

Sovereignty and the Exception in Hans Morgenthau's World State

Jeremy Moses

University of Canterbury

Christchurch, New Zealand

Abstract. It is commonly argued that Realist international relations theory is thoroughly statist and provides no hope or scope for the transformation of politics on a global scale. In *Politics Among Nations*, however, Hans Morgenthau devotes an entire chapter to the subject of a world state and clearly presents it as the only possible path toward attaining world peace. Here, Morgenthau suggests that a world community needs to be forged before a world state could exist as anything more than 'a totalitarian monster resting on feet of clay', an argument that seems more at home in Kantian cosmopolitanism or English School theory than it does in mainstream representations of power politics realism. This paper aims to investigate Morgenthau's argument in order to understand the ethical claims he advances, particularly as they relate to the problem of sovereignty. It will be argued that, while having some cosmopolitan sympathies, Morgenthau remains attached to a decisionist understanding of state sovereignty that remains relevant even in a world state. It is this attachment to a *de facto* account of state sovereignty that differentiates Morgenthau's version of the world state from those presented by his contemporary critics. Morgenthau's world state, in other words, maintains the unsettling centrality of power at the heart of an idealised vision of world peace.

Introduction

The past decade has seen a dramatic burgeoning of literature addressing the legacy of classical Realist thought in international relations. While much of this has been inspired by the calamities induced by the 'imperialistic' overtones of US foreign policy under the presidency of George W. Bush and by a concern over the intensification of normative strategies designed to enhance the possibilities of humanitarian intervention, questions have also been raised concerning the potential transformation of existing state institutions as a path toward a more

peaceful world. While it is generally assumed that Realist thought is hostile to 'post-statist' or 'post-national' thought, there are multiple resources for those who seek to demonstrate that classical Realists, in particular, were prepared to think beyond the modern state system and envisage future institutional orders that might be more conducive to peace. Of particular note in this regard are Hans Morgenthau's musings on the world state, set out at some length in *Politics Among Nations*. As this paper aims to show, Morgenthau's arguments surrounding the world state are torn between the insistence that, on the one hand, change was necessary for the survival of humanity and the recognition, on the other, that such change was fraught with difficulties and dangers and might in fact prove to be more destructive and violent than the existing order.

In this context, my aim is to explore the place of sovereignty in Morgenthau's thought on the world state. What stands in the way of the establishment of a world state? How would power be distributed in a world state order? Would the existence of a world state institution represent the end of large-scale war or at least the end of the threat of nuclear destruction? Could a world state provide any kind of guarantee that major political conflict would be contained and limited?

The first issue that must be considered in addressing these questions is the Realist definition of sovereignty itself. Here I am particularly concerned with the centrality of 'the exception' that finds a place in Morgenthau's elaboration of sovereignty in *Politics Among Nations*. Following on from this I will look more closely at the key questions of power that bedevil Morgenthau's desire for the establishment of a world state in the context of the Cold War nuclear stand-off. Having established the key issues identified by Morgenthau, I will consider the contemporary contributions of Campbell Craig and William Scheuerman to the debate over his thought on the world state. Finally, I will argue that the exception stands as the key point of division between Realist thinkers and cosmopolitan proponents of global institutional reform and I will suggest that the works of Craig and Scheuerman on this subject underplay the importance of the exception to a problematic extent.

Sovereignty and the exception

Before addressing Morgenthau's position on the world state, it is necessary to revisit the underlying definition of sovereignty that inspired his hesitancy and pessimism on the subject. Following in the line of (amongst others) Hobbes (Hampton 1986; Hobbes 1997; Hoekstra 2004) and Schmitt (1985), Morgenthau was of the view that sovereignty referred to unlimited power. The existence of multiple sites of unlimited power in the world is precisely what produces 'international (or 'interstate', as Schmitt (1996, p. 56) might have insisted) relations' and sustains the condition of anarchy. This in turn breeds and sustains the contingency and uncertainty that demands a 'realistic' approach to statecraft and diplomacy.

The basic contours of Morgenthau's understanding of sovereignty can be found in a chapter on the subject in *Politics Among Nations*. Here, we find the notion of sovereignty within the modern state system spelled out in fairly clear terms:

Sovereignty points to a political fact. The fact is the existence of a person or group of persons who, within the limits of a given territory, are more powerful than any competing person or group of persons and whose power, institutionalized as it must be in order to last, manifests itself as the supreme authority to enact and enforce legal rules within that territory (Morgenthau 1972, p. 314).

It is from this definition of sovereignty as 'supreme authority' over a given territory that the related notion of anarchy at the international level is derived. This is particularly important for the Realist understanding of international law, which for Morgenthau cannot be anything more than a 'weak and decentralized' system of law within the modern state system. While this does not preclude the possibility of the existence of international law, it does mean that it is of a starkly different character to laws enacted and enforced within sovereign states. Morgenthau argues, therefore, that 'sovereignty is incompatible only with a strong and effective, because centralized, system of international law. It is not at all inconsistent with a decentralized, and hence weak and ineffective, international legal order' (Morgenthau 1972, p. 308). In practice, this means that 'a nation can take upon itself any quantity of legal restraints and still remain

sovereign, provided those legal restraints do not affect its quality as the supreme lawgiving and law enforcing authority' (Morgenthau 1972, p. 311).

The influence of international law and international institutions did not, therefore, amount to a *division* of sovereignty. The idea of 'shared', 'divisible' or 'limited' sovereignty was, for Morgenthau 'contrary to logic and politically unfeasible' and represented 'a significant symptom of the discrepancy between the actual and pretended relations existing between international law and international politics in the modern state system' (Morgenthau 1972, p. 320). In making his case against 'divided' sovereignty, the true test of sovereignty from the Realist perspective becomes more evident. Following Schmitt, Morgenthau effectively defines sovereignty in 'decisionist' terms (Koskenniemi 2001, p. 428; Schmitt 1985). That is, the holder of sovereign power becomes evident in crisis situations as the maker of the final decision, through force or otherwise. In Morgenthau's terms:

that authority within the state is sovereign which, in case of dissension among the different lawmaking factors, has the responsibility for making the final binding decision and which, in a crisis of law enforcement, such as revolution or civil war, has the ultimate responsibility for enforcing the laws of the land (Morgenthau 1972, p. 321).

It is the ability to exercise decisive force when required, therefore, that marks the sovereign power. Thus, while normative theories of sovereignty find meaning for the term in shared understandings, practices, legitimacy and recognition, the Realist definition of sovereignty is anchored in the opposite: at points of crisis, mutual misunderstanding, lack of recognition and, most importantly, in the (forceful) resolution of these intense political conflicts.

What, then, of the concepts of popular sovereignty and the separation of powers that lie at the heart of modern liberal-democratic theory? In response to this issue, Schmitt argued that liberal democracy 'attempts to repress the question of sovereignty by a mutual control of competences' but that such arrangements cannot contain matters of extreme crisis, as 'the norm is destroyed in the exception' (Schmitt 1985, pp. 11-12). Liberal-democratic theory has, in this sense, served to disguise the continued existence of a sovereign power that is not itself subject to the law that is made and enforced in its name. Notions of

'popular sovereignty,' which claim to distribute power amongst the populace within a given territory, are the prime example of liberal moves toward obscuring the exercise of effective power. On this point Morgenthau is in full agreement with Schmitt, claiming that democratic constitutions have 'purposely obscured the problem of sovereignty and glossed over the need for a definite location of the sovereign power.' Further:

Since in a democracy that responsibility lies dormant *in normal times*, barely visible through the network of constitutional arrangements and legal rules, it is widely believed that it does not exist, and that the supreme lawgiving and law-enforcing authority, which was formerly the responsibility of one man, the monarch, is now distributed among the different co-ordinate agencies of the government and that, in consequence, no one of them is supreme. Or else that authority is supposed to be vested in the people as a whole, who, of course, as such cannot act. Yet *in times of crisis and war* that ultimate responsibility asserts itself... and leaves to constitutional theorists the arduous task of arguing it away after the event (Morgenthau 1972, p. 323, emphasis added).

In what follows, I will argue that this definition of sovereignty as supreme and indivisible power, manifest in times of crisis, is an indispensable element of Realist international relations theory that cannot be elided in seeking to understand Morgenthau's thought on the world state. While, unlike Schmitt (Schmitt 1996, pp. 53-58), Morgenthau believed that the emergence of such a state was a possibility and perhaps even a necessity, he worried about the troubling potentials of a global sovereign. It is to these issues that I now turn my attention.

Morgenthau and the world state

What, then, did Hans Morgenthau have to say about the need for and the prospects of a world state and how did it relate to his understanding of sovereignty? To begin, it must be said that there is no way that a thoroughly coherent picture of this issue can be constructed that runs through Morgenthau's entire oeuvre. The idealism inherent in any world state proposal appears deeply at odds with the scathing critique of liberalism advanced by Morgenthau in the immediate aftermath of World War Two. The arguments put forward in *Scientific Man vs Power Politics* on the fanciful 'oversimplified problems' and 'magical

formulas' offered by liberals (Morgenthau 1974) can be jarringly juxtaposed against his later contention in *Politics Among Nations* that 'there can be no permanent international peace without a state coextensive with the confines of the political world' (Morgenthau 1960, p. 509). It might be said that the Morgenthau of *Scientific Man* would have ended the sentence at 'there can be no permanent international peace', but by the late 1950s to early 1960s, he is willing to append at least the consideration of ideal political futures to the 'hard-headed' realism of the previous decade.

What is important, however, is that the image of the world state envisaged by Morgenthau was never countenanced as anything other than a desirable but, at least in the short-term sense, unrealizable goal. The prospect of a 'permanent international peace' is obviously the object of desire and this was a desire that had been intensified by the presence of thermonuclear weaponry in the context of the Cold War. The fact that this desire was not achievable under existing political conditions, on the other hand, had its roots in the problem of power, particularly sovereign power, which lies at the heart of Morgenthau's theory of international relations. So while the speculative consideration of the world state may be considered to be an idealistic departure from Morgenthau's previous thought, the fact that the speculation remained anchored in and hindered by the problem of power politics indicates a continuity of thought that has not been well appreciated by some contemporary critics of Morgenthau's dalliance with the world state.

Turning first of all to the perceived necessity of the world state, there is no doubt that the emergence of thermonuclear weapons in the 1950s and 1960s brought about a change in Morgenthau's attitudes toward what he may previously have dismissed as a hopelessly idealistic vision. The destructive potential of thermonuclear technology in a world divided between two great powers, he argued in 1961, appeared to point toward:

the abolition of international relations itself through the merger of all national sovereignties into one world state which could have a monopoly on the most destructive instruments of violence. Both kinds of solutions are supported by the awareness of the unity of mankind underlying the inevitable fragmentation of international relations. However inarticulate and submerged, this awareness has

never disappeared even in the heyday of nationalism, and it has been sharpened by the threat of nuclear destruction facing all mankind. (From *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1961, quoted in Craig, p.109.)

For a thinker who had always appeared to adhere to a 'pessimistic anthropology' and who had warned repeatedly of the dangers of universal morality, the espousal of an underlying 'unity of mankind' seems a dramatic departure. Yet there remains, I would argue, a continuation of the profoundly realist argument that the realization of such a unity on a global scale is *subject to politics*; that is, while the desire for human unity remains an aspiration held by millions in all parts of the world, it is a normative desire that has been, on the one hand, 'sharpened' and, on the other hand, limited by dimensions of power. In this regard, what is most interesting about this claim is the idea that the development of a world state encapsulating mankind as a whole would represent 'the abolition of international relations itself.' This points directly to the question of sovereignty as the central hindrance to and consequence of the realization of the world state.

Despite his gestures toward the peaceful potential of the world state, then, Morgenthau maintained a deep and enduring skepticism about the possibility of its realization. The reservations that he expressed were, unsurprisingly, primarily grounded in questions of sovereign power. Extrapolating from the political theory of John Stuart Mill, Morgenthau claimed in *Politics Among Nations*, that 'the presence of three conditions – overwhelming force, suprasectional loyalties, expectation of justice – makes peace possible within nations' (Morgenthau 1960, p. 502). These elements of national peace were, for Morgenthau, inextricably bound together. There could be no peace without an overwhelming material power at the centre, as 'society has no substitute for the power of the Leviathan whose very presence, towering above contending groups, keeps their conflicts within peaceful bounds' (Morgenthau 1960, p. 508).

The power of the Leviathan could, in revolutionary situations, be countered by 'irresistible social pressure', which constitutes the second manifestation of 'overwhelming power' (Morgenthau 1960, p. 505). In *Leviathan*,

Hobbes envisages the sovereign state as resting upon 'the mutual relation of protection and obedience' (Hobbes 1997, pp. 115-122) and I would argue that Morgenthau adopts a similar line of thought in *Politics Among Nations*, arguing that 'overwhelming power manifests itself in two different ways: in the form of material force as a monopoly of organized violence, and in the form of irresistible social pressure' (Morgenthau 1960, p. 505). On the one hand, 'Individuals will be unable to break the peace [in domestic societies] if overwhelming power makes an attempt to break it a hopeless undertaking' (Morgenthau 1960, p. 502), while on the other, 'society cannot afford to remain deaf to the claims for justice of large and potentially powerful groups without inviting the risk of revolution and civil war' (Morgenthau 1960, p. 505). Under the existing circumstances, which I would argue have barely changed today, Morgenthau was left with the conclusion that neither form of power, from above nor from below, was available in requisite quantity to bring about the revolutionary 'abolition of international politics' required for the realization of the world state.

Under these circumstances, any forced attempt at creating a world state would necessarily be an expression of national power by one or more (but not all) existing nation-states. For, despite the 'underlying' humanitarian sentiment, Morgenthau recognized that fierce national resistance to the idea of freedom of immigration revealed the continued adherence of statesmen and citizens to their own national interests (Morgenthau 1960, p. 511). Moreover, the persistence of national politics obscured the possibility of fighting on behalf of anything that could be considered a 'unity of mankind' insofar as:

a man who would want to act as a citizen of the world would by the conditions of the world be forced to act as a partisan of another nation and as a traitor to his own. For above one's own nation there is nothing political on behalf of which a man could act. There are only other nations besides one's own (Morgenthau 1960, p. 512).

In addition to the lack of support from the people of the world, the world state, Morgenthau argues, is also a difficult and dangerous undertaking for the existing powers of the world. Without a spontaneous and universal surrender of national power to a world government, a brutal and bloody global war of

conquest would be necessary. Once established a world government achieved in this manner would constantly struggle to maintain the obedience of an unwilling populace. Hence:

a world state created by conquest and lacking the support of a world community has a chance to maintain peace within its borders only if it can create and maintain complete discipline and loyalty among the millions of soldiers and policemen needed to enforce its rule over an unwilling humanity (Morgenthau 1960, p. 515).

This would be compounded by a lack of allegiance to world legislative body as:

None of its constituent groups would willingly submit to the majority vote of a [world] legislative assembly thus constituted. The threat and the actuality of civil war would hang over such institutions, which would have to substitute compulsion for the lacking moral and political consensus (Morgenthau 1960, p. 513).

The ultimate consequence of this lack of power from above and below, according to Morgenthau, is that 'such a world would be a totalitarian monster resting on feet of clay, the very thought of which startles the imagination' (Morgenthau 1960, p. 515).

With all the cataclysmic dangers that he saw in the potential emergence of a world state, it is unsurprising that Morgenthau's response was to retreat into his core arguments about the need for prudent statesmanship and diplomacy. By 1969, in *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*, Morgenthau offers a far more restrained response to the problem of nuclear armaments, arguing that 'since nuclear weapons are... irrelevant for the normal exercise of national power, foreign and military policy ought to concentrate upon the development and use of the non-nuclear instruments of national power' (Morgenthau 1969, p. 13). In addition, articles on the possibility of a world police force (Morgenthau 1963) and on the question of intervention (Morgenthau 1967) continued to maintain the centrality of state sovereignty and national interest as their theoretical touchstones. In this sense, Morgenthau's foray into the idealistic politics of the world state remained limited and is perhaps best understood as a further example of his understanding of the way in which power politics limits the possibilities for permanent peace in existing international relations.

Nuclear fear and the 'New Leviathan'

In his 2003 book *Glimmer of a New Leviathan*, Campbell Craig is concerned with establishing the extent to which the classical Realist thinkers, alongside the Neo-Realist Kenneth Waltz, were challenged by the destructive potential of nuclear armaments and how their responses to the emergence of these technologies were limited by their pre-existing theoretical and ideological commitments. Following his examination of these issues, Craig makes the somewhat radical argument that the emergence of thermonuclear technology in the post-Cold War era led to a situation where Reinhold Niebuhr and Hans Morgenthau 'presided over the expiration of their political philosophy of Modern Realism, lamenting its demise and offering no suggestions for its resurrection' (Craig 2003, p. 116). In relation to the core themes of this paper, Craig suggests that Morgenthau in particular struggled with the implications of his own brand of Realism and found himself unable to pursue the ideal of the world state that offered at least the possibility of eliminating the threat of all-out nuclear war.

In the introduction to *Glimmer of a new Leviathan*, Craig claims that when writing of a 'New Leviathan' he is not in fact referring to 'a global super-state, a transnational version of the kind of government Hobbes called for at the national level' (Craig 2003, p. xv). In what follows, however, he provides no clear indication of what in fact he does mean by 'New Leviathan' and by the end of his explanation he in fact returns to the term 'world state' as the 'desirable' and 'possible' objective espoused by both Morgenthau and Niebuhr in response to the nuclear threat (Craig 2003, p. xvii). The distinction he appears to want to draw seems to be premised on the argument that the civil state promoted by Hobbes was drawn from real world experience, while the world state of the Realists in the Cold War era depended upon painting likely scenarios of a continuation of anarchy leading to nuclear 'omnicide'. This distinction is unconvincing and the motivation for it is difficult to discern. While it is true that neither Morgenthau nor Niebuhr offered a clear and specific 'design' for a world state, I believe it can be assumed, for Morgenthau at least, that such a state would have many of the characteristics of the nation-state and, most importantly, would maintain sovereign power over the entire world. As noted above,

Morgenthau himself argued that a world state would require 'the merger of all national sovereignties into one world state which would have a monopoly of the most destructive instruments of violence' (Craig 2003, p. 109).

Craig's hesitancy in elaborating what 'New Leviathan' means appears to be a significant factor in his reluctance to fully confront the problematic nature of a sovereign world state, both in terms of its formation and its continuation. Morgenthau's views on this question, as set out above, are quite clear: A world state may indeed have the desirable outcome of eliminating the danger of thermonuclear conflict between major powers, but the likelihood that such a state could come into being in a peaceful manner or could continue to exist in peaceful relation to its citizens was minimal at best. In response, Craig's critique is that Morgenthau's realist skepticism over the possibility of world state formation is inconsistent with the commitment to human survival that, following Hobbes, lies at the foundation of Morgenthau's theory of international relations (Craig 2003, pp. 109-111).

The problem with Craig's analysis, in short, is that he sees the foundation of Realist thought as a normative problem rather than a 'real', material limit. As a consequence, he represents the apparent inconsistency in Morgenthau's views on the world state as theoretical mistakes, rather than as an example of the tragic gap between ideal and reality that has always been at the heart of Realist thought in international relations. Hence international anarchy is understood as a product of Realist theory rather than as a material fact that is the corollary of the existence of multiple sovereign entities in the world. Moreover, the 'odd idea that anarchy is some kind of cosmic material force that cannot be overcome' is claimed as one of the two chief obstacles to the necessary realization of the world state (Craig 2003, p. 173). There are, of course, reasonable grounds for making such claims from certain critical or constructivist perspectives, but it seems disingenuous to accuse Realists of failing to theorize a world that is congenial to the formation of a world state and, as a consequence, the elimination of the possibility of nuclear annihilation. What Craig utterly fails to appreciate is the status of sovereign power itself, an issue that is made evident in his problematic tendency to view Realist thought as *justification* of great power war rather than acceptance of its permanent possibility. Should we really be

surprised, then, that a realist theory measured using an idealist standard should come up short?

Craig applies a further normative gloss to the idea of the world state in his brief musings in the conclusion to the book on the contemporary prospects for such a development. While suggesting that the post-Cold War era of US superiority provides a 'propitious' moment for the formation of such a state, Craig also suggests that a US-dominated world state would not be 'genuine' (Craig 2003, p. 172). This desire for an absence of domination speaks more to the cosmopolitan desire for the elimination (or at least the division) of sovereignty, a concept that stands in stark opposition to the permanence and indivisibility of sovereign authority at the heart of Realist thought. While this does not form a central part of Craig's thesis, it is indicative of the chasm that the unlimited power of the sovereign presents for any theory that seeks to identify a point at which 'the realistic and utopian approaches to politics in general and to international relations in particular merge' (Craig 2003, p. 108).

In his contribution to the *Realism Reconsidered* collection, Craig reprises the arguments made regarding Morgenthau's relation to the world state in *Glimmer of a New Leviathan*, adding only a brief discussion of James Speer's 1965 article on the same subject. Here, Craig maintains that the world state represents a 'basic paradox' in Morgenthau's thought (Craig 2007, p. 195) and reiterates the earlier claim 'that the thermonuclear revolution... had rendered [Morgenthau's] realist understanding of international politics obsolete' (Craig 2007, p. 202).'

In support of these claims Craig draws on Speer to make an unclear and unconvincing argument critical of Morgenthau's appraisal of the world state. The suggestion is that Morgenthau mistakenly conflates 'the lust for power and fear' and that this 'philosophical confusion', according to Speer, arises as a consequence of Morgenthau's commitment 'to the whole nexus of German philosophy and sociology', which 'prevents Morgenthau from taking seriously the more Lockean notion of a gradualist formation of world government' (Craig 2007, p. 210; Speer 1968, pp. 225-226). Craig's interpretation, I would argue, slightly misconstrues Speer's point, which is that Morgenthau appears to adopt *both* Hobbesian and Lockean images of human nature in considering the

possibilities of and impediments to the world state: On the one hand, the likelihood of totalitarian violence being used to control a disparate world population points toward a Hobbesian view of power and absolute sovereignty, while on the other, the Lockean image of a world state being achieved through the gradual development of functional institutions and careful diplomatic practice (Speer 1968, p. 225). So while Craig believes that 'we can use Speer's insight to close the book on Morgenthau's muddled vision of a world state in the nuclear age', he does not address the argument Speer is making, which is that Morgenthau's apparent prioritisation of the Hobbesian concept of indivisible sovereignty stood in the way of a more positive attitude to the possibility of the world state. This important issue is, however, tackled more comprehensively by William Scheuerman, to whose work on Morgenthau and the world state I will turn to in a moment.

For now, it is sufficient to conclude that Craig's intense focus on the dangers of thermonuclear war lead him to elide or play down the potential dangers of the world state that Morgenthau identifies. There is no consideration of the possibility that a world state could potentially invoke conflict more apocalyptic than that which is potentially faced under the current situation. Where, for example, is the guarantee that a world state, armed with power unmatched anywhere in the world, could not use nuclear weapons against a restive segment of the global population? It is precisely these points of crisis and violent contention – captured in the Realist consideration of sovereignty and the exception – that represent the chasm between liberal and Realist thought in international relations and raise questions over the suggestion, raised by Morgenthau and endorsed by Craig, that 'the realistic and utopian approaches to politics in general and to international relations in particular merge' when confronted with thermonuclear technology and the possibility of the world state.

'Progressive Realism' and the World State

In contrast to Craig's analysis, which lacks any sustained discussion of the problem of sovereignty and the exception, William Scheuerman has considered this issue at some length. Like Craig, he concludes that Morgenthau maintained an attachment to a political theory that bred too much skepticism over the

possibility of the world state. This criticism, however, is more deeply – and, I believe, correctly – anchored in Morgenthau’s attachment to the theory of sovereignty espoused by Carl Schmitt. In essence, Scheuerman is supportive of Morgenthau’s claims about the potentially pacifying effects of the world state, but rejects the idea that such a state would necessarily need to be founded on the absolute power of a global Leviathan, with all the accompanying dangers that such an authority might carry. Instead, he suggests, such a state could rest upon more contemporary foundations of popular sovereignty, in which power could be dispersed and divided amongst the constituent parts to ensure that totalitarian violence could not be exercised by the centre.

Scheuerman’s task in *The Realist Case for Global Reform* is to convince the reader that ‘some Realists... have developed a surprisingly sound version of far-reaching global reform’ and ‘that present-day [cosmopolitan] global reformers can in fact strengthen their case by building on Realism’ (Scheuerman 2011, p. 4). Hans Morgenthau’s writings on the world state are clearly relevant to this case and it is largely on the issue of ‘post-national’ government that Scheuerman focuses in his elaboration of what he calls ‘Progressive Realism.’ From this perspective, the key argument is derived that the prospects for structural change in world politics depend upon the establishment of state-like institutions at the global level and that cosmopolitan proposals for ‘governance without government’ lack sufficient substance to take us forward. In short, Scheuerman aims to provide a *via media* between liberal cosmopolitanism and Realism and to emphasise the often-ignored progressive qualities of classical Realist thought.

It is clear, then, that Scheuerman is not arguing for an outright acceptance of Morgenthau’s arguments on the world state. Indeed, like Craig, one of his aims is to understand why Morgenthau could not ever quite bring himself to fully embrace such a vision, despite the horrendous potential consequences engendered by the thermonuclear revolution. In *The Realist Case for Global Reform* and in his contribution to *Realism Reconsidered*, Scheuerman locates his main line of critique in Morgenthau’s apparent adherence to a Hobbesian/Schmittian ‘intellectual baggage’ that, as outlined above, sees the sovereign as power capable of acting without limitation in situations of social crisis (Scheuerman 2007, pp. 84-86). Hence:

Morgenthau's definition of sovereignty, like its Schmittian inspiration, suffers from a misleadingly one-sided focus on the emergency or crisis... its dismissal of the notion of *popular sovereignty*, inadvertently reproduces Schmitt's anti-democratic views... Morgenthau probably fails to appreciate how ideas of *popular sovereignty* break with such traditional notions of state sovereignty (Scheuerman 2007, p. 84).

This is a problem, Scheuerman claims, as it prevents consideration of the possibility of federal structures at the trans-national level that may ameliorate the dangers of global totalitarianism.

In developing his arguments on the relationship between Schmitt and Morgenthau in his contribution to *Realism Reconsidered*, Scheuerman places great emphasis on the power-dispersing qualities of democracy and popular sovereignty. Turning to Speer's critique of Morgenthau (Speer 1968), he endorses the argument that the existence of federal states, such as the United States, is evidence of the possibility of 'dividing' sovereignty. In accordance with this belief in the possibility of divided sovereignty, Scheuerman claims that 'Morgenthau's hostility to alternative forms of relatively decentralized supranational organization rests on sand' and that 'effective state action is by no means inconsistent with any of a host of complex forms of complex or differentiated sovereignty potentially realizable at the transnational level' (Scheuerman 2007, p. 85). In building upon this argument in *The Realist Case for Global Reform*, he claims that 'democracy and statehood represent two sides of the same coin' (Scheuerman 2007, p. 131) and that a 'world state would only be worth having if its liberal-democratic credentials were sound' (Scheuerman 2011, p. 154). India is offered as an example of a 'stunningly diverse, populous, and more-or-less politically and socially integrated liberal democrac[y]' in which 'democracy has not allowed the poor to swamp the well-to-do with unreasonable policy demands' (Scheuerman 2011, pp. 155,164). This, then, stands as evidence to suggest that criticism of a world state as being inhospitable to pluralism is both 'dogmatic and ahistorical' (Scheuerman 2011, p. 155).

Yet the ghosts of Hobbes, Schmitt and Morgenthau also appear to plague Scheuerman's attempt to establish a theory of the world state that does not rest upon an 'absolute' or indivisible sovereignty. In a response to Thomas Pogge's

'Cosmopolitan critique of state sovereignty', Scheuerman maintains that it is 'difficult to fathom the possibility of global institutions exercising an effective monopoly over legitimate force – and this is ultimately what Pogge wants – without them in fact gaining a preponderant power status in relation to their national institutional rivals' (Scheuerman 2011, p. 120). The concept of indivisible sovereignty seems to be at play here and this sense is reinforced with a later reference to the importance of decisive power in the exceptional situation, with the claim that 'when push comes to shove, federal institutions will have to be able to unleash preponderant power – if necessary, in opposition to powerful social groups or member states – in order to ensure the binding character of their decisions' (Scheuerman 2011, p. 153). This, it seems to me, must be recognised as a description of an unlimited and indivisible sovereign power at work. The federal institutions of such a world state would be sovereign, as Hobbes, Schmitt and Morgenthau would argue, precisely because they maintain this preponderant, decisive power. So while Scheuerman remains positive about the possibilities of a world state emerging through gradual institutional reform, he maintains an uneasy relationship with the problem of Hobbesian/Schmittian sovereignty. When a federal world state needs to compel one of its component parts to transform its policy by force, the question of sovereignty is decided. Democracy or popular sovereignty, as Morgenthau rightly argued, ultimately has no impact upon the existence of an unlimited, indivisible sovereign power.

A further question may also be raised concerning the suggestion that 'the people' both *limit* the sovereign and *are* sovereign. Popular sovereignty, in this regard, neglects the problem of agency, which Morgenthau pithily points out in saying that 'the people, as such, cannot act.' In a political crisis, what you have is division, either between people and people or between people and sovereign (usually a mix of both). The existing sovereign may be deposed in such a crisis, in which case a new 'unlimited' power emerges, or they may wield decisive power on behalf of themselves and a supportive element of the population. The belief that 'the people' are always unified against totalitarian government is a misleading oversimplification of any political conflict. This, from a realist perspective, is why civil crises occur and why they can only be resolved through the exercise of sovereign power.

In sum, Scheuerman can be said, in many ways, to be grappling with the problematic interplay of norms and power in a similar way to that of Morgenthau, but in doing so he appears far more prepared to jettison the Hobbesian/Schmittian definition of sovereignty as unlimited or decisive power. The difficulty presented here, I would argue, is that this definition of sovereignty is the axis on which Realism distinguishes itself from liberalism or other idealistic theories. There cannot be a 'partial' abandonment of sovereignty as it is, by definition, an all or nothing – that is to say, an 'indivisible' – concept in the Realist tradition. To dump the 'Schmittian baggage' that Morgenthau was, according to Scheuerman, burdened with, is to cease to be a Realist. Morgenthau's work certainly gestured in that direction, but he was never prepared to take that decisive step and revise or recant his understanding of sovereignty as *de facto* power and it was precisely this hesitancy and uncertainty that represents a consistent theme in Morgenthau's work.

Conclusion: The Persistence of Crisis and Decision in the World State

I would argue that the difficulty in escaping 'decisionist' definition of sovereignty arises due to the fact that Realist thought is founded upon the problem of uncertainty and contingency that can never be fully contained. This radical sense of uncertainty and the violent response of power is captured in the problem of the exception that Schmitt places at the centre of his political theory. As Jacques Derrida claimed in his recently published lectures on sovereignty, 'a theory of the exception, especially a juridical or political theory of the exception, is impossible qua philosophical theory, even if the thought of exception is necessary' (Derrida 2009, p. location 1074, Kindle Edition). As stated above, the exception represents a chasm between idealist and Realist thought that cannot be effectively bridged or limited. As a consequence, no theory of the world state can provide a guarantee of the absence of conflict and nor can it be guaranteed that conflict would necessarily be resolved in favour of pluralist or democratic forces. In considering these uncertainties, then, it falls to the Realist theorist to maintain 'the thought of exception' without ever being able to anchor it or eliminate it in philosophical theory, for the exception must always, by definition, represent a radical departure from (or breach of) a predictable and stable norm.

As Morgenthau well understood, none of this precludes the possibility of the emergence of radical institutional reforms on a global scale. It is highly likely, however, that the exercise of sovereign violence in an exceptional situation would be the condition for the foundation of such institutions. Considering, then, the enormous forces that would be required to build and sustain such institutions, the conclusion he reached was that it was an unlikely outcome in the near term, but that patient diplomacy and cultural exchange may, at some point in the future, offer the possibility of less violent political upheaval. Moreover, the existence of the world state, while it *may* ameliorate the possibility of a nuclear war between superpowers, provides no guarantee of an end to violent conflict. There is no teleological argument available here as there can be no permanent solution to the complexity and conflict of political life.

The crux of this problem returns, as we might expect, to the deep and persistent philosophical distinctions between Realists and Idealists in international relations: Idealists believe that morality, norms and laws dictate the distribution and application of power, while Realists believe that power dictates the distribution and application of morals, norms and laws. While Realist and idealist theory may indeed 'merge' on the thought of the world state, they diverge on the thought of the exception. This is an unbridgeable divide, raising serious critical questions about the attempted assimilation of Realism and Idealism around the theme of the world state that is evident in the work of both Craig and Scheuerman. Both authors, I would argue, ask too much of Morgenthau in suggesting that he could and should have been more open to the possibilities of a world state. In doing so, both arguments seek to abandon the foundations of the 'real' in Morgenthau's thought: the existence of supreme, decisive, unlimited and indivisible powers in all human societies. Yes, Morgenthau was concerned about the massive destructive potential of nuclear weapons, but his world state proposal did not amount to an abandonment of his position on the indivisibility of sovereignty. The world state would not constitute the end of human conflict, as the permanent possibility of political conflict meant that no such guarantee could be maintained but, at best and perhaps at least, such a state would not seek to police internal challenges to its authority through the utilization of thermonuclear weapons.

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