

## Morgenthau's and Bull's Conceptions of International Morality: Similarities, Differences and Implications\*\*

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### Abstract

This paper examines Hans J. Morgenthau's and Hedley Bull's conceptions of international morality. It aims to answer the question: Despite similar assumptions on the state-centric and anarchic nature of international politics, and despite a clear recognition of morality in it, how do Morgenthau and Bull differ on their conceptions of international morality? Based on the two canonical works of Morgenthau and Bull, namely **Politics Among Nations** and **The Anarchical Society**, supplemented by related works and reviews, the paper finds five conceptual similarities and eight major distinctions. It argues that Bull's empirical assumptions on morality in world politics and his stronger focus on the systemic level of analysis render his conception of the state system less flexible to moral considerations, in contrast to Morgenthau's ontology of morality and his focus on states and statesmen. These conceptual distinctions are further illustrated through the second question: What are the theoretical implications of their conceptual differences? Taking human rights as a case in point, the paper argues that Morgenthau provides a firmer standing for human rights in the body of international morality, whereas Bull gives a greater range of instruments and mechanisms for the development of human rights in international relations.

Keywords: international morality, international justice, Hans J. Morgenthau, Hedley Bull, human rights

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แนวคิดด้วยศีลธรรมระหว่างประเทศของ Morgenthau และ Bull: ความเหมือน ความต่าง และ  
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บทคัดย่อ

บทความชิ้นนี้ศึกษาแนวคิดด้วยศีลธรรมระหว่างประเทศของ Hans J. Morgenthau และ Hedley Bull โดยมุ่งตอบคำถามว่า “ถึงแม้ว่า Morgenthau และ Bull มีสมมติฐานว่ารัฐเป็นตัวแสดงหลักในการเมืองระหว่างประเทศที่มีสภาพเป็นอนาธิปไตย และถึงแม้ว่าทั้งสองตระหนักถึงบทบาทของศีลธรรมในการเมืองระหว่างประเทศ กระนั้น Morgenthau และ Bull มีแนวคิดด้วยศีลธรรมระหว่างประเทศแตกต่างกันอย่างไร?” เมื่อศึกษางานชิ้นเอกของทั้งสองอย่าง *Politics Among Nations* และ *The Anarchical Society* ประกอบกับงานที่เกี่ยวข้อง จึงพบความเหมือน 5 ประการและความแตกต่าง 8 ประการ บทความชิ้นนี้เสนอว่าสมมติฐานว่าด้วยศีลธรรมเชิงประจักษ์และการวิเคราะห์ระดับระบบระหว่างประเทศทำให้แนวคิดด้วยศีลธรรมของ Bull มีความคับแคบกว่าแนวคิดของ Morgenthau ที่ตั้งอยู่บนทฤษฎีของธรรมชาติมนุษย์และระดับการวิเคราะห์แบบปัจเจกและระดับรัฐ บทความชิ้นนี้ยังมุ่งตอบคำถามที่ว่า “ความแตกต่างของแนวคิดทั้งสองมีนัยอย่างไร?” โดยเลือกศึกษาแนวคิดเรื่องสิทธิมนุษยชน บทความชิ้นนี้จึงเสนอต่อไปว่าแนวคิดด้วยศีลธรรมระหว่างประเทศของ Morgenthau เปิดพื้นที่ให้แก่แนวคิดเรื่องสิทธิมนุษยชนมากกว่าแนวคิดของ Bull ขณะที่แนวคิดของ Bull ระบุถึงสถาบันและกลไกระหว่างประเทศที่สามารถใช้พัฒนาแนวคิดสิทธิมนุษยชนได้มากกว่าแนวคิดของ Morgenthau

คำสำคัญ: ศีลธรรมระหว่างประเทศ, ความเป็นธรรมระหว่างประเทศ, Hans J. Morgenthau, Hedley Bull, สิทธิมนุษยชน

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## Introduction

Classical Realism and the English School have close affinities due to similar assumptions and perspectives on international politics, including the recognition of sovereign states as prime actors and the logic of anarchy. They also share a traditional approach based on the study of history and philosophy. One unique characteristic of Classical Realism and the English School among other theories of International Relations is their clear emphasis on and concern about normative elements in international politics (Donnelly 2010; Cochran 2010). They are conscious and aware of the roles of morality and justice in the conduct of international affairs. Taking Hans J. Morgenthau and Hedley Bull as key figures whose ideas and core concepts laid the foundations of Classical Realism and the English School, respectively, differences start to emerge between the two schools. As a quick observation, Morgenthau (1956) puts his “International Morality” chapter as part of the limitations of national power, whereas Bull (2012) underlines the tension between “Order versus Justice in World Politics” as a natural condition in the state system.

This leads to the question which this paper aims to answer: Despite similar assumptions on the state-centric and anarchic nature of international politics, and despite a clear recognition of morality in it, how do Morgenthau and Bull differ on their conceptions of international morality? This will help reveal the qualities, the impacts, the limits and the conditions of moral actions in world politics. The paper further seeks to illuminate the dissimilarities by responding to the second question: What are the theoretical implications of their conceptual differences? This paper selects the concept of human rights, to which both scholars have responded and which have evoked much theoretical debate in International Relations, as the scope of the latter question. This will scrutinize the validity of human rights as a universal principle and will suggest some possible ways to rethink and promote human rights in the international ideational arena where such universal concepts are contested.

Primarily based on the two canonical works of Morgenthau and Bull, namely **Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace** (Morgenthau 1956) and **The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics** (Bull 2012), supplemented by related works and

reviews, this paper argues that Bull's empirical assumptions on morality in world politics and his stronger focus on the systemic level of analysis render his conception of the state system less flexible to moral considerations, in contrast to Morgenthau's ontology of morality and his focal points on states and statesmen. This paper also argues that Bull allows lesser space than Morgenthau for human rights in international morality, but offers a wider range of instruments for human rights to develop. The paper begins with brief introductions to Morgenthau's Classical Realism and Bull's International Society and their general views on international morality. It then undertakes a deeper examination by comparing conceptual similarities and differences between the two conceptions of international morality. Afterwards, it puts the two conceptions into practice in regards to the concept of human rights. Finally, the paper ends with a short conclusion.

#### Morgenthau's Classical Realism and Moral Concerns

In this brief introduction, it is essential to understand the logic of Classical Realism, notably the struggle for power of states to preserve national survival in the state of anarchy, and to realize that Morgenthau allows great space for moral thinking in international politics, despite common misunderstanding of Realism's amorality.

The Classical Realist thinking of Morgenthau is clearly presented, though not conclusive, in his "Six Principles of Political Realism" (Morgenthau 1956, 3-13) which is concerned with the perennial "nature of all politics." He contends that "politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature." As he explains in **Scientific Man vs. Power Politics** (Morgenthau 1947, 165-173), one particular essence of human nature is **animus dominandi**, the insatiable desire to maintain, increase and demonstrate power under the tragic condition of human life where doing evil is inevitable and choosing the lesser evil becomes a practical ethics. Accordingly, international politics is described by Morgenthau (1956) as "a continuing effort to maintain and to increase the power of one's own nation and to keep in check or reduce the power of other nations." It sees the nature of politics in the struggle for power and the conflict of interest, which again is "defined in terms of power." With the state of anarchy derived from the absence of central authority among sovereign states, the main focus for

Morgenthau is on the elements and methods that would guarantee a state's national interest in this endless struggle for power. He further argues that political realism is founded on a "pluralistic conception of human nature" with the political element being superior to others, resulting in a dynamic "identity of interest" of an individual and a distinct political sphere autonomous from other spheres of human activities.

As recognized by his fellow scholars, Morgenthau's view of morality in international politics is unmistakable (see Morgenthau 1979). He expresses his apprehension on the decline of morality in the age of rationalism and reiterates that human is "both a political and a moral animal", endowed with conscience and "moral destiny" (Morgenthau 1947, 145-173). His fourth principle of political realism (Morgenthau 1956) directly stresses the roles of morality in international politics. Morality is relevant to politics, yet there is an inescapable tension between "the moral command and the requirements of successful political action." He warns against blind adherence to universal moral principles and opts for the application of practical morality, those which are "filtered" for particular contexts under the guidance of the "supreme virtue in politics" – prudence. At the same time, Morgenthau views national survival as a moral principle in itself, an end for states to pursue. Accordingly, he offers a criteria for ethical and moral judgment of a political leader – political consequences of his/her actions (Morgenthau 1956).

In addition, the fifth principle (Morgenthau 1956) guards against any state's attempt to impose its own moral aspirations on others, judging it as not only unjust but also as dangerous to the national interest. This point is elaborated in the sections that follows. It is also important to note that Morgenthau treats the **relativist** body of international morality to function as a restraint on the crude and violent power politics in order "to keep aspirations for power within socially tolerable bounds" (Morgenthau 1956, 205-209). Presently, one needs to be reminded that Morgenthau recognizes the importance of the tension and the balance between morality and political expediency in international politics. National leaders and policymakers, as human beings, navigate the tension while responding to particular obligations of national interest and national survival. Deeper examinations of his conceptions of human nature and morality are discussed below.

## Bull's International Society and the Tension between Order and Justice

For an overview on Hedley Bull and his **The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics** (Bull 2012), one needs to contemplate the interplay between the three elements of world politics and to understand the inherent and empirical tension between the concepts of order and justice, from a rather systemic point of view. It should be clarified here that Bull makes an explicit examination of the term “justice.” Since he classifies justice under moral ideas (Bull 2012, 75), this paper accordingly treats his arguments on international justice as part of his larger conceptions of international morality.

In parallel with a strong ethical standpoint, the English School offers a “middle ground approach” highlighting the complexities and tensions in world politics, thanks to its “synthetic potential” (Dunne 2010). Bull accepts the realist state of anarchy in world politics. He disagrees, however, that this systemic nature necessarily leads to a Hobbesian power play. Bull (2012) argues for the interplay between the three elements in world politics; the realist element of international system characterized by Hobbesian traditions of thought and the acts of war, the universalist element of world society characterized by Kantian traditions of thought and horizontal conflict of ideology, and the rationalist element of international society characterized by Grotian traditions of thought and economic and social intercourse.

Bull (2012) contends that realism underestimates the roles of international society which exists when “a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society, in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.” The main function of international society is to maintain international order, “a pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states”, namely; the preservation of the system and the society of states, the maintenance of independence or external sovereignty of individual states, peace or the absence of war as a normal condition for relationship among states, and the common goals of all social life—the limitation of violence, the keeping of promises and the stability of possession.

Regarding morality, Bull recognizes the existence of morality and justice in world politics. However, they are “ideas of right and wrong found within a practice of states” (Cochran 2010, 290) and are subordinated to an international order. Firstly, Bull argues that moral concepts like justice are merely limited to “private or subjective definition”, i.e. they are not universal. Similar to Morgenthau’s take on national survival but from a more systemic perspective, Bull regards order as a value, a moral precept in itself. He categorizes justice into three groups based upon whom the moral rules confer rights and duties; interstate justice, human justice, and world justice. He then examines the inherent tension between the different notions of justice and the value of order in international politics. In short, the current state system is “inhospitable” to world justice which, calling for supranational control and (re)distribution of goods. The system of states allows “selective and ambiguous” realizations of human justice in which individuals assert their rights, such as human rights, against states. However, it may well get along with interstate justice whose claims for just treatment among states can reinforce the “compact of coexistence” by adding a “moral imperative” to enlightened self-interests (Bull 2012).

In empirical terms regarding the tension between justice and order, Bull (2012) points out that order serves as a backdrop to the pursuit of justice in world politics. Of equal importance, in responding to a possible amalgam of order and an elevated morality from enlightened interests among states, Bull argues that there is an “incompatibility” between the “rules and institutions that now sustain order within the society of states” and the demands and pursuits of different notions of justice. Despite this caution, his mentioning of the liberal view in regard to this tension and a possible shift from a pluralist towards a more solidarist international society infused with a “stronger consensus” on justice needs to be subjected to further discussion (Bull 2012, 90-94; 235-240; 282).

#### Conceptual Similarities – Relevance and Relativism

This section seeks to examine the conceptions of international morality by Morgenthau and Bull in greater detail. Based upon their general standpoints on international politics and

morality presented above, both writers share close affinities on moral terms in five major ways; the existence and relevance of morality in international politics, a distinct nature of morality in the international sphere, their caution against blind application of universal moral principles in international politics, the conception of justice as relative and founded primarily upon the claimant's interests, and their judgment that the international morality is in decline. The paper now turns to each point at hand.

The first similarity is straightforward. Both Morgenthau and Bull accept the existence and the relevance of morality in international politics. As mentioned in earlier sections, they accept the roles of morality on the international scene. As a result of their rejection of the scientific model of international relations, for instance, they both see the interrelations between balance of power and morality. For Morgenthau, the "moral and intellectual consensus" undergirds the adherence to and thus the function of the balance of power (Morgenthau 1956, 194-202). For Bull, the balance of power sustains the international society, allowing the development of common values and thus common moral principles which would then shape the relations among the members of the international society (see Hoffmann 1986). They also see that political decisions and foreign policies often include moral factors and language. They both raise the question whether these articulations merely serve as a justification or really function as a genuine restraint. The answer belongs to the next section. At this stage, both agree that states generally claim the notions of morality and justice in order to back up their demands for their own interests (Morgenthau 1974; Bull 2012).

The second point is an observation that both Morgenthau and Bull recognize a distinct nature of morality and virtue in the international sphere. This needs not mean a dual standard (i.e. domestic-international) in the body of morality, but at least signifies particular difficulties in adhering to moral standards at the international level. Although Morgenthau (1979) argues that the ontology of morality is objective, as discussed below, "abstract and objective moral codes" must always be subjected to adaptation for contextual practice, especially the "context of foreign policy." Bull (2012), on the other hand, conceives this entirely from a state-centric plane. This particularity is shared largely by the mainstream traditions of the International Relations



discipline. Since sovereign states, or the statesmen at the helm, are “abstractions” from the collective of individuals within that particular state, they have a special duty to protect those under their authorities and are thus “judged differently than when they act as individuals” (Nye Jr. 2007, 20-28). This purports that the international sphere is different in nature from the domestic sphere. The actions of states are then judged in their pursuit of values like the national interest or order, in contrast to domestic values like liberty or equality. Though it is a subject of debate whether the concepts of the national interest and national survival already imply domestic values such as liberty (see Plamenatz 2012), the domestic-international distinction is questioned by later scholars like Chris Brown (2002) who argues that “international relations is not *sui in generis*”, nor the international morality (see also Beitz 1999).<sup>1</sup>

The third similarity is Morgenthau’s and Bull’s conception of justice in relative terms. Morgenthau (1974, 166-169) rejects the claims of absolute justice by denying religious and metaphysical conceptions of justice due to their unempirical nature and by denying rational conceptions of justice due to their lack of normative content which, he argues, presumes some external standards. Pointing to the interpenetration of power and justice and to the fact that claims of justice coincide with the “self-interest of the claimant”, Morgenthau argues for a “relative justice” based on the national interest whose content varies in time and space (Morgenthau 1974, 163-175).

Bull (2012), on the other hand, argues that justice is a “term which can ultimately be given only some kind of private or subjective definition.” He examines the different meanings of justice when applied to or invoked in world politics, for instance; general and particular justice, substantive and formal justice, and arithmetical and proportionate justice. All lead back to the fact that the notion of justice is evoked to justify specific demands. Different actors also claim different rights and duties. Bull lists three actors; state, individual and cosmopolitan or

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<sup>1</sup>See Molloy (2009), Murray (1996) and Wong (2000) for the different approaches that reconcile the seemingly dual standard of morality in Morgenthau and argue for the domestic-international coherence through the ethics of the lesser evil, through the Augustinian-Niebuhrrian view and through the concept of public teaching, respectively.

universal society of mankind. Adding that notions like economic and social justice are recent inventions, the concept of justice is thus relative to the perspective of the actor and depends on the interests of those claiming it.

The fourth common stance is that Morgenthau and Bull equally warn against blind adherence to universal moral principles and disapprove of attempts to impose such ideals on other states. As is explicit in his fourth principle of Classical Realism, Morgenthau (1956) sees that unfiltered pursuits of moral precepts often contradict the requirements of political success, which are defined by the values of national interest and national survival. Then in his fifth principle, he treats the blind aspirations of particular nations to impose its particular moral laws, as if it was absolute, as “idolatry” and, as said in his later article, a “political crusade” (Morgenthau 1974, 172). He denounces such actions on two grounds. First, it will lead to distorted judgment and ultimately to “politically pernicious” consequences. Second, it is unjust. Since each state has its own particular interests defined in terms of power, treating each state according to their interests is to “do justice” to them, while this crusade does not (Morgenthau 1956). It is important to note that Morgenthau uses the term “justice” affirmatively in a universal sense only when he speaks of justice as fair treatment.

Bull issues a warning against inappropriate applications of moral rules (Cochran 2010, 287). In regards to what he terms the “ideological homogeneity” scenario of the world politics, such a case may bring about a more orderly world, although not completely safe from violence and wars from other motives. The process to reach that result, however, will need active interventions to realize homogeneity. This infringes the core compact of coexistence – state sovereignty and non-interference, thus hampering the international order. Moreover, since ideologies are subjected to constant changes and variations, the desire to make the ideological landscape homogenous will necessitate mechanisms that inevitably erode the international order along the way. Rather, he suggests the concept of ideological toleration to improve orderliness in world politics (Bull 2012, 235-240) and accommodation of different cultures to create an inclusive “universal society” (Hoffmann 1986, 193-194).

The last important point that both Morgenthau and Bull share is their judgment that the state of international morality is in decline. Morgenthau (1956, 220) notes “the deterioration of international morality...is only a special instance of a general...dissolution of an ethical system.” Bull (2012, 248-250) sees a “decline in the consensus about the common interests and values” that sustains the international society. It is upon this element of international society that found the commonly accepted norms of conduct – international ethics. The diverging reasons to this decline, however, is the subject of examination in the next section.

These five similarities reveal close affinities between Morgenthau’s and Bull’s standpoints on morality in international politics. These observations contribute to better comprehension of the subsequent comparison and application of their conceptions of international morality. The paper now turns to examine the more subtle elements of their conceptions of international morality.

#### Conceptual Differences – Ontology, Level of Analysis and Limitations

This section examines in depth the distinctions in Morgenthau’s and Bull’s conceptions of international morality. Despite the appearances of common themes and conclusions, this paper seeks to unravel eight important differences. These support the central argument that Bull’s empirical and systemic view of international morality and justice makes the moral sphere in world politics more limited than the one that results from Morgenthau’s perspective, whose prudence and focus on statesmen provide more flexibility in political decisions. The eight major distinctions are; the ontology of international morality, the prime agent exercising international morality, the level of analysis, the higher value to which morality is subordinated in practice, the conceptions of basic human needs, the criteria for moral judgment, the sources of decline in international morality, and their views on international norms. These points are interconnected and should be treated in their entirety.

First, the ontology of international morality concerns philosophical assumptions on the nature of international morality and the forms it takes. The previous section confirms that both Morgenthau and Bull recognize the existence and relevance of morality in international relations.

The divergence emerges, however, when Morgenthau's existence of international morality **in itself**, as a body of higher consciousness emanating from individuals in world politics is compared with Bull's international morality and ethics as practices of states within international society.

Although Morgenthau takes justice to be a relative product infused with aspects of power, he takes morality *per se* as genuine. He recognizes the independently objective existence of morality, but humans as moral animals are bound by natural limitations to understand and practice morality only through social and contextual filters. Morgenthau mentions the existence of a moral code that "is something objective that is to be discovered" and "is not a product of history" (Morgenthau 1979, 10), in the same way that there are "philosophical and political ideas of eternal verities" (Morgenthau 1947, 12). Yet, this has to be put into context for practical judgment (Morgenthau 1979, 11), as all philosophies are represented under particular historic conditions (Morgenthau 1947, 12). On the other hand, humans are moral beings bound "to reflect and to render judgments" on the nature and value of the social world and of human social actions, and on human experience in the society. The perennial antinomy between the egotistic political nature and the moral destiny towards the common good always charges human consciousness with unending ethical dilemmas, since evil is inevitably present in our actions and underlies **animus dominandi**. Under this tragic condition of human existence, "Political ethics is indeed the ethics of doing evil...Its last resort, then, is the endeavor to choose, since evil there must be, among several possible actions the one that is least evil." This inherent antinomy where objective morality confronts political realities is transferred to the international sphere (Morgenthau 1947, 145-173).

Internationally speaking, Morgenthau (1956) highlights the existence of "certain moral rules" that "interpose an absolute barrier" against political expediency. This body of morality functions as a restraint to the savagery of power politics and the Hobbesian state of nature, which ultimately culminate in the rupture of societies and self-destruction of states (see also Morgenthau 1947, 166). This restraint, Morgenthau (1956, 210-211) further argues, would prevent the realization of a world where "Might would indeed make right." Despite international

politics having its own set of practical virtues, he notes the centrality of human life in international morality. Relative as it is, the history of the conduct of foreign affairs among states has been marked by the development of respect accorded to human lives. The abandonment of assassination as an instrument of foreign policy, the humanitarian principles against the use of violence on civilians, and the limitations to the use of warfare are so infused into the consciousness of individual humans that they regard such acts as morally reprehensible in both the times of peace and war (Morgenthau 1956, 211-217). This allows international morality a space as it enjoys in the domestic sphere.

In contrast, Bull represents the empirical and pluralist wing of the English School and treats international ethics as “international society management”, a code of practice among states (Cochran 2010, 290). Following the same logic that he views justice as subjective, Bull sees that the actual and accepted practices in the international society is merely the convergence of common interests and values among sovereign states. This formation of a compact of coexistence is an empirical practice. It functions only to manage order in the international society by upholding codes of practice such as mutual respect for sovereignty, non-interference and self-determination. This prioritization of state-centric order based on such interstate practices is known within the English School as the pluralist international society. For pluralists like Bull, moral – ethical, strictly speaking – elements do exist. However, they are derived from interests and principles that bind states, or from universal and basic needs in social life. Poignantly, he does not believe that they have “moral veto” over states (Cochran 2010; Dunne 2010). Therefore, unlike Morgenthau, international morality for Bull bears no normative values in itself.

Second, Morgenthau and Bull disagrees over who is the prime actor in exercising international morality. Morgenthau sees individuals as the central agent, while Bull sees states. Morgenthau (1956) writes, “a moral rule of conduct requires an individual conscience from which it emanates.” The existence of such individuals, who act in the name of the government and who “can be held personally accountable for their acts, is therefore the precondition for the existence of an effective system of international ethics.” Since it is “the individual who acts”

as a moral agent, this moral action is translated into the international sphere through collective actions “with reference to a common end” (Morgenthau 1947, 145-173). For Morgenthau (1956), the European aristocratic diplomatic class, belonging to the same circles, same culture and same values, are the people who develop the ethical rules restraining their actions in international politics. International morality is thus developed within individuals and emanates from them.

Bull, on the other hand, sees states as the prime user and central fulcrum of international morality. It is true that Bull recognizes the tension between different claimants to justice: individuals, states and humanity as a whole. However, since the central element is the society of **states**, and as the international order primarily preserves the rights and duties of states and allows most room for interstate justice. Hence, states are the prime agents evoked and have enough weight to create change favoring their claims to justice. International ethics, as practice, is furthermore the product of interstate relations. Dunne (2010, 272-273) notes that in narrowly empirical sense, “diplomatic and foreign-policy elite are the real agents of international society.” One could refute this by arguing according to Bull’s logic that, although not dictated by the international structure, these individuals, acting as states, adopt the perspective of their respective countries and act in conformity to the standards of interstate practices. Unlike Morgenthau who accepts the normative value of morality within individual conscience, Bull’s empirical conception of morality designates states as central agents, which are thus under more constraints by systemic institutions and values than moral individuals.

Third, the two conceptions differ on their levels of analysis; individual and state levels for Morgenthau, systemic level for Bull. As mentioned above, Morgenthau focuses on actions and policies of states and statesmen preserving the national interest and ultimately national survival amidst the state of anarchy and the struggle for power. On the other hand, Bull emphasizes the systemic view in regard to the tensions among the three elements of world politics. His primary concern is the maintenance of the international order which, despite imperfections, proves to be a great success in global management of human affairs (Bull 2012, 272-285). In addition to his assessment on the incompatibility and conflicts between moral

aspirations and order, Bull (2012, 102-107) points out that the institution of balance of power necessarily sacrifices the independence of smaller states in order to uphold the general balance of power. Prioritizing order, Bull accedes to this as a normal condition. Morgenthau, from his state perspective, would disapprove.

Fourth, as have been repeated oftentimes and in continuation of the previous point, the higher value to which international morality is subordinated in practice is different in the eyes of Morgenthau and Bull. The end for states, Morgenthau (1956) argues, is national survival pursued through interests defined in terms of power. Statesmen often have to put the national interest, thus the interest of their citizens, before moral precepts. They balance the two under the guidance of prudence, resulting in moderation of policy such that respect is accorded to “the interests of other nations, while protecting and promoting those of our own.”

Reiterated once again, Bull puts order at the forefront. Such an order which incorporates moral ideals is possible, though current institutions may impede the process thereto. Bull (2012) underlines that the “institutions and mechanisms which sustain international order...necessarily violate ordinary notions of justice.” In reverse, demands for human or cosmopolitan justice tends to weaken order, or even are outright challenges against the state system itself. Such a scenario would disrupt mechanisms that sustain the basic needs of human and would remove necessary social conditions for the achievement of higher values. Although Bull notes that this does not give order a “priority over goals of justice in any particular case”, the priority is there from a general and systemic point of view.

Fifth, there is a divergence between Morgenthau's and Bull's conceptions of basic human needs. It is these different assumptions that underline their logics in both descriptive and normative dimensions. They, nevertheless, put moral considerations at the center of human life, one way or another (Morgenthau 1979, 25; Hoffmann 1986, 182-183). Morgenthau has a pluralistic conception of human nature, composed of different elements in different degrees. He sees, however, the “psychological traits and aspirations which are the common possession of all mankind”; the inherent desire to life, freedom and power (Morgenthau 1956, 237). It is the savviness of statesmen to navigate through these conditions in order to protect the three basic

aspirations from external powers. For Bull (2010, 3-8), the primary and universal goals of all social life are security, contract and private property. Order in social life functions to ensure these three elementary goals.

This difference on basic human needs can be subjected to further arguments regarding its implications. However, it suffices to state at present that Morgenthau is primarily aware of the natural desire for power in human relations and seeks to restrain that power-maximizing nature with power itself and with morality which he deems solid, i.e. the struggle for peace. In comparison, Bull highlights the minimum goals that any collective has to achieve, without explicit struggle for power as an element. Consequently, this allows him to pursue an international society based on common rules, since there is a minimal guarantee of **pacta sunt servanda**.

The sixth observation is straightforward. Morgenthau provides a criterion for moral judgment – consequentialism. Bull does not. Morgenthau (1956, 9), like “realist” philosophers before him, argues that “political ethics judges action by its political consequences.” This consequentialist criterion is undeniably central to the attempts to lay standards for moral judgment (Nye Jr. 2007, 21). For Morgenthau, however, the desired consequence is not political success alone, but also the choice that is least evil (see Murray 1996). On the other hand, Bull, as well as the English School, fails to provide criteria for moral judgment. Molly Cochran (2010) argues that an eventual development of such criteria would bring attention to the English School as an alternative theory of international ethics.

The seventh distinction concerns the sources of the decline in international morality. Morgenthau (1956, 220-236) points to the democratization of foreign affairs from the aristocracy, a class of diplomatic corps who share a transnational culture and who are bounded by personal ties. He equally points to the national universalism that destroys the international body of ethics and that imposes one's particular national ethics in an ideological crusade. For Bull (2012, 248-250), the “ideological divisions”, the resistance against Western dominance and the expansion of the state system beyond Europe all account for the decline of the international society element which sustains international ethics.



Readers must be reminded that the two writers delivered their judgments at different times. If Morgenthau were still alive, he would see the continuing fragmentation in international morality, or more precisely the clash of different moral systems; Western liberalism, Chinese-style authoritarianism, third world critical perspectives, etc. This paper suspects that he would point out that morality seems to play a larger part in the international sphere, varying from economic justice to humanitarian intervention. He would likely warn against the rising universal claims that each party asserts and against the ever growing influence of public opinion over governmental conduct of international affairs. In the case of Bull, post-Cold War world politics arguably witnesses a return of the international society element. It also sees a surge in the world society element and human justice. Nevertheless, the element of international system is somewhat revived due to heightened interstate tensions and threats from non-state actors in the recent years. It would be appropriate to say that despite the rise in the international society and world society elements, there is a rebalancing among the three elements which remains to be settled. The next and final difference offers an alternative assessment.

Lastly, there are some nuances when comparing Morgenthau's and Bull's views on international norms as an instrument for setting moral standards. Since both writers were not exposed to the recent constructivist concepts of international norms, the following examination is based on the sociological ideas of norms as informal rules that govern appropriate behavior in a particular context (Haralambos, Holborn and Heald 2008, 3).

Morgenthau's (1956, 235-245; see also Morgenthau 1947, 169) version of international norms is represented in what he calls world public opinion, a "normative order" that "transcends national boundaries and that unites members of different nations in a consensus with regard to at least certain fundamental international issues." He envisages this, however, as something that virtually all members of the society of nations form one solid body of common expectation, the same assumption as collective security. He assigns the League of Nations and the United Nations as the focal points of this consensus. As history shows, Morgenthau sees two fundamental weaknesses of world public opinion. It has "no restraining effect upon the policies it [opposes]", in view of the restraining function of the body of international morality. In the same

way that he underplays international law, public opinions in international relations is articulated in terms of national interests. They are framed from the perspective of the state, bound by particular interests that supersede moral or philosophical intention. Nevertheless, he visions a possible public opinion that can exert restraining influence. That possibility requires a “world society” and a “universal morality” which, unfortunately, do not exist. Such a realization is also improbable, particularly since whenever transcendental attempts occur, “there intervenes the nation.”

Bull offers his version of international norms in the form of a solidarist international society. Dunne (2010, 275) summarizes Bull’s conception of it as an “extension of an international society” that incorporates the “collective enforcement of international rules and the guardianship of human rights.” In Bull’s opinion (Bull 2012), this would increase the chance of realizing other notions of justice. The international society that mutually promotes far-reaching values would also create a “more orderly world.” Bull nevertheless warns that the “classical devices for the maintenance of order [would be] weakened or undermined” (Bull 2012, 230-231). The latter assessment highlights his pluralist nuance within the English School. It is also important to note that Bull regards the role of international organizations as secondary to that of states. In light of the declining international society element, nonetheless, he notes that the “preservation and extension of a cosmopolitan culture” that sustains common ideas and common values would preserve international society in the coming future (Bull 2012, 304-305, see also Hoffmann 1986, 183).

It cannot be denied that the current trajectory of world politics points to the gradual convergence of international norms in certain areas, especially international humanitarian laws, the human rights regime and environmentalism. This owes much to the norms entrepreneurs like international organizations that the two writers underestimate. It is also a subject of debate whether states’ decisions to pursue such policies constitute a real belief or merely an instrument of foreign policy that corresponds to national interest calculation. That is beyond the scope of this paper. As for the current assessment of Morgenthau’s and Bull’s notions of international norms; Morgenthau puts too high a bar for world public opinion to function, while Bull’s vision

of a solidarist international society fairly accords with the growing body of international norms but not so much with the diverse norm entrepreneurs.

These eight major conceptual differences show that Morgenthau's recognition of both the existence and the importance of international morality per se gives more weight and more attention to morality in the international sphere than Bull who primarily concerns himself with stability and order in the pluralist international society over international morality in terms of interstate practice. Moreover, Morgenthau's foci on individual agents and state units, in their attempts to survive and thrive in international relations according to their respective interests and values, allow more space for moral judgment and political decision than Bull's systemic view of world politics. Some may come to Bull's defense by saying that he aims to provide a descriptive image of world politics, to which he provides more space to normative elements in practice. However, it is Morgenthau who underlines the imperatives for international morality within world politics in a strikingly stronger manner than Bull. The paper now puts the two conceptions to test.

#### Implications for Human Rights

This section translates the two conceptions of international morality by Morgenthau and Bull into practice. The paper selects the concept of human rights because of its being subjected to theoretical debate in International Relations, notably since human rights necessarily implies the limitations of state sovereignty. The other reason is that both Morgenthau and Bull have addressed the issue themselves. Based on the following discussion, the paper argues that Morgenthau allows more room for human rights in the moral sphere. Nevertheless, Bull's conception of the international society provides more instruments and channels for human rights to develop, although in a non-moral fashion. This section proceeds by examining their stances and judgments on human rights, contemporary criticisms of their views, ways to accommodate human rights into their theories, and a final assessment on their conceptions of human rights.

Morgenthau and Bull each takes a cautious view on human rights. They both agree, first and foremost, that the concept of human rights as circulated in international relations is not inherently universal due to the fact that it is articulated in terms of states or pursued for the interests of particular states (Morgenthau 1979, 6; Bull 2012, 85-87). Beginning with Morgenthau (1979), one should be reminded that he supports humanitarian principles which constitute parts of the body of international morality. The “sacredness of human life”, being the core “basic [interest] which are common to all men”, is taken as a “general moral principle.” Human rights, on the other hand, is regarded as relative. The ideas of human rights in international politics are particular moral codes of particular states who seek to impose them universally in a moral crusade. Importantly, Morgenthau argues that the national pursuit of human rights is unviable. This is primarily because it cannot be enforced universally, having to face the obstacle of state sovereignty. Secondly, it has to be subordinated to national interest considerations to which human rights is only a part. The conflict between human rights and other interests in a particular circumstance is always possible, and it is often human rights that is deemed secondary to economic or security interests.

Although Bull confesses his desire for human rights in his later years (Cochran 2010, 295), his main arguments on human rights revolve around his **Anarchical Society** arguments. Bull (1979a) sees human rights in three senses; moral sense subjected to moral philosophy, legal sense under positive law, and empirical sense for political science and sociology. Empirically, Bull notes the different conceptions of human rights and the lack of universal consensus and practice (see also Bull 1979b). Legally, he argues that only states have rights and duties in the international society and are the actors who effectuate human rights instruments. Morally, Bull sees no human rights that are “rights established by some **a priori** moral rule that can be shown to be objectively valid.” There are indeed certain common elementary rules across societies but they are treated **a posteriori** “as if they were natural rights” for their practical purposes as common goals of social life (Bull 1979a, 89-90). In terms of justice, Bull (2012, 79) categorizes human rights into the notions of individual justice, “moral rules conferring rights and duties upon individual human beings.” At the same time, human

rights is included in the world society element, the weakest element in Bull's assessment (Dunne 2010, 278). In accord with our prior examination, Bull (1979a, 83; 2012, 79) judges human rights, and also natural rights, as "potentially disruptive" to the "maintenance of order among states" and thus "potentially subversive" to the "international society itself." Contentions for human rights undermine the international order by "[threatening] the jurisdictions of sovereign states and [licensing] intervention", while reducing obligations and loyalties of individuals to the state (Reus-Smit 2017, 78-80). This leads Bull to opt for order based on the rights of states in the international society. This comparison reveals that Morgenthau treats human rights as a normative set of values, whereas Bull essentially perceives it as a potential menace to the international order.

Their assessments of the concept of human rights have drawn many criticisms. This paper briefly presents two, one for each. Koldo Casla (2018) points that's Morgenthau's rejection of human rights is partly founded on his skepticism of international law. This is because Morgenthau (1956, 252) sees the existence and operation of international law to depend on the "community of interest" and the balance of power, which are both decentralized in nature. This leads him to underestimate the role that human rights may play through instruments such as international law, not to mention international norms and norms entrepreneurs. It is precisely this point that Bull can accommodate the idea of human rights in forms of international law.

On the other hand, Reus-Smit (2017) argues that human rights do not perfectly fit into Bull's taxonomy. Human rights claims rights for individuals while conferring duties to states. He also argues that Bull neglects the aspect that order rests upon the legitimacy that members accord to the system. Enhanced justice, in the solidarist direction, strengthens order. Inadequate change of the existing system amid the growing demands for normative values damages the legitimacy of the system in return. Furthermore, he points to the historical interplay between the rights of individuals and the rights of states that support each other in political movements such as during the decolonization period.

In consequence, it is essential to examine what alternative paths do Morgenthau and Bull provide that could accommodate the prescriptions of human rights, if that be the case, within their theories. The discussion below argues that Morgenthau allows the incorporation of human rights into the body of international morality. It is also suggested that Bull provides some room for a gradual shift towards solidarist international society based on enlightened interests.

Morgenthau (1974, 174) recognizes that a human being by nature “strives to transcend itself by giving its existence a meaning beyond what can be empirically ascertained.” This normative meaning is also essential in uplifting the crude nature of power politics. Instruments of restraint like morality “serve the purpose not of eliminating the struggle for power but of creating civilized substitutes for the brutality and crudeness of an unlimited and unregulated struggle for power”, i.e. a delicate balance between the struggle for power and for peace (Morgenthau 1956, 209; see also Molloy 2009). As a locus of the intellectual and moral consensus, international morality can incorporate the principles of human rights and the protection of human life to create a civilized moral restraint. This, of course, precludes the act of imposition on the international stage and its usage as propaganda. Personal morality that includes the concept of human rights is viable. For human rights-based universal morality in the international landscape, however, it is required that the content is not filtered by nationalism, that it is shared in all diplomatic corps in some kind of common values and culture, and that it is unaffected by democratic fluctuations (Morgenthau 1956, 220-234). Though one may not overcome the nation-factor in the near future, the minimal yet general discursive expansion of human rights and the liberal culture seem to be the most promising element for Morgenthau’s incorporation of human rights into the body of international morality.

Bull offers perhaps a clearer term for this incorporation of human rights – the abovementioned solidarist international society. If expanded thoroughly, the concept of human rights could underpin stronger values that reinforce the international society element, if not directly the world society element. If states could learn that human rights contribute a direct link between human justice and the general stability and order of the state and the state system as Reus-Smit suggests, this could also underpin “enlightened self-interest” (see Bull 2012, 87)

that would converge their codes of conduct regarding human protection.<sup>2</sup> The strengthening of common interests and values can then evolve into more solid common rules and institutions. The process could take the form of a diplomatic culture among the transnational diplomatic class or of an international political culture among the societies composing the state system (Bull 2012, 303-305). The growing body of human rights, especially the entailed concepts like humanitarian intervention and R2P, will continue to be resisted by the systemic element of world politics and its institutions. One can also take the “liberal or progressivist view” that does not see an inherent conflict between order and justice and seeks to reform the current state system to better accommodate both order and justice (Bull 2012, 90-94). From today’s perspective, however, the most probable venue to universal human rights seems to be the gradual shift towards the solidarist international society driven by enlightened self-interests.

Based on the discussions above, Morgenthau’s conception of international morality and international politics allows human rights to play its proper role in the international sphere, i.e. as natural rights. The limitation, however, is that human rights for Morgenthau is hardly effective as world public opinion and international laws have many shortfalls. Moreover, the prospect of universal human rights is greatly reduced by the lack of enforcement and national interest. This means that the concept of human rights is valid as a moral goal, but it must forge an intellectual and moral consensus, especially among the statesmen, in order to secure its universal recognition and application. In contrast, Bull barely provides any space for human rights in moral terms, despite his moral concerns. Bull, nevertheless, may better accommodate the concept of human rights into the international society through the instruments of international law and the convergence of enlightened interests and values. This means that once states come to redefine their interest properly, they will adopt the principles of human rights and later create corresponding values. It must be stressed, however, that such a conception of human rights would be purely instrumental which disregards the argument of human rights advocates that it represents natural and inviolable rights of human beings.

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<sup>2</sup>See also the concept of human security and the responsibility of the state in Kerr 2016.

In conclusion, the comparison between Morgenthau's and Bull's implications of international morality on human rights deliver two findings. First, it is Morgenthau who allows more space for human rights in the body of international morality. Second, it is Bull who offers more empirical instruments and channels for human rights to develop and extend its scope in the international society.

## Conclusion

Hans J. Morgenthau of Classical Realism and Hedley Bull of the English School both have keen interests in and concerns about the roles and the influence of morality in international politics. This paper addresses their main arguments and elucidates their standpoints on international morality. It then examines the two conceptions of international morality in closer detail by highlighting their similar moral concerns and conclusions and their conclusions and by unraveling their conceptual divergences. The examination responds to the central question of this paper by arguing that Bull's empirical morality and his focus on the systemic level of analysis provides smaller room for morality in world politics, in comparison with the one derived from Morgenthau's ontological assumptions on morality and his individual and state levels of analysis.

Accordingly, the paper discusses the implications of their conceptions of international morality on the concept of human rights. Reviewing their assessments of human rights and exploring alternatives within their theories, it is argued that Morgenthau provides more firm standing for human rights in the body of international morality, whereas Bull gives a greater range of instruments and mechanisms for the development of human rights in international relations.

This paper contributes to the knowledge of International Relations theories and philosophy of international relations by enriching the literature on the moral aspects of the two key scholars of Classical Realism and the English School - Morgenthau and Bull. It also contributes an in-depth examination of the distinctions between the two theories. Further studies can be pursued by exploring other implications of Morgenthau's and Bull's conceptions



of international morality or by comparing the conceptions of international morality of other thinkers and schools. More research can also be done by undertaking issues that are raised but not covered at length in this paper, such as the relations between international morality and international law, and notably the transference of human morality into the international sphere.

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