negation in practice."103 Even during the heyday of the classic balance of power, the concept was open to at least two interpretations. It could signify either equality of power (e.g., as Britain or the United States tried to maintain in Europe) or superiority of power (e.g., as the United States sought in the Western Hemisphere since the early nineteenth century). Morgenthau recognized, however, that the objective of complete balance or equivalence in power is a dubious prospect for any nation. Because no nation can be certain that its calculation of the distribution of power at any one time is correct, policymakers tend to err on the side of preserving an ample margin of safety in amassing the power necessary to counter the power of rivals.104 By equating the balance with superiority, preventive war between nations becomes a natural tendency of the balance of power.105
Third, the difficulties involved in calculating the relative power of other nations has made the invocation of the balance of power one of the favored ideologies in international politics. In his discussion of the national interest, Morgenthau noted how the power drives of nations take hold of ideal principles and transform them into ideologies in order to disguise and rationalize themselves.\textsuperscript{106} Commenting on how ideology accentuates the difficulties inherent in the mechanics of the balance of power, he wrote:

The contrast between...the pretended aspiration for balance and the actual aim of predominance...which...is of the very essence of the balance of power, makes the latter in a certain measure an ideology....The balance of power thus assumes a reality and a function that it actually does not have....\textsuperscript{107}

Finally, the contemporary balance of power is without the restraining influence of an underlying moral-ethical consensus among nations regarding the appropriate means and end of foreign policy. In the period of the classic balance of power, international politics became "an aristocratic pastime, a sport of princes...."\textsuperscript{108} But from Morgenthau's perspective, the increasingly ideological character of world politics has deprived the balance of power mechanism of all normative restraint. In a revealing passage, he concluded:

The struggle for the minds of men, advancing rival claims to universal dominion on the part of different nations, has dealt the final...blow to that...mechanism that kept the walls of the house of nations standing: the balance of power.\textsuperscript{109}
Realism and Raison D'état

Morgenthau's political realism and its normative rationale represent a forceful testament to both power and interest backed by power as the crowning essence of international politics. Critics of his international thought are quick to deplore what is perceived to be an admixture of Machiavellian and Hobbesian sentiments limiting, or perhaps sacrificing, the positive force of moral conviction in a tragic social drama from which man has no escape. From this vantage point, Morgenthau is often viewed as a modern advocate of raison d'état. As a leading theorist of international relations has written: "From Machiavelli to Meinecke and Morgenthau the elements of the approach and reasoning remain consistent." As emphasized in Chapter One, the concept of raison d'état in foreign policy has stressed: (1) the statesman's interest in self-preservation as the primary determinant of action; (2) the unregulated rivalry of states in an anarchic environment; (3) the standard of success as the guide for expedient political action; (4) the tragic presence of evil in all politics; and (5) the exemption of political action from ethical limitations.

While critics and commentators have correctly singled out numerous problems in Morgenthau's theory of international politics, few have wrestled with the more challenging issue of the philosophy or conception of
political ethics underlying the theory. This neglect is particularly acute in light of Morgenthau's rejection of classical *raison d'État* as a basis for calculating the moral dignity of American national interest in world affairs. It is a distortion and gross oversimplification of Morgenthau's work to conclude that he epitomizes the European legacy of *Realpolitik* with its intrinsic denial of ethical constraints upon the statesman. Admittedly, one can detect the spirit of a Machiavelli or Hobbes (not to mention Aristotle, St. Augustine, Burke, Niebuhr and other thinkers) in certain facets of his appraisal of human nature and political society. What Morgenthau explicitly disavowed, however, was the idea that the primacy of self-interest and power at all levels of human conduct is exempted from the ineradicable moral impulse of man to submit political action to ethical evaluation.

Such early texts as *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* and *Politics Among Nations* clearly demonstrated Morgenthau's understanding of *raison d'État*, as it was revealed in the theories and practices of such European statesmen as Richelieu, Frederick the Great, and Bismarck. Once again, however, it must be reiterated that Morgenthau acknowledged the paradox that European *raison d'État* was often justified according to normative assumptions about human nature and politics that he, himself, invoked as integral to American political realism. His appreciation of America's liberal-
democratic ideals and the relation of those values to United States foreign policy led him to recoil from the ethical dualism evident in European *raison d'état*. In his first comprehensive treatise on American foreign policy, in *In Defense of the National Interest*, Morgenthau insisted: "The choice is not between moral principles and the national interest...but between one set of principles divorced from political reality, and another set of...principles derived from political reality."

Throughout his career, Morgenthau devoted considerable attention to rival ethical perspectives in both classical and modern political philosophy. Yet it remains difficult to associate clearly the many strands of his own thinking with any one particular school of ethics or moral reasoning. In analyzing competing ethical orientations, his observations were often cast in summary form and influenced by the relative deficiencies associated with alternative philosophical conceptions of human nature and politics. Morgenthau believed that "the history of political thought is the history of the moral evaluation of political power."

For our purposes, it is instructive to concentrate on Morgenthau's treatment of the national interest as a problem in political ethics. The lingering remnants of idealism and utopianism in United States diplomatic history reinforced Morgenthau's conviction that American statesmen have
persistently misunderstood the nature of foreign policy and its moral significance. In particular, American moral judgment has been corrupted by imagining that the tension between foreign policy and morality, always evident in immediate experience, could easily be made to disappear in favor of more non-violent, harmonious forms of international cooperation. This is illustrated by the American temptation to visualize the foreign policy process in mutually exclusive terms:

On the one side, there is the realist, the Machiavellian bargainer, who conceives of foreign policy...in terms of power and for whom the end...justified the means employed; on the other side, there is the moralist...whose ability to bargain is...circumscribed...by his insistence upon principles which must be reflected in the bargain but cannot be made its object.¹¹

From the horizon of political ethics, this false dichotomy points to the dilemma of trying to reconcile the statesman's obligation to protect the interests of the national community and his loyalty to values and ideals transcending the national community. Fundamental to Morgenthau's effort to bridge this gap are his critique of raison d'état and his "sense of transcendence" regarding the moral input into foreign policy.

The philosophy of raison d'état, Morgenthau asserted, is betrayed by the error of differentiating the political sphere, from the private, for purposes of ethical evaluation.¹¹ In matters of foreign policy, the state is subject to no rule of conduct but the one which is dictated
by its own self-interest. *Salus publica suprema lex*. Ethical prohibitions, as proponents of *raison d'état* believed, are vitiated by the statesman's obligation to pursue national goals, defined in terms of power, successfully in a world devoid of substantive multinational norms. While an individual's moral nature may be reflected in private life, political life is free of such ethical limitations and is immoral by nature. This dual standard of morality was strikingly formulated by one of the greatest Italian statesman, Cavour, when he said: "If we had done for ourselves what we have done for Italy, what scoundrels we would have been." In no uncertain terms, Morgenthau summarized his objection to *raison d'état* by saying:

The importance of this conception has been literary rather than practical....Political philosophy from the Greeks to our time has started with the assumption that man in the political sphere is not allowed to act as he pleases and that his action must conform to a standard higher than...success. It has even made this conformity the test of legitimate political power....As the *lex Salica* put it: "King thou will be if thou follow the law. If thou do not follow the law, thou will not be king."  

Morgenthau's rejection of the dual moral standard embodied in *raison d'état* raises the more problematic issue of his own conception regarding the moral basis of all political conduct. Morgenthau was certainly no positivist, who considered moral questions as either unreal or only subjective preferences to be invoked with ideological passion. While never denying that normative systems of
thought frequently function as subterfuges to rationalize an individual's lust for power. He took seriously the role of morality in conflicts of power.

Political ethics is...the ethics of doing evil....Neither science nor ethics nor politics can resolve this conflict between politics and ethics into harmony....To know with despair that the political act is inevitably evil, and to act nevertheless is moral courage. To choose among several expedient actions the least evil one is moral judgment.

For Morgenthau, the popular juxtaposition of "power" politics and "moral" politics is fundamentally mistaken. At the basis of this juxtaposition, he felt, was the optimistic belief in the intrinsic goodness of the rational individual and the pessimistic conviction that politics is the seat of all irrationality and evil. However, the opposition between man and society is "a mere figure of speech" in that "it is always the individual who acts, either with reference to his ends alone or with reference to the ends of others." Morgenthau suggested that the difference in moral character between a private, as over against a political, action is a relative one and devoid of the absoluteness which contemporary doctrine attributes to it. Commenting on the ethical quality of political conduct, he wrote:

...the political actor has...a general moral responsibility to act wisely...and for him expediency becomes a moral duty....What is here done with good intentions but unwisely and...with disastrous results is morally defective, for it violates the ethics of responsibility to which all action affecting others and...political action par excellence is subject.
Many students of Morgenthau's thought have understandably found a troubling ambivalence in his relationship of interest and principle. For example, one critic notes that "the overall impact of Morgenthau's writing is to maintain a separation of the political sphere and the moral sphere, though judgments are made about the immorality of politics."\(^{121}\) At times, his terminology (if not his thought) tends to portray the moral dilemma of politics in rather extreme terms. Surely, Morgenthau's objective to affirm, yet limit, the boundaries of moral choice in public life appears suspect in light of such categorical observations as:

- The invocation of moral principles for the support of national policies is always and of necessity a pretense.\(^{122}\)

- It is impossible...to be a successful politician and a good Christian.\(^{123}\)

- There is no escape from the evil of power regardless of what one does. Whenever we act with reference to our fellow men, we must sin....The political act is inevitably evil.\(^{124}\)

The unqualified character of these "musts" and "inevitables," together with his tragic perspective on the human condition, have left Morgenthau vulnerable to the accusation of surrendering to Machiavellian cynicism.

Morgenthau's sometimes-extreme accentuation of the "autonomy of politics" and "paramountcy of the national interest" in foreign policy must also be evaluated within the context of his stern denunciation of legalistic and
moralistic approaches to international politics. In taking strong exception to the pretentious idealism of these approaches, he seemed to jeopardize his own case for the morality of political action. Elsewhere in his writing, however, Morgenthau was more restrained and informative about the ethical failure of political idealism and the link between morality and public policy. From an ethical standpoint, the idealist in politics erred in assuming "that the principles of morality have the same substantive quality as...the principles of politics, economics, or law." In the arena of international politics, the idealist jeopardizes the national interest by promoting world-embracing principles which are too vague and general to provide guidance to policy (e.g., "defend and promote democracy" or "freedom and the rights of man"). This approach only strains relations, worsens conflicts of interests by investing them with moral content, and results at the end in a moral crusade.

While the idealist dichotomizes and ultimately substitutes the principles of morality for those of politics, Morgenthau refused to consider morality as just another branch of human activity, coordinate with other substantive intellectual disciplines. To the contrary, morality "is superimposed upon them, limiting the choice of ends and means and delineating the legitimate sphere of a particular branch of action altogether." This
restraining function is especially important in the political sphere, he argued, "for the political actor is peculiarly tempted to blind himself to the limits of his power and to overstep the boundaries of both prudence and morality." Based on this logic, Morgenthau could label *raison d'État* a "figure of speech" insofar as: "The moves and countermoves in the struggle for...power must be intelligible as a dialectic movement toward the realization of justice."

Unfortunately, many critics of Morgenthau's work have gone little further than offering a summary critique of the broad principles and concepts shaping his realist theory of international politics. The widely-held assumption that he has simply updated Hobbes does Morgenthau serious injustice. He was aware of this popular fallacy and acknowledged: "Disregarding the voluminous evidence, some of them have picked a few words out of their context to prove that realism in international affairs is unprincipled and contemptuous of morality." Particularly troubling for some critics was his reference to the dictum of Hobbes that "there is neither morality nor law outside the state." Not so widely reported was his observation that: "Universal moral principles, such as justice and equality, are capable of guiding political action to the extent that they have been given concrete content and...related to political situations by society." Indeed, Morgenthau has always
maintained that the actions of states are subject to universal moral principles. It is possible to identify five basic themes or concepts on the basis of which Morgenthau’s ideas on international morality differed from those of Hobbes.

1. Cosmic Humility. While Morgenthau considered national interest as the perennial standard by which foreign policy must be judged and directed, he also affirmed the requirement of cosmic humility with regard to the moral evaluation of states. Such a standard obliges the realist to view the moral significance of political action as a product of the ineluctable tension between the moral command and the requirements of political success. "To know that states are subject to the moral law is one thing; to pretend to know what is morally required of states in a particular situation is quite another." Throughout history, statesmen have often yielded to the temptation of identifying the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe.

The lighthearted equation between a particular nationalism and the counsels of Providence is morally indefensible...for it is liable to engender the distortion of judgment which, in the blindness of crusading frenzy, destroys nations and civilizations—in the name of moral principle, ideal, or God himself.

In one respect, therefore, the gap between moral principle and political expedience functions as a brake on the temptation to pretense and hypocrisy.
2. Morality As A System Of Restraints. Morgenthau's awareness of the "irremediable gap" between "the moral ideal and the facts of political life" was also qualified by his belief that there are moral absolutes that are not to be trespassed under any circumstances in the pursuit of national interest. "Moral rules do not permit certain policies to be considered at all from the point of view of expediency." Into this category, Morgenthau included policies of mass extermination and the killing of civilian populations in war. Critics raise a legitimate point of debate by referring to Morgenthau's often categorical formulation of the moral dilemma in all political action. Paradoxically, it is this "irremediable gap" that Morgenthau wished to transcend when he wrote: "Certain things are not to be done on moral grounds, even though it would be expedient to do them."

In relating moral restraints to politics, Morgenthau echoed Burke's vision of prudent statesmanship. The role of prudence for Morgenthau, as for Burke, was that of adjusting principle to circumstance. "There can be no political morality without prudence... without consideration of the political consequences of seemingly moral action." Prudence, therefore, becomes an important procedural standard if policy ends are to be made consistent with policy means.

J. Morality And The Pragmatic Anglo-American Tradition.
Morgenthau's emphasis on prudence in policy-making was paralleled by his preference for the pragmatic qualities of the Anglo-American political tradition. In contrast to the philosophic polemics characterizing the debate between raison d'État and moral principles on the European continent, the political theory of the English-speaking peoples developed "not in comprehensive systematic efforts but in a series of debates concerned with the practical merits of limited concrete issues." As a series of cases debated in the forum of public opinion, the Anglo-American approach exhibited: (1) the preference for empirical procedures aiming at immediate practical results over theoretical consistency; (2) the ability to see in any concrete issue the instance of a general proposition rather than empirical proof for a priori abstractions; and (3) the prominence of public debate determining a decision in light of the rational merits of the case. In international politics, universal norms must always be filtered through circumstances of time and place which limit their application. In his "Fragment of an Intellectual Biography," Morgenthau summarized his position by saying: "This aversion to a dogmatism that sacrifices pragmatic effectiveness for logical or ideological consistency has remained a persistent element of my intellectual attitude."
neglected by international relations scholars also was Morgenthau's own "sense of transcendence"; this served both to illuminate and to complicate his thinking on foreign policy norms. Perhaps one reason why this particular theme has failed to stimulate much debate is that Morgenthau's transcendent frame of reference is admittedly vague, more implicit than explicit, and without clearly defined roots in any philosophical or theological system. Nowhere does he explicitly develop a transcendent international political ethic or a normative calculus by which to rank and evaluate alternative ethical objectives in world politics. By neglecting to further develop the transcendent source of applicable universal norms in foreign policy, his "sense of transcendence" tends to function as an indiscriminate standard of analysis; at most, it provides a negative judgment on sinful man while failing to affirm the positive moral potential of the prudent statesman. For those detractors who indict Morgenthau as a modern spokesman for raison d'état, his insistence on the limitations of morality in politics takes precedence over the fact that he could never fully escape the judgment made by transcendent norms upon every politically expedient act.

From Morgenthau's perspective, the political realm is a dialectical field: it is animated by the interplay between the forces of self-interest (i.e., the lust for power) and its ethical denial, in the form of universal moral
principles. Morgenthau's characterization of the dilemma, however, leaves one in doubt about the relative significance of either pole. Contrast, for example, his frequent assertion that "politics is interest defined in terms of power" and his less widely-quoted statement, that "political action can be defined as an attempt to realize moral values through the medium of politics, that is, power." The still-difficult question for students of foreign policy concerns the extent to which Morgenthau introduced norms to direct and judge interest from a moral vantage point beyond the operative political reality of the nation. In other words, is the parochial national interest the ultimate and exclusive standard from which all principles derive?

Despite Morgenthau's observation that "moral principles...must be derived from political practice and not imposed on it," one could plausibly argue that his discussion of the national interest could not help but invoke transcendent norms as a distinctive force in the life of nations. In denying the application of any criteria for judging state behavior, other than those derived from political necessity, the realist must end up a cynic. Yet, Morgenthau was anything but a confirmed cynic, even if he never explained how or why such norms entered into his view of the national interest. Two vivid examples will illustrate the presence of this ambiguity in his thinking.

In seeking to defend the primacy of the national
interest in foreign policy, Morgenthau repeatedly objected to the pretentious hypocrisy of America's presumed innocence and virtue. Yet, ironically, his objection to moral pretense in foreign policy seemed to infer a standard of evaluation beyond any particular conception of the national interest. One scholar, documenting Morgenthau's transcendent frame of reference, suggested:

The charge of hypocrisy is a moral charge not a political judgment. It is to protest that a man [or nation] is not what he pretends to be, and...is not as moral as he pretends to be. If the only standard for judging the behavior of states were national interest, one would not likely accuse the pretentious statesman of hypocrisy, a term laden with moral censure.140

If the charge of hypocrisy were to be interpreted as an expedient political action, then one would have expected Morgenthau to accept the adherence to moral claims, like the wielding of the sword, as justifiable when it was in the national interest to do so. From a purely political standpoint, the pretense to virtue in statecraft would more likely be condemned, not by reference to moral hypocrisy, but as an imprudent act of sheer political stupidity.141 In other words, without recourse to moral judgment transcending interest, Morgenthau's position would be compatible with raison d'État.

Similarly, Morgenthau's emphasis on the paramount importance of diplomacy as an element of national power displayed a curious mix of propositions, again based on both political self-interest and transcendent moral principles.
On the one hand, diplomacy must reflect (even as it tries to moderate) antagonistic interests in a world devoid of any moral consensus on operative international norms. "Diplomacy, however morally unattractive its business may seem to many, is nothing but a symptom of the struggle for power among sovereign states."¹⁴²

At the same time, Morgenthau never envisioned diplomacy as merely an inventory of amoral methods capable of being placed in the service of any system of values. Morgenthau treated diplomacy itself as a kind of norm, directed by certain motives toward certain goals:

The objective of foreign policy is relative and conditional: to bend, not to break, the will of the other side...in order to safeguard one's own vital interests without hurting those of the other side. The methods of foreign policy are relative and conditional: not to advance by destroying the obstacles in one's way, but to retreat before them...to soften and dissolve them...by means of negotiation and pressure.¹⁴³

Yet these diplomatic norms are anything but self-evident in Morgenthau's reliance upon the national interest as a moral-free guide to foreign policy. Morgenthau's idea that the national interest demands a moderate and restrained diplomacy to help create an international society conducive to democratic values did not escape the "invocation of moral principle," so much as it invested the national interest with moral content.¹⁴⁴

These examples culminate in a conception of national interest that embodied a notion of purpose that, by its
nature, must transcend pure self-interest. How is one to account for this implicit normative dimension in the workings of the national interest, in light of Morgenthau's periodic tendency to recoil from universal principles in foreign policy? A good case can be made for the contention that these bold affirmations of the national interest purged of pretentious moral content do not fairly represent Morgenthau's thought. Indeed, Morgenthau made it clear that he had no objection to residual ethical considerations limiting the statesman's duty to promote national security. Instead, he took exception to the idealistic tradition of applying universal moral principles to the actions of states without due regard for the political effects of avowedly moral action. Summarizing Morgenthau's outlook on the moral requirements of foreign policy, one commentator has observed:

More than Niebuhr, Morgenthau is inclined to say that politics...involves a choice of lesser evils. These are fateful choices that involve not so much the balancing of rights against rights as judgments about which course of action is least likely to bring harmful results.148

In seeking to fashion an acceptable political ethic, Morgenthau emphasized two ways in which transcendent norms influence the pursuit of narrow self-interest. First, these principles serve as the relevant, objective, and constant goal of political life. "Both individual and state must judge political action by universal moral principles, such as that of liberty."149 Admittedly, this theme is not
always present or stated unequivocally in his published work. Furthermore, given the absence of a moral consensus in world politics, Morgenthau provided little indication of the type of new policies or instrumentalities that could generate mutual moral sympathies regarding transnational political issues. In a statement distinguished not only for its candor but also by a lingering moral hope for mankind, he wrote: "...as there can be no permanent peace without a world state, there can be no world state without the...community-building processes of diplomacy." 147

Second, Morgenthau's "sense of transcendence" relied on universal moral principles to expose and moderate the temptation to hypocritical pretense in foreign policy. At this level, morality functioned more as a judgmental restraint than a controlling end-in-view. The prudent statesman capable of distinguishing between "the misery of politics" and the realm of universal ethical norm is less apt to commit the sin of the Fascist mind: the equation of "political and military success with moral superiority." 148

Therefore, the absolute principle (or, at least, its recognition) prevents acts of gross immorality, while at the same time identifying every political act as in fact political and inconsistent with the moral law.

In sum, Morgenthau's effort to relate interest and principle in international politics was often clouded in ambiguity. Early in his career, he rejected classical
raison d'État as an intellectual dead-end that was founded on the artificial separation of political life from man's inherently moral nature. Yet his own state-centric theory of international politics reflected a number of propositions and concepts traditionally identified with a Machiavellian or Hobbesian worldview. Not surprisingly, the contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in Morgenthau's position on international morality have spawned different interpretations of his position. Some, for example, decry his insistence that "interest is the perennial standard by which political action must be judged and directed." More sympathetic colleagues share in his belief that: "...all human actions in some way are subject to moral judgment. We cannot act but morally because we are men...."¹⁴⁷

If Morgenthau's position continues to raise doubts about the moral significance of political action, this is largely due to the relationship between his estimate of man's nature and the use of transcendent norms in political analysis. Up to a point, Morgenthau's view of human nature paralleled Reinhold Niebuhr's depiction of man's tragic situation. For Morgenthau, "the lust for power" was a "ubiquitous empirical fact." In a revealing passage, he noted: "For no social action can be completely free of the taint of egotism which, as selfishness, pride, or self-deception, seeks for the actor more than is his due."¹⁵⁰ Niebuhr objected to Morgenthau's rather fatalistic
formulation of man's moral predicament, since it ignored the potentially creative presence of the human will. To will evil, Niebuhr believed, implied the freedom to will the good.¹⁸¹

Furthermore, Morgenthau's pessimistic view of man raises an additional difficulty. The pervasive evil in human nature and politics rendered his formal ethic so transcendent that it could not easily function as a vital force directing man's creative energies in an imperfect world. Morgenthau asserted that "all nations stand under the judgment of God," but he also acknowledged that God's will is "inscrutable to the human mind." Morgenthau believed that operative political norms are ultimately derived from transcendent ethical principles; however, he was less illuminating on how, and to what degree, these principles are capable of guiding political action when distorted by the institutions of sinful man. Because his concept of moral principle was so transcendent, morality could operate only as a restraint on political man by saving him from hypocrisy (i.e., by demonstrating to him that he is not God).¹⁸²

By ultimately endorsing a political standard based on the national interest, therefore, Morgenthau adopted both a secular and relative conception of morality. Moral reasoning in international politics, he believed, obliged the prudent and pragmatic statesman to reconcile competing
moral values flowing from divergent interpretations of a
nation's interest in a particular situation and at a
particular time. Morgenthau pointed to the intellectual
legacy of Burke who wrote:

Nothing universal can be rationally affirmed on
any moral or any political subject. Pure
metaphysical abstraction does not belong to these
matters. The lines of morality...admit of
exceptions; they demand modifications. These
exceptions and modifications are not made by the
process of logic, but by the rules of prudence. 103

Morgenthau and the Current Foreign Policy Agenda

Our focus now turns to Hans J. Morgenthau's outlook on
several major foreign policy issues of the last decade that
have generated considerable debate among scholars and public
officials. Indeed, to evaluate Morgenthau only at the level
of formal theory or political philosophy ignores his role as
a political activist, who sought to "speak the truth to
power." As public commentator, Morgenthau stressed
limitations on the uses of power and inveighed against its
inordinate exercise over a range of cases, from the
relatively minor Quemoy-Matsu crisis to the Vietnam War. As
with other realists included in our study, specific
attention is devoted to Morgenthau's views on such topics
as: (1) nuclear war and disarmament; (2) American military
and political intervention abroad; (3) American policy and
the Third World; and (4) human rights.

Morgenthau wrote at great length about the
revolutionary impact of nuclear power on international
politics. The availability of nuclear weapons, he argued, results in two extraordinary paradoxes which stem from the destructiveness of these weapons. First, a quantitative increase in strategic weaponry does not necessarily correlate with an increase in national power.\textsuperscript{184} Once a nation acquires the capability to destroy all enemy targets chosen for destruction, additional nuclear weapons will not increase its power.

Second, he pointed to the inverse relationship between the degree of destructiveness of these weapons and their rational usability. Since the destruction of one actor would call for the simultaneous destruction of the other, both superpowers can afford to ignore the threat, on the assumption that both nations will act rationally.\textsuperscript{185} According to Morgenthau, "it is only the assumption that the nations concerned might act \textit{irrationally} by destroying each other in all-out...war that the threat of nuclear war is credible."\textsuperscript{186} In short, Morgenthau drew a sharp distinction between the threat and actual use of force.\textsuperscript{187}

Morgenthau never doubted or disavowed the contribution of strategic or tactical nuclear weapons for the promotion and defense of American global interests. Yet, for some three decades, he expressed grave reservations about the "conventional" thinking shaping the evolution of United States strategic doctrine. The tendency to model and justify nuclear strategy in conventional terms was implicit
in the early formulation of "massive retaliation"; and it was subsequently refined in the 1960s and 1970s by counterforce strategies based on the principle of "mutual assured destruction." Underlying all conventional estimates of nuclear policy is "a theory of nuclear war which assumes nuclear war to be just another kind of violence, greater in magnitude but not different in kind from the types of violence with which history has acquainted us." From this theoretical assumption, it follows that the United States need not limit itself to avoiding a nuclear confrontation: in addition, the United States must also prepare to survive it. Furthermore, Morgenthau warned of the inescapable link between the continuation of a costly nuclear arms race and the commitment to a counterforce strategy which purports to offer controllable war-fighting options by means of more accurate nuclear weapons.

Morgenthau believed that the security of the United States, threatened by the exposure of American territory to nuclear destruction, required a dual emphasis on "the novel methods of deterrence and arms control." The management of nuclear power confronted policy-makers with two interrelated problems: the abatement of the nuclear arms race and the prevention of nuclear proliferation. As long as both the United States and Soviet Union competed for new weapons, he saw little possibility in preventing lesser powers from following suit. Moreover, diplomatic initiatives designed
to curtail the nuclear arms race are justified because the indiscriminate destructiveness of nuclear weapons overwhelms all possible objectives of a rational foreign policy. "If they are used as instruments of national policy, nuclear weapons would destroy the tangible objective of policy and the belligerents as well." In consequence, Morgenthau wrote:

What the nuclear powers have...been doing pragmatically—that is, to refrain from the use of nuclear weapons--they ought to now do...as a matter of principle: to eliminate nuclear weapons from their regular armory, so that they will not be used as instruments of national policy, and assign to them...the function of a deterrent, to be used only in suicidal desperation.

Denying the rational usability of nuclear weapons in world politics, Morgenthau identified three specific consequences for the conduct of American foreign and military policy. First, since nuclear threats are inherently lacking in credibility (i.e., not limited to the purpose of deterrence), they ought to be eliminated from standard diplomatic practice. Morgenthau argued that nuclear force was credible only in terms of maintaining a residual second-strike deterrent capability. Second, since nuclear weapons contribute little to the normal exercise of national power, policy-makers should give greater attention to the development of non-nuclear instruments of national power. Third, the availability of long-range communication, delivery, and transportation systems have radically altered the importance of the control of territory for national
power. For example, "the conjunction between the large radius of nuclear destruction and the relatively small size of their territories imposes a...handicap upon the ability of the traditional nation states, such as Great Britain and France, to make a nuclear threat credible."102

Yet, Morgenthau remained skeptical of broad-gauge disarmament strategies and expressed only cautious optimism at the prospects of nuclear arms control. Since 1900, disarmament has been achieved only under two extraordinary conditions.143 First, arms reduction was agreed on only by a limited number of nations and was largely local in character. Second, the agreed-upon ratio of armaments reflected either the absence of competition for power or temporary preference for regulated, rather than unregulated, competition for power in the form of armaments acquisition. By contrast, all attempts at general disarmament (e.g., the two Hague Conferences, the Geneva Conference of 1932, and the disarmament commissions of the United Nations) have been conspicuous failures.

At the root of these failures, Morgenthau believed, was the modern philosophy of disarmament which starts from the assumption that men fight wars because they have arms. Morgenthau judged that such thinking treats the symptom, while leaving the underlying ills essentially intact:
What makes for war are the conditions in the minds of men which make war appear the lesser of two evils. In those conditions must be sought the disease of which the desire for...arms is but a symptom.\textsuperscript{144}

At best, Morgenthau considered disarmament or the limitation of armaments as "an indispensable first step in a general settlement of international conflicts." Disarmament can contribute to general pacification and ease the financial burden of a costly arms race only when there is a "mutually satisfactory settlement of the power contest."

While disarmament seeks to reduce or eliminate armaments, arms control aspires to regulate the armaments race for the purpose of increasing military stability. Such restrictions on armaments can conceivably encompass international, mutual, or unilateral controls. Morgenthau decried the tendency of policy-makers and strategists to link arms control calculations exclusively to the increasing weapons level of a potential adversary. Instead, a rational approach to arms control involves "stopping one's nuclear armaments at the point where they provide an invulnerable...deterrent and cutting them back to that point in so far as they have exceeded it."\textsuperscript{145}

Morgenthau's endorsement of nuclear arms control stands in vivid contrast to his pessimistic outlook on the regulation of conventional arms. Regarding the latter, the quantity and type of conventional weapons has a direct bearing on the overall distribution of military power. Any
agreement to control these weapons would signify the end of competition for military advantage. However, attempts to halt or slow military competition in conventional force levels have floundered on the inability to resolve outstanding political issues.*

In theory, the control of nuclear weapons is facilitated by the capability of major nuclear powers to reach an optimum of assured destructive potential beyond which it would be irrational to increase armaments. Provisions in the SALT agreements of 1972 prohibiting the deployment of ABMs (antiballistic missiles) and placing numerical limitations on different types of offensive nuclear weapons constitute a success in the field of nuclear arms control. In practice, however, arms control is based on "the stability of nuclear technology; for it is only on that assumption that the nations concerned can afford to desist from competition." Yet as President Reagan's commitment to a new, space-based missile defense system has demonstrated, major nuclear powers can be expected actively to compete in areas where technology may confer decisive military advantages in the nuclear arms race. In view of its dependence on technological stability, "nuclear arms control...is likely to remain both limited and temporary."

In contrast to other realists included in this study, Morgenthau was much more outspoken on the specific problems confronting United States foreign policy in the Third World.
For some three decades after World War II, he cited a combination of intellectual and political miscalculations, the net effect of which has been to weaken American power and influence in many parts of the developing world. The examples of Korea, Taiwan, Cuba, and South Vietnam provide vivid testimony of "our inability to achieve our political purposes even with an abundance of material means." 16b

Morgenthau viewed the concept of "intervention" as an inevitable and ever-present political reality, commensurate with the struggle for power on the international scene. Intervention, through either the withholding of benefits or the inflicting of disadvantages, is a general designation for the various forms of competition and cooperation characterizing the interplay of conflicting national interests in world politics. America's historic commitment to the moral and legal doctrine of "non-intervention," he believed, had been of practical significance only in terms of abstention from the political rivalries of Europe during the era of isolationism. 16c

Even during the heyday of classical isolationism, however, America's adherence to the principle of non-intervention was qualified by its tendency to intervene at will in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere. The American propensity for self-deception was revealed by treating such examples of intervention as essentially different from the selfish and expansionist ways of traditional European
diplomacy. Commenting on the divergence between what Americans think their foreign policy is and its actual character, Morgenthau wrote:

...the unchallengeable superiority of the United States within the Western Hemisphere, in conjunction with the American ideals at the service of which that superiority was supposed to be employed, made it appear to American eyes as though what was actually intervention was in truth something different, if not the exact opposite.170

The distribution of world power following World War II posed additional problems for both the nature and justification of American intervention abroad. For Morgenthau, it was obvious "that we are intervening massively and effectively all over the world and what we have foresworn is not intervention per se, but only certain kinds of intervention."171 As much as the Soviet Union intervened in developing countries to promote causes of national liberation, the United States championed the political status quo throughout the Third World. When faced with an actual or impending crisis, Morgenthau judged American foreign policy as "incapable of foresight, sureness of touch as regards means and ends, and manipulative skill that are the prerequisites of successful political action."172 Evaluating American intervention at various places in the developing and nonaligned world, Morgenthau emphasized the following themes: (1) the error of anti-communist intervention; (2) the self-defeating character of anti-revolutionary intervention; and (3) the failure of
American foreign and economic aid.

The interventions of the United States in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Vietnam have been largely justified as reactions to communist intervention. Morgenthau never doubted the aggressive and expansionist tenor of Soviet foreign policy; however, he deplored the failure of United States policy-makers to assess objectively the extent to which the infusion of communist revolutionary sentiment in local or regional conflicts threatened American security interests. Increasingly, the United States confronted a variety of communist regimes pursuing their separate interests; their dependence on the Soviet Union or China varied both over time and from one country to another. "The bearing...of those interests upon the policies of the United States must be determined not in terms of communist ideology but of their compatibility with the interests of the United States." 173

In seeking to contain communist intervention on a global basis, the United States has intervened in a variety of civil conflicts for the purpose of supporting certain leaders or factions whose objectives are perceived to coincide with American national interest. According to Morgenthau, however, such interventions have accomplished little more than legitimizing the political status quo and exacerbating deep-seated revolutionary tensions. His widely-publicized condemnation of United States
participation in the Vietnam War testified to the "anti-revolutionary" stigma attaching to the exercise of American power in the Third World.174

Morgenthau contended that an American policy of indiscriminate anti-communist intervention would be self-defeating for two reasons. First, the United States lacked sufficient resources to deal simultaneously with a number of acute revolutions at any one time. Second, such interventions would fail, since "logic that would make us appear as the anti-revolutionary power...would surrender to communism the sponsorship of revolution everywhere."175 Alternatively, he argued that "the principle of selectivity" should serve as the criterion for American political and military intervention.

Intervene we must where our national interest requires it and where our power gives us a chance to succeed. The choice of these occasions will be defined not by sweeping ideological commitments...but by a careful calculation of the interests involved and the power available.176

The United States has also attempted to promote its global interests and to counter communist gains through the medium of foreign aid. Throughout the postwar era, Morgenthau remained a vocal critic of both the intellectual rationale and actual operation of American assistance to recipient countries in the developing world.177 The assumption that rich nations have a moral duty to assist poor nations overcome their poverty justified the naive expectation that the quantitative extension of American aid
was actually capable of eliminating poverty on a grand scale. The American philosophy of foreign affairs, Morgenthau alleged, "equated foreign aid with economic development, economic development with social stability, social stability with democracy, and democracy with a peaceful foreign policy." 178

Yet he believed that American foreign aid efforts have largely failed to promote democratic reforms or significant economic growth in developing societies. By contrast, ambitious strategies of modernization have often led to an uneven distribution of resources and had little bearing on the redistribution of political power. Morgenthau argued that American policy-makers are just now recognizing the "extent to which the development of other nations depends upon indigenous rational and moral qualities not susceptible to deliberate foreign influence." 177 The conclusion Morgenthau arrived at in his discussion of intervention also applies to the special kind of intervention called foreign aid: it should be selectively oriented toward the political advantage of the donor and, if feasible, the economic benefit of the recipient ought to be the aim of American foreign policy. 180

Perhaps no moral issue in recent times has divided the American public and their elected officials as the campaign to promote human rights in foreign policy. At this juncture, it would be well to recall Morgenthau's argument
that moral principles for states are filtered through circumstances of time and place, as well as national concepts determining their application. This approach raises a fundamental question for human rights policy: to what degree is a nation obligated to impose its values on others? Morgenthau seriously questioned the idea that the rest of mankind was required to accept the American political and moral tradition. He found that Wilsonian moralism and President Jimmy Carter's campaign for universal human rights exhibited similar defects. First, the universal acceptance of human rights would be impossible to enforce. Second, the United States is a global power with a variety of interests throughout the world. The consistent promotion of human rights in foreign policy could easily jeopardize other valuable military, political, and economic interests. The United States, therefore, is incapable of applying a uniform moral standard to each and every country, because such a policy "must come in conflict with other interests that may be more important than the defense of human rights in a particular instance."

To Morgenthau, the issue of human rights is merely a general example of the connection between morality and foreign policy. Recognition that men and nations proclaim goals transcending national defense or sovereignty is a first step in solving, but not a solution to, the moral problem in international politics.
formulate a standard for the statesman seeking what is morally and politically right, Morgenthau invoked the words of Abraham Lincoln:

In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be and one must be wrong....These are not, however, the days of miracles and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible and learn what appears to be wise and just.183

Conclusion

Following World War II, the discipline of international relations represented an ad hoc mixture of scholarly pursuits ranging from international law and organization to diplomatic history and descriptive area studies. The scope and methods of the various subfields were influenced, and often overshadowed, by the historic American debate over the significance of power and moral principle in statecraft. The gradual recession of idealism and temporary ascendance of political realism in the early postwar period was reflected in the works of such notables as Walter Lippmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, Robert Strausz-Hupé, and George F. Kennan. However, in its earliest formulation, realism was a loose and ill-defined label applied at random to prominent individuals from such professions as journalism (Lippmann), theology (Niebuhr), and diplomatic service (Kennan).

It was the lifelong achievement of one scholar-activist, Hans J. Morgenthau, to integrate political realism
within the mainstream of American political science and help to establish international politics as an autonomous field of inquiry. The national interest defined in terms of power, the precarious uncertainty of the international balance of power, the weakness of international morality, the decentralized character of international law, the deceptiveness of ideologies, the requirements of diplomacy—these were phenomena his theory of international politics aimed to address in terms of general principles of politics.

Morgenthau's theory of international politics drew upon fundamental philosophical conceptions about man, nature, and politics. Rejecting many of the optimistic and reductionist beliefs of modern liberal thought, he stressed that politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. One scholar has effectively summarized Morgenthau's intellectual orientation in the following terms:

...he was determined both to erect an empirical science opposed to the utopias of the international lawyers and political idealogues, and to affirm the unity of empirical research and philosophical inquiry into the right kind of social order. He wanted to be normative, but to root his norms in the realities of politics, not in the aspirations of politicians or in the constructs of lawyers.184

Against the wishful thinking and pious hopes of interwar idealism, Morgenthau developed a theoretical approach to international affairs that both described national behavior and provided a framework for policy-makers, in order "to reduce the facts of experience to mere specific instances of
Morgenthau’s realist theory may be reduced to three key assumptions that have stimulated considerable debate among contemporary students of international politics. These assumptions are:

1. The state-centric assumption: the idea that the most important actors in world politics are territorial, organized entities (city states or modern states). Realists view the state as a territorially-determined sovereign community, characterized by a consensus on rules and governing institutions, and autonomy of its socio-economic processes. Interstate interactions are understood and explained largely in terms of forces emanating from the international system.

2. The rationality assumption: the belief that world politics can be understood as if states were unitary rational actors, carefully calculating costs of alternative courses of action and seeking to maximize their expected utility. Morgenthau contended that the theorist of international politics could understand events and actions by imagining himself, as a rational individual, in the position of a statesman, and reflecting on what he would do if faced with the problems confronted by actual decision-makers.

3. The power assumption: the notion that sovereign states, recognizing no higher authority, are in an
international state of nature; the resulting security
dilemma forces them to live in a condition of mutual
competition and conflict. In a situation of global anarchy,
states seek power (both the ability to influence others and
resources that can be used to exercise influence); and they
seek to calculate their interests in terms of power, whether
as an end or a means to a variety of other ends.106

A new generation of scholars in the 1970s and 1980s has
offered trenchant criticism of the realist tradition,
severely challenging the assumptions and concepts upon which
it is based. Critics point to a number of new questions
about international politics that variously reject or
challenge major tenets of Morgenthau’s realist theory.

First, Morgenthau’s realist perspective does not
sufficiently account for the growing importance of economic
and human welfare pursuits in world politics. At the heart
of the debate is the tendency of realists to differentiate
(and elevate) "high politics" issues of military security
over "low politics" issues of social and economic well-
being. Contemporary theorists refer to significant
developments in the economic field (e.g., resource scarcity,
commodity politics, worldwide inflation) that have generated
participatory demands and challenges to authority in
different institutional spheres.107 The demand for a New
International Economic Order (NIEO) and concern about the
North-South conflict exemplify the growing awareness of
economic problems transcending national boundaries and
defying national capabilities in containing them.

Second, political realists offer little insight into
the changing nature of power in the context of growing
international interdependence. Morgenthau treated national
interest as a constant. Given the same level of national
power, all states would presumably react similarly to
stimuli from the movement of forces in the international
environment. For the realist, power represents a
generalized means and resource; it is homogenous,
cumulative, and convertible. However, more recent
research questions the adequacy of such a concept of power
and points to the lack of correspondence between power
differentials and international outcomes. Cases in point
include the failure of the United States in Vietnam, the big
influence of small allies, and the phenomenon of Third World
power. Against the realist viewpoint, the growing
interdependence in different policy areas suggests that
power is limited in scope and domain; it is specific to
issue, policies, and actors.

Finally, Morgenthau's insistence on "objective laws" of
politics tended to make him look for the determinants of the
national interest in the external environment—the nation's
position in the world and history—more than in the domestic
milieu. Such an external perspective blinds the theorist to
the increasing interrelationship between the domestic and
international system. The concept of "linkage politics," formulated by James Rosenau, more precisely examines "any recurrent sequence of behavior that originates in one system and is reacted to in another." What has been the impact of the Vietnam War on American domestic politics, to cite but one example of an international-domestic linkage?

The concept of linkage can serve as a corrective to realism in two respects. On the one hand, it raises the largely-unanswered question of the effect of domestic structures and forces on a country's foreign policy. On the other, it allows the theorist to explore differences among nations to the extent that they are "penetrated" from outside, or in the degree to which linkages exist between the international system and a domestic political system.

More so perhaps than any American student of international relations and foreign policy during the past generation, Hans J. Morgenthau has frequently been judged as the premier spokesman for the Realpolitik approach to international political behavior. Certainly his formative educational experiences in Germany exhibited a clear appreciation for the statecraft of such standard-bearers of raison d'état as Frederick the Great, Richelieu, and Bismarck. Upon embarking on a new career in the United States, he staked out an intellectual position on the tragic side of the social drama and left to others--idealists in the first postwar generation, and peace-centered
behavioralists in the second—to side covertly with the angels. Typically neglected, however, has been the philosophy or conception of political ethics underlying Morgenthau's analysis.

In *Scientific Man* and other essays, Morgenthau offered a forceful rejection of European *raison d'état* as a fraudulent principle, based on the artificial separation of political life from man's inherently moral nature and capacity for ethical judgments. Specifically, he rejected the "ethical dualism" of classical *raison d'état* which, in his view, makes the error of setting the political sphere apart from the private one for purposes of ethical evaluation. He always wrote and acted from the conviction that man in the political sphere is not allowed to act as he pleases and that his behavior must conform to a standard higher than success. The simple dichotomy or juxtaposition of power politics and moral politics was, for Morgenthau, fundamentally mistaken. In particular, he concluded that *raison d'état* is little more than a myth since "the struggle for power is intelligible only as a dialectical movement toward the realization of justice."

The neglected transcendent component in Morgenthau's thought impinges directly upon the extent to which he relied on universal norms to direct or judge interest from a moral horizon beyond parochial interest. Yet, Morgenthau's attempt to strike a meaningful balance between national
interest and moral principles in international politics is beset by contradictory and ambiguous impulses. Various references to the "autonomy of politics" and "paramountcy of national interest" clearly imply that moral principles must be derived from political practice and not imposed on it. By contrast, Morgenthau found no escape from ultimate reliance upon moral principles in his avowedly "moral" objection to the pretentious hypocrisy of American foreign policy and in his identification of operative norms of diplomatic procedure.

In the final analysis, however, Morgenthau's occasional reliance on universal ethical principles was qualified by his excessively pessimistic view of man. Divorced from the transcendent by the sinfulness of man, political life tends to develop its own operational rules. Effectively distorted by the institutions of sinful man, Morgenthau's formal ethic could not easily function as a vital force directing man's creative moral energies. At best, Morgenthau's recourse to universal moral principles functioned only as a check to moderate the temptation to hypocritical pretense in foreign policy.

Moreover, Morgenthau's endorsement of a political ethic geared to the national interest culminated in a secular and relative conception of morality. Moral reasoning in politics, according to Morgenthau, encompassed not so much the balancing of universal principles or rights, but
prudential and pragmatic choices of a course of action in changing circumstances. His thinking yielded to a vision of practical morality involving the reconciliation of what is morally desirable with what is politically possible. A relative and proximate moral standard "recognizes the need for the moral man in the immoral world to find his way through a maze of conflicting moral principles no one of which reigns supreme."13
Endnotes


5. Morgenthau, Dilemmas of Politics, p. 35.


10. Ibid., p. 7.

11. Before accepting the position at Chicago, Morgenthau received appointments at Brooklyn College (1937-1939) and the University of Kansas City (1939-1943). In addition, he held a position at the City College of New York from 1960 to 1975.

12. Interview, pp. 381-383.


15. Interview, p. 381.


18. Ibid., p. 7.


20. Ibid., p. 61.


22. Ibid.


24. In a revealing passage, Morgenthau wrote: "Politics is an art and not a science, and what is required for its mastery is not the rationality of the engineer but the wisdom and moral strength of the statesman." See _Scientific Man_, p. 10.


27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.


32. Ibid., p. 3.

33. Ibid., p. 8.


37. Ibid.


40. Morgenthau, "National Interest and Moral Principles in Foreign Policy," pp. 207, 211. See also Morgenthau, In Defense of the National Interest, p. 35.


42. Morgenthau, "National Interest and Moral Principles in Foreign Policy," p. 211.


45. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p. 231.


47. Ibid., p. 253.

48. Ibid.


53. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest*, p. 34.


55. Ibid., p. 66.

56. Ibid., p. 69.


60. Ibid., p. 74.


62. Ibid., p. 7.

63. Ibid., p. 4. Morgenthau wrote: "Thus Wilson in 1917 led the United States into war against Germany for the same reasons, only half-known to himself, for which Jefferson had wished and worked alternatively for the victory of England and France. Germany threatened the balance of power in Europe, and it was in order to remove that threat—and not to make the world safe for democracy—that the United States put its weight into the Allies scale."

64. Ibid., pp. 14-15. Jefferson and his supporters opposed the proclamation by appealing to three moral principles—faithfulness to treaty obligations, gratitude to France for its aid during the American Revolution, and the affinity of republican institutions.


66. Morgenthau praised Adams as a statesman who managed to fit moral to political purposes so perfectly that the two comprised one remarkable whole. See Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest*, pp. 22-23.


69. Treating the national interest as a kind of diplomatic "invisible hand" always operative in the life of nations, Morgenthau suggested that Wilson could no more ignore the
national interest than could Jefferson. "It was only the
objective force of the national interest, which no rational
man could escape, that imposed the source of
America's...danger upon him as the source of his moral
indignation." See Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p. 33.

70. Morgenthau, In Defense of the National Interest, pp. 28-29.
56-61.
73. Hans J. Morgenthau, A New Foreign Policy for the United
74. Ibid.
75. Morgenthau, The Impasse of American Foreign Policy, p. 9.
76. Ibid., p. 1.
77. Ibid., p. 2.
and Tragedy, p. 53.
79. Ibid.
81. Alfred J. Hotz, "Morgenthau's Influence on the Study of
International Relations," in Truth and Tragedy, pp. 317-318. See
also Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, pp. 27-32.
82. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p. 36.
83. Ibid., pp. 112-149.
84. Morgenthau, A New Foreign Policy for the United States,
p. 24.
86. Morgenthau, A New Foreign Policy for the United States,
p. 208.
87. Ibid.

90. Morgenthau, Dilemmas of Politics, p. 41.

91. Ibid., p. 258.

92. It should be noted that Morgenthau associated the balance of power concept with four different meanings: (1) as a policy aimed at a certain state of affairs; (2) as an actual state of affairs; (3) as an approximately equal distribution of power; and (4) as any distribution of power. Whenever Morgenthau used the term without qualification, he had in mind "an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among several nations with approximate equality." See Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p. 167.

93. In general, Morgenthau identified the period between the Treaty of Westphalia and the First World War as the classic period of the balance of power in Europe. In general, the balance succeeded in preserving the existence of all the major European powers from the end of the Thirty Years War (1648) until the partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth-century; in addition, the balance prevented any one state from achieving universal dominion. See Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, pp. 167-224; 338-354.


99. Ibid., pp. 342-345.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid., p. 167.

102. Ibid., p. 204.
103. Ibid., p. 207.
104. Ibid., pp. 207-208.
106. Ibid., p. 211.
107. Ibid., p. 213.
108. Ibid., p. 190.
109. Ibid., p. 337.
111. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest*, p. 34.
112. For example, see *Scientific Man*, Chapter 7.


128. Ibid., pp. 253-254.


130. Morgenthau, Dilemmas of Politics, p. 80.


132. Ibid.

133. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p. 11.

134. Ibid., p. 231. In an earlier passage (p. 226), Morgenthau wrote: But in the long run philosophies...that have made the...struggle for power their mainstays have proved impotent and self-destructive."

135. Ibid. Morgenthau observed: "Such ethical inhibitions operate in our time on different levels and with different effectiveness. Their restraining functions is most obvious...in affirming the sacredness of human life in times of peace."

136. Morgenthau, Dilemmas of Politics, p. 84.

137. Ibid., p. 251.


140. Good, Nat. , Interest And Political Realism, p. 609. Much of the analysis in this section benefits from and seeks to develop Good's observations on Morgenthau's political ethic.

141. Ibid.


144. Ibid.
147. Ibid., p. 547.
150. Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics*, p. 84.
153. Quoted in Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics*, p. 84.
155. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
156. Ibid.
157. The credible resort to nuclear threat was exemplified by the Soviet Union during the Suez Crisis (1956) and by the United States in the Berlin Crisis (1961). See Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 30.
158. Ibid., p. 20.
160. Ibid., p. 13.
161. Regarding the credibility of nuclear threats in foreign policy, Morgenthau's statements are often ambiguous and contradictory. Compare his comment that "nuclear threats are...lacking in credibility" with the observation that "the threat of nuclear war is credible and has...been used by the United States and the Soviet Union against each other." Ibid., p. 29.
163. Ibid., pp. 397-401.
164. Ibid., p. 398.
165. Ibid., p. 403.
166. Ibid.
167. Ibid.
172. Ibid.
174. Ibid., p. 126.
175. Ibid.
176. Ibid., pp. 128-129.
177. Ibid., p. 10.
180. Ibid., p. 110.
182. Ibid., p. 90.
184. Stanley Hoffmann, "An American Social Science: International Relations," p. 44.

186. Ibid.

187. See, for example, K.J. Holsti, The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1985).


189. See, for example, Harold Sprout and Margaret Sprout, Toward a Politics of the Planet Earth (New York: Van Nostrand, 1971), pp. 163-178.

190. Ibid.


RAISON D'ETAT AND THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY OF REALISM IN WORLD AFFAIRS

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CHAPTER V

GEORGE F. KENNAN: SEARCHING FOR REALISM'S GRAND DESIGN

Perhaps no other American realist has stimulated as much protracted debate over the methods and goals of United States foreign policy as has George Frost Kennan. As both a career diplomat and scholar of diplomatic history, his critical eye has never drifted far from the intellectual and moral justification of American national interest in world affairs. Paralleling Kennan's assessment of the consistency and change in American national interest since the early days of the republic has been his passionate commentary on the few successes and, even more, failures of United States policy-makers to ensure a viable balance of power among the great powers following World War II.

As both American ambassador to the Soviet Union and a student of Russian-European history, Kennan wrote and lectured widely on the evolving strategic-diplomatic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union during the years of cold war antagonisms. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, he increasingly devoted attention to such topics as: the nature and changing distribution of power in the international environment; the irrational madness of nuclear stockpiles and proliferation; the
relationship of the Third World to traditional bipolar (superpower) competition; and the role of norms and ideology in foreign policy. Finally, Kennan's rather pessimistic evaluation of United States foreign policy prospects for the future was rooted in beliefs about the internal and psychic disorder of American society, as well as democratic impediments to a consistent and wise diplomacy.

Much of the confusion associated with Kennan's diagnosis of the objectives and errors of United States foreign policy stems from what has been widely-perceived as an unintelligible reversal in his approach to the requirements of American national security in the nuclear age. In fact, several critics see not one George Kennan but two distinctive personalities, with divergent convictions regarding the contribution of American power and diplomacy. On the one hand, there is the Kennan who sounded alarms about the expansionist nature of Soviet foreign policy in both the "long telegram" of 1946 and the pseudonymous 1947 "article" in Foreign Affairs. The "early" Kennan introduced a new generation of policy-makers to the logic of containment and advocated the vigilant application of "counterforce" as a measured response to aggressive Soviet intentions in war-torn Europe and beyond.

On the other hand, there is Kennan the "dove" or "neo-isolationist," who has tried to expose the errant reasoning underlying the globalization and militarization of
containment in United States foreign policy for the last three decades. Indeed, the "later" Kennan occasionally appears to revise the containment rationale by seeking to restrain America's militaristic impulse and its justification in sterile platitudes of unyielding and rigid anti-communism.

Our primary concern is the influence of classical raison d'état as one intellectual determinant (among others) in Kennan's understanding of the nature and structure of international politics in the twentieth century. More specifically, does Kennan draw on the ethical dualism of raison d'état in discussing morality as a criterion for the determination of the behavior of sovereign states? In what sense does Kennan acknowledge or neglect norms not immediately derived from the traditional concepts or principles of political realism? The philosophical sources in Kennan's thought provide a useful standard by which to examine a number of disputed points in his trenchant criticism of the theory and practice of American foreign policy since World War II.

The Two Careers of George Kennan

George F. Kennan has enjoyed and occasionally been troubled by a distinguished career as both diplomat and historian. His meteoric rise within the Foreign Service immediately launched Kennan to the forefront of debate regarding the responsibilities of American power in an
increasingly dangerous postwar world. Although modest about
his actual influence at the highest echelons of American
government, he occupied a unique position in being able to
reflect on the significance of policies and diplomatic
strategies he helped to shape. During the apex of his
diplomatic career in the late 1940s, Kennan’s confidential
reports and public statements provided the broad outlines
for the posture of containment that has guided United States
foreign policy toward the Soviet Union ever since. According
to Henry Kissinger, he "came as close to authoring
the diplomatic doctrine of his era as any diplomat in our
history."

Serving since 1974 as professor emeritus of diplomatic
history at Princeton’s Institute For Advanced Studies,
Kennan was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on February 16,
1904. From his ancestors (pioneer farmers who emigrated to
the United States from Ireland in the eighteenth century),
he inherited an appreciation for the thrift and sacrifice of
the Protestant work ethic, as well as a strong commitment to
individual freedom. Both his father and grandfather
preferred the ways and thinking of the eighteenth, as
opposed to the nineteenth century. Absorbing part of their
values, Kennan maintained a certain detachment from
twentieth century customs and manners. As we shall see,
this singular preference for a bygone era perhaps
contributed to Kennan’s evaluation of the internal and
external obstacles inhibiting America from playing a major role as a great power in world affairs.

Kennan enrolled at Princeton in 1921 and was drawn to the study of classical literature, history, and politics. Unlike the formative academic experience of such realist scholars as Walter Lippmann and Hans J. Morgenthau, Kennan's university years yielded no commitment on his part to any particular philosophy of politics or foreign policy. After graduating from Princeton in 1925, Kennan's outlook on public affairs extended little beyond a vague endorsement of Wilsonian liberalism, support for the League of Nations, and a belief in competitive laissez-faire economics. In fact, the still unresolved issue of Kennan's political philosophy or worldview was never a debatable proposition until his postwar commentary on the ills of American society and foreign policy.

In 1927, Kennan entered the Foreign Service, where he specialized in Russian culture and history. Over the ensuing five years, he held diplomatic assignments in Geneva, Hamburg, Tallin, Riga, and Berlin. Thereafter, Kennan served as third secretary in Moscow (1934); consul in Vienna (1935); second secretary in Moscow (1935); second secretary (1938) and consul (1939) in Prague; second secretary (1939) and first secretary (1940) in Berlin; counselor of legation in Lisbon (1942); counselor to the United States delegation of the European Advisory Commission
in London (1944); minister counselor in Moscow (1945); deputy director for foreign affairs at the National War College in Washington (1946); director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff (1947); ambassador to the Soviet Union (1952); and ambassador to Yugoslavia (1961-1963).

Kennan's "second career" as elder statesman and diplomatic historian began in 1950 through his association with the Institute For Advanced Study and continued until his retirement as professor emeritus in 1974. His retirement from the Foreign Service in 1953 coincided with a profound personal experience of "anxiety" and "despair" regarding an inability to countenance the organizational rigidity and increasing politicization of the foreign affairs bureaucracy. From the venue of Soviet-American relations during the early 1950s, kennan grew increasingly cynical because of efforts by more conservative policy-makers (such as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles) to invoke "the logic of containment" as primarily a military remedy to expanding Soviet political influence throughout the world. Especially in his relationship with Secretary of State Dean Acheson earlier, kennan considered his role not unlike that of "a court jester...privileged to say the shocking things, valued as an intellectual gadfly...but not to be taken fully seriously when it came to the...responsible decisions of policy." Recalling his
final days as a public servant, he wrote: "I was inclined to
wonder whether the day had not passed when the government
had no use for the qualities of persons like me—for
the...cool and rational analysis in the uniform substance of
imponderables."\(^1\)

Kennan left the State Department strong in his
conviction that "only the diplomatic historian, working from
the...detachment of a later day, will be able to unravel
this incredible tangle and to reveal the true aspect of the
various factors and issues involved."\(^1\) Despite his
sympathy for the comprehensive view of the diplomatic
historian who reveals the present through its genesis in the
past, he was destined to become an active and highly visible
contributor to the ongoing foreign policy debate. Of his
seventeen published books, only about half can be considered
works of history. Indeed, Kennan's only sustained
discussion of American diplomatic history is to be found in
his now classic American Diplomacy, 1900-1950 (1951) and in
the opening chapter of Realities of American Foreign Policy
(1954).\(^2\) More recent studies—Russia, the Atom and the
West (1958); On Dealing with the Communist World (1964); The
Cloud of Danger: Current Realities of American Foreign
Policy (1977); and The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet-American
Relations in the Atomic Age (1982)—examine contemporary
issues of American foreign policy within the context of the
evolving East-West conflict.\(^3\)
Despite the burden of psychic remorse that Kennan continues to exhibit about the misunderstanding of his position and the subsequent errors of United States foreign policy, he must be credited with an honesty of mind and originality of vision that few modern American statesmen have equalled. That his views have been at the center of national attention for over forty years is reflected by an impressive publication record that includes seventeen books; fourteen published statements before Congress; forty-five published speeches; and some seventy-five articles. In addition to receiving eighteen honorary doctorates, he has also been the recipient of such distinctions as two Pulitzer Prizes, a Bancroft Prize, a National Book Award, a Benjamin Franklin Award, and, most recently, an Albert Einstein Peace Prize.

**Political Philosophy and Diplomatic History**

The critical accounts of Kennan's published work may be divided into one of two rather general categories. Not surprisingly, considerable attention has been given to Kennan the Cold War strategist and historian. Both "orthodox" and "revisionist" scholars have hotly debated Kennan's initial formulation of containment, its legacy for United States foreign policy in the ensuing years, and its relevance for superpower diplomacy in the 1970s and 1980s. By contrast, numerous scholars have variously celebrated or rejected the isolationist impulse behind Kennan's more
recent proposals for the "disengagement" of American power from traditional areas of involvement in Europe and the developing world. In conjunction with the disengagement theme, students of Kennan's work have also analyzed his more specific outlook on such key issues as nuclear strategy, global interdependence, and human rights.

Less often examined, however, have been the antecedent philosophical assumptions and ethical precepts shaping Kennan's understanding of man and society's political existence in all of its cooperative and conflictual dimensions. The neglect is especially conspicuous with respect to his contribution in the fields of international politics and American foreign policy. With perhaps one notable exception, virtually no political scientist or international relations expert has assumed the more demanding task of integrating the philosophical underpinnings of Kennan's political realism with his observations on the role of power, self-interest, and morality in human existence. Furthermore, this oversight is particularly unfortunate, since Kennan has devoted considerable attention to the pitfalls and limited contribution of American liberal-democratic values in the conduct of United States foreign policy. Lippmann, Niebuhr, and Morgenthau offered a conceptual framework for understanding foreign policy rooted squarely in assumptions about the nature of man, society, and the world of sovereign
nation states. Can the same be said of Kennan?

At the outset, it will be useful to bear in mind several limitations in attempting to reconstruct the normative basis of Kennan’s thought. That Kennan’s political philosophy has not often been the subject of rigorous scrutiny results as much from his own unique intellectual temperament as it does from the “policy-oriented” focus of his critics. In fact, it must be admitted that Kennan’s infrequent observations on the perennial themes in Western political thought tend to be vague and highly abbreviated in content. His dependence upon any one philosophical tradition, as it relates to the question of political morality, is a matter that, for whatever reason, Kennan chose never to tackle explicitly.

Whether Kennan ought to have examined the sources of his intellectual inspiration more fully is, after all, more an issue of academic preference than some inviolable prerequisite for the conduct and analysis of diplomacy. Undoubtedly, some measure of his elusiveness resulted from more practical career goals, as well as from Kennan’s patent distrust of abstract doctrine and rigid formula in the exercise of foreign policy. Additionally, the broad sweep of normative political theory is often only a tangential consideration for the manner in which the diplomat thinks and writes about history. The more challenging question, from the standpoint of this study, is how someone who was
not trained to think or write in systematic philosophical-ethical terms, nevertheless, has wound up holding such firm views on many of these issues.

There is no reason to suppose that Kennan was unaware of, or failed to grasp, the philosophical moorings of political realism as an approach to international affairs. As the director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, he coordinated the ideas of such luminaries as Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans J. Morgenthau, Louis J. Halle, Dorothy Fosdick, and Charles Burton Marshall. His reference to Niebuhr as "the father of us all" is instructive for his own assessment of the nature and destiny of man, the perplexities of social ethics, and the conditions of human community.

Kennan certainly embraced the position of his realist colleagues, if not the central premise of the classical political thinkers: that the underlying basis for political action and the maintenance of political society begins with an appreciation of the forces at work in the human soul. The goals and objectives of any political community mirror the relative levels of intellectual and spiritual growth (or degeneration) of its citizens. Kennan saw the seat of worldly evil "not in social and political institutions, and not even...in the will or inequities of statesmen, but simply in the weaknesses and imperfections of the human soul itself." In addition, both the meaning of freedom and
man's right to fundamental human liberties "begins ... with
the humble acceptance of membership in, and subordination
to, a natural order of things, and it grows only with
struggle, and self-discipline, and faith." Unfortunately,
Kennan never developed a theory of the state or elaborated
on the processes of nature by which man strives to achieve a
certain excellence of character (or virtue) in the political
association. At the same time, however, his concern for the
organic base of political society, as well as the need to
carefully nourish the higher intellectual and rational
vitalities in human nature, suggest a line of reasoning that
may be summarized as follows: Law, justice, and the state
are not to be looked on as evils, but are to be valued for
themselves as things which are fundamentally good and
essential for the proper development of human nature.
Because the world is constructed according to a coherent and
rational pattern, it is proper and generally beneficial that
each species should develop and exercise its own natural
characteristics.

Kennan's inclination to view society as Man writ large
is informed by a sober preoccupation with the many human
failings that often preempt the realization of those moral
virtues that lie at the core of civilized existence. As
with other realists, particularly Niebuhr, Kennan's focus is
on man's sinful proclivities and the inevitable tragedy of
human existence. For Kennan, man is intrinsically a self-
regarding creature, whose more noble motives are often betrayed by egotistic impulses. Once rejecting a Quaker plea for pacifism, he argued:

We run around, each of us, encumbered with a side of our nature—the demonic side—which is...wholly unamenable to reason, capable of great destructiveness, and extremely persistent. It manifests itself individually and collectively. Ultimately, it can be restrained only by some form of force. Violence is the tribute we pay to original sin.

Adhering to what one critic has described as a Calvinistic conception of human nature, Kennan accepted the reality of coercive power and violence in life as the price to be paid for restraining the ambitions of human egotism. He once stated: "The problem...is not whether force is to be exerted but how; and this applies in the individual, the family, the nation, and the world community." Certainly the reference to original sin raises the still unresolved issue of the relative significance of either theological or secular philosophical principles in Kennan's realism. Moreover, the problem is further compounded by his tendency to stress the demonic, more than the divine or rational, elements in man. At no point, however, does Kennan elaborate on how the self-love in human nature is moderated by faith in a higher law. Unlike Morgenthau, he never attempted to examine the rational requirements of a realist theory of politics. Unlike Niebuhr, Kennan offered little insight into why it is necessary to draw upon another moral or spiritual resource to widen the conception of self-
interest in political life.

Given Kennan's recognition of man's fallen nature, it is with no small touch of irony that he sometimes displays a personal and intellectual affinity for the pleasant, genteel world of eighteenth century rationalism. Deeply ill-at-ease in his society and his time, Kennan always felt an obligation to set a personal example of civility and moderation. In his famous Encounter interview with George Urban in 1975, he argued "that kindliness and generosity in our personal behavior, and a refusal to be beastly to others even by way of reaction, are both moral and pragmatic qualities of the highest order." Furthermore, the remnants of Calvinist theology in Kennan's thought are open to dispute by his periodic inclination to equate the pursuit of self-interest with the common interest. In a concluding summary of foreign policy in American Diplomacy, Kennan displayed a typical liberal-bourgeois faith in the idea that the well-mannered pursuit of one's objective self-interest cannot help but serve the common good.

It will mean that we will have...to admit that our own national interest is all that we are really capable of...understanding--and the courage to recognize that if our purposes...here at home are decent ones, unsullied by arrogance or hostility toward other people...then the pursuit of our national interest can never fail to be conducive to a better world....

As with any of the more philosophical determinants influencing Kennan's thought, the critic must avoid the temptation to seek consistency in his expression or thought
where there simply may be none. For example, even the rationalistic flavor of Kennan’s commentary on the American national interest must also be judged in the more practical context of his "Niebuhrian" remonstrations against the "legalistic-moralistic approach to international problems."

In addition, it cannot be said that Kennan’s worldview reflects any very profound appreciation of egalitarian sentiments rooted in American political culture.

If, philosophically, Kennan is a man of the eighteenth century, he perhaps has more in common with the conservatism of Edmund Burke than the liberalism of John Locke or John Stuart Mill. The central function of government, as Kennan sees it, is the establishment and maintenance of public order. In one of his most-quoted observations on the problems of justice and order in society, he wrote:

Humanity divides...between those, who in their political philosophy, place the emphasis on order and those who place it on justice. I belong in the first of these categories. Human justice is always imperfect. The laws on which it bases itself are always to some extent unjust....But the good order of society is something tangible and solid. There is little that can be done about men’s motives; but if men can be restrained in their behavior, something is accomplished.

For Kennan, the benefit of the doubt should rest with the forces of order and not the world-improvers. That the maintenance of human order may entail "a certain amount of natural inequity and brutality" is "a sad necessity of the human predicament—a prudent concession to human weakness." A self-described "inveterate elitist," Kennan
yearns for a civilized meritocracy of skill and intellect, founded upon the hierarchical structure of society.

One has to distinguish between individual dispositions. There is always a small minority...who have values, insights, and sensitivity far greater than the mass of their fellow beings, and it is very important how this pattern-setting minority behave. Beyond that, you have the mass of people...who are the common run of humanity with their normal strengths and weaknesses.31

Throughout his long diplomatic career, Kennan was consistently troubled by the intrusion of domestic political considerations into the realm of foreign policy and the representation of United States interests abroad. Against the chaotic disorder of the American political process, Kennan favors "a greater fastidiousness about the allotment of tasks and responsibilities...a preference for hierarchy and authority over compromise and manipulation."32 In a revealing passage from his Memoirs, he likened his role to that of "the surgeon...if told to deflect the knife and make the cut in a different and unsuitable place because he might look better...to people in the seats of the theatre."33

Before turning to the concepts and principles shaping Kennan's realism as an approach to international politics, brief mention must also be made of his role and thought as a diplomatic historian. In general terms, Kennan defines diplomatic history as one aspect of political history.
It is part of the study of man in his behavior as a political animal; and it concerns itself with what occurs at that particular point of friction where the activity of one sovereign political authority rubs and grates on that of another. From the nature and personality of the sovereign state, the historian is led to the classical problems of political science: how men tend to behave in the exercise of political power and the problem of reconciling self-interest with a larger national purpose.

Regarding the methods of the diplomatic historian, Kennan may be considered a "particularist," who scrupulously avoided formulating systematic theory or a philosophy of history, in the tradition of Oswald Spengler or Arnold Toynbee. Subscribing to what one author labels the "snowball theory of history," Kennan argues that the great moments and ideas of history are more the result of cumulative errors in the mundane or in the everyday choices of people and governments.

One thing leads to another. Every mistake is in a sense the product of all the mistakes that have come before it...and at the same time every mistake is in a sense the determinant of all the mistakes of the future, from which it derives a sort of cosmic unforgiveableness.

Aside from occasional hints in the direction of formulating "a personal philosophy of foreign policy," Kennan's concern for the historical particulars (i.e., the hidden, unexpected, and unpredictable in human affairs) is matched by his aversion to "the search for absolutes in world affairs." Indeed, Kennan has long been suspicious
of sweeping doctrines and universal formula of foreign policy in a world forever changing and marked by "relative and unstable values." Reflecting on his long days of public service, he wrote: "I had no confidence in the ability of men to define hypothetically in any useful way, by means of general and legal phraseology, future situations which no one could really imagine or envisage." 30

In sum, Kennan's political philosophy is nowhere stated in explicit or systematic form. Commentators seeking to discern his intellectual progenitors confront the unenviable chore of groping for some measure of order or relationship among thoughtful fragments, dispersed at random throughout his many books and essays. To appraise Kennan's ideas solely from the standpoint of political philosophy would not only be a brief and inconclusive endeavor; this unidimensional fixation would also seriously neglect his more stimulating and practical reflections on America's role in the unending struggle for security and freedom in a hostile world.

However, to be pragmatic in politics and foreign policy is not to disinherit basic assumptions about the meaning and value of man in his political existence. There is every reason to believe that Kennan would concur with Morgenthau's point, that "man...cannot live without a philosophy that gives meaning to his existence, by explaining it in terms of causality...and justifying it in terms of ethics." The
following section examines Kennan's realism as a philosophy of world affairs and identifies the root principles shaping his primary concepts of analysis.

**Principles of American Statecraft**

The path by which Kennan was led to embrace the principles of realist thought defies brief recapitulation. His intuitive curiosity for the "imponderables" of interstate relations and "the finer distinctions of the psychology of our adversaries" precluded any systematic refinement of realist theory. Eugene Rostow describes Kennan as "an impressionist, a poet, not an earthling," one whose mind "has never moved along mathematical lines, and never will." Writing on containment strategy, John Lewis Gaddis argues that Kennan's approach depended on the "noncommunicable wisdom of the experienced career official and had little patience with the rigidities...and artificialities involved in administering large organizations." While always appreciative of the personal and esoteric skill of Kennan, Secretary of State Acheson said in reference to him that the conduct of foreign policy requires "communicable wisdom, and not mere conclusions, however soundly based in experience and intuition...."

Any account of Kennan's realism must begin by acknowledging the personal torment that moved him to question the deep-seated psychological and material forces determining the historical fate of individuals and nations.
For example, Kennan believed that the failure of the Western countries to reach a stable and satisfactory political solution to the division of Europe following World War II resulted from "our general ignorance of the historical processes of our age and particularly from our lack of attention to the power realities involved in a given situation." Kennan invoked the reasoning of the Cambridge historian, Herbert Butterfield, who wrote:

Behind the great conflicts of mankind is a terrible human predicament which lies at the heart of the story. . . . Contemporaries fail to see the predicament or refuse to recognize its genuineness so that our knowledge of it comes from later analysis. It is only with the progress of historical science . . . that men come really to recognize that there was a terrible knot almost beyond the ingenuity of man to untie.

Kennan's reservations about the objectives of United States foreign and defense policy throughout the postwar period involve more than the calculation of power differentials and respective national capabilities. Underlying much of his writing on the purposes of American power is a profound sense of horror and bewilderment at the stakes involved in international politics. In a relevant passage from his Memoirs, recalling a trip to Hamburg in 1943, Kennan referred to:

...an unshakable conviction that no momentary military advantage...could have justified this stupendous, careless destruction of civilian life and of material values....If the Western world was really going to make a valid pretense of a higher moral departure point...then it had to learn to fight its wars morally as well as militarily, or not fight them at all; for moral principles were a
part of its strength.44

By his own admission, these thoughts would remain at the center of Kennan's trials in future years. They were clearly reflected in his views on whether America should commit itself to the development of the hydrogen bomb; in the BBC Reith Lectures of 1957, in which Kennan spoke against basing the defenses of NATO members on nuclear missiles; in the senatorial hearings of 1966 and 1967, where debate centered on the bombing of North Vietnam; and in the public domain throughout the 1970s, in the controversy over nuclear proliferation and strategic arms control.45

Turning his attention to the lessons of United States diplomatic history, Kennan's realism took shape as an inventory of various intellectual misconceptions associated with the "legalistic-moralistic approach to international problems." In particular, he noted the contrast between the realistic orientation of early American statesmen during the Federalist era and "the cloudy bombast of their successors of later decades." From the period of the Civil War to World War II, American foreign policy was "legalistic in its concept and methodology, moralistic in the demands it seemed to place on others, and self-righteous in the degree of high-mindedness...it imputed to ourselves."46 In both American Diplomacy and Realities of American Foreign Policy, he examined various undertakings in which these tendencies revealed themselves: specifically, the endless preoccupation
with arbitration treaties; the efforts toward world disarmament; and the illusions of achieving a peaceful world through international organization and multilateral diplomacy.

Deeply rooted in the national consciousness, these idealistic abstractions invoked by American leaders served "as unconscious pretexts" for the failure and inability to deal with the "real substance of international affairs." At the core of the legalistic-moralistic approach is the belief that:

instead of taking the awkward conflicts of national interest and dealing with them on their merits with a view to finding the solution least unsettling to the stability of international life, it would be better to find some formal criteria of a judicial nature by which the permissible behavior of states could be defined.

Among the consequences of this hopeless misconception were the following: it erroneously assumes that all states are satisfied with their present status and limits their possibility for redress; it confers an absolute value on the concept of national sovereignty, ignoring variations in national divisions and inhibiting flux and change; it assumes that domestic issues cannot become international concerns; and, worst of all, it abets a moralism—the "assumption that state behavior is a fit subject for moral pronouncement"—which gives rise to the mentality of total war and total victory.

Kennan's analysis of the idealistic component in
American foreign policy is generally consistent with the intellectual standards utilized by other realists in their evaluation of American diplomatic history. Unlike a Niebuhr or Morgenthau, however, Kennan does not systematically develop his critique of American foreign policy within the context of an explicit and comprehensive worldview or philosophy of global politics. In recounting the errors of American diplomacy after 1900, he was more inclined to "discuss individual episodes and situations...in the hope that this impressionistic pattern may communicate better than any attempt at direct presentation my own reactions to the material at hand."50 Kennan's particularism, as well as his concern to unravel the various factors involved in specific historical outcomes, almost always took precedence over any sustained effort to convey the essential concepts and normative precepts underlying his thought.

Yet it is inconceivable that Kennan could write at such length about the conduct of American statecraft without relying upon a core of basic principles and explanatory concepts. While the fundamental tenets of George F. Kennan's realism were never formulated in precise theoretical terms, several recurrent ideas distinguish his approach to the study of American foreign policy and international politics. Here, we shall examine briefly Kennan's realism, as it relates to the ruling characteristics of the modern state system, the objective
foundations of foreign policy, the role of power and force, and the contribution of American ideals to the preservation of international stability.

--Human nature is "irrational, selfish, obstinate and tends to violence." It is virtually impossible to effect basic changes in man, and few people will ever "have an abstract devotion to the principles of international legality capable of competing with impulses from which wars are apt to arise."

--International politics takes place in an anarchic global environment where the vital forces of "fear, ambition, insecurity, jealousy, and...even boredom" are the prime movers of events. The sovereign national state "still recognizes in the crucial moments of its own destiny no law but that of its own egoism--no higher focus of obligation, no overriding ethical code."

--The prudent statesman is obliged to recognize the "realities of power" and to deal frankly with them in the interests of the survival and integrity of national life. Reconciling divergent national objectives and minimizing the sources of international tension are best left to "the traditional devices of political expediency," with an eye to the given relationships of power.

--A nation's foreign policy cannot be grasped apart from
the domestic factors that prescribe the goals of policy or international forces that hinder achievement of those goals. What a state may hope to achieve in international politics results from the complex interplay of state interests, personalities, and domestic pressures, as well as the nature and organization of a state's foreign service.

A logical corollary to the persistence of national ambition and rivalry in international politics is the absence of any universally applicable standards of morality in relations among sovereign states. While "moral principles have their place in the heart of the individual," governmental behavior cannot be subjected to the same moral judgments that are applied to human behavior. In particular, government "may not subject itself to those supreme laws of renunciation and self-sacrifice that represent the culmination of individual moral growth."

While by no means an exhaustive list, these recurrent themes are particularly instructive for understanding Kennan's outlook on the purposes and principles of American power in a changing postwar international environment.

Perhaps no other concept or standard is as integral to Kennan's writing on America's postwar diplomatic behavior as the national interest. The power realities that define the essence of international politics largely derive from the
destabilizing impact of self-centered national egoism in a world of large secular societies. Underlying his critique of the legalistic-moralistic style of United States diplomacy was Kennan's belief that policy-makers misunderstood both the selfish motives of allies and adversaries, as well as the nature and limits of American power in the service of world peace. Shaping Kennan's analysis of the national interest were such fundamental considerations as: (1) the problem of conceptualization and definition; (2) the national interest and underlying purposes of American society; and (3) the national interest as a delimitation of geopolitical strongholds.

For over thirty years, Kennan studiously avoided any static or a priori conception of the national interest of the United States, as a fixed measure by which to treat the means and ends of foreign policy. Nevertheless, he was willing to accept the historical reality and rational intelligibility of the concept of the national interest. In Kennan's words:

I wanted...to try to ascertain on what concepts of national interest and national obligation, as related to foreign affairs, the various American statesmen had operated.^

By 1900 we were generally aware that our power had world-wide significance and...from that time on our interests were constantly involved in important ways with such events.**

It will mean that we will have the modesty to admit that our national interest is all that we are really capable of knowing and understanding.***
Yet while he was emphatic about the value of the concept of self-interest, Kennan was also skeptical about efforts to define the national interest according to invariant criteria or fixed determinants. Two reasons may be cited for this reluctance. The first concerns Kennan's belief that the most important characteristic of international politics is its diversity, not its uniformity.

International political life is something organic, not something mechanical. Its essence is change; and the only systems for the regulation of international life which can be effective...are ones sufficiently subtle, sufficiently pliable, to adjust themselves to constant change in the interests and power of the various countries involved.

The sources of conflict and change in relations among sovereign states are "always specific, never general." Judgments on the components of the national interest will, therefore, always be relative to particular circumstances and tailored to account for the changing distribution of power and values in the international system.

A second reason followed from the doubts Kennan expressed about whether the vicissitudes of American foreign policy, including the national interest, can be subjected to precise theoretical definition. In language more intuitive than analytic, he once described the national interest as "something...you know must exist--you can demonstrate it by the process of exclusion--but it is too vast, too rich in meaning, too many-sided, for any positive definition." Briefly reviewing Kennan's outlook on what the national
interest is not, rather than what it is, some insight may be
gained into that "something" shaping the purpose and
objectives of American foreign policy.

In Kennan's view, America's national interest "is not a
detached interest in our international environment for its
own sake, independent of our aspirations and problems here
at home." He believed that nations "do not live just for
their relations with others"; rather they "conduct foreign
policy in order to live." Kennan was also convinced that
the national interest "is a function of our duty to
ourselves" and "one of the means by which some higher and
more comprehensive purpose is served." That end or purpose
"consists in whatever we consider to be the general objects
of American society." Treating the national interest as
an expression of self-respect, Kennan wrote:

A nation which is meeting its problems, and
meeting them honestly and creditably, is not apt
to be a problem to its neighbors. And...having
figured out what it wants to do about itself, it
will find that it has...mysteriously acquired
criteria...for knowing what to do about its
relations with others.

In linking the national interest to the general objects
or values of American society, Kennan consulted the vision
of the Founding Fathers. Government existed in order to
secure to the individual citizen such natural rights as
life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as well as "the
right to hold property and to dispose over it." Reflecting
the tenets of liberal-rational political thought, their view
was that the state "was not conceived as an end in itself or
the bearer "of any concrete social program." The "greatest
good of the greatest number" was believed to be the result
of the natural processes of private interest.\textsuperscript{4}

From this conception of the original objects of
political society, Kennan believed that American statesmen
were compelled to follow a "modest" and "restrained" course
in foreign affairs. In the early years of the republic,
American national interest had two basic objectives: "to
protect the physical intactness of our national life from
any external military or political intrusion" and to
"promote and protect" private American interests abroad.
Moreover, there was "nothing in it that said we should be
ashamed to recognize the realities of power or to deal
frankly with them in the interests of our survival."\textsuperscript{5} For
example, resisting European intrigues in the New World and
extending American sovereignty to the western territories
both "involved power considerations." Yet, as Kennan
observed, such a national policy "at this time was not
considered evil, or Machiavellian, or cynical. It was
simply regarded as a response to the...logical requirements
of our situation."\textsuperscript{6}

In the decades after World War II, Kennan's \textit{definition}
(if not his more ambiguous \textit{interpretation}) of the national
interest added little to the diplomatic perspective of the
Founding Fathers. For example, in 1948, he suggested that
the fundamental objectives of United States foreign policy must always be: to protect national security, by which he meant "the continued ability of this country to pursue the development of its internal life without serious interference...from foreign powers"; and to promote the well-being of the American people, "by promoting a world order in which this nation can make a maximum contribution to the peaceful...development of other nations."

Many years later, Kennan would write: "The interests of the national society...are those of military security, the integrity of its political life, and the well-being of its people." The fundamental interest of the United States in world affairs is "to continue this Pilgrim's Progress...with a minimum of foreign interference, and also with a minimum of...provocation to the interests of other nations." By contrast, constructive efforts to enhance the harmony and stability of domestic life preclude an activist foreign policy linking the defense of American national interest to such lofty goals as assuring the morality of international conduct elsewhere in the world; preventing economic hardship or altering living standards in distant countries; and seeking military superiority in an age of "irrational" nuclear overkill capability.

To Kennan's mind, the national interest is not primarily a question of purpose, objective, or doctrine; rather it is a question of "how" rather than "what." From
this angle, Kennan is apparently preoccupied with the style or the conduct of American foreign policy, rather than any predetermined hierarchy of desirable goals. Indeed, “manner of execution is always a factor in diplomacy of no less importance than concept.”\(^7\) Harshly judging America’s diplomatic dilletantism in foreign affairs, he observed:

Objectives were normally vainglorious, unreal...even pathetic--little likely to be realized....But methods were another matter. These were real. It was out of their immediate effects that the quality of life was really molded. In war as in peace I found myself concerned less with what people thought they were striving for than with the manner in which they strove for it.\(^1\)

For Kennan, good form in outward behavior “becomes a value in itself, with its own validity and effectiveness, and perhaps--human nature being what it is--the greatest value of them all.”\(^2\)

While a number of conceptual defects in Kennan’s realism will be more fully examined at a later stage of this chapter, it is instructive at this juncture to note the ambiguity in his treatment of the national interest as an extension of the American purpose in foreign policy. On one level, he is inspired by a nostalgic affinity for the conception of national purpose that shaped the interpretation of American national interest during the early years of the republic. In this period, American foreign policy was geared to “fixed and limited objectives,” involving only the “improvement of our national life.”
America's influence in the world went no further than minimizing European influence in this hemisphere and protecting private American commercial interests abroad.

What is far less certain in Kennan's writing, however, is the extent to which the vision of the Founding Fathers is meaningful for the conduct of United States diplomacy in the second half of the twentieth century. At one point, Kennan acknowledged that the traditional objects and ideals of American society "must be enlarged" and "pursued...partly in the broader theater of our international environment." Against the laissez-faire theory that the best interests of society are served by promoting individual self-interest, he called on government to foster a greater sense of collective and national purpose with regard to the social and economic ills of the nation. Clearly, Kennan considers the liberal-rational philosophy of watch-dog government as the guardian of private interest sorely deficient as a remedy to such negative phenomena in American life as inflation, unemployment, pornography, and declining educational standards. However, beyond opposing the welfare state or socialization of the means of production, Kennan has had little to say about either the reorientation of civic values or new institutional forms which would shape American national life in keeping with the demands of the future.

To a considerable degree, Kennan's cursory observations on the national purpose have been eclipsed by his
examination of American national interest as a geopolitical problem. While mindful of numerous domestic influences and constraints on foreign policy, Kennan devoted more attention to the constellation of external variables affecting America's traditional interest in preserving national security and promoting a stable world order. As pioneer in the field of national security studies at the National War College, Kennan developed an interest in both the organization of postwar international society and the distribution of military and political power in the nuclear age. America's inability to police the world and considerations of power balance led him to distinguish among key geographic areas on the basis of their contribution to United States security.

Speaking to a War College audience in 1948, Kennan provided a rough outline of "those areas of the world which...we cannot permit...to fall into hands hostile to us." His list included:

1. The nations and territories of the Atlantic community, which include Canada, Greenland and Iceland, Scandinavia, the British Isles, Western Europe, the Iberian Peninsula, Morocco and the west coast of Africa down to the bulge, and the countries of South America from the bulge north;

2. The countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle East as far east as, and including, Iran; and


In later years, Kennan narrowed his geopolitical priorities to encompass five strongholds of military-

industrial strength having a direct bearing upon American national security. All are located in the Northern Hemisphere; they include the United States, the United Kingdom, the Rhine Valley with adjacent industrial areas, the Soviet Union, and Japan. Only these regions can bring together "great masses of manpower, military strength...and particularly strength of an amphibious nature, capable of reaching our homeland and disputing our power within it." Only one of those great power centers was, at that time, in hostile hands; the primary interest of the United States in world affairs, therefore, was to see to it that no others fell under enemy control.

The concept of five vital centers of world power would remain an enduring feature of Kennan's international perspective throughout the postwar decades of cold war and détente. Yet he acknowledged that his primary concern for military-security objectives in Europe and Asia did not exhaust the totality of America's varied interests in world affairs. Kennan's position, according to Gaddis, "was that of the varieties of power that existed on the international scene, industrial-military power was the most dangerous, and hence primary emphasis should be placed on keeping it under control." Clearly, Kennan recognized that American foreign policy includes such essential interests as consolidating a sphere of influence within the Western Hemisphere; preserving access to sources of raw materials.
throughout the developing world; and maintaining a broad network of economic, political, and cultural ties with the major industrial democracies.

The concepts of power and balance of power were of decisive importance in Kennan's views regarding the realization of America's postwar military and diplomatic interests. His preoccupation with the conflicts of interest and power among nations is rooted in a tragic conception of human nature. The basic human condition, according to Kennan, is one of alienation. Despite occasional moments of transcendent greatness, the destructive force of self-love in human nature leads to man's estrangement from other men. The pursuit of power in the lives of both men and nations creates a "moral dilemma":

...to wield power is at best an ambivalent thing--a sharing of the guilt taken upon themselves by all those men who, over the course of the ages, have sought...to tell others what to do....Power, like sex, may be concealed or outwardly ignored...but neither in the one case nor in the other does this concealment save us from the destruction of our innocence...."

Paradoxically, the universal urge to power is both the seat of the soul's corruption as well as an organic process by which to stem or counter the sinful and aggressive pretensions of demonic man. Accordingly, Kennan called on Americans to accept frankly "the validity and legitimacy of power realities and aspirations...to take them as existing and inalterable human forces...and to seek their point of maximum equilibrium rather than their reform or their
repression." In an imperfect world, the morality of all political action is contingent upon the expedient search for a balance among conflicting interests.

The balance of power principle also provided Kennan with a standard with which to relate American security interests to the organization of international society. The importance of this concept for his thinking can be traced to three pivotal assumptions about the nature of international politics.

First, grandiose legal blueprints for world government cloak the intractable realities of international politics behind a sterile facade of "parliamentary shadow-boxing" and inhibit action necessary in defense of the national interest. An organization for international security can fulfill its purpose only when the interests of the participating countries happen to coincide with the maintenance of a particular political or territorial status quo. Reflecting on the failure of the Holy Alliance and League of Nations, Kennan noted that "the moment it became in the interest of one or the other of the great powers to alter the status quo, none of these treaty structures ever stood in the way of such alteration." In short, international security will depend "on the realities of power...not on the structure in which they are clothed."

Second, as Kennan envisioned it, the "organic" character of international political life is one in which
man, culture, and history are woven together in an inextricable web. The organic metaphor underlies Kennan's belief in the contingent nature of international politics, where "there is nothing final in point of time, nothing not vulnerable to the law of change, but also nothing absolute in itself." Given the inherent instability of political phenomena, "the function of a system of international relationships is not to inhibit this process of change by imposing a legal straitjacket on it but rather to facilitate it; to ease its transitions and to temper its asperities." Any equilibrium among major powers would have to be sufficiently flexible to adjust itself to constant change in the interests and power of the countries involved.

Third, any mechanism for the regulation of international politics must adapt its methods to accommodate both violent and nonviolent forms of change. Committing American diplomacy to the elimination of armed conflict from international life was a goal that Kennan thought neither possible nor desirable. In addition, he observed: "I think we have to face the fact that there may be arrangements of peace less acceptable to the security of this country than isolated recurrences of violence." American foreign policy, according to Kennan, should abide by the maxim: "Peace if possible, and insofar as it affects our interests."
policy, Kennan equates the balance of power with "using American influence, wherever possible, to assure that the ability to develop military power on a grand scale is divided among several governmental entities and not concentrated entirely in any one of them." The balance of power not only prevented the outbreak of a major war in Europe during the century prior to 1914; in addition, the European balance (along with British maritime supremacy) represented a political necessity for America's economic expansion and hemispheric security throughout the nineteenth century. Yet, Kennan believed that it was only during the early years of the republic that American statesmen confidently dealt with power realities and attempted to restrain European powers in their territorial ambitions in the Western Hemisphere. By contrast, in the decades before and after World War I, America's traditional interest in the balance of power was mortgaged upon illusory hopes of universal disarmament and the abstract formalism of international law. Again during World War II, America planned for a world organization, unmindful that the Soviet Union was emerging as a new threat to the equilibrium of Europe.

Increasingly after 1945, balance of power considerations began to shape official estimates of American foreign policy goals in a bipolar world. "The objective of our policy from this point on," Secretary of State Marshall
announced in 1947, "would be the restoration of a balance of power in both Europe and Asia and...all actions would be viewed in the light of this objective." Kennan emphasized that America's vital interest required first and foremost that no single continental power come to dominate the major power centers in Europe and Asia. The power vacuums created by the defeat of Germany and Japan necessitated "strengthening...the natural forces of resistance within the respective countries which the communists are attacking and that has been...the basis of our policy."*

Kennan identified several prerequisites for American overseas policy geared to promoting a balance of power in Europe and Asia. Because of its unrivaled position of influence in the postwar world, the United States would have to take the lead in seeking to maintain any global balance of forces. Yet it was equally obvious that America lacked both the resources and the will to hold the world in balance unilaterally. "We may not like allies--but we've got to have them."** Similarly, American security hinged upon establishing a balance among hostile powers and sowing dissension within enemy ranks. Specifically, Kennan urged policy-makers to utilize more fully propaganda techniques as part of a vigorous diplomatic campaign to counter Soviet gains in Eastern Europe. Political regimes that posed a threat to the national interest of the United States would thus be "compelled to cancel each other out...in order that
the constructive forces, working for world stability, may continue to have the possibility of life." Finally, smaller states in the Third World do not make any significant contribution to the global strategic balance. To this day, Kennan still believes that a balance of power is only applicable to the five predominant geopolitical strongholds of military-industrial potential.

At this point, it will be useful to assess Kennan's conception of power as it relates to the various foreign policy methods he deemed essential for implementing a postwar balance. Despite his concern with the ubiquity of power in foreign policy, Kennan never settled on any one explicit definition of power applicable to the wide range of events and processes evident in modern international politics. As a general proposition, Kennan treated power as the ability to achieve intended results or to influence the attitudes and behavior of other people in some desired way. More specifically, Kennan denied that power simply translates into the possession of superior force; the American national interest "cannot be served by any single agency of policy....It is the sum total of our performance that counts; our efforts must embrace all facets of our national behavior." Any attempt by the United States to foster a state of equilibrium among the major powers of Europe and Asia would, therefore, entail reliance on a combination of military, political, economic, psychological,
and other dimensions of foreign policy.

George Kennan is certainly no pacifist and, at least until the 1970s, he recognized the importance of military force in maintaining the postwar balance. Although cynical about nuclear weapons (both strategic and tactical) as usable instruments of policy, he did favor utilizing small, highly-trained, mobile forces that could be rapidly deployed in local situations to restore the balance of power. In addition to supporting United States involvement in Korea (1950), he is on record of having considered (though not finally recommending) possible American military intervention in Greece (1947), Italy (1948), and Taiwan (1949). However, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Kennan joined Walter Lippmann, Hans J. Morgenthau, and other commentators in opposing the escalation of United States military commitments in Vietnam. Specifically, he doubted whether America had either sufficient power or sufficiently strong interest to police, and ultimately to resolve, a civil conflict in the jungles of Indochina. There was little evidence, Kennan argued, that the turmoil in Vietnam had a significant bearing on the security of Japan or the overall balance of power in East Asia. Kennan also believed that the deployment of conventional American forces on a limited scale was questionable. He suggested that the greatest value of American military forces lay in their psychological quality as a deterrent. "Armaments are
important," he wrote, "not just for what could be done with them in time of war, but for the psychological shadows they cast in time of peace."**

The importance of American diplomatic and economic initiatives in creating a postwar balance of power derived from the nature of the Soviet threat to the peoples of Western Europe and Japan. Kennan never expected, and still does not believe, that the Soviet Union would risk a war with the United States in order to achieve its desired foreign policy goals. More likely than direct Soviet military intervention in Europe and elsewhere was the possibility of a psychological conquest and the prospect of communist-led coups or victories in free elections. Accordingly, economic aid, and in Western Europe the Marshall Plan, constituted the primary vehicle by which to bolster "the strength and will of those people to a point where they could play their part in the European balance of power."

The Marshall Plan...would lay the foundation for a new sense of purpose in Western society....In this vision, we saw a new ordering of international relations generally in the Atlantic and European areas...it was our hope that this alternative could be made so patently worthy and inspiring in itself...that peoples could safely repair to it without raising military issues."***

Concomitant with the economic recovery of Europe and rehabilitation of Japan, Kennan called for such American diplomatic initiatives as reducing the scope of Soviet influence by exploiting tensions within the international
communist movement; modifying the Soviet concept of international relations with a view to reaching a negotiated settlement of outstanding differences; deflating Soviet ideological pretensions by constructive propaganda efforts abroad; and maintaining a healthy and cohesive society in the United States as a model for others. Despite calling for a policy of containment based on "counterforce" in his famous "X" article, Kennan maintained that his idea was "not the containment by military means of a military threat, but the political containment of a political threat." At least for the first decade after World War II, Kennan's balance of power formula was inspired by his preference for a diplomatic settlement with Moscow while American military power in Europe and Asia was at its peak.

Kennan's attempts to define the integral concepts and standards of foreign policy seemed largely tailored to the requirements of American national security in the early postwar years. Yet his concern for the organic and contingent nature of international politics precluded any final or fixed assessment of American military, economic, and diplomatic objectives in a rapidly changing world. Indeed, much of Kennan's writing over the ensuing decades focused on foreign policy problems in the major geographical regions and upon current problems, such as arms control, détente, and human rights. What has remained problematic for students of Kennan's thought is the extent to which his
early views on national interest and balance of power are still meaningful in terms of the limits and opportunities confronting the United States in an interdependent global arena which is poised, as Kennan clearly believes, on the precipice of nuclear and environmental calamity. While a future section of this chapter more fully evaluates his position on several continuing problems in American foreign policy, it seems appropriate to call attention here to a number of conceptual defects in Kennan's realism.

Much of Kennan's thought gravitated toward the complexities and ambiguities of international politics and away from any theoretical or systematic explanation of the foreign policy process. Kennan, therefore, provided no coherent framework by which to rank-order or judge the interaction of external or internal variables in specific outcomes of foreign policy. On the domestic side of the ledger, this reluctance may be attributed to Kennan's professed elitism and cynical reproach of democratic decision-making. Foreign policy, he has always believed, should remain the exclusive preserve of an intellectual aristocracy insulated from the pullings and haulings of ethnic, religious, and economic groups that have at heart only parochial concerns, not the national interest.

Similarly, Kennan's thought suffers from a lack of precision both in specifying the content of the national interest, as well as in accounting for its significance, in
the formulation of specific foreign policy goals. Against
the legalistic-moralistic principles identified with the
interwar years, Kennan's invocation of the "national
interest" as the lodestar of United States foreign policy
was based on a firm appreciation for the realities of power
and conflict in international life. However, he never
specifically explained what it means to formulate foreign
policy based on existing power realities. The implication
of Kennan's argument is that policies enhancing the national
interest can be deduced from the application of power
realities to specific international political problems.
Left unresolved, however, is the question of how a general
grasp of these realities can determine a statesman's
preference for any particular course of action in the light
of fluctuating value patterns and relatively scarce means.

Furthermore, Kennan's tendency to treat the national
interest as a self-evident, objective datum that follows
from the original objects of the American national
experience is tautological: it begs the question of what the
national interest is in any specific foreign policy context,
why certain measures are preferred over others at different
times, for what purposes power and influence are being
utilized, and (among several competing interests) which
interest is the national interest.

Second, Kennan's case against moral and legal
abstractions in foreign policy obscures the way in which the
broad purposes and interests of a society are ultimately subject to normative evaluation. Both preserving national security and protecting the welfare of Americans are statements of value that cannot be deduced from any objective statement of facts. For example, it would make little sense to argue that nations should seek power adequate for their survival if high value were not placed on the existence of independent nations. Moreover, concern for individual welfare entails a moral judgment on the worth or dignity of man as well as the desired ends of human existence. 

Finally, Kennan's interpretation of the national interest followed from an inquiry into the general objects and purposes of American society. The Founding Fathers' commitment to limited government, individual freedom, and economic liberty translated into a modest and restrained conception of foreign policy. Kennan still describes himself as a "traditionalist who does not believe that this country is well constituted...to play an active role in foreign affairs." 

However, Kennan never probed further into the relationship between national purpose and national interest, even while he believed that the eighteenth century conception of national interest was not fully applicable to twentieth century America. This neglect is all the more unfortunate in that Kennan frequently exhibits seemingly
irreconcilable views on the value and strength of American society in a troubled postwar world. For example, in 1954, he wrote:

If I did not believe that, despite all our national failings, our existence as a great nation was by and large beneficial to the civilization of which we are a part, if I did not believe that our purposes as a nation were on balance worthy ones...I would not feel we were entitled to take the attitude I have suggested this evening.\textsuperscript{101}

Yet, in speaking to George Urban in 1976, Kennan claimed that America was ill-suited to speak and act as an effective leader in world affairs.

Leadership cannot be given for the two reasons we have already mentioned: (1) because the United States has nothing much to say to the outside world, and (2) because the kind of government we have does not permit, even if we had a valid message to impart, the shaping of that message into a consistently pursued foreign policy.\textsuperscript{102}

Since he spent much of his career debating the strategy and tactics of American power, it is somewhat surprising to find that Kennan never developed the balance of power as an analytical tool for assessing alternative foreign policies and changes in international political structure. In general, his interpretation of the balance principle was as geographically narrow as it was qualitatively vague. The postwar balance of power would be maintained, he believed, as long as military-industrial power "on a grand scale" was divided among the five major centers of geographical strength in the Northern Hemisphere. Largely absent from Kennan's geopolitical design is any investigation into the
precise operation of the balance of power in tandem with the nuclear balance of terror; the distribution of power concomitant with new relations of interdependence and recent trends in the world economy; the significance of local-regional balances of power in both the developing and industrial parts of the world; and the influence of social, economic, and political developments in the Third World upon the global balance of power.

Kennan's more recent commentary on the balance of power leaves open for debate the degree to which it provides a useful standard for United States foreign policy. In an interview with the editors of *Foreign Policy* in 1972, he claimed that "it should not be cynically conceived and it should not...be taken to mean pushing other people into conflict with each other." This seems to represent a clear departure from his earlier conviction that the balance could be used to exploit tensions within the world communist movement and otherwise permit America's enemies to spend their energies in conflict with one another. Kennan provides little insight into how the balance might be more positively conceived in terms of specific policy initiatives designed to stabilize the sources and expressions of conflict both within and among nations. In the same context, Kennan admitted that "except for our role in NATO, and such influence as we might have--or might have had--on the situation on the subcontinent of India-Pakistan, our
possibilities are decidedly limited." In East Asia, the "curious balance of power" maintained by the Russians, Chinese, and Japanese "is not our doing, and needs no stimulation from us." These reservations suggest that Kennan now finds the balance of power applicable only to NATO countries, which seek to maintain rough equivalence with the Soviet Union in strategic and conventional military capability.

Realism and Relative Moral Judgments in Foreign Policy

Aside from his formulation of the containment doctrine and its continuing relevance for American national security, no other facet of Kennan's work has been as vexatious as his treatment of morality and foreign policy. Unlike the other realists examined in this study, Kennan never wrote at any length about the philosophical, religious, or scientific foundations supporting alternative ethical conceptions of politics in the history of Western thought. Undoubtedly, his more practical concern for workability over abstract principle in foreign policy militated against any ongoing inquiry into the normative basis of rights and obligations in interstate behavior.

Throughout the postwar era, therefore, Kennan's reflections on the moral quality of American statecraft stand as abbreviated fragments and summary footnotes in his more general indictment of the idealistic tradition of American diplomacy. More recently, he has admitted that
"these observations were...brought forward too cryptically and...invited a wide variety of interpretations, not excluding the thesis that I had advocated an amoral, or even immoral, foreign policy for this country."

In fact, it was not until he published an essay in the Winter 1985/86 edition of Foreign Affairs that Kennan even attempted a systematic presentation of his views on the subject.

The concept of raison d'État (explained more fully in Chapter I) has never figured prominently in Kennan's writing on the role of American values and ideals in international politics. However, its meaning should certainly not be alien to one who read Clausewitz and Machiavelli while serving at the National War College with Bernard Brodie. As a conscientious scholar interested in European diplomatic history, for George Kennan the historical manifestation of "state necessity" permeated his recent study of the pre-World War I Franco-Russian alliance. Whether raison d'État is relevant for American power, as informed by a realistic appraisal of the national interest, was translated by Kennan into the question: "Can it be true that here, too, there is no room for the application of moral principle and that all must be left to the workings of expediency, national egoism and cynicism?" Bringing together the disparate strands of Kennan's moral reasoning will entail considering the problem of "moralism" in foreign policy; the statesman's loyalty to norms transcending the national
community; and the relation of domestic purpose to foreign policy norms.

Both the role and limitations of morality in international politics have been important elements in Kennan's polemic against the legalistic-moralistic impulse in United States foreign policy conduct. Increasingly since the turn of the century, this approach found expression in the tendency of policy-makers to substitute high moral pronouncements and universal legal principles for calculations of the national interest based on the "rude facts of power." Summarizing the American moralistic sense of mission in world affairs, he wrote:

It was assumed by American statesmen that whatever was urged...in the name of moral or legal principles bore with it no specific responsibility on the part of him who urged it, even though the principle at hand might be of questionable applicability to the situation and the practical effects of adherence to it drastic and far reaching.107

Whether in theory or philosophy, "every attempt to systematize about international affairs involves artificial distinctions."108 For Kennan, the state represented an always changing organic whole, the embodiment of unique historical forces and cultural traditions. Since the state's political growth reflects no predetermined structure or generally accepted universal patterns, what is morally right or wrong is not readily apparent to the foreign observer. Because of the subjective nature of its cultural development, no nation can presume to "be the judge of
another's domestic institutions and requirements.\textsuperscript{10} Like Morgenthau, Kennan distrusted approaches to international peace that rely on the innate human capacity for moral judgment as a panacea for reconciling divergent claims and interests of sovereign states. With Lippmann, he believed that the morality of peace and war can never be approached separately from "the international significance of political problems and the deeper sources of international stability."\textsuperscript{110}

Insofar as Kennan's moral perspective eschews abstract moral commands and looks to concrete political experience, it is not surprising that many of his most revealing statements are made within the context of specific diplomatic case studies. Certainly anyone who has taken the time to read both volumes of his Memoirs cannot help concluding that he is an almost tragic figure, genuinely troubled by the "stupendous, careless destruction of civilian life and material values, built up laboriously by human hands over the course of centuries."\textsuperscript{111} Among the many examples and failures Kennan cites in the history of American foreign policy, it is possible to extract several core concerns that have shaped his approach to the ethical possibilities and limits of constructive statesmanship.

1. Foreign Policy By And For Governments: Chief among the political realities that characterize the national state is that "foreign policy is conducted by governments, as a
function of their governmental responsibility; and it must serve the purposes of government generally." Against the traditional American yearning for relations of people to people, Kennan argued that amorphous expressions of public sentiment or states of national feeling are effective only when filtered through a duly-constituted political authority that has control over the inner processes of a nation's life. Whether a government speaks with an enlightened voice in world affairs "will be largely a matter of the outlook of the ruling group itself and of the independence it enjoys, at the given moment, to follow a courageous and constructive course in its foreign policy."  

2. **Moral Purposes And Government:** Whether on the subject of either domestic or foreign policy, Kennan has always insisted on a "wall of separation" between the actual tasks of government and its normative rationale according to criteria of national purpose. The governing of human beings, he believes, is a practical (and not a moral) exercise best left to the devices of political expediency. In an often-quoted passage, he argued:

> It is a practical function, made necessary, regretfully, by the need for order in social relationships and for a collective discipline to control the behavior of that large majority of mankind who are too weak and selfish to control their own behavior usefully on the basis of individual judgments and conscience.  

3. **Public vs. Private Standards Of Morality:** Like other American realists, Kennan draws a sharp distinction between
the moral conscience of the individual and the morally-neutral obligation of the statesman to uphold a nation's sovereignty and security. He acknowledges that "moral principles have their place in the heart of the individual" and are "essential to the successful functioning of any political society that rests on popular consent." However, in a passage with a strong Niebuhrian accent, he noted:

...when the individual's behavior passes through the machinery of political organization and merges with that of...other individuals to find its expression in the actions of a government, then it undergoes a general transmutation, and the same moral concepts are no longer relevant to it. A government is an agent, not a principal; and no more than any other agent may it attempt to be the conscience of its principal.\footnote{14}

Furthermore, Kennan considers a state's interest in maintaining military security and the integrity of its political life as "unavoidable necessities of a national existence and...not subject to classification as either good or bad." While admitting that these goals "may be questioned from a philosophical point of view" (a view he never takes), he warns that "the government of the sovereign state cannot make such judgments."\footnote{15} By suggesting that a government needs no moral justification for acting in defense of security and national well-being, some critics contend that Kennan has called into question, if not exempted, moral choice in foreign policy decision-making.\footnote{16}

4. Moralism in Foreign Policy: Typical of Kennan's foreign policy analysis is his preference for defining by
exclusion or boxing in a problem by eliminating false answers or untenable solutions. Regarding ethics and foreign policy, he has often chastised American statesmen for failing to distinguish between the practical requirements of morality and a crusading moralism geared to the indiscriminate promotion of universal norms. Moralism is the tendency to make one moral value supreme and to apply it without regard for rival moral claims emanating from a wide variety of cultural and political settings. Into this category, Kennan placed such pronouncements as the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the Atlantic Charter, the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe, and the Helsinki accords of 1975. In a brief essay prepared for the Council on Religion and International Affairs, he asked: 

If our government...set out to pursue moral purposes in foreign policy, on what would it base itself? Whose outlooks, philosophy, religious concepts would it choose to express? Are we to assume that the government knows what is right and what is wrong, has imparted this knowledge to the people at large, and obtained their mandate to proceed to bring about the triumph of what is right on a worldwide scale? If a number of Kennan's detractors erroneously label him a cynical architect of American Realpolitik, they are correct in maintaining that his strident critique of
moralism more often confuses, rather than clarifies, the nature and role of norms in foreign policy. To a considerable degree, this failing may be attributed to the many broad generalities and propositions that appear to cast the relationship between reality (facts) and morality (values) in irreconcilable terms. In the interview with George Urban, he stated: "Please understand that for purposes of argument I am given to overstating a case....If one wants to see both sides of a coin, one has...to bring out each side in exaggerated relief."114 It is not always clear, for example, whether Kennan generally rejects morality as a viable standard in international affairs or, more specifically, just the particular celebration of American virtues animating the legalistic-moralistic approach. Several examples can be cited to illustrate the conflicting themes and areas of contradiction in Kennan's thought.

While rarely sympathetic to idealism, Kennan certainly disavowed the more modern view of political life as a value-free medium of predictable behavior. Less clear, however, is precisely what he means by morality or ethics: nor is he overly clear about the contribution of universal principles within the framework of a pluralistic democracy. Convinced that there are few if any universally-accepted moral beliefs, Kennan once wrote: "I know of no absolutes in the quality of human beings anywhere."120 Yet, in any interview
with Joseph Alsop regarding Soviet power in Eastern Europe, he averred:

...that these events do have grandeur, because they are visible proof that certain...moral principles really must be observed in the long run in the successful government of great people. These events prove that if those principles are consistently violated over a long period of time, this violation avenges itself.

Kennan submitted that certain higher principles were objective and immutable: "They were there. God created them, in my opinion." Never one to debate morality as a philosophical or theological proposition, he offered scant advice on relating objective, immutable principles to a less than perfect world "where the ideal so obviously lies beyond human reach."

With regard to the illusions associated with idealism and moralism in foreign affairs, Kennan is not always consistent in his reflections on either the reality of international norms of conduct or the extent to which power and principle may be reconciled in the formulation of American national interest. On a few rare occasions, he acknowledged that no foreign policy can be successful over any length of time without some recourse to moral sanctions. In Realities of American Foreign Policy, Kennan argued "that the conduct of foreign relations ought not to be conceived as a purpose in itself for political society...but rather as one of the means by which some higher and more comprehensive purpose is served." The reference to a normative purpose
in foreign policy is somewhat puzzling, in light of his conviction that only the methods, as opposed to the purposes, of states can be assigned moral significance. "I have never...meant to suggest that we should not be concerned for the observation of these concepts in the methods we select for the promulgation of our foreign policy." Yet what are "moral" methods, if not variations of purposive actions with value in their own right? His imprecision in distinguishing between purposes and methods is matched by the absence of any explanation regarding how the means of foreign policy can be subjected to moral evaluation.

A related line of Kennan's thinking sees morality and the national interest as potentially complementary forces in foreign policy. From this perspective, he suggested there need be no conflict between the demands of security and those of principle, provided the first were understood as a precondition for the second. Speaking to the Naval Academy in 1947, he observed:

I think that our country has made the greatest effort in modern times...to treat the questions of international life from the standpoint of principles and not power; but even we in the end are compelled to consider the security of our people...because...unless they can enjoy that security they will never be able to make any useful contribution to a better and more peaceful world.

The complementariness of national security and moral purpose was again affirmed by Kennan's conviction that, "if our
purposes here at home are decent ones...then the pursuit of our national interest can never fail to be conducive to a better world." Despite these more optimistic assessments of the moral impulse in United States foreign policy, Kennan offered little or no insight into the question of the operative American ideals or values that are to be promoted in the service of a "better" and "more peaceful" world.

Kennan's rather cursory and ambiguous remarks on the ethical character of American national interest has been far overshadowed by his preoccupation with the tragedy, and ultimate constraints of decision-making, in a decentralized and power-regulated system. A more pronounced tendency in Kennan's writing is to cast the relationship between power and moral principles in conflicting, if not mutually-exclusive, terms. Writing about the drift toward war in the 1930s, he said:

"It meant as early as the late 1930s, no clean, moral victory for the West was any longer in the cards....Only the very strong, or those so weak that they do not choose to compete in terms of power, can enjoy the luxury of acting purely in the name of ideals; the others have to make their compromises."^{126}

In a passage from his personal diary in 1950, he wrote:

"Only the very strong can take high and mighty moral positions and ignore the balance among the opposing forces. The weak must accept...and exploit those realities to their advantage as best they can."^{126} Kennan's words bring to mind a similar account of the relation between might and
right that figured in Thucydides' characterization of the conference in 416 B.C. between Athens and Melos. Brushing aside the argument of the weaker Melians, the Athenians remark: "...you know as well as we do that right...is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." 127 One suspects that the Athenians would have endorsed Kennan's more pointed judgment that nations should recognize the "legitimacy of power realities and aspirations...without feeling the obligation of moral judgment."

In all fairness, it was never Kennan's simple intention to relegate the necessity for moral choice to the machinations of the wealthy and powerful. The excesses of Hitler's Germany, and especially Stalin's Russia, are cited as more conspicuous examples of man's fallen nature and capacity for evil on a grand scale. Describing the 1939 Nonaggression Pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, he observed: "You had the reduction ad absurdum of political cynicism, the illustration of the helplessness of people who...have launched themselves into a stratosphere of unlimited opportunism where there is no moral gravity." In the evolution of Soviet power, he argued that "individual moral concepts cannot remain permanently separable from the problem of how man treats man within the framework of state power." 128 Unfortunately, it is often difficult to reconcile Kennan's belief in man's moral nature with the
advice that Americans should view the vicissitudes of power in foreign policy as "neither good nor bad," and they should seek only a power equilibrium rather than fundamental reform.

At his most extreme, Kennan sometimes exemplifies the agnostic who rejects "the assumption that state behavior is a fit subject for moral judgment." Insofar as most international conflicts are the product of uncontrollable historical forces, what is morally right or wrong is "simply not discernible to the outsider." On whose side, he asks, resides justice in the conflict between Israel and the Arab states? Where is the right and wrong in the dispute over Kashmir? On numerous occasions, Kennan questions whether America has a useful moral message to impart to the world and doubts whether the United States government is prepared to accept the varied consequences of moral intervention in the affairs of others. Certainly such expressions of doubt as "our national interest is all that we are...capable of knowing" appears casually to invoke the classic rationale of raison d'État for American foreign policy. While perhaps sensing the danger of cynically stretching the gap between interest and norm to its breaking point, Kennan was reluctant to absolve decision-makers of all moral responsibility in acting on the basis of the national interest.
Let us...conduct ourselves at all times in such a way as to satisfy our own ideas of morality. But let us do this as a matter of obligation to ourselves, and not as a matter of obligation to others. Let us do it in order that we may be able to live easily with ourselves. But let us not assume that our moral values have validity for people everywhere.131

Although Kennan never makes a consistent case as to why states should be held morally accountable for their actions, he was never able to avoid the introduction of extrinsic norms into the conduct of international relations. For all of his reflections on the national interest as something objective and value-free, he would have America "ease" the transitions and "temper the asperities" of international relationships; he wishes to "isolate and moderate" international conflicts; he seeks solutions "least unsettling to the stability of international life"; he places before us "that tremendous task of learning, and of helping others to learn, how man can live in fruitful harmony."132 Such exhortations constitute irreducible normative judgments. They evoke a moral frame of reference (however dimly perceived) both higher and broader than that which is implied when Kennan professes only to know "our own national interest" and that alone.133 As was often the case with Morgenthau, Kennan simply insinuates operative diplomatic norms into his view of the national interest.

Unlike Reinhold Niebuhr, Kennan never directly addressed either the nature or contribution of transcendent moral principles in the pursuit of an ordered and just
international life. He seems to have been so impressed with the hypocritical pretense in every claim to the moral absolute that he decided to occupy the less dangerous ground of moral relativity. Often left ambiguous is the question of whether there are any universal norms not to be violated in the pursuit of interest. He implies that no categorical answer can be given to that question since the concepts of right and wrong are not applicable to the purposes and behavior of other states. Yet, in one of his most fascinating passages on the dangers of nuclear war and environmental pollution, Kennan called for a standard of judgment beyond the dictates of "objective" self-interest.

Is there not...an element of sacrilege involved in placing all of this at stake just for the sake of the...fears and national rivalries of a single generation? Is there not a moral obligation to recognize in this very uniqueness of the habitat and nature of man the greatest of our moral responsibilities....This, it may be objected, is a religious question, not a moral-political one....But the objection invites the further question as to whether there is any such thing as morality that does not rest...on some foundation of religious faith, for the renunciation of self-interest...can never be rationalized by purely secular and materialistic considerations.134

While suggesting a position at odds with the logic of relativism, Kennan fails to specify whether the principles of religious faith function only as a restraint on sinful man or as a viable, creative force in the destiny of all men and nations.

In his recent article in Foreign Affairs, Kennan provides not so much a philosophical discourse on the ethics
of statecraft as he does a more pragmatic orientation to the role of values in American foreign policy. Regarding the moral defensibility of American actions taken against the internal practices of offending governments, he advises that such interventions are legitimate "only if the practices against which they are directed are...injurious to our interests, rather than just our sensibilities." Against the histrionics of moralism, Kennan feels that "Americans must overcome their tendency toward generalization and...examine each case on its own merits." There may be times when the chief requirement of American security in a certain part of the world "is not an unnatural imitation of the American model but sheer stability." The merit of each particular case is not to be found in the attractiveness of general semantic symbols but in the effect of a given situation on the "tangible and demonstrable interests of the United States." Once again viewing morality and self-interest in complementary terms, he writes:

If the...actions of the U.S. government are...to conform to moral standards, those standards are going to have to be America's own, founded on traditional...principles of justice and propriety. When others fail to conform to those principles, and when their failure has an adverse effect on American interests, as distinct from political tastes, we have every right to complain and...to take retaliatory action.  

Although Kennan previously held that the problem of international peace is best left to "the traditional devices of political expediency," he has more recently objected to
any approach to American diplomacy based on the national egoism and cynicism of *raison d’état*. At least in America’s judgment of itself (*if not others*), "the connection between power and responsibility—between the sowing and reaping—is integral." In the final analysis, his estimation of American moral conduct in world affairs is relative to, and a function of, the internal purposes and normative order of domestic society. Morality in foreign policy, he believes, begins with the humble recognition of the gap "between what we dream of doing and what we really have to offer, and the resolve...to take ourselves under control and establish a better relationship between our undertakings and our real capabilities." A country victimized by huge budget deficits, and where defense spending has grown into a national addiction, "is not in a position to make the most effective use of its own resources on the international scene, because they are so largely out of control." 136

Aside from averting the supreme dangers of nuclear annihilation and the destruction of the natural environment, America's moral mission is its own social and spiritual regeneration.

Seeking a coherent whole from the many diverse and often conflicting strands of Kennan’s thought on the normative resources of American foreign policy is perhaps beyond the limits of even the most creative display of human ingenuity. One wonders if this complicated man will ever
satisfy the critics without redirecting his energies to more fully account for the "first principles" and "inarticulated assumptions" of his ethical convictions. While rejecting classical raison d'état as a standard for United States foreign policy, his writing more often emphasizes the ubiquity of self-interest and power, while casting doubt on both the need for moral judgment, as well as upon the existence of international norms of state behavior. Kennan presumes to speak about an objective national interest at the same time as he variously celebrates and debunks the values and purposes of American society. He takes exception to universal norms in international politics, while exhorting Americans to abide by their traditional principles of justice and propriety. Ultimately, Kennan found no escape from the "middle ground" of moral relativism—the belief that transcendent principles must be filtered through circumstances of time and place. Presumably, however, one must or should have some conception of universal principles before they are attenuated by the self-serving institutions of sinful man. Beyond an infrequent and vague profession of religious faith in immutable principles, Kennan never probes the creative forces of the human will in fostering communal brotherhood and harmony. His formal ethic is immanental: morality is a function of how we behave toward ourselves rather than others.

Kennen and the New Realities of American Foreign Policy
In some respects, Kennan's second career as a provocative analyst of contemporary foreign policy has overshadowed his earlier years of distinguished diplomatic service. In his more recent publications and statements, Kennan came to the center of national debate at a time when détente lost credibility and the containment of communism accelerated new fears of a nuclear Armageddon. Part of the growing fascination with Kennan results from the perception of a radical shift in his thinking regarding the nature of the Soviet threat, as well as the new requirements of American national security. Whether he has been consistent or, in fact, changed his views on the American strategy for power in the postwar period has produced what Gaddis calls "a kind of cottage industry" of continuing exegesis. It is beyond the scope of this study to review fully the panoply of issues that continue to divide Kennan and his persistent critics. To illustrate his thought, this section will focus on the fundamental problems of nuclear war, containment, and human rights.

No other single issue of international politics has so haunted Kennan and provoked his moral ire as the terror of nuclear war. Comparing the momentum of the current arms race to that which catapulted Europe into World War I, Kennan warns: "We are all being carried along at this very moment towards a new military conflict which could not conceivably end, for any of the parties, in anything less
than disaster." On one occasion, he even suggested that the mere possession of such weapons carries with it the stigma of moral guilt. Speaking in 1980 before a West German audience, and directing his impassioned plea to both Soviet and American leaders, he said:

For the love of God...and of the civilization to which you belong, cease this madness....You have no right to hold in your hand...destructive powers sufficient to put an end to civilized life on a great portion of our planet....Thrust them from you. The risks you might thereby assume are not greater--could not be greater--than those which you are now incurring for us all.136

Kennan has now been at the center of the nuclear debate for more than thirty-five years. As early as 1950, he pleaded against the decision to develop the hydrogen bomb before renouncing the principle of "first use" and before resuming international negotiations to outlaw all weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction. Since the era of "massive retaliation," and extending to the present emphasis on assured destruction capability, he has consistently objected to basing the American defense posture on the nuclear warhead. Kennan's objection was and has been rooted in several key considerations.

--Since World War I, all-out war has ceased to be a coherent means to a desirable end. Weapons of mass destruction rendered obsolete the normal objective of warfare construed as the total destruction of the enemy's ability and will to resist. The existence of such weapons, Kennan wrote, "meant that total war would
either be suicidal or...destructive to a degree impossible to contemplate and out of accord with every principle of humanity in warfare."137

--No respite from the nightmare of nuclear catastrophe can be hoped for without the recognition that "the weapon of mass destruction is a sterile and hopeless weapon...which cannot in any way serve the purpose of a constructive and hopeful foreign policy." Even the tactical nuclear weapon is "destructive to a degree that sickens the imagination." The objective of political action is "to affect the deeper convictions of man; this the atomic bomb cannot do."140 With Stalin, Kennan believed that nuclear weapons are largely idle threats with which to frighten people with weak nerves.

--At the center of American nuclear strategy for over three decades has been the principle of "first use"--a "pernicious theory," according to Kennan, that "has lain at the heart not only of the nuclear weapons race...but also of the proliferation of nuclear weapons across the globe." Relying on nuclear weapons to influence a broad range of policies culminated in a "steady displacement of political considerations by military ones," and a "dreadful militarization of the entire East-West relationship in concept, in rhetoric, and in assumption."141
--While the SALT talks open up useful channels of communication between the two governments, there is not much likelihood that any arms limitation agreement will successfully address the dynamics behind Soviet-American military competition. One reason for this is that the pace of advancement in military technology is much more rapid than the predictable pace of negotiations of this nature. In addition, without some measures of unilateral restraint on the part of both parties, such talks degenerate into "contests to see how much one could contrive to keep...and how much the other side could be brought to give up, as though the purpose of the exercise was...to get the other party at a clear disadvantage."

Although more inclined to speculate on what the Soviet leaders have ruled out (rather than in) by way of military strategy, Kennan's primary concern has been with the revival of Cold War rhetoric and behavior in United States foreign policy. Concerning the highly-debated motivations behind the Soviet arms build-up in the post-Vietnam years, Kennan "saw no signs...that they intended to go beyond a general state of equivalence." Against the "myth" of growing Soviet superiority in conventional armed strength in Central Europe beyond any limit that the NATO powers could conceivably match, he commented: "I was inclined to see the causes of this as much in our own neglect--in our uncontrolled
inflation and the...wastefulness of our own military establishment—as in any sinister Soviet designs for the launching of World War Three." Soviet problems in Eastern Europe, in addition to a variety of internal concerns and a genuine understanding and fear of the consequences of war, mitigate against any inclination to expand militarily into Western Europe.

While Kennan holds both sides culpable for the dangerous escalation of the nuclear arms race, there is a recurrent tendency in his recent work to contrast a "conservative" and "cautious" Soviet leadership with American officials who have been "hypnotized" by "a high degree of general anti-Soviet hysteria." Especially since 1973, he notes that American attitudes both in and out of government have contributed to "the assumption of deadly and irreconcilable conflict" and "the acceptance of the likelihood, if not the inevitability, of Soviet-American war." These perceptions find their apotheosis in the Reagan Administration's proposals for new first-strike weapons, as well as in the projection of the "nuclear delusion" into space. Kennan now believes that prudent calculations of deterrent capability have been eclipsed by irrational scenarios of "overkill" potential and morbid inquiries into national "survivability" in the event of limited or protracted nuclear war.

Kennan's long-standing opposition to the "first use"
principle and rejection of nuclear weapons as viable instruments of national policy have placed him at odds for more than three decades with the official American doctrine of war. Aligning himself with more liberal critics of current American strategic policy, Kennan has proposed several dramatic initiatives in the area of arms control and disarmament. Some of these include: a comprehensive test ban agreement with the Soviets; a temporary "freeze" on existing nuclear arsenals; a total "denuclearization" of Central and Northern Europe; and a renunciation of the "first use" principle.146 In receiving the Albert Einstein Peace Prize in 1981, he suggested that the Soviet Union and United States should agree to a fifty percent across-the-board reduction in all forms of nuclear weapons and delivery systems.147

Yet Kennan acknowledges that even his own far-reaching program "would not be enough, in itself, to give Western civilization even an adequate chance of survival." In what must be considered a revolutionary transformation in his thinking on war and peace, he now confesses:

War, itself, as a means of settling differences...between the great industrial powers, will have to be in some way ruled out; and with it there will have to be dismantled...the greater part of the vast military establishments now maintained with a view to the possibility that war might take place.148

Kennan cites two primary reasons for this conclusion. First, modern weapons—even of the conventional variety—
have become so destructive that there can be no clear line of demarcation between the discriminate ones and weapons of mass destruction. Second, even a confrontation among major powers involving conventional forces would "in all probability slip over into the use of those to which the term conventional could not be properly applied."

On the surface, in recent years Kennan appears to have been groping for the same sort of pacifism or universal prohibition of violence that he condemned throughout most of the postwar period! His remedy calls for "frank searching" and "patient communication" that would produce "understandings of such moment that they would effectively rule out not only the very thought of war but also the preparations for it." It is one thing to alter or modify the institutions or modalities of power; it is quite another to press for the redemption of human nature with a view toward changing "the ingrained habits and assumptions" of men. Perhaps more than most, Kennan has provided an eloquent testimony to the genuine risks of viewing the Soviet-American military balance primarily in nuclear terms. However, he is far less illuminating on how two political systems with profound ideological and political differences can find a common rational or moral ground for assuring the mutual recognition of "legitimate" security interests in a world devoid of massive military sanction.

With the impact of a destabilizing nuclear arms race
upon superpower rivalry in world affairs, it is appropriate to reexamine Kennan’s early postwar thinking on the containment strategy and its relevance for United States foreign policy in the 1980s. In the July 1947 edition of Foreign Affairs, Kennan called for an American policy of "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." "Counterforce" had to be applied to "constantly shifting geographical and political points" in order to "promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the mellowing of Soviet power." The basic themes of the "X" article had been developed in a number of Kennan’s earlier papers and governmental reports: Soviet aggression was based on the internal necessity of justifying its dictatorial authority at home; an intractable antagonism toward the West would continue until the nature of Soviet power itself changed; in light of Soviet imperviousness to objective reality, the United States must be prepared for a "duel of infinite duration," a protracted cold war of tough containment of Russian expansionism.

Few statements in the history of American diplomacy have produced such confusion. As Kennan was compelled to concede in his Memoirs, the "X" article was ambiguous and imprecise in several key respects. A serious deficiency was the failure to deal with Soviet power in Eastern Europe and the difficulties of ruling an empire. In discussing the
sources of Soviet foreign policy conduct, Kennan's analysis was primarily limited to the question of ideology and the significance of power within the context of domestic political structure. The Soviet role in foreign affairs was narrowly cast as a response to internal needs rather than a reaction to real or imagined threats from the outside. An additional dilemma is that he never clearly defined what the tools of containment were to be. Left unclear also was the question of whether the application of "counterforce" correlated with any specific economic, military, or diplomatic initiatives by the United States. Finally, Kennan placed no limits, geographical or chronological, on containment, and thereby ignored the resources and will of the United States to undertake such a long-term campaign. Walter Lippmann observed that containment could evolve into a "strategic monstrosity" if interpreted as a justification for extending the reach of American power to countries like China and other Afro-Asian states, whose internal political struggles did not affect American security interests directly.

In the following years, the peculiar vision of Mr. "Y" dogged Kennan's footsteps "like a faithful but unwanted and somewhat embarrassing animal." Subsequently, he tried to clarify his position in light of the shortcomings cited above and, in so doing, generated another storm of controversy by taking exception to the continuing relevance
of the containment principle for United States conduct abroad. In discussing the containment of Soviet power, he claims to have had in mind "not the containment by military means of a military threat, but the political containment of a political threat." Never intending to formulate a foreign policy "doctrine," much less a programmatic statement on the uses of American power, Kennan suggested:

The purpose of containment as then conceived was not to perpetuate the status quo to which the military operations...of World War II had led; it was to tide us over a difficult time and bring us to a point where we could discuss...with the Russians the...dangers this status quo involved, and to arrange for its peaceful replacement by a better and sounder one.

The far greater danger to a demoralized Europe was not the unrealistic prospect of direct Soviet military aggression; rather, Kennan was more concerned about the ability of indigenous communist parties to exploit through violent tactics the sources of social and political instability. The policy of containment, he argued, related "to the effort to encourage other peoples to resist this type of violence and to defend the internal integrity of their countries." As Kennan emphasized both then and now, the militarization of Western Europe via NATO was a far less viable method of containing Soviet influence than the Marshall Plan and its concern for "the restoration of the economic health and vigor of European societies."

In addition, he objected to the temptation of critics both in and out of government to read into containment a
universal commitment on the part of the United States to defend distant nations threatened by "armed minorities" or "outside pressure." Although nowhere communicated in the "X" article, he claims "to have clearly distinguished" in his own mind "between areas I thought vital to our security and ones that did not...fall into this category." In other talks and lectures, Kennan placed containment within the framework of his five-fold geopolitical strongpoints in world politics. Of the five key military-industrial regions, only one of these was under communist control. "I defined the main task of containment...as one of seeing...that none of the remaining ones fell under such control." From this vantage point, containment was restricted to policies designed to "inspire and support resistance" (primarily in Europe and Japan) until such time as "the internal weaknesses of Soviet power, combined with frustration in the external field," led the Russians "to moderate their behavior and ambitions." While Kennan stressed the need for non-military instruments of containment, he would later suggest that containment was not even necessarily a question of relations with the Soviet Union.
The problem of containment is...a problem of the reactions of people within the non-communist world. It is true that this condition depends upon the maintenance by ourselves and our allies...of an adequate defense posture....But so long as that posture is maintained, the things that need most to be done to prevent the further expansion of Soviet power are...things we must do in our relations with the peoples of the non-communist world.¹ë³

Yet, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Kennan pointed to a number of developments that effectively undermined the assumptions behind the concept of containment, as expressed in the "X" article. First, he argued that it was not containment that failed; it was the intended followup that never occurred. In his Memoirs, Kennan wrote:

The failure consisted in the fact that our government, finding it difficult to understand a political threat as such and to deal with it in other than military terms...failed to take advantage of the opportunities for useful political discussion when, in later years, such opportunities began to open up.¹ë⁴

Specifically, it was the militarization of East-West conflict which helped to seal and perpetuate the very division of Europe which American policy should have been concerned to remove.

Second, Kennan's original inspiration for containment was invalidated by changes in the internal structure of Soviet power, as well as by the emergence of polycentric tendencies in the global communist movement. When he used the term "Soviet power" in 1947, he had in mind the monolithic structure of power and terror dominated by Joseph Stalin.¹ë⁵ Stalin's firm grip on the revolutionary actions
of communist parties throughout Europe was accentuated by the ruthless tactics he used to eliminate political opponents and consolidate his authority at the apex of Soviet power. Kennan argued that the de-Stalinization campaign led by Khrushchev in the 1950s, and the rise of a more "parliamentary" form of party rule under Brezhnev in the 1960s, had a significant effect on the Soviet position in world affairs. While a new generation of Soviet rulers could be expected to affirm Stalin’s goal of reducing Western influence on the Eurasian land mass, a major military confrontation with the West was an unlikely prospect. The need to consolidate their heavy-handed hegemony in Eastern Europe, in addition to the problems of collective leadership and the need to bolster economic productivity, suggested new (albeit limited) possibilities for more peaceful and collaborative exchanges. Writing about the ideas and behavior of Stalin’s successors, Kennan observed: "This...is something far more like the traditional established great power of Russia than like the fanatical personality we faced in the Soviet regime of Lenin’s time or the...totalitarian despotism of Stalin." Concomitant with the "mellowing" of Soviet power after Stalin’s demise was the emergence of a plurality of independent or partially independent centers of political authority within the communist bloc. The disaffection of the Yugoslavs from Soviet control in 1948 was just the first
signal of a fundamental change in the nature of international communism as a political force on the world scene. A great part of the energy of Soviet foreign policy is today devoted to the effort to "contain," politically, another socialist state—China.  

...the Chinese-Soviet conflict was...the greatest single measure of containment that could be conceived. It not only invalidated the original concept of containment, it disposed in large measure of the very problem to which it was addressed....I emphatically deny the paternity of any efforts to invoke that doctrine today in situations to which it has, and can have, no proper relevance.  

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Kennan's earlier inspiration for the containment of Soviet expansionism was transformed into a pessimistic indictment of the moral complacency and ominous wave of militarism sweeping over a declining Western civilization. He has now come to believe that the negative image of the Soviet Union "is a monster of our own creation." In contrast to the "full-fledged war scare" created by the "anti-Soviet hysteria" of the Reagan Administration, Soviet leaders are portrayed as "men whose motivation is essentially defensive and whose attention is riveted...to the unsolved problems of economic development within their own country." While once seeing ideology as a significant factor in Soviet foreign policy, Kennan now stipulates that the Soviets will "behave...as a normal great power, the traditional concerns and ambitions of Russian rulers taking precedence over ideological ones." For
example, he explained the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (a "bizarre" and "ill-considered act") primarily in terms of age-old Russian anxieties about the security of its borders (apprehensions that had been aggravated by such American moves as the planned improvement of NATO forces). Aside from the possible exception of the Middle East, the "United States...has, for the first time, no serious territorial-political conflict with the Soviet government." The military rivalry in both nuclear and conventional weapons "has no foundation in real interests—no foundation...but in fear, and essentially an irrational fear at that."171

Kennan believed it the height of folly to speak of protecting the world from dubious external threats, "when the signs of disintegration are so striking from within." Finding some residual merit in the case for isolationism, he wondered if the United States would not be better served "if we put our main effort into making ourselves worth protecting." From a revealing passage in the Urban interview, he said:

Show me first an America which has successfully coped with the problems of crime, drugs, declining educational standards...and decadence of one sort or another—show me an America that has pulled itself together and is what it ought to be, then I will tell you how we are going to defend ourselves from the Russians.172

Paradoxically, the normative flavor of Kennan's assessment of the national purpose is seldom evident in his more recent commentary on the role of human rights in
American foreign policy. Until the late 1970s, whatever specific thoughts he may have had on the subject were indistinguishable from his opposition to the excessive moralism underlying much of United States diplomatic history. Taking exception to the Carter Administration’s advocacy of a foreign policy guided by ethical and moral precepts, Kennan pointed to several problems associated with both the definition and implementation of human rights in a culturally pluralistic world.

As previously noted, Kennan views the conduct of government and foreign policy as a practical, not a moral, undertaking. The statesman’s principal duty is to protect the interests of the national society; in addition, these interests have no moral quality and reflect the “unavoidable necessities of national existence.” Moral principles, including those of human rights, are secondary and relative to the prudent calculation of a nation’s interest in ever-changing foreign policy situations. The promotion of individual liberties and freedom abroad can best be achieved, not by abstract arguments of right and wrong, but through the power of America’s own example in securing the virtues of justice and propriety at home.173

Furthermore, Kennan doubts the existence of any internationally recognized ethical principles that could concretely define the meaning of human rights in specific conflicts of interest and power. He can find “no criterion
for determining what they ought to be other than their general utility in assuring the higher social aims of a given society. The possibilities and justification for achieving humane and orderly social conditions will vary greatly from one society to another. In Kennan's view, the case for human rights cannot be made apart from specifying the responsibilities that follow from the acceptance of basic freedoms.

And human rights, too, operate only within a framework of discipline and restraint. Do we...in undertaking to decide what rights should exist in other countries propose to tell the peoples and governments of those countries what restraints should also exist? And can one...try to tell another country what rights ought to be observed in its society without telling it what sort of government it ought to have?

The answer to this question, he believes, must "be found in the workings of their systems for arriving at consensus or acceptance—not ours." A number of additional difficulties either limit or render impossible the international implementation of human rights. From the Atlantic Charter to the Helsinki accords of 1975, the codification of human rights has been unilateral and declaratory, not contractual. The general and imprecise terms in which these agreements have been formulated "deprived them of the character of specific obligations to which signatory governments could usefully be held." As Kennan points out, few governments can be expected to refrain from such vague endorsements of
principle since "the mere act of subscribing carries with it no danger of having one's freedom significantly impaired." In particular, human rights reform in the Soviet Union "could not be implemented...without fundamental changes in the Soviet system of power--changes we had no reason to expect would, or could, be introduced by the men...in power."

More importantly, the case for human rights in foreign policy is jeopardized by the temptation of policy-makers to read universal significance into America's own liberal-democratic heritage. By contrast, Kennan argues that democracy is not the natural form of government for most of mankind; it derives from the unique environmental characteristics affecting only a small portion of humanity, primarily northwestern Europe and its offshoots on other continents. Against those who contend that the encouragement of democracy is always in the interests of the United States, he writes:

Democracy is a loose term. Many varieties of folly and injustice contrive to masquerade under this designation. The mere fact that a country acquires the trappings of self-government does not...mean that the interests of the United States are thereby furthered. There are forms of plebiscitary democracy that may well prove less favorable to American interests than a wise and benevolent authoritarianism.

Finally, in calling for democratic reform in the internal practices of other governments, "it seems seldom to occur to us that even if a given situation is bad, the
alternatives to it might be worse." According to Kennan, this amounts to exercising a "veto power over those whose practices that we dislike, while denying responsibility for whatever may flow from their acceptance."\(^{102}\) It may very well be that the national interest, modestly conceived, is the highest moral attainment of a state in foreign policy.

**Conclusion**

In the years to come, George F. Kennan will remain an enigmatic personality to Cold War historians and students of American foreign policy. While regarded throughout the world as a man of reason and integrity, his versatile career as both prominent diplomat and scholar has more often been played out in the midst of turbulent debates regarding the responsibilities and limits of American power in international affairs. After designing the broad outlines of a policy for waging the Cold War, he subsequently objected to the "militarization" of containment and denied its relevance as a reliable instrument for the purposes of American power. Today, Kennan stands out as an impassioned opponent of nuclear weapons and argues that their existence poses a far greater danger than does the Soviet Union. Believing that there are no serious political differences between the two superpowers, he would restrict the reach of the American national interest to the "defense" of the industrial nations of Europe and Japan. In short, he seems more concerned with what the United States might do to
provoke a confrontation with the Soviets than with the potential for destabilizing and aggressive military behavior by Moscow.

Kennan's credentials as a political realist can be substantiated by his conceptualization of international politics in terms of power and foreign policy as a function of the national interest. At this level of analysis, his emphasis on "noncommunicable wisdom," and his intuitive distrust of absolutes in world affairs, took precedence over theoretical inquiry into the meaning and relation of key concepts. For example, his conception of the national interest as an objective category based on the original purposes of American society exhibits a number of deficiencies. On the one hand, to justify the broad range of foreign policy actions by reference to the inexorable logic of the national interest is both abstract and tautological. Left unresolved is the problem of what the national interest means in a specific foreign policy situation and for what purposes power and influence are being used. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether any society can define its foreign policy interests apart from underlying ethical criteria. Preserving the national security and promoting the welfare of Americans involve normative judgments about the value of independent nations as well as the meaning of human existence in a communal setting.
A similar sense of ambiguity colors Kennan's approach to the "power realities" and balance of power principle in international politics. Just how the "rational" recognition of power realities translates into specific policy initiatives serving the national interest is never fully clarified. He formulated no consistent set of criteria by which to judge the interaction of external and internal variables of power in the foreign policy decision-making process. Moreover, it is difficult to see how the statesman's duty to promote the national interest can be discussed apart from the fluctuating values, domestic political pressures, and limited resources impacting on the implementation of particular interests in varying external situations.

Unfortunately, Kennan never developed an explicit definition of power that could function as a useful analytical tool in comparing or explaining alternative foreign policies. His failure to do so is somewhat surprising in light of his obvious appreciation for the economic, psychological, and ideological instrumentalities of American power in world politics. For the most part, however, these variables have been secondary in importance to his evaluation of military-industrial potential among the major national actors and coalitions in the evolving East-West conflict. He believed that the postwar balance of power would remain viable as long as military-industrial
power was divided among the five major centers of geopolitical strength in the Northern Hemisphere. At no point did Kennan specify the structural or functional prerequisites of the contemporary balance of power system with regard for the destabilizing impact of developments beyond Europe and Japan. In particular, he neglected to consider how the balance of power is affected by growing trends of interdependence in the volatile world economy. Aside from noting the existence of a "curious" balance of power in East Asia (which "needs no stimulation from us"), Kennan showed little interest in the nature or actual workings of local-regional balances of power in both the developing and industrial parts of the world. The utility of the balance principle, he argued, extended only to efforts by the United States and Western Europe to maintain a "general equivalence" with the Soviet Union in strategic and conventional military capability. From this rather limited perspective, the balance of power becomes virtually indistinguishable from calculations of deterrence underlying the nuclear balance of terror.

In essence, Kennan's realism represented a broad critique of American democratic idealism which ignored the factors of self-interest and power in international politics. Especially during the first postwar decade, he pointed out that the single-minded emphasis on universal moral and legal precepts (to the neglect of an objective and
rationally-construed national interest) makes foreign policy more dangerous and more prone to wars that seek total victory. For all of his penetrating insight into the deficiencies of pretentious idealism in American diplomatic history, Kennan never formulated a comprehensive theory of realism or politics. The reluctance to account more fully for the operative philosophical underpinnings of his intellectual orientation is particularly relevant for his evolving commentary on the purposes and values of American foreign policy behavior in an overcrowded world that hovers at the edge of a nuclear disaster.

Although Kennan seldom referred to alternative ethical or philosophical traditions in Western political thought, he quite clearly objected to the modern inclination to treat the politics and history of a people as a value-free medium of human behavior conducive to precise hypothetical expression. Specifically, he pointed to the "organic" character of all political growth and development where there are "no uniformities, no generally accepted universal patterns." In addition, he joined with other prominent American realists in believing that a meaningful approach to the problems of political society will always reflect an understanding of the conflictual forces in human nature. Although Kennan acknowledged that the moral capacity of man may occasionally reach out in "moments of transcendent greatness," this theme was overshadowed by his concern for
the consequences of sinful man in an imperfect world. In brief, Kennan was less concerned with the existence of any "higher law" moderating the element of self-love in human nature than the inevitable resort to violence and coercion as a restraint on the upheavals of the human ego at all levels of man's social existence.

The troubling sense of ambivalence associated with Kennan's inability to clearly distinguish between the requirements of self-interest and moral principle in political life carries over into his few reflections on the values and purposes of American government. Believing that human justice is always imperfect, his political thought has always given priority to preserving "the good order of society." If there is little that can be done about men's motives, society will profit in some degree "if men can be restrained in their behavior."

Yet on other occasions, he appears to believe that the motives and intentions of men are indispensable for a well-ordered and constructive political existence. For example, in discussing the American national purpose, he interprets morality as "the channel of individual self-fulfillment," "the foundation of civic virtue," and as "a condition precedent to successful democracy." While suggestive, these observations provide few specific details about the nature and scope of individual liberties or the obligations of government in promoting the public good. From Kennan's more
recent indictment of the "moral decay" and crass materialism of American society, it is clear that he considers the \textit{laissez-faire} principle of liberal-rational philosophy inappropriate for a country debauched by the pollution of air and water, self-indulgent permissiveness, pornography, and violent crime. In fact, he now speaks more often of assigning a "higher value" to the collective resolution of national ills rather than relying on the purely private functions of enlightened self-interest. Beyond opposing state ownership of production and favoring a meritocracy of skill and intellect, Kennan had little to say about the necessary reorientation of civic values (either in terms of morality or power) that should shape American politics in keeping with the demands of the future.

Of all the realist scholars evaluated in this study, Kennan ranks as the most puzzling and elusive in his efforts to relate moral principles to the conduct of American diplomacy in the twentieth century. Our more specific task has been to determine if, and in what respects, his political realism mirrors the ethical perspective of classical \textit{raison d'état}. In particular, does Kennan's political thought allow for the moral evaluation of political power in international politics? The philosophy of "reason of state," associated with the names of Machiavelli and Hobbes, exempts the state from any rule of conduct or normative restraint other than the one which is
dictated by its own self-interest. Moreover, the ethical dualism of *raison d'état* separates the political realm from the private one for purposes of normative judgment. On the one hand, the individual may be compelled to observe universal moral standards when he acts in a private capacity; on the other, statesmen and nations are often obliged to subordinate ethical considerations to the expedient calculation of virtually any means which have the best chance of successfully defending a state's security in the international struggle for power. In perhaps its most extreme and cynical form, *raison d'état* suggests not only that the state is exempt from morality, but also that if the state does rely on morality, morality will fail to protect it.\(^{103}\)

In both his many publications and private papers, the debate over the operative norms or values of American foreign policy has been an integral facet of Kennan's realism throughout the postwar decades. Writing in *American Diplomacy and Realities of American Foreign Policy*, he staked out a position against the crusading moralism that animated American thinking on the problems of war and peace since the turn of the century. Essentially, he emphasized that universal moral or legal concepts are too abstract and inflexible to accommodate the conflicting interests of sovereign states. If purposes at home are decent ones, unsullied by arrogance or hostility toward other people or
delusions of superiority, this contributes more to a better and peaceful world than claims of universal law or absolute moral principles.¹⁸⁴

Unlike a Morgenthau or Niebuhr, however, Kennan's negative assessment of the legalistic-moralistic approach never developed in tandem with a more profound philosophical or theological inquiry into the nature of morality in either man's private or political existence. In terms of his international thought, he never provided a coherent framework of moral reasoning conducive to the evaluation of a state's methods and purposes in world affairs. Unfortunately, Kennan seldom mentioned or probed into the ethical requirements (or limitations) of raison d'État. Yet its general meaning was surely grasped and implicit in his observation that the sovereign state "still recognizes in the crucial moments of its own destiny no law but that of its own egoism--no higher focus of obligation, no overriding ethical code." At the same time, he has written that "no one could be more sadly conscious than is the professional diplomatist of the primitiveness, the anarchism, the intrinsic absurdity of the modern concept of sovereignty."¹⁸⁵ These observations tend to suggest that Kennan does not believe the inevitable expression of national self-interest can or should function as a legitimate normative standard for state relations.

Beyond this tacit admission, Kennan's perspective on
the role of moral judgments in foreign policy becomes a
profile in inconsistency and contradiction. As was
illustrated in several passages cited from previous pages of
our study, Kennan's position ranges from affirming the
complementary nature of power and morality to denying that
"state behavior is a fit subject for moral pronouncement."
By suggesting that "our own national interest is all that we
are really capable of knowing," he more often questions
whether moral criteria may rightly enter into the conduct of
American foreign policy. At the same time, he shows little
reluctance in speaking of America's moral responsibility in
averting the apocalyptic dangers of nuclear catastrophe and
devastation of the world's natural environment. Ultimately,
Kennan takes his stand on the side of moral relativism by
arguing that universal moral principles will always be
attenuated by the statesman's morally-neutral obligation to
preserve the nation's security and the integrity of its
political life. While explicitly objecting to a foreign
policy left to the workings of "expediency" and "national
egoism," he would "seek the possibilities for service to
morality primarily in our own behavior, not in our judgment
of others." From this vantage point, it is difficult to see
how Kennan can avoid the accusation that his notion of
relative moral judgments based on the best traditions of
American society can function as little more than as a
rationale for the primacy of the national interest. That
the national interest should be "prudently" and "pragmatically" conceived hardly resolves his dilemma insofar as these qualifiers suggest the existence (or belief in) operative diplomatic norms that are in no way conveyed by an "objective" statement of national self-interest. In the final account, Kennan never gives a persuasive account of why nation states should not be held accountable morally for the consequences of their actions.
Endnotes


6. Thompson, Masters of International Thought, p. 143.


8. Thompson, Masters of International Thought, pp. 144-145.


10. Ibid., p. 499.

11. Ibid., p. 510.


Delusion: Soviet-American Relations in the Atomic Age (New York: Pantheon, 1982).


20. Ibid., p. 11.


See also Reed Davis, "George F. Kennan," in Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., Traditions and Values: American Diplomacy, 1945 to the Present (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 197-211.


23. Ibid.


29. Ibid., pp. 149-150.

30. Ibid., p. 9.


33. Ibid., p. 323.


35. Gel'fman, *Contending With Kennan*, p. 5.


43. Gel'fman, *Contending With Kennan*, p. 4.


45. Ibid.


49. Coffey, "The Political Realism of George F. Kennan," P. 296. See also Kennan, American Diplomacy, p. 87.

50. Kennan, American Diplomacy, p. 111.

51. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, p. 48.

52. Ibid., p. 36.


54. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, p. 36.

55. Ibid., p. 43.

56. Ibid., p. 48.


59. Ibid., p. 88.

60. Kennan, Memoirs I, p. 218; Realities of American Foreign Policy, p. 36.


62. Ibid. See also Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, pp. 4-5.

63. Ibid., p. 731.

64. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, p. 7.

65. Ibid., p. 13.


70. Kennan, Russia and the West, p. 233.

72. Quoted in Gellman, Contending With Kennan, p. 31.

73. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, p. 104.


75. Cited in Gellman, Contending With Kennan, p. 39.


77. Ibid., pp. 63-64; American Diplomacy, p. 10.

78. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 31.

79. Kennan, Russia and the West, pp. 397-398.

80. Kennan, American Diplomacy, p. 49.

81. Kennan, Memoirs I, p. 219; Russia, the Atom and the West, p. 27; American Diplomacy, p. 41; and Russia and the West, p. 120.

82. Kennan, Russia and the West, p. 398; American Diplomacy, p. 85.

83. Quoted in Gellman, Contending With Kennan, p. 35.

84. Ibid.


86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

89. Quoted in Gellman, Contending With Kennan, p. 38.

90. Ibid.

91. Quoted in Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p.

92. In addition, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1980, he supported a declaration of war against Iran over the hostage crisis. While geared more
to the legal ramifications of the situation, he urged that America "hold in readiness" military forces against the Iranian government. Dan Oberdorfer, "George Kennan Urges Tougher Stand On Iran, The Washington Post, February 28, 1980. See also Gel'fman, Contending With Kennan, p. 130.


94. Kennan, Russia, the Atom and the West, p. 93.

95. Ibid., p. 90.


98. Ibid., p. 154.

99. Gel'fman, Contending With Kennan, pp. 70-72.

100. Interview with George F. Kennan by the editors of Foreign Policy, "X Plus 25," Foreign Policy, no. 7 (Summer 1972): 15-16.

101. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, pp. 61-62.


107. Kennan, American Diplomacy, p. 45.

108. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, p. 31.

109. Kennan, American Diplomacy, p. 49.


113. Ibid.

114. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, p. 48.


116. See, for example, Coffey, "The Political Realism Of George F. Kennan," pp. 299-305.


121. George F. Kennan, "The Soviet Will Never Recover," The Saturday Evening Post (November 24, 1956), p. 120.

122. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, p. 4.

123. Ibid., p. 47.

124. Quoted in Gellman, Contending With kennan, p. 64.

125. Kennan, Russia and the West, pp. 314-315.

126. Kennan, Memoirs I, p. 495.


128. Kennan, Russia and the West, p. 335.

129. Kennan, American Diplomacy, p. 87; Realities of American Foreign Policy, p. 36.

130. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy, pp. 36-37.

131. Ibid., p. 47.


136. Ibid., pp. 215-216.

137. Kennan, The Nuclear Delusion, p. 146.

138. Ibid., p. 144.


140. Kennan, Russia, the Atom and the West, pp. 55, 58-59; The Cloud of Danger, p. 125; and Realities of American Foreign Policy, pp. 84-85.


144. Ibid.

145. Ibid., p. xxxi.

146. Ibid., p. 194.

147. Ibid., p. 180.

148. Ibid., p. xxxii.

149. Ibid.

150. Ibid., p. xxxi.


152. Coffey, "George Kennan and the Ambiguities of Realism," p. 188.

154. Ibid.


158. Ibid., p. 365.

159. Ibid., p. 362.

160. Ibid., p. 359.

161. Ibid.

162. Ibid., p. 364.


164. Ibid., p. 365.


176. Kennan, "Ethics and Foreign Policy," p. 44.


178. Ibid.

179. Ibid., pp. 207-208.

180. Kennan, "Ethics and Foreign Policy," p. 44.


185. Kennan, "History and Diplomacy as Viewed by a Diplomat," p. 171.

186. Gellman, *Contending With Kennan*, p. 73.
CHAPTER VI

REALISM AND RAIION D'ETAT RECONSIDERED

Throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s, a number of scholars and public servants (many associated with the newly-established State Department Policy Planning Staff) helped to stimulate national debate on the operative values and goals of American statecraft. In addition, these "realists" called for a new intellectual or theoretical orientation by which to understand and evaluate the realities of power, conflict, and interest in international political behavior. Documenting the failure of America's periodic relapse into legalistic and moralistic approaches to world politics, these individuals probed beneath surface events in order to link foreign policy conduct with competing philosophical interpretations of human nature, politics, and history. Often characterized as proponents of expedient "power politics," the political realists tried to account for the residual force of self-interest in the lives of men and nations, as well as the statesman's "moral dilemma" in seeking to uphold universal norms of conduct in a world of changing and unstable values.

This study has not attempted to summarize and compare
the scope and methods of political realism in relation to alternative theories and approaches in the discipline of international relations; rather, our more specific objective has been to examine the significance of continental *raison d'état* for the normative roots and political concepts of postwar American realism. Case studies on the international thought of Walter Lippmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and George F. Kennan provided a basis for examining the hypothesis that the philosophical precepts shaping the response of postwar realists to the many challenging issues of contemporary world politics differs from the diplomatic rationale of *raison d'état* geared to a Eurocentric international society. At issue is the extent to which the earlier European tradition has been adapted or modified by realist spokesmen to account for the methods and goals of United States foreign policy. While frequently labeled by their critics as modern proponents of Realpolitik, how and why have realist thinkers pointed to various restraints and limitations affecting the promotion of American national interest based on balance of power strategies?

*Raison D'état and the Primacy of the National Community*

Before turning to a final assessment of American realism according to the criteria of analysis used in each case study, it will be useful to summarize briefly the central features and tenets of classical "reason of state"
as outlined in chapter one. In the long history of European statecraft, the diplomatic legacy of raison d'état often defied precise or consistent interpretation as a doctrine of foreign policy. Among continental theorists, raison d'état was variously characterized as a "mixture of moral and power considerations," "the state's first law of motion," and "the victory of the demonic over the divine or rational in man." On other occasions, the concept has functioned simultaneously as both a description of the international environment and a justification of immoral methods by which the statesman seeks to preserve the health and strength of the state.

As a basis for comparing continental international thought with an American realist philosophy of international politics, the basic tenets of raison d'état may be reduced to five essential propositions.

1. International politics is the study of patterns of action and reaction among sovereign states. The most important reality of international politics is the fact that nation states are the major units of political life. Theorists of raison d'état since the time of Thucydides have regarded the organized political community (polity) as a distinctive moral agent, which commands the supreme loyalty and sacrifice of its citizens.

2. The state's political existence is defined by its position in an external environment of rival powers and
conflicting interests. Sovereign states coexist in an anarchical international arena devoid of effective legal sanctions or supranational normative restraints. The primary obligation of every state in this environment—the goal to which all other national objectives should be subordinate—is to promote the national self-interest, defined in terms of power.

3. The Machiavellian or Hobbesian view of *raison d'état* is geared to the assumption that the origin of international conflict and instability stems from the *animus dominandi*: the inexorable lust for power man exhibits at all levels of his political existence. Under such circumstances, international politics is a struggle for power, a war of all against all. The national interest necessitates a state's self-promotion, especially through the acquisition of military capabilities sufficient to deter attack by potential enemies. However, with the relative weakness of international law and morality, the chief measure of national power is ultimately the ability to deprive rival nations of their self-interest including, as a last resort, their very survival.

4. Throughout the centuries, *raison d'état* embodied a dual standard of morality that separates the political sphere from the private one for purposes of ethical judgment. The solitary individual retains the prerogative to sacrifice his life in defense of a universal moral
command; however, in international politics, the imperative of national survival becomes the highest moral value, thus making all other considerations—moral, legal, or social—secondary. In general, moral pronouncements can play a positive role in foreign policy only insofar as they function to legitimize successful policy initiatives.

5. Above the state, there is no centralized authority beyond the mechanism of the balance of power, which can impose actual limits on the collective desire for domination. For example, Thucydides warned that power represents an amoral force that will grow until resisted by opposing power. While emphasizing military self-reliance as the most appropriate technique to bring about unity on the Italian peninsula, Machiavelli thought the statesman was ill-advised to remain neutral in a conflict between neighboring powers. For European statesmen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the operations of the balance reflected a belief in a world governed by reason and conforming to clear, if often mechanistic, rules of diplomatic intercourse. In particular, Richelieu's belief in a community of reason shaping the negotiations of diplomats was joined with the idea of equilibrium among the leading European powers. Viewing France and the Hapsburgs as two poles of power, French diplomacy sought to counter the Hapsburg threat by entering into a series of alliances with the Protestant powers of Europe. Although Bismarck
rejected the notion of Europe united by transcendent moral and political standards, his diplomacy of Realpolitik represented an effort to create a new balance of power in Europe with a unified Germany as one of the principal actors.

American Realist Philosophy and Principles of International Politics

Following World War II, the rise of political realism as a distinctive approach to the study of international politics represented a vigorous refutation of the central assumption shaping America's philosophy of foreign relations for well over a century: the belief that the involvement in power politics is not inevitable, but only a historic accident, and that the statesman has a choice between power politics and other modes of diplomacy not tainted by the desire for power.1 Skeptical of the ability of nations to transcend fully their own self-interest, American realists called into question the relevant norms and principles of United States foreign policy in a rapidly changing postwar environment. In refuting the challenge of pretentious moralism throughout United States diplomatic history, these scholars cited the need for a new philosophical orientation or theoretical approach to the recurrent patterns of international political behavior.

The varied professional and academic commitments of the major figures examined in the previous chapters suggest
several preliminary considerations relevant for any assessment of realism as a distinctive American tradition of political thought. At a minimum, the realist worldview has seldom been characterized by either its leading proponents or critics as an autonomous or unprecedented agenda of research and political inquiry. In fact, much of the creative energies helping to distinguish the realist approach to international politics emanate from a wide range of intellectual orientations in philosophy, theology, and ethics. Moreover, the divergent paths by which these thinkers arrived at a common body of principles also provide a basis for identifying more specific differences among American realists in matters of conceptualization and policy evaluation.

As discriminating critics of public affairs, they sought to relate specific trends and developments in national policy to the norms and philosophy of American society. Reflecting on the rational requirements of political action in a democracy, Lippmann argued that a large pluralistic nation could not be governed "without recognizing that, transcending its plural interests, there is a rational order superior to canon law." He judged it to be the basic responsibility of the intellectuals to promote "a common conception of law and order which possesses universal validity" and which would provide the basis for the American public philosophy.
In terms of America's intellectual history, Niebuhr's special contribution was in formulating and applying a pragmatic Christian ethic to the struggle for justice in human communities. The Christian view of man as both a sinner and image of God led him to the conclusion that democracy was a "perennially valuable" form of polity. As he once wrote: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary." A system of checks and balances represented the best method of neutralizing special interests and of arriving at the truth by allowing various conceptions of the truth to destroy each other. At the same time, Niebuhr was far from offering one more celebration of American uniqueness. In The Irony of American History, he treated the American experience not as a revelation of progress, but a sign of the indeterminacy of history, of its potential for good and evil. For Niebuhr, the atomic bomb served as only the most visible symbol of man's technical fortitude, as well as a sign of the crushing anxiety of modern life.

Although receiving scant attention in academic circles, Morgenthau's The Purpose of American Politics represents a strong rebuttal of the popular misconception that his political thought is concerned exclusively with power to the neglect of purpose and morality. Any great nation, he submitted, must pursue its interests for the sake of a transcendent purpose that gives meaning to the day-by-day
operations of its foreign policy. The very uniqueness of the American purpose—the establishment of freedom conceived as equality of opportunity and minimization of political control—brings into being another purpose that "endows the action required by the fundamental purpose with a special... responsibility: to maintain equality in freedom...as an example for other nations to emulate." In language hardly compatible with the European tradition of "reason of state," Morgenthau wrote:

The American purpose carries within itself a meaning that transcends the natural boundaries of America and addresses itself to all the nations of the world. By pursuing its own purpose and in the measure that it achieves it, America gives meaning to the inspirations of other nations and furthers the awakening and achievement of their purpose.

As one of the principal architects of postwar American diplomacy, Kennan noted that the diplomatic historian is compelled to take cognizance of the classical problems in the history of political philosophy (i.e., the obligations and restraints in the exercise of governmental power). Like Morgenthau, Kennan conceived of the role of the United States in world affairs as a reflection of the internal purposes and values of American society. Although less willing to assign universal significance to any definition of national purpose, he equated the successful defense of the national interest with America's spiritual and material resolve in coping with the strains and divisions of domestic society. Specifically, Kennan judged America's traditional
liberal-rational philosophy as the servant of private interest no longer sufficient to address such negative phenomena as inflation, declining educational standards, pornography, and environmental pollution. While calling for the reorientation of civic values with a greater sense of collective purpose, he argued that "the ancient conflict of freedom and authority has taken on new forms in this day and age, and ones which assail...the very foundations of our political and social philosophy."

The standard of American Realpolitik, as some critics have alleged, can be demonstrated by the realist preoccupation with: (1) the irrational and egotistic elements in man's nature; (2) the omnipresence of conflict and coercion in all political life resulting from the struggle for power; (3) the nation state as the most important actor in world politics; (4) the national interest as the objective basis of a state's foreign policy; (5) the importance of classic diplomatic procedures and the balance of power for preserving international stability and reconciling divergent national objectives; and (6) the illusion of moral absolutes in world affairs.

Like their European predecessors, each scholar evaluated in this study affirmed the importance of contrasting perspectives on human nature for generalizing about political behavior at all levels of human existence. Although Lippmann's investigation into the ethical basis of
human behavior reflected periodic shifts in viewpoint, he consistently inveighed against the tendency of political scientists to focus exclusively on institutions without an accompanying analysis of "man" who makes and lives under them. Forever trying to strike a balance between the fusion of universal ideals and self-interest in national behavior, Niebuhr's "Christian Realism" drew its inspiration from the dialectical tension between the law of love and the reality of man in an imperfect world.

Similarly, Morgenthau reminded his more empirical-minded colleagues that the commitment to a "value free" political science is itself a philosophical predisposition based on certain beliefs about man's nature and the meaning of his political existence. Although generating considerable controversy over America's moral mission in world politics, Kennan certainly shared the conviction of the classical political thinkers that the justification for political action begins with an appreciation of the forces at work in the human soul. In responding to America's radical student left of the 1960s, he suggested that the origin of evil in this world is "not in social or political institutions...or the inequities of statesmen, but simply in the weaknesses and imperfections of the human soul itself."

Although often motivated by a broad range of intellectual concerns, these four thinkers testified to the manifold vitalities and contradictory forces at work in
human nature. Man is both good and evil, rational and compulsive, part animal and part spirit. The great societies that historically comprise mankind must share the same burdens and strengths. While American realists have, in varying degrees, recognized man's capacity for virtue and moral self-sacrifice in community with others, they have also affirmed one of the key insights of European thinkers—that politics and diplomacy bring out the harshest side of man's nature. Writing in *The Federalist Papers* on the origin of conflict among states, Alexander Hamilton suggested: "To presume a want of motives for such contests would be to forget that men are ambitious, vindictive, and rapacious."

The ineluctable tension between the misery and dignity of human nature had a direct bearing on Lippmann's inquiry into the competing themes of morality and power in modern society. As a dedicated political rationalist seeking to illumine objective standards undergirding all political action, he equated the ethical goal of human development with the triumph of reason over man's passions and natural impulses. Against the chaos and disorder of a large democratic society, the dictates of reason filled the "mature man" with an appreciation for universal standards of order and justice superior to the selfish ambitions of private interests backed by power. In an essay prepared for the first issue of *The New Republic*, Lippmann echoed a theme
that would be fundamental to all his writing: Man's thoughts and ideas represent the only viable weapons in controlling the irrational resort to violence in both domestic and international politics. {Reviewing *The Public Philosophy*, Morgenthau took exception to Lippmann's "rationalistic idealism" and the emphasis he placed on the power of self-sustaining reason to transform the philosophy by which men live.

...Lippmann believes that men in their political thoughts and actions can be sincerely lucid and rational, and he considers this rationality to be the very foundation of the public philosophy. Herbert Butterfield, Reinhold Niebuhr, myself and others have tried to show how much more ambiguous...the relations between reason and politics are than is suggested by this simple rationalistic faith.

Morgenthau's objections to the abstract mechanical formulas of modern rationalist philosophy notwithstanding, his summary review fails to illustrate how Lippmann's thought was influenced by an awareness of both the norms of the American "higher law" tradition and the complex interplay of personalities and historical forces in a dark and angry world of unreason. The politics of human reconstruction takes place within a social and political arena in which the vast majority of men are foolish and ever-insurgent against reason, where both groups and individuals seek to realize their desires by force. As a realist, Lippmann realized that "there is evil which is as genuine as goodness, that there is ugliness and violence
which are no less real than joy or love." In a world where conflict and rivalry are a fact, the survival of men and nations cannot be achieved unless power is confronted with power, unless it is checked and balanced.

The ethical realm of man's political existence within society and the more complex international community formed the vital center of Niebuhr's Christian Realism. From the perspective of Christian ethics, he alluded to the fundamental existential contradiction of man in history—where, on the one hand, man aspires to the law of love as the true essence of humanitas and, on the other, the tragedy of his consistent betrayal of that law. Niebuhr located the source of this contradiction in man being situated at an uneasy juncture between necessity and freedom, spirit and nature, the human and the divine. The classical preoccupation with man's unique and rational qualities is often betrayed by man's restless urge to power and brute nature. Alternatively, the more modern perception that man is a product of nature and unable to rise above his immediate circumstances says little of man as "a spirit who stands outside of nature, life, himself, his reason and the world." As Niebuhr once pointed out: "Christianity... recognizes that the dignity of man consists precisely of that freedom which makes it possible for him to sin."

Man's involvement in the paradox of finitude and freedom provided the boundaries within which Niebuhr
reflected on the relation between power and moral principle in the political behavior of groups and nations. According to Niebuhr, it is in man's attempt to overcome his own vulnerability to the self-regarding ambitions of others that "all human life is involved in the sin of seeking security at the expense of other life." In both individual and collective life, the human predicament has its roots in the "security-power dilemma"; the margin of power sought is never sufficient to achieve complete security and the struggle for power continues unabated as both man and nations are caught in a tragic dilemma. The ferocity and intensity of the struggle among groups is so strong that "the only harmonies are those which...neutralize this force through the balance of power...and through techniques for harnessing its energy for social ends."

More explicitly than some other American realists, Morgenthau suggested that all political relationships are governed by objective rules deeply rooted in human nature. Since these rules are "impervious to our preferences, men will challenge them only at the risk of failure." Viewing man as a self-centered creature whose ego is contaminated by the propensity for sin and evil, Morgenthau acknowledged that forces inherent in human nature prevent the realization of a thoroughly rational or moral political order. Whereas Niebuhr emphasized man's creative and destructive tendencies, Morgenthau's doctrine of political man was often
couched in extreme, pessimistic terms. "It is impossible," he argued, "to be a successful politician and a good Christian." Calling into question the influence of morality upon social life, he wrote:

There can be no actual denial of lust for power without denying the very conditions of human existence in this world. ... There is no escape from the evil of power, regardless of what one does. Whenever we act with reference to our fellow men we must sin.

Divorced from any transcendent moral authority, man's political life is doomed to produce evil.

Kennan's reference to Niebuhr as "the father of us all" was in large part prompted by the diplomat's recognition of the many human failings that preempt the realization of those moral and civic virtues that form the basis of civilized existence. However, Kennan is perhaps closer to Morgenthau than either Lippmann or Niebuhr in his tendency to stress the demonic more than the divine or rational elements in man. An admitted elitist repulsed by the crass materialism of the Western world that has lost its spiritual stamina, he accepted the reality of coercive power and violence as "the tribute we pay to original sin."

Ultimately, Kennan's thought was shaped less by the requirements of human justice (e.g., "there is little that can be done about men's motives") than the need to preserve the tangible order of society by the imposition of restraints on recalcitrant human behavior. Unlike Lippmann, kennan devoted little consideration to how the self-interest
in human nature is moderated by faith in a higher law. Unlike Niebuhr, he provided little insight into why it is necessary to rely upon transcendent moral principles to broaden the conception of self-interest in political life.

Integral to both the continental tradition of raison d'État and American realist thought is the assumption that conflicts of power are an inevitable feature of all political relationships—more so perhaps among nation states than at any other level of political interaction. European theorists viewed the state's struggle for power and security as a fact of nature or a datum of history impervious to human will and control. The best the political philosopher could hope to achieve was to describe the international state of nature and the precarious legal order presumed to exist among nations. Along with Thucydides and Machiavelli, American realists regarded the lust for power as an intrinsic quality of human nature; however, the political thought of Lippmann, Niebuhr, and Morgenthau more specifically illustrated how the peculiar corruption of political man is magnified by the transference of power impulses from the individual to the state.

Tracing the modern force of nationalism to the loves and prejudices of man's "first" (or irrational) nature, Lippmann noted that the nation absorbs the loyalties that men desire to bestow on an entity more permanent and enduring than themselves. The strength of collective
egotism, according to Niebuhr, results from the tendency of groups and nations to express both the virtue and selfishness of their members. One consequence of modern society is that the state delimits and suppresses the individual's desire for power and personal security. Frustrated individuals seek an outlet for their inhibited aspirations by projecting their ego to the level of the national ego. Furthermore, this process of transference is accentuated by the state's appeal to the loyalty and self-sacrifice of individuals. What was egotism and immoral for man in his personal life now becomes patriotic and noble when these impulses are directed by the state itself toward its own ends. Believing that society simply "cumulates the egotism of individuals and transmutes their individual altruism into collective egotism," Niebuhr concluded that no nation "acts from purely unselfish or even mutual intent and politics is therefore bound to be a contest of power."

Building on Niebuhr's analysis, Morgenthau explained how the diversion of power drives from the individual to the state gives the "lie" to the ethical dualism associated with Machiavellian raison d'état. Specifically, those who seek power at all levels of political organization must make it appear that they are aiming at something more worthy of moral approval than power or domination. This objective is usually met by the invocation of political ideologies which conceal and transform the political act into something
different from what it actually is. As for the ethical
significance of this transference, these ideologies function
to blunt man's conscience, in that man becomes oblivious to
the corruption of power in the public sphere while still
being aware of its private manifestation. With obvious
reference to the ethics of *raison d'état*, Morgenthau wrote:

The dual morality...which justifies what is done
for the power of the state but condemns it when it
is done for the power of the individual...presents
but the positive aspect and at the same time the
logical consummation of this forgetfulness.12

In brief, these American thinkers can be distinguished from
their European counterparts in their effort to more fully
substantiate the connection between human nature and the
power of self-interest in national or group behavior. While
continental theorists generally retained a pessimistic view
of man, Niebuhr and Morgenthau argued that the international
state of nature was a product of both the virtuous and
selfish side of man's nature.

An additional point on which the American school of
realism parallels the classical diplomacy of *raison d'état*
is the assumption that nation states are the most
significant actors in world politics. Especially following
the breakup of medieval Christendom, continental theorists
regarded the state as an enduring moral entity, whose
authority superseded transnational sympathies. The norms of
diplomacy and military confrontation observed by Richelieu
and Bismarck were efficacious only to the extent that they
enhanced the power and security of the French and German state. In fact, the legacy of Bismarckian Realpolitik was to elevate the state to the level of a "mortal God" for an age that no longer believed in an immortal God.

Although American realists continue to view the governments of territorially-organized nation states as the primary actors on the international stage, they have been no less insistent in refusing to treat the self-centered, parochial national community as a final norm of human existence. Referring to the "anarchism" and "primitiveness" of the modern concept of sovereignty, Kennan asked: "Could anything be more absurd than a world divided into several dozens of large secular societies, each devoted to the cultivation of the myth of its own overriding importance and virtue?" Similarly, Niebuhr suggested that realism must be tempered with morality, that "nations must use their power with the purpose of making it an instrument of justice and a servant of interests broader than their own."

Lippmann's rationalist ethics led him to the conclusion that a world state predicated on the law of reason—or the Law of Nature's God—must be the ultimate norm of all clear thinking men. Insofar as the dictates of reason are universal and coextensive with mankind, Lippmann could argue that nationalism represented a barbaric retrogression in the criminal rivalry of nations.

Along with Kennan, Morgenthau pointed out that "the
contemporary connection between interest and the nation state is a product of history, and is...bound to disappear in the course of history." Nowhere is it preordained that nation states constitute the permanent political units of international life. The paradox of the present age is that the nation state may have outlived its usefulness but no wholly viable form of political organization ("more in keeping with the technological potentialities and moral requirements of the contemporary world") has emerged to take its place. In tandem with Lippmann and Niebuhr, Morgenthau considered "the equation between a particular nationalism and the Counsels of Providence as morally indefensible," for it "is liable to engender the distortion in judgment which...in the name of moral principles" destroys nations and civilizations. All four American realists are united in the belief that interest is the perennial standard by which political action must be judged and directed; however, they have been much more willing than continental thinkers to recognize the tragic moral dilemma of acting within the political sphere.

Thucydides' statement that "identity of interests is the surest of bonds whether between states or individuals" was echoed by those American realists who appealed to the historic reality of the national interest to account for the goals of postwar United States foreign policy. While previous chapters briefly noted a number of conceptual and
empirical weaknesses of realism as a theory of international politics, the significance of raison d'état for the expression of American national interest in world affairs is primarily a problem in political ethics. In other words, the moral dilemma for the statesman inheres in his having to reconcile the requirements of political success with ultimate standards of right and wrong in the behavior of sovereign states. Although our analysis has been restricted to four prominent realist thinkers, each of them has acknowledged that the ethical dimension of diplomacy assumes special importance inasmuch as Americans have traditionally viewed the actions of the United States as taking place within a framework of moral restraints and limitations. The projection of American power in war or peace has seldom been justified exclusively by reference to national survival; rather, policies designed to defend and augment national security are viewed in and out of government as standing for moral purposes beyond the state.

To some extent, the charge that these American scholars are little more than modern enthusiasts of hard-headed power politics results from their periodic inclination to draw an overly sharp distinction between moral principle and objective self-interest (backed by power) in foreign policy. Influenced by the geopolitical stratagems of Mahan and Spykman, Lippmann's classic definition that foreign policy "consists of bringing into balance with a comfortable
surplus of power in reserve, the nation's commitments and...power" implied that in diplomacy the national interest is a consideration superior to all others. According to some commentators, the Machiavellian tendencies in the thought of Niebuhr may be evidenced by his occasional tendency to portray national self-interest as an inescapable reality from which no state can demur. By viewing group pride as a corruption of individual loyalty, Niebuhr rejected the proposition that a nation can escape the power of self-regard through the proclamations of universal aspirations based on mutual intent. For example, he once noted that during World War II the allied nations were driven by "a stronger desire to come to the aid of stricken peoples [invaded by the fascists] than they had the power to act upon that desire....Every impulse of national pride intervenes to prevent the desired, or at least desirable, action."

In addition, selected passages from the writings of Morgenthau and Kennan appear to stretch the gap between "the moral ideal and the facts of political life" to its breaking point. Specifically, Morgenthau often characterized politics as an "autonomous" field of inquiry (distinct from ethics) and argued that the statesman's primary obligation is to think and act in terms of interest defined as power. Judging the political act to be inevitably evil, he called into question the ethical potential of American foreign
policy by suggesting that "the invocation of moral
principles for the support of national policies is...of
necessity a pretense."

In equally strident tones, Kennan rejected the
proposition "that state behavior is a fit subject for moral
judgment": in most international conflicts, he cautioned,
what is morally right or wrong is "simply not discernible to
the outsider." Ironically, both of these realists evinced a
normative rationale for the pursuit of a national interest
unencumbered by the moral abstractions of pretentious
idealism. Addressing the Truman Administration, Morgenthau
wrote:

And above all, remember that it is not only a
political necessity but also a moral duty for a
nation to follow in its dealings with other
nations but one guiding star...one rule for
action: the National Interest.17

Exemplifying the liberal faith that the observance of one's
objective self-interest cannot help but serve the common
good, Kennan expressed the conviction that "if our purposes
at home are decent ones...then the pursuit of our national
interest can never fail to be conducive to a better world."

Certainly a number of these more extreme statements on
the relation of power to principle in statcraft were
perhaps chosen by American realists for their cutting edge
in a polemical contest with the idealists. As the previous
chapters have illustrated, however, each of these thinkers
reflected at length on the purposes and values of American
foreign policy at a time when the legal fiction of state sovereignty is rendered obsolescent by new trends in military and economic interdependence. Largely in response to the accusation of being moral cynics and little more than tacticians of power, they attempted to clarify more fully the ethical basis of all political action, including both the limitations and possibilities of moral choice in foreign policy.

**Morality and Foreign Policy:**
*Raison D’État* and the Dual Moral Standard

Of the various American realists evaluated in this study, only Niebuhr and Morgenthau explicitly confronted the Machiavellian doctrine of *raison d’État* as a distinctive issue in the history of Western political ethics. In fact, the moral realm of man’s political existence within both the national community and the more complex international community formed the basis of Niebuhr’s realism; he regarded politics as a vital and ever-changing arena where the self-interests of power-seeking men and nations interact with the demands of conscience. Although Niebuhr claimed to abide by a "frank dualism" in ethical matters, his use of the dialectic denied neither egoism nor altruism, but illustrated how the many facets of man’s social life are an inevitable product of both self-seeking and self-giving impulses.

Always alert to the errors resulting from an overly
consistent realism or idealism, Niebuhr recoiled from the tendency of continental thinkers either to exempt or subordinate morality to the realities of power and self-interest in politics. For example, he considered that the "secular realism" of Machiavelli and Hobbes jeopardized the prospect of achieving standards of discriminate justice in the political order by its cynical preoccupation with the sources of individual and collective egoism. The violent and destructive manifestations of man's fallen nature were recognized by these thinkers only for the amoral purpose of investing the Leviathan or conquering prince with sufficient power to bring order to the conflicting interests in society. As a result, the problem of the larger order between parochial communities disappeared from the moral horizon. Niebuhr concluded that "pulling ethics into the service of justice, however defined, remains one of the paramount problems of an adequate political ethics."

The dual moral standard suggested by *raison d'état* was rejected by Morgenthau for two principal reasons. First, he observed that political philosophers since the time of Plato and Aristotle have routinely embraced the belief that man is not allowed to act as he pleases in the political sphere (i.e., that his behavior ought to conform to a standard higher than success). The test of a morally good action is the degree to which it is capable of treating others not as means to the actor's end but as ends in themselves. In
addition, Morgenthau shared the normative sentiment of
Niebuhr in recognizing that the struggle for power amid the
evil and conflict in political life "must be intelligible as
a dialectical movement toward the realization of justice."
Doubting whether even the most cynical political act is
exempt from ethical significance, he wrote:

The actors on the political scene, however they
may be guided by...expediency, must pay tribute to
these standards by justifying their actions in
ethical terms. The actor may subordinate all
ethical considerations to his political goal;
however, his act cannot be beyond good and
evil...as long as he makes the apparent harmony of
his act with the ethical standards part of the
goal to be realized.18

Second, Morgenthau took exception to the notion that
man acts differently in the political sphere than in the
private one because ethics allows him to act differently
(i.e., political acts are subject to one ethical standard
while private acts are subject to another). This
juxtaposition, he believed, was fundamentally mistaken since
it is always the individual who acts either in his own
interests or in reference to the goals of others; the action
of a society or nation, political or otherwise, has no
empirical existence. The opposition between man and society
reduces to the opposition between different kinds of
actions. There is not one kind of ethical precept applying
to political action and another one to the private realm,
but one and the same ethical standard applies to both.
Morgenthau argued that the difference in moral character
between the private and public sphere is at best a relative one: The potential immorality of all human action becomes obviously more present in political behavior where it is impossible for an action to conform to the rules of politics (i.e., to achieve political success) and to conform to the rules of ethics (i.e., to be good in itself). Although Niebuhr's admission of a "frank dualism" notwithstanding, both realists viewed the lust for power as ubiquitous empirical fact and its denial as universal ethical norm as the two poles between which the problem of political ethics is perilously suspended.

By implication, the ethical dualism of raison d'etat poses a central question for the nature of moral choice in a state's external relations: To what extent, and from what perspectives, have American realists maintained a meaningful balance between universal norms and national self-interest? That Lippmann was often described by critics as a proponent of American Realpolitik was due largely to his reliance on the methods of classical diplomacy and support for a reinvigorated Atlantic Alliance based on the balance of power and spheres of influence. Yet, his faith in the rational dignity of man and concern for transcendent standards of justice in democratic societies precluded any attempt to decouple power politics from man's inherent capacity for moral judgment.

While Lippmann considered military and strategic assets
as the frontline of any nation's power, he also warned that a government would be foolish to disregard the potential impact of ideals in its calculations of foreign policy. During World War II, he defended the national values that shaped the history of American diplomacy with the conviction that "a people which does not advance its faith has already begun to abandon it." Even at the height of the Cold War, Lippmann urged American decision-makers to "develop and apply their principles" of democracy and freedom to counter Soviet ideological fervor in Europe and areas of the Third World. In the final analysis, Lippmann suggested that United States foreign policy commitments abroad are supported by the fact that they enlist American power as the defender of democracy.

Moreover, Lippmann's geopolitical orientation must be evaluated in the context of his self-admitted internationalism and distinctive cosmopolitan worldview. Both his writings on American government and foreign policy reveal a mindset that is sensitive to the values and interests of many other countries. The prospects for any rational exchange of ideas and beliefs among diverse societies were being jeopardized, he thought, by the imperatives of modern warfare and the globalization of militant ideological confrontation between East and West. To a considerable degree, Lippmann's use of diplomatic strategies traditionally associated with raison d'état
represented the only realistic means by which to salvage his cosmopolitan sympathies. The balance of power and stabilization of alliance systems functioned as self-activating restraints on the irrational resort to imperialism or belligerence by aggressive nations on either side of the Atlantic. Although Lippmann never approached the American national interest as an issue in moral philosophy, his contribution was to illustrate how the ethics of war and peace can never be approached apart from political and territorial questions.

Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Kennan shared Lippmann's concern that a true realism, grounded on justice and historical standards, was an illusive goal unless "military power has first been organized for security against the threat of great wars." At the same time, these three thinkers took Lippmann's analysis a step further by more precisely focusing upon the consequences and problems of trying to relate self-interest to norms transcending interest in the conduct of foreign policy. By noting both complementary and dissimilar components in the moral perspective of these three thinkers, students of American diplomacy will be able to draw on a more informed estimate of how realist ethics can be distinguished from the dual moral standard of raison d'État.

American realists begin their analysis of the moral problem in foreign policy by pointing to the inescapable
hypocrisy in the nation's claim to being the bearer of transcendent values; however, an important difference occurs at the point of prescribing a remedy to the claims of the pretentious idealist. Kennan recommends that we have "the modesty to admit" that the national interest provides the only objective standard for American foreign policy. Although Kennan would have policy-makers consult the national interest with restraint and prudent regard for the interests of others, he argued that the error of the legalistic-moralistic approach was to carry over "into the affairs of states the concepts of right and wrong." Even though Morgenthau found it "morally indefensible" to equate a particular nationalism with the creative work of civilization, he was no less insistent in maintaining that the ends of policy are determined by interest and by available power.

By contrast, Niebuhr consistently urged that the realist understanding of the national interest be broadened and evaluated beyond the aims of the parochial national community. He accepted the reality of national self-interest while rejecting it as a norm. The recognition of norms beyond the national interest helps to moderate the nation's egoism and assist it in achieving what at least may be regarded as enlightened self-interest. Niebuhr never denied that the nation constitutes a morally defensible entity. What he did question, however, was whether those
values that assure the legitimacy of the nation and impart a modicum of dignity to the national interest are ever defined in such a way to accommodate the devotion to principles of justice and established mutualities in a community of sovereign nations. Accordingly, Niebuhr advised that "a narrow national loyalty...will obscure our long range interests where they are involved with those of a whole alliance of free nations."²¹

A second important difference among these three thinkers concerns the role of universal norms in the political life of nations. Human existence, Morgenthau stressed, "cannot find its meaning within itself but must receive it from a transcendent source."²² Against the Hobbesian view that there is neither morality nor law outside the state, he claimed that there are absolute moral principles which "do not permit certain policies to be considered at all from the point of view of expediency." Paradoxically, Morgenthau's rather vaguely defined transcendent ethic is so ethereal in distancing sinful man from a "wholly other Divine Being" that it can play only a judgmental role in saving man from hypocrisy (i.e., by demonstrating that man is not God and that every political act is therefore inconsistent with the moral law). By contrast, he is far less instructive on how and in what ways moral absolutes may serve as the directive force and constant goal of political life. This line of inquiry is
preempted by Morgenthau's more pronounced tendency to conceive of politics as an autonomous realm with its own operational rules. Although these rules may derive from universal norms, they are ultimately distorted (and relativized) by individual selfishness and the tragic presence of evil in all political action.

Perhaps more than any other prominent American realist, the ethical precepts shaping the international thought of Kennan defy precise categorization. While "moral principles have their place in the heart of the individual," he warned that the "unavoidable necessities" of the national interest (i.e., maintaining the military security and political integrity of the state) are "not subject to classification as either good or bad." If Kennan has looked to "the traditional devices of political expediency" as a remedy for idealistic and utopian abstractions, he has also sought to distance himself from the national cynicism of raison d'état by occupying the less dangerous middle ground of moral relativism.

Throughout the postwar decades, Kennan exhorted Americans to rely upon principles "of a moral and ethical nature which we like to consider as being characteristic of the spirit of our civilization" without presuming that those principles are valid for others. Elaborating on the connection between power and responsibility, he suggested that American moral conduct in world affairs must be founded
on and limited to the nation's "traditional principles of justice and propriety." In contrast to Morgenthau's "sense of transcendence," Kennan's formal ethic is immanent; morality in foreign policy is a function of the values and normative order of American society. Unfortunately, his "humane relativism" often failed to specify the nature or importance of American transcendent principles in the pursuit of a just and ordered world community.

The realism of Niebuhr was distinguished by his lifelong concern to reconcile the transcendent articles of Christian faith with the inevitable tendency of men and nations to pursue their own selfish interests. In Niebuhr's estimate, Morgenthau's concept of transcendence could hardly provide a viable political ethic insofar as his overly pessimistic outlook on human nature functioned to obscure the search for moral principles beyond the operative political reality of any one particular group or nation. In opposition to Morgenthau's contention that man's political life (divorced from a transcendent ethic) is doomed to produce evil, Niebuhr insisted on the mixture of good and evil and found politics, like man, morally ambiguous rather than the "prototype of all possible corruption." The responsibility for defining standards of order and justice in the human community can only be acted on "if the individual is known in terms of both his capacity for love and self-love."
In addition, Morgenthau's somewhat fatalistic preoccupation with man's sinful nature neglects the always precarious balance between the destructive and creative vitalities of the human will. Niebuhr argued that the "radical freedom" of the individual personality forces us to acknowledge that to will evil implies the freedom to will the good. While the community of perfect justice cannot be achieved, a narrow but real margin of moral choice may be preserved if the "higher loyalty" to norms beyond self-interest saves the "lower loyalty" (i.e., self-regard) from cynicism and self-defeat. At the very least, these universal principles can serve political man by pointing to those areas in which self-interest intertwines with the interest of others. Whereas Morgenthau spoke of the "impossibility" of reconciling the moral requirements of Christianity and politics, Niebuhr's reliance on the importance of Christian social teaching regarding the responsibility for order and justice reduced the impossibility to a tension-filled possibility.23

Certainly Niebuhr was aware that when applied to the behavior of nations the dialectical balance between power and principle is subject to enormous strains. He joined with other American realists in maintaining that "there can be no complete self-sacrifice or even generosity in political or collective relations." While an enlightened self-interest is often considered the most attainable virtue
of states, Niebuhr stipulated that "nations are...subject, as are individuals, to an internal tension between the claims of the self and the larger claims of love. At a deeper level, and in vivid contrast to the relativism of Kennan, he wrote:

It is possible for...individuals and groups to relate concern for the other with interest and concern for the self....A valid moral outlook for both individuals and for groups...sets no limits to the creative possibility of concern for others and makes no claim that such creativity ever annuls the power of self-concern...if the force of residual egotism is not acknowledged.24

Specifically, Niebuhr drew upon his profound faith "to remind the nation of a majesty greater than its own, of obligations beyond its own interest, and of a divine judgment...against the complacent and proud."25

The Responsibility and Limits of American Power

Even though these thinkers exhibit a number of important philosophical differences with regard to the significance of morality in world affairs, they have seldom been passive on the subject of the purpose or proper objectives of power in American diplomacy. The allegation by some commentators that the realist perspective simply recapitulates the logic of raison d'état often take the form of a loosely-worded indictment against those writers who define the primary interest of the United States according to the calculus of military and diplomatic gains in the enduring rivalry among hostile states. What is often
obscured by this line of reasoning, however, is the extent to which American scholars repeatedly emphasized the necessity for restraints and limits upon the actions of the United States, as the leader of the western alliance and champion of democracy around the globe.

For almost four decades, peace has been maintained in the world through the maintenance of an effective nuclear deterrent by the two major superpowers. Not one of the American thinkers examined in this study has ever argued against the need for a deterrent capacity sufficient to prevent a debilitating "first strike" by the Soviet Union. What they have objected to is: (1) the conviction of some strategic thinkers and government officials that the management and control of nuclear war is no different from the fine-tuning of military strategy throughout the ages; and (2) the naive belief that deterrence can be stabilized, and American security enhanced, by adding increasing numbers of new and more sophisticated weapons with which to threaten a potential aggressor.

At the height of the Cold War, and with the concept of "massive retaliation" in mind, Lippmann warned of the militarization of American diplomacy that would substitute a temporary monopolization of nuclear power for a more constructive diplomatic approach to resolving the territorial and political questions that lie at the center of Soviet-American strategic differences. Along with
Kennan, he objected to basing the defense of Western Europe on offensive missiles and called for the withdrawal of Soviet and American forces from Central Europe. Referring to the moral predicament of the statesman in the nuclear age, Niebuhr pointed out that "we are caught in the dilemma of doing the evil we do not want." Moreover, Niebuhr questioned whether American policy-makers could ever find a moral vantage point from which to justify a retaliation-in-kind in the event of a preemptive Soviet strike. While his Christian faith revealed that there are no solutions to the ultimate ethical problems of man's political existence, Niebuhr believed that peace might be enhanced if "both sides were...more conscious of the common danger which transcends their enmities."

In addition to the escalating costs and unparalleled risks that continue to multiply in the military competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, all four American thinkers acknowledged several important limitations upon American diplomatic influence throughout the Third World. Viewing the Truman Doctrine and containment strategy in relation to the developing world, Lippmann argued that the implicit suggestion of globalized military confrontation with the Soviet Union would commit the United States to an "ideological crusade" and a dangerous policy of indiscriminate intervention in the affairs of weaker and disorderly states. Niebuhr cautioned the West against
overestimating its moral authority among the new nations; by the mid-1960s, he judged that the claims of capitalism and communism were largely irrelevant to the many diverse liberating movements of nationalism and modernization in Africa and Asia.

Focusing on the major strongholds of military-industrial strength that have a direct bearing on American national security, Kennan maintained that the smaller states of the non-European world are poorly constituted to make a useful contribution to the global strategic balance. Furthermore, Morgenthau concluded that American foreign aid efforts have been ineffective in promoting democratic reforms and economic growth insofar as policy-makers have failed to recognize the extent to which the development of other nations depends on indigenous rational and moral solutions. Specifically, he believed that the problem of foreign aid is insoluble, if treated as a "self-sufficient technical enterprise" without regard for either the political problems of the donor country or the prevailing political conditions in the receiving country.

Another integral concept associated with the diplomatic practice of espionage, and repeatedly emphasized by leading American realists as a standard for United States foreign policy, is the balance of power. Although the precise origins of the balance of power have been the subject of considerable debate among diplomatic historians,
the principle generally served continental thinkers and statesmen as an indication of the methods by which foreign policy is conducted and a prescription shaping the successful defense of state objectives. As Inis Claude observes, "the trouble with the balance of power is not that it has no meaning, but that it has too many meanings." In the writings of our four American scholars, the balance concept has been variously construed to mean: (1) an existing distribution of power; (2) an equilibrium or certain amount of stability that under favorable conditions is produced by an alliance or other devices; (3) a particular manifestation of a general social principle; (4) an approximately equal distribution of power; (5) a search for superiority; and (6) a law of universal application whenever a number of armed sovereign states coexist and compete for power.

Although American realists have drawn on a wide variety of definitions to characterize the workings of the balance of power, their interpretation of this perennial concept has frequently drawn on a number of common assumptions. First, the fact that decisions can be taken in one or more independent states which will drastically affect the national well-being and vital interests of other nations means that foreign policy must be shaped with the end-in-view of neutralizing the power threat implicit in such a state system. One solution—indeed, the most frequently adopted
solution—is for each nation to seek alliances which will counter-balance the power of its principal rivals and its allies. In this way, an alliance system is established which may enhance national security by balancing rival nations and rival power blocs. In the words of Lippmann: "Where coercive force exists, it must either be neutralized by force or employed in the interests of what we regard as civilization."

Second, the interests and objectives of the American republic going back to the Founding Fathers were restricted to maintaining a preponderance of power in the Western Hemisphere and a balance of power elsewhere in the world. For well over a century, the only serious threat to the security of the United States could come from a major outside power—and this meant a European power—given the preponderance of great powers within Europe and the proximity of Europe to the bulge of Brazil in the Southern Hemisphere. As both Morgenthau and Kennan pointed out, American entry into the world wars of the twentieth century was justified by the traditional conviction that the subjugation of European powers by any one predominant nation would put the very safety of the United States in the Western Hemisphere in jeopardy.

Third, the traditional balance of power framework composed of a multiplicity of states with roughly equal strength and sharing a common political culture has been
radically altered in the postwar era by a bipolar system of world power. Concerning the requirements and consequences of the new international distribution of power, American realists have often displayed significant differences and pointed to a number of unresolved puzzles for calculating the relevance of balance strategies in the nuclear age. For example, Lippmann's optimism that "third states" might serve to moderate conflicting interests between the major powers was rejected by Morgenthau and Kennan.

Against Morgenthau's belief that the balance of power is "an essential stabilizing factor in a society of nations," Niebuhr suggested that the balance of power may degenerate into domination and tyranny by creating a coerced unity of society in which the freedom and vitality of its members are impaired. Kennan's use of the balance of power, restricted to initiatives designed to support an equilibrium among the geopolitical strongholds of the world, provided few clues about how such policies can possibly be responsive to his more recent concern for the common environmental and military dangers transcending all nations. Furthermore, political realists in general have devoted little attention to how balance techniques can be usefully applied to the nuclear "balance of terror." Aside from seeking some numerical parity in the weapons of mass destruction, what viable options does a statesman possess in seeking to preserve his nation's security in a world where the rational
relationship between force as a means and end of foreign policy no longer applies?

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the philosophy and practice of postwar American realism can be evaluated on two interrelated levels. On the one hand, some scholars contend that the realist conceptualization of power and national interest has been overshadowed by the emergence of new instrumentalities of political influence and patterns of competition in a rapidly changing international environment. Although these critics do not always ignore the normative roots of state behavior, for the most part their analyses are limited to contemporary developments in world affairs that call into question the usefulness of political realism as a comprehensive theory of international politics. A younger generation of American political scientists has provided an important and significant challenge to the realist worldview by documenting such phenomena as: the vulnerability or "penetrability" of the nation state as a result of trends in promoting economic and military interdependence; the rise of influential non-state actors; the "linkage" between domestic structure and international political outcomes; the lack of a consistent correspondence between a nation’s power and the actual requirements of a successful foreign policy; and the tendency of balance of power formulas to perpetuate a political status quo by
subordinating social welfare issues to the exigencies of military competition between East and West.

From the venue of international ethics, however, to single out these four thinkers as either vigorous or unwitting advocates of cynical *raison d'état* is intellectually indefensible. In opposition to the inclination of continental theorists to exempt political action from ethical limitations, the American realists affirmed that political actors come under moral judgment and are witness to the values of their society. Specifically, they maintained a consistent regard for the underlying purposes and ideals of American society.

"From the time of the Declaration of our Independence," according to Henry Kissinger, "Americans have believed that this country has a moral significance for the world." The United States was created by a conscious act by a people dedicated to a set of political and ethical principles they held to be of universal meaning. While continental theorists of *raison d'état* propounded an autonomous ethics of state behavior, American thinkers have been unwilling to admit of any separate ethics for state behavior. Insofar as a state is a legal abstraction, or fictitious personality, it is not the state that decides and acts but always individuals, though they are sometimes called, "statesmen."

Furthermore, the ethical perspective of American realists may, in part, be distinguished by their implicit
affirmation of the classical and Christian principles that characterize the "Higher Law" background of American constitutional law. The founding fathers were practical philosophers whose views on democratic government and foreign policy were based on a clear-cut conception of the nature of man, the state, and the world. Edward S. Corwin, one of America's leading constitutional historians, argued that the early American statesmen succeeded in translating principles of transcendental justice into terms of personal and private rights. These principles of natural law, he wrote:

...were made by no human hands; indeed, if they did not antedate deity itself, they still...express its nature as to bind and control it....They are eternal and immutable. In relation to such principles, human laws are, when entitled to obedience...merely a record or transcript, and their enactment an act not of will or power but one of discovery and declaration.28

Similarly, Lippmann wrote that the American founders were the adherents of a public philosophy--"of the doctrine of natural law, which held there was law above the ruler and the sovereign people...above the whole community of mortals."30

That transcendent purpose, which Morgenthau deemed essential for the successful workings of a democratic government, encompassed a common conception of law and order based on the natural rights of man. Since imperfect man aspires to the good but is frequently betrayed by a propensity for sin, the best system of government is one
which harnesses his virtues to serve good purposes and limits his vices through legal and institutional restraints. Niebuhr's perception of the manifold forces at work in human nature, and his belief that the balance of power stands at the forefront of whatever justice is achieved in human relations, were reflected earlier in the political thought of James Madison. In the pages of the Federalist Papers, Madison opined:

Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.31

The central moral problem of government, since the early days of the republic, has been to strike a just and effective balance between freedom and authority. In short, what Blackstone saluted as "the eternal, immutable laws of good and evil" were institutionalized within a constitutional system of checks and balances designed to achieve the best that is possible among mortal and finite, diverse and conflicting men.

Evaluating the potential significance of American ideals for the realities of international politics, realist thinkers acknowledged that the principles of morality and the necessities of power are not mutually-exclusive
categories by which to define the scope and objectives of
the national interest. Clearly, a responsible foreign
policy must begin with the practical necessities of survival
and the maintenance of a balance of power—a scope for
action, a capacity to shape events and conditions. At the
same time, the higher law tradition and transcendent values
of the American people ensure that a policy directed solely
at manipulating force would lack all conviction,
consistency, and public support.

Any number of historical examples can be cited to
illustrate how the confluence of self-interest and the
ethics of national purpose have distinguished America's
relations with the world for over two centuries. For
example, the Founding Fathers were driven to manipulate the
rivalries of European powers in order to secure the
independence of a nation committed to the rule of law and to
reap the blessings of ordered liberty. After World War II.
the Marshall Plan, as well as several other recent foreign
policy initiatives—attempts to promote human freedom behind
the Iron Curtain; efforts to promote democratic governments
in Latin America, Africa, and Asia; programs designed to
eliminate or reduce poverty and hunger throughout the Third
World; campaigns to promote the international observance of
human rights; and initiatives to achieve strategic arms
control and disarmament—have served both moral and
practical ends and which can only be sustained with
idealistic conviction and practical wisdom.

At a time in our history when both liberals and conservatives frequently judge the nation's interest and foreign policy commitments according to universal principles of justice and human rights, the legacy of realism for American diplomacy in the 1980s can be stated briefly. While sensitive to the force of self-interest in the political conduct of men and nations, realist scholars have exhorted America to maintain the courage of its moral convictions, to seek the enhancement of freedom and basic human liberties together with other national objectives. As Kennan suggested, the implementation of these convictions requires a renewed sense of the basic decency of this country so that the American public and policy-makers may continue to have the pride and self-confidence to remain actively involved in the world. Furthermore, American realists are well-aware that underlying the traditional historic and geopolitical conflict between the two leading superpowers is a pervasive ideological and spiritual "struggle for the minds of men." The conflict between freedom and totalitarianism is not transient or incidental; it is a moral conflict, of fundamental historical proportions, which gives the modern age a special meaning.

The error of moral perfectionists, as Morgenthau and Kennan submit, is to make an unjustifiable leap from the omnipresence of the moral element in foreign policy to the
conclusion that the United States has a mission to apply its own moral principles to the rest of humanity. Abstract principles of human rights and individual liberty not only come into conflict with other diplomatic and strategic interests which America may possess in a given instance; in addition, the actual impossibility of consistently pursuing the global defense of self-evident truths enshrined in the American polity may be evidenced by the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms and the predominance of universal ideological claims in the foreign policy of non-democratic states. For these postwar realists, the American tradition in foreign affairs was best exemplified by John Quincy Adams who maintained that it was not for the United States to impose its own principles of government upon the rest of mankind, but, rather, to attract the rest of mankind through the example of the United States.

Regarding the relation between moral principles and foreign policy, American realists have exemplified a distinctively pragmatic approach to the universal application of American standards of action to others. To their minds, moral principles are not realized in the real world of conflicting interests by moral fervor alone, but instead by a pragmatic calculation of the means to an end or by a rational anticipation of the actual consequences of a given action. Summarizing what is distinctive in the American approach to foreign policy, a former Secretary of
State has written:

...since Tocqueville, it has been observed that we are a pragmatic people, commonsensical, undogmatic, undogmatic--a nation with a permanent bent to the practical and an instinct for what works. We have defined our basic goals--justice, freedom, equality, and progress--in open and libertarian terms, seeking to enlarge opportunity and the human spirit rather than to coerce a uniform standard of behavior or a common code of doctrine and belief.\textsuperscript{32}

Since international society is morally and institutionally imperfect, it is also inevitable that the effective means for achievement of even the loftiest goals will fall short of ideal standards.

In other words, universal norms must be filtered through the intermediary of historic and social circumstances, which will lead to different results in different times and under different circumstances. As Morgenthau pointed out, "there exists of necessity a relativism in the relation between moral principles and foreign policy that one cannot overlook if one wants to do justice to the principles of morality in international politics."\textsuperscript{33} The ancient virtue and art of prudence provided American realists with a standard to acknowledge the persistence of self-interest without sacrificing the practical moral requirement of adjusting interest to norms above the national community. In language that could not fail to command the acquiescence of his colleagues, Niebuhr wrote:
Prudence is a civic virtue because it is necessary not only to strive for justice, but to take cognizance of all contingencies in preserving the stability... of a community. Prudence is the wise application of principles of justice to the contingencies of interest and power in political life.... Political tasks require a shrewd admixture of principle and expediency, of loyalty to general standards of justice and adjustment to actual power.
Endnotes

4. Ibid.
9. See, for example, Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, pp. 51-83.
19. Ibid., pp. 187-188.
20. Blum, Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitanism in the Century of Total War, p. 132.


27. Thompson, Moralism and Morality in Politics, p. 50.


30. Lippmann, The Public Philosophy, p. 76.


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Major Field: Political Science

Title of Dissertation: Raison D'État and the American Philosophy of Realism in World Affairs

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Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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