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Ideas of Darwinism in the Theory of Hans J. Morgenthau

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Abstract: This article investigates the presence and role of Darwinian ideas in the classical realism of Hans J. Morgenthau. While it is not uncommon for classical realists to ground their theories in a biologically-informed view of human nature, the specific influence of Darwinian scientific and social Darwinist thought remains underexplored. This article argues that key components of Morgenthau's theory – particularly his views on human nature, power, and survival – bear conceptual affinities with Darwinian ideas and principles. The article does not claim that Morgenthau's theory is wholly derived from Darwinism, nor that all classical realists share these intellectual roots. Instead, it demonstrates how principles and ideas derived from Darwinism specifically enforce Morgenthau's theory and why this matters for our understanding of classical realism.

Keywords: Hans J. Morgenthau, Darwinism, biology, classical realism, hard core

Introduction

Classical realism represents one of the earliest paradigms and an important theory for the discipline of International Relations (IR). It is widely known for its emphasis on the role of human nature and the inherently competitive behaviour of states in the international arena. Classical realists have often claimed that their theory is deeply rooted in the practice and history of international politics because, according to them, today's world is the same as the one of yesterday and that of tomorrow. Among its leading figures, Hans J. Morgenthau stands out for his systematic articulation of realism's core tenets. His *Politics Among Nations* (1948) quickly gained world-renowned attention and still remains one of the most used textbooks in the field of International Relations. While some scholars have acknowledged a biological basis in Morgenthau's understanding of politics, the specific influence of Darwinian ideas – both scientific and non-scientific – on his theory has received relatively little attention.

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This article addresses that gap. It argues that certain aspects of ideas of Darwinism are present in Morgenthau's work and help shape his views on international politics. His emphasis on the inescapable struggle for power, the egoistic nature of political actors, and the primacy of survival in an anarchic system offers fertile ground for this analysis. However, it does not claim that Morgenthau's theory is reducible to Darwinism or that all classical realists share these influences. Likewise, it doesn't show that every aspect of Darwinism is aligned with his way of thinking on human nature, power, and survival – three elements that will be discussed. Instead, it shows how evolutionary thinking informs Morgenthau's notion of classical realism, why recognizing this is important for IR scholarship, and how it complicates our understanding of both classical realism and the relationship between biology and politics. The article also addresses the complexity of Morgenthau's thought – including elements that resist a Darwinian interpretation – and situates his work within a broader intellectual context.

The importance and contribution of this study is twofold. First, it reveals the biological substratum that undergirds Morgenthau's realist theory, shedding light on how assumptions about nature and evolution shape his core concepts. Second, it invites critical reflection on normative commitments of Morgenthau's theory in light of these Darwinian influences. Recognizing the Darwinian foundations of Morgenthau's thought challenges contemporary realist scholars to re-engage with the biological dimension in international politics. While the analysis centers on Morgenthau, it acknowledges the plurality within classical realism and does not seek to generalize its findings to all figures associated with that tradition. Instead, Morgenthau is treated as a representative case whose work reveals important dimensions of the realist worldview.

The article begins by reviewing the state of current scholarship, clarifying the meaning of 'Darwinism,' and outlining the theoretical framework drawn from Imre Lakatos. It then analyzes how ideas of Darwinism inform Morgenthau's views on human nature, power, and survival. The conclusion reflects on the implications of this Darwinian interpretation for our understanding of realism and international relations more broadly.

Contemporary scholarship presents two main narratives regarding the relationship between international politics and Darwinism in the broadest sense. One narrative maintains that biology, evolutionary theory, and ideas derived from Darwinism could be more or less useful for IR and Political Science. Political scientists from this camp are convinced that certain phenomena can be explained if such ideas are included in the analysis of international politics (see Thompson 2001; O'Neill 1986, 44–53; Somit and Peterson 2005; Alford and Hibbing 2004, 707–723; Johnson and Thayer 2016, 1–26; Tang 2013; Fukuyama 2011; Wendt 2004, 289–316; Sagarin and Taylor 2008; Maxwell 1990; Wilson 2013, 417–438; Peterson and Somit 2017). These authors identify different vantage points about the use of evolutionary principles in the analysis of international politics. Some scholars focus on the human nature angle; others concentrate on state behaviour, while few draw attention to the international environment (system). Here one needs to single out Bradley A. Thayer and his book *Darwin and International Relations* since he made in this respect

a significant impact in the Western academic community (see Thayer 2004). This path-breaking but also controversial publication offers the first comprehensive analysis of the international affairs of the state through the lens of evolutionary theory. His standpoint of analysis is the one of human nature and human behaviour (so-called “first image” analysis) and how these two things play a role in the origins of war and ethnic conflicts. Thayer believes that the findings and knowledge from the life sciences and their implementation in social sciences are not a threat to the social sciences. On the contrary, Thayer posits that the gulf between evolutionary biology and social science has grown too great and that the time has come to bridge this gap (see Thayer 2004, 9). As such, his book represents the first step in illustrating how evolutionary theory can assist important theoretical and empirical issues in the discipline of IR (see Thayer 2004, 266). For instance, by exploring the origins of egoism and domination, this author provides an alternative ultimate cause of classical realism. Specifically, the evolutionary mechanism explains why humans are egoistic, strive to dominate others, and make in-group/out-group distinctions (see Thayer 2004, 75).

The other narrative, on the contrary, presumes that this type of reasoning is dangerously controversial, illogical, and based on fragile grounds. What is noticeable from this group of scholars, besides the fact that they are intrinsically against Darwinian or evolutionary inauguration into the field of IR, is that they evidently advocate for a clear division between the two branches of science. They point to some genuine and serious challenges that would occur if biology were to define international relations (see Laitinen and Maude 1986, 113–128; Bell and MacDonald 2001, 187–198; Davis 2014, 32–44; Rendall 2022, 1–22). Richard Ned Lebow was one of those distinguished scholars who criticized the evolutionary aspect of international politics on multiple occasions. First, back in 1994, he criticized Kenneth Waltz’s assumption that the environment, or international structure in the language of neorealism, rewards certain adaptations in structure and behaviour and punishes others (Lebow 1994, 273). According to Lebow, the twentieth century offers little support for the neorealist notion of evolutionary adaptation. His second article was more explicit and focused on the increasingly mainstream use of evolutionary biology in international relations theory (Lebow 2013, 2–10). Lebow’s position on this matter is that evolutionary foundations essentially generate parsimonious theories, and as a consequence, social Darwinism resurfaces in a new guise. Finally, in one fairly recent article, Lebow offered his critique of adaptation and imitation (Lebow 2018, 1–30). He believes evolutionary psychologists make big and unwarranted leaps far too easily from genetic change to political behaviour. Unlike them, Lebow thinks that one needs to be a lot more careful and explicit about identifying those evolutionary mechanisms under consideration. He remarks that we need to properly describe how those mechanisms work and in which conditions they work. Most importantly, he reminds us that today, evolutionary theories in IR show very little of biologists’ sophistication or caution and that scholars must always specify whether they are using evolution in a biological or metaphorical sense.

What seems clear is that in both camps, researchers have only sporadically made a link between the biological foundations of Morgenthau’s theory and the ideas of Darwinism.

In other words, few researchers have taken into consideration the correlation between the Darwinian scientific ideas and social Darwinist ideas on the one hand, and the key Morgenthau's arguments on the other. Darwinian scientific ideas and principles, along with social Darwinism, have been variously deployed and persistently transpire in Hans J. Morgenthau's theory of international politics. Consequently, his theory relies on Darwinian scientific and social Darwinist ideas more than meets the eye.

Darwinism: Ideas and Principles

Darwinism represents a theory of the evolutionary mechanism proposed by English naturalist Charles Darwin (1809–1882) after the publication of his book *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 as his way of explaining the organic change in living beings. The central premise of Darwinism lies in the understanding that all living organisms, including humans, have evolved over millions of years through the process of natural selection. The “Father of Evolution”, as he was often called, made a genuine revolution in the scientific inquiry from then on and remained one of the most argued figures in the scientific and public discourse. Based on his immense knowledge and observations, many other branches developed in the following decades but have always remained part of Darwinism in one way or another. These areas include evolutionary biology, evolutionary psychology, sociobiology, social Darwinism, Neo-Darwinism, and many others. While Darwinism has the most to offer to the natural sciences, there is a growing interest regarding its contribution to the social sciences. The discipline of IR, as a field of study within social sciences, is anything but excluded from such considerations. Bearing in mind the biological basis of Morgenthau's theory, his arguments can best serve to analyze the ideas of Darwinism.

Even though Darwinism represents a spectrum of different and sometimes conflicting approaches, only a small fraction is considered suitable for IR theories. It is convenient at this stage to consider precisely what Darwinism is and what ideas of Darwinism and principles stand for, thus shedding light on how Morgenthau implicitly and explicitly used them in his works. Darwinism refers to Charles Darwin's ideas as well as the ideas of his many followers from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. The ideas of Darwinism therefore encompass the entire spectrum of ideas, principles, and theories that have originated from or are inspired by Charles Darwin's work on evolution. In this article, ideas of Darwinism will be depicted in their broadest scope, encompassing evolutionary biology, evolutionary psychology, sociobiology, primatology, ethology, but also social Darwinism. In order to avoid conceptual confusion and enhance precision in the analysis, the two strands of Darwinism will be examined; one focusing on the biological and scientific aspects, and the other on the sociopolitical and ideological dimensions:

1. Darwinian scientific ideas – evolutionary biology, evolutionary psychology, sociobiology, primatology and ethology
2. Social Darwinism

By distinguishing between the biological and social currents within Darwinism, the analysis aims to provide clarity and prevent potential misunderstandings that may arise from conflating these aspects. These fields undeniably all trace their origins back to the fundamental concepts established by Charles Darwin, and collectively, they form a tapestry of disciplines interconnected by their roots in the foundational ideas of Darwin's evolutionary theory (Shanahan 2004; Crawford and Krebs 2008; Wilson, Smillie, and der Dennen 1999; Fuentes 2017; Gervet and Soleilhavouy 1997, 195–220; O'Connell and Ruse 2021).

Here are some arguments supporting the claim that these fields are connected and share roots in the ideas initially proposed by Charles Darwin. Evolutionary biology as a field directly stems from Darwin's work and focuses on studying the processes, patterns, and mechanisms of evolution. It encompasses various sub-disciplines all of which aim to understand the evolutionary history and processes that have shaped life. Evolutionary psychology also derives from Darwinism, as it applies Charles Darwin's principles of natural selection to human behavior. It asserts that our psychological traits evolved to solve ancestral problems, aiding survival and reproduction. Sociobiology seeks to explain social behaviors, particularly in animals, including humans, through an evolutionary lens. It draws heavily from evolutionary principles, positing that social behaviors have evolved and persisted due to their adaptive advantages in terms of survival and reproduction. Primatology and ethology are disciplines firmly rooted in evolutionary principles as well. Primatology, the study of primates, and ethology, the study of animal behavior, both draw heavily from Darwin's evolutionary theories. Darwin's work on evolution provided the foundational framework for understanding the behavior, social structures, and adaptations of primates and other animals.

While distinct from scientific theories, social Darwinism attempted to apply Darwin's ideas to human societies and international politics, albeit in a misinterpreted and often ethically questionable manner. It purported that societal progress and success mirrored the principles of natural selection, leading to notions of inherent superiority or fitness of certain groups over others. In other words, social Darwinists attempted to apply evolutionary principles, particularly the idea of "struggle for survival" and the "survival of the fittest," in order to justify various social, economic, and political ideologies, including the idea that certain nations, races, or social classes were more "fit" and should dominate over others. Whether we like it or not, social Darwinists were, in their own way, followers of Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution.

Overall, despite their differences in application and interpretation, all these fields share fundamental concepts rooted in the principles of Darwinism and, therefore, essentially belong to the ideas of Darwinism. Over time, these fields have evolved and diversified but continue to be influenced primarily by Darwinian thought. They remain interconnected through their exploration of evolutionary mechanisms, whether applied to biological evolution, social behavior, or broader societal implications. This article treats both strands as relevant to Morgenthau's intellectual context while maintaining a critical distinction

between them. As such, these ideas can reinforce Morgenthau's theory because they substantially support and fortify his key arguments.

Theoretical Framework

The article will investigate the role of ideas of Darwinism in Hans J. Morgenthau's theory by drawing on the ideas of Imre Lakatos (1922–1974) and his philosophy of science (Lakatos 1989, 48–52; Urbach 1989, 400). In essence, Lakatos' research programme revolves around two parts of a scientific theory (Figure 1). The first part of any scientific theory is its "hard core", which contains its basic assumptions (or axioms). The hard core represents the central, non-negotiable components of a scientific theory or research program. It defines the key concepts, relationships, and assumptions that underlie the theory. These core assumptions or principles are typically resistant to change and serve as the foundation upon which the entire research program is built. One can look at the hard core as the nucleus of a scientific research program. The second part of a scientific theory is its so-called "protective belt" or a surrounding defensive set of "ad hoc" hypotheses. While the hard core provides the foundational principles of a research program, the protective belt serves as a flexible and adaptive layer surrounding the core. The protective belt consists of auxiliary hypotheses, secondary assumptions, or additional theories that surround and protect the hard core. These auxiliary hypotheses act as a buffer zone between the hard core and empirical challenges. Essentially, while the "hard core" of a particular theory contains the essential aspects that define that theory, the "protective belt" is a set of confirmed but disputable auxiliary hypotheses that can be replaced.

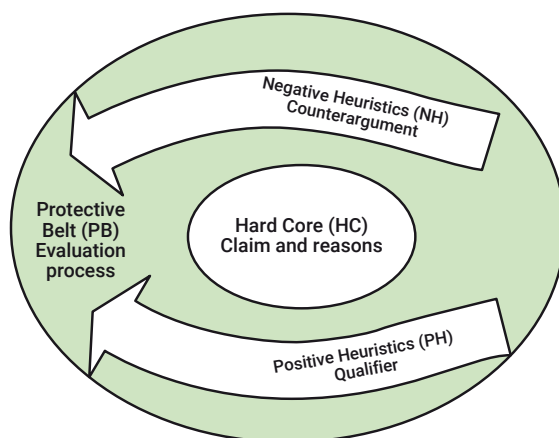


Figure 1: Representation of Lakatos' scientific research programmes. Source: Chang and Chiu 2008, 1759.

One can claim that the so-called theoretical "hard core" of Morgenthau's theory consists of the following: a pessimistic depiction of human nature, the primacy of power and survival, state-centrism, anarchy, moral relativism, balance of power, a competitive zero-

sum outlook, and materialism. On the other hand, restraint, alliance formation, diplomacy, history, geography, leadership, and rejection of international law serve as auxiliary hypotheses within his theory and support the core principles of his theory, providing mechanisms through which states navigate the pursuit of power and survival in the international arena. Although important, these facets are not essential for Hans J. Morgenthau; hence, they belong to his theory's protective belt.

This article examines whether ideas derived from Darwinism serve as foundational assumptions in Morgenthau's theory – that is, whether they constitute part of its hard core. The following arguments will elucidate that Hans J. Morgenthau implicitly and explicitly relies on ideas of Darwinism and, consequently, that those ideas are in fact important for his theory's identity, distinctiveness, and coherence. It is important to underline that beyond the scope of this research are going to be the 'positive' aspects of the ideas of Darwinism. Namely, while Darwinism has often been associated with competitive aspects of nature, one mustn't ignore the fact that such ideas also offer valuable insights into many positive traits, behaviors, and societal developments observed in human societies and across various species. For instance, the ideas of Darwinism also highlight the evolutionary roots of morality, cooperation, and altruism (see Trivers 1971; Hamilton 1963; Hauser 2007; Waal 2009; Krebs 2011; Kropotkin 1972). Accordingly, this research will not focus on the opposite side of Morgenthau's theory, such as elements of his work with regards to ethical restraint, warnings against nationalism and his advocacy for international reform in order to achieve enduring peace. In other words, this article seeks to investigate those ideas of Darwinism that are aligned with and follow the logic of basic principles that his theory proposes, such as the pessimistic side of human nature, struggle for power and survival. This sets the boundary of the intended research and serves as a clear delineation with regards to research direction.

Ideas of Darwinism and Hans J. Morgenthau

Hans J. Morgenthau (1904–1980) is considered by many to be the most iconic classical realist of the twentieth century. Disciplinary historians unanimously regard him as the leading classical realist and a scholar who greatly influenced the whole realist landscape. His *Politics Among Nations* (1948) quickly gained world-renowned attention and, until now, remains one of the most used textbooks in the field of International Relations (Rösch 2018, 342). This book and other writings he produced have influenced not only students and professors but also many political leaders, commentators and diplomats in various countries around the globe. After his death in 1980, major public figures and intellectuals, such as Henry Kissinger, described him as a teacher and mentor (Kissinger 1980, 12–14). If one wants to fully comprehend Hans J. Morgenthau's thoughts on power and human nature, one must pay attention to the fact that this German-American scholar spent his intellectually formative years in pre-World War II Germany (Cox 2007, 172). His intellectual roots were, after all, grounded in the Weimar Republic, where he wrote three books before arriving in the United States. With this in mind, Morgenthau inadvertently import-

ed the continental tradition into the Anglo-American intellectual and political discourse, even though he aimed to distil the IR discipline from the German theoretical debates and discourses. As one will see, the vantage point of German social Darwinists especially parallels his theory of international politics.

Although Hans J. Morgenthau was labelled as “the best-known and most influential biological realist”, explicit references to Darwinian scientific ideas and social Darwinism are curiously absent from his works (Donnelly 2004, 44). In spite of its intellectual repulsion, Morgenthau has implicitly and intuitively imbibed the logic of Darwinism. The attention of this article will be directed towards this German-American scholar in relation to other classical realists for two main reasons. The first reason is that he is considered the genuine modern founder of classical realism and the most influential classical realist of the previous century. The second reason Hans J. Morgenthau deserves the spotlight is that the themes and topics he dealt with most favourably relate to the general subject of this research. After all, he introduced and insisted the most on the biological basis of his theory.

The following intends to investigate the “hidden” Darwinism in Hans J. Morgenthau’s theory of international politics and show how he confirmed key ontological similarities between the biological and political spheres through ideas of Darwinism. It is important to clarify that this analysis does not claim Morgenthau to be a Darwinian thinker in any doctrinal sense. Rather, it highlights how certain themes central to Darwinism shape the contours of his theory. The link will essentially be found in three key accounts: human nature, power, and survival. In other words, a detailed analysis of Hans J. Morgenthau’s theoretical framework will try to demonstrate that basic Darwinian scientific and social Darwinist ideas and principles are decidedly encapsulated in his books and articles.

While demonstrating the necessity of ideas of Darwinism in Morgenthau’s theory, one can expect two things. First, Darwinian scientific ideas can definitely illuminate some of the hard-core principles in Morgenthau’s classical realist theory. The second is to trace and identify the similarities between his thinking and that of social Darwinism. In addition to conventional social Darwinists and modern followers of scientific Darwinian ideas, German military social Darwinists will also prove useful for this examination. This will all be displayed via content analysis. Taken together, these arguments will elucidate that Hans J. Morgenthau implicitly and explicitly relies on ideas of Darwinism and, consequently, that those ideas are in fact within his theoretical hard core.

Human nature will be a stepping stone in the quest to investigate the necessity of ideas of Darwinism in Hans J. Morgenthau’s theory of international politics. Generally, one of the foundations of Hans J. Morgenthau’s theory and classical realism is the question of human nature. Moreover, the most significant difference between classical realism and other forms of realism is precisely the subject of human nature. Morgenthau, in particular, emphasize that imperfect human nature is accountable for the struggle for power that takes place in (international) politics. According to the famous Morgenthau line “political

realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature” (Morgenthau 2005, 4).

At the very beginning of *Politics Among Nations*, Hans J. Morgenthau cites a long paragraph from American social scientist William Graham Sumner (1840–1910).¹ This would not be something strange if Sumner was not at the same time considered as the most prominent American social Darwinist (Lachs and Talisse 2008, 156). More importantly, his affiliation with Sumner starts with his inquiry on the topic of human nature and the nature of politics:

Concerning attempts to reform international politics before making an effort to understand what international politics is about, we share William Graham Sumner’s view: “The worst vice in political discussions is that dogmatism which takes its stand on great principles or assumptions, instead of standing on an exact examination of things as they are and human nature as it is” (Morgenthau 2005, 19–20).

As one can clearly notice, Morgenthau aligns his general thought regarding human nature with social Darwinist William Graham Sumner. Elaborating further on the nature of political activity, Hans J. Morgenthau argued that human nature is rooted in two main human drives. The first human drive is egoism (selfishness) which arises from the competition for those scarce material goods that enable human beings to survive. According to Morgenthau, these goods “have an objective relation to the vital needs of the individual” (Morgenthau 1947, 165). The second human drive is domination – *animus dominandi* – which is in contrast to the requirements of physical survival. Morgenthau described domination as “the desire to maintain the range of one’s own person with regards to others, to increase it, or to demonstrate it” (Morgenthau 1947, 165). The idea behind the following part of this article is to delve into the evolutionary character of egoism and domination. Modern Darwinian scientific ideas are pertinent to explain these two important traits that Morgenthau believes are at the core of human nature. Following that, the discourse of the social Darwinists on this subject will also be presented.

The notion of egoism will be dealt with first. As previously mentioned, Hans J. Morgenthau points out that human nature contains an ineradicable core of egoistic passions (Morgenthau 1947, 172). Egoism, however, carries a distinct Darwinian undertone that IR scholars, Morgenthau included, tended to neglect and dismiss. First and foremost, egoism is embedded in human evolution because, as Charles Darwin has shown, it was essential in the struggle or competition in which all organisms – including humans – were constantly engaged (O’Shea 2012, 26). Darwin himself noted that man was “the rival of other men; he delights in competition, and this leads to ambition which passes too easily into selfishness” (Darwin 1981, 326). He argued that in the struggle for life, selfish behaviour

1 In *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau cites Sumner more than five times. He also cited this author repeatedly in all three volumes of *Politics in the Twentieth Century*.

ensures that an organism meets its physiological needs if the resources are scarce. In other words, organisms were naturally shaped to pursue basic selfishness (Richardson 2004, 15). As Darwin believed, our species is a product of a long history of such selfish struggles. The British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins elaborates Darwin's position and gives us a more modern argument for the origin of egoism (Dawkins 2016; Thayer 2004, 70). His gene's-eye view of Darwinian evolution is opposed to the classical view, which emphasizes that evolution is organism-centred. He explained this theory in his most famous book, *The Selfish Gene*, from 1976. According to Dawkins: "a predominant quality to be expected in a successful gene is ruthless selfishness [...] This gene selfishness will usually give rise to selfishness in individual behaviour" (Dawkins 2016, 3). His main argument is that:

The logic of Darwinism concludes that the unit in the hierarchy of life which survives and passes through the filter of natural selection will tend to be selfish. The units that survive in the world will be the ones that succeeded in surviving at the expense of their rivals at their own level in the hierarchy. That, precisely, is what selfish means in this context (Dawkins 2006, 215).

Morgenthau identified that human beings encompass a trait (egoism) which helps them survive a highly competitive environment. His own words parallel those of Darwin and Dawkins: "There are two reasons why the egotism of one must come into conflict with the egotism of the other. What the one wants for himself, other already possesses or wants, too. Struggle and competition ensue" (Morgenthau 1947, 164–165). As one can see, for Morgenthau, an egoist is an individual who cares only for himself and not another in a condition where natural resources are relatively scarce. If scarcity is the prevailing condition, each egoist seeks to develop strategies to enhance his prospects for survival because life is always better than death (Morgenthau 1947, 164). In other words, man is selfish precisely because he wants to live (Schuett 2010, 26). Morgenthau also translated the notion of egoism on the international level because states in the international arena have to be selfish if they want to survive the highly competitive international environment. By using the same arguments, the policy of national "egotism or selfishness" is essential for national survival and represents the highest moral duty (Smith 1981, 779). Therefore, egoism is not just an assumption or phrase on which Morgenthau built his theory of international politics. It is a feature which is deeply rooted in the evolution of species as such.

The second drive Morgenthau emphasizes in human nature stems from the egoistic trait in animals and humans. This drive is the drive for dominance or *animus dominandi*. Like in the case of egoism, Morgenthau's classical realist theory relies on the Darwinian scientific assumption that evolution plays an important role for dominance as a feature of human nature. In other words, the desire to dominate is another trait rooted in human evolution. For dominance to appear, other organisms are required over whom an individual organism can dominate. In his most famous book, *The Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin recognized that "[e]ach species tries to take advantage of the instincts of others, as each takes advantage of the weaker bodily structure of others" (Darwin 2009, 208). He

also identified that creatures are “overmastering” one another (as cited in Crook 2007, 3). In the case of human beings, Darwin recognized that: “the varieties of man seem to act on each other in the same way as different species of animals – the stronger always extirpating the weak” (Darwin 1839, 520).

American biologist and the founder of sociobiology Edward O. Wilson provides more modern clues on the evolutionary background of dominance (Wilson 1975; Thayer 2004, 70–71). The field of sociobiology is generally defined as the study of the evolution of social behaviour in animals (Goldstein 1987, 34). Sociobiologists have an unequivocally Darwinian perspective, and Wilson’s entire view on human nature revolves around Darwinism (Hawkins 1997, 298). For Wilson, one of the main reasons for the emergence of dominance is related to power itself. In the language of sociobiology, Wilson placed the will to dominate side by side with power. According to him, dominance as a human feature needs to be understood in the context of evolutionary theory because correlates of power in animal groups are essentially the correlates of dominance (Dowding 2011, 25). For example, he observed that the dominant animals of some primate societies utilized power in order to terminate fighting among subordinates (Wilson 1975, 287). Furthermore, Wilson noticed that the will to dominate is intertwined with the possession and priority of access to the necessities of life and reproduction (Wilson 1975, 287).

On this matter, Morgenthau starts with the statement that “the drives to live, to propagate, and to dominate are common to all men” (Morgenthau 2005, 39). Even though he admits that political domination appears as a product of nature itself, he does not relate it specifically with the theory of evolution or any Darwinian idea (Morgenthau 1945, 5). He does, however, mention that “zoologists have tried to show that the drive to dominate is found even in animals, such as chickens and monkeys, who create social hierarchies on the basis of will and the ability to dominate” (Morgenthau 2005, 39). Secondly, Morgenthau’s understanding of the will to dominate greatly matches Wilson’s arguments. For Morgenthau as well, individuals in social groups exert this behaviour to gain control over others and have regular priority of access to resources in a competitive environment. In Morgenthau’s own words:

The other root of conflict and concomitant evil stems from the *animus dominiandi*, the desire for power [...] the desire for power is closely related to the selfishness [...] For the typical goals of selfishness, such as food, shelter, security, and the means by which they are obtained, such as money, jobs, marriage, and the like, have an objective relation to the vital needs of the individual; their attainment offers the best chances for survival under the particular natural and social conditions under which the individual lives (Morgenthau 1947, 165).

One can undoubtedly detect here echoes of natural selection, i.e., that dominance hierarchies are an important part of the social groups of primates, including humans, because having a position of power gives key advantages in terms of access to resources, such as

food and sex. An environmental incentive to compete for scarce resources drives Morgenthau's "man" to acquire power. In such a situation, Morgenthau believed: "man cannot hope to be good but must be content with being not too evil" (Morgenthau 1947, 165). In any case, the will to dominate and the urge to accumulate power are nonetheless presented as the ultimate rationale in human affairs (Payne 2015, 46). His understanding of dominance simply matches that of Darwinism, especially in the sense of power and resources.

This brings us to how human nature, together with egoism and dominance, relates to social Darwinism and its proponents. First of all, many social Darwinists shared Morgenthau's dark and pessimistic vision of human nature. Herbert Spencer, for example, held a rather negative point of view concerning human nature. He noticed that there are what he called certain "defects of existing human nature" (Spencer 1892, 324). By these defects, he identified love (lust) for power, selfishness, injustice and untruthfulness (Spencer 1892, 324). All these traits are notably at the heart of Hans J. Morgenthau's variant of classical realism. Furthermore, this British philosopher and sociologist also claimed that "it is a tolerably well-ascertained fact that men are still selfish. Granting the proposition that men are selfish, we cannot avoid the corollary that those who possess authority will, if permitted, use it for selfish purposes" (Spencer 1892, 93). Spencer even underscored that we as humans need to recognize the truth "that egoism comes before altruism" (Spencer 1879, 187). With regard to dominance, Spencer thinks that: "the abject submission of the weak to the strong, however, unscrupulously enforced, has in some times and places been necessary" (Spencer 1914, 232). In accordance with Spencer, Ernst Haeckel also noticed that mankind's rational judgments were obscured "by the selfish interest of the human personality, who is determined to guarantee of his existence beyond the grave at any price" (as cited in DeGroot 1982, 48). Moreover, he held that "Passion and selfishness, conscious or unconscious, is everywhere the motive force of life. [...] Man in this respect is no exception to the rest of the animal world" (Haeckel 1868, 16).

Furthermore, William Graham Sumner equally shared Morgenthau's pessimism about human nature: "The truth is that cupidity, selfishness, envy, malice, lust, vindictiveness, are constant vices of human nature" (Sumner 1963, 114). Sumner presented a similar vision of dominance: "Men have struggled for power over their fellow-men in order that they might win the joys of earth at the expense of others and might shift the burdens of life from their own shoulders upon those of others" (Sumner 1919, 6). For Ludwig Gumplowicz, domination is universal in time and space, in the same way Morgenthau described it: "The struggle of races for domination and power, this struggle in all its forms, whether avowed and violent or latent and peaceful, is thus the real propulsive principle, the motive force of history" (as cited in Pichot 2009, 260). Gumplowicz further adds that self-preservation "finds expression in attachment for one's own and desire to subdue others" (Gumplowicz 1999, 182).

German militant social Darwinist General Friedrich von Bernhardi also firmly believed that "If men and States acted absolutely unselfishly war would be avoidable" (Bernhardi

1914a, 109). Bernhardt also asserted that “It is neither probable nor desirable that egotism which is necessary for the preservation of one’s existence should be weakened by the desire for a higher civilization” (Bernhardt 1914a, 111). As one can notice, Bernhardt also identified and confirmed Morgenthau’s position that men and states primarily act in the most selfish way. Another German militant social Darwinist, Heinrich von Treitschke, also had a rather grim perspective on human nature. According to Treitschke “[...] it is above all important not to make greater demands on human nature than its frailty can satisfy. The idealist who loses sight of this principle may all too easily become a disappointed enthusiast” (Treitschke 1916, 590).

Power represents a second key concept in Hans J. Morgenthau’s terminology. For him, politics, especially international politics, is predominantly a power phenomenon. Simply put, if there is no power, there is no politics. Morgenthau’s second principle of political realism is defined in terms of power. In his own words: “The essence of international politics is identical with its domestic counterpart. Both domestic and international politics are a struggle for power, modified only by the different conditions under which this struggle takes place in the domestic and in the international spheres” (Morgenthau 2005, 39). On the other hand, power represents a fact of life, and Morgenthau especially gave great significance to adapting to the facts of life. If power is a fact of life, is it somewhat linked to evolutionary biology? In other words, is there a Darwinian scientific foundation of power? Likewise, how do social Darwinists interpret power? This following part will examine that aspect of the power phenomenon in Hans J. Morgenthau’s thought.

To begin with, one needs to look at the evolutionary character of power. As mentioned earlier, power is not something that belongs exclusively to the human species and human nature. Power dynamics in the animal world are strikingly similar to those in human groups. Evolutionary biologist and animal behaviourist Lee Alan Dugatkin finds that the quest to attain and maintain power lies at the heart of almost all animal societies (Dugatkin 2022, xiii). He identified explicit power dynamics in various species of animals, including hyenas, meerkats, mongooses, caribou, chimpanzees, bonobos, macaques, baboons, dolphins, deer, horses, field mice, ravens, skylarks, white-fronted bee-eaters, common loons, Florida scrub jays, copperhead snakes, wasps, ants, and cuttlefish (Dugatkin 2022, xvi). On the other hand, this scholar also recognizes that open aggression, complex assessments of potential opponents, spying, deception, manipulation, formation of alliances and building social networks all serve as strategic paths to attain, maintain and increase power (Dugatkin 2022, xiv). All these traits are intrinsically peculiar to realism and represent what differentiates this IR theory from other theories.

Furthermore, according to American ethologist Liane J. Leedom from the University of Bridgeport, power is, in both animal and human contexts, an individual’s relative capacity to modify others’ states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments (Dowding 2011, 22). The first main function of power is the ability to control resources. In the animal kingdom, those resources are key substrates of survival for both the individual and the species. Those include territory, food, water and shelter (Dowding

2011, 23; Dugatkin 2022, 51). Finite resources essential for life led to the appearance of power as biological and social certainty. In other words, the necessities of power originally emerged from Malthusian necessities (Schmookler 1995, 67; Malthus 2004). Essentially, Thomas Malthus recognized that competition between individuals of the same species for limited environmental resources plays a crucial role in nature. The second main function of power is relational, meaning an unequal relation exists between the powerful (strong) and the subordinate (weak). Power bolsters those that possess it because powerful ones can act without punishment from other group members (Dowding 2011, 25). Taken together, power is crucial for the ability to gain material resources on the one hand and for social recognition on the other (Dowding 2011, 23).

Hans J. Morgenthau implicitly acknowledged the evolutionary background of power when he said that “man’s aspiration for power is not an accident of history, but a universal experience of humanity” (Morgenthau 2005, 38). In *Politics in the Twentieth Century: The Decline of Democratic Politics* he even declares that in the end “Man is an *animal* longing for power [...]” (Morgenthau 1962a, 130). Following the arguments of Liane J. Leedom, Morgenthau’s “man” also exists and acts in the context of scarce resources. In other words, Morgenthau implicitly recognizes the Malthusian imperative and its relation to power. In *Politics Among Nations* and *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics*, Morgenthau refers to the biological sources of political conflict rooted in the Malthusian framework. First of all, Morgenthau believes that only through power, as our natural and innate urge, the scarcity of resources and the existence of conflicting aims can be overwhelmed (Lang 2007, 32). According to him: “All human beings want to live and, hence, want the things necessary for life [...] All human beings seek power and, hence, seek social distinctions, again varying with the particular pattern of their culture, that put them ahead of and above their fellow men” (Morgenthau 2005, 281). He confirmed this in a passage where he noted that “so long as men seek to dominate each other, to take away each other’s possessions, fear and hate each other, they will try to satisfy their desires and to put their emotions to rest” (Morgenthau 2005, 436). The main desire is, of course, the desire for power.

Morgenthau further mentions two main resources (or possessions) that are crucial as the elements of power. Firstly, food is one of the essential elements of power which must be protected at all costs or else both man and state cease to exist (Morgenthau 2005, 130–131; Morgenthau 1947, 165). For Morgenthau “A nation that is self-sufficient in food has a great advantage over a nation that must import foodstuffs or starve” (Morgenthau 1962b, 248). In addition to food, the notion of territory is another element of power that has an important place in Morgenthau’s thought. He speaks of it as a vital utility for power struggles and sees it as the “most stable factor upon which the power of a nation depends” (Morgenthau 2005, 127). For him, territory contains all the necessary physical resources which individuals, communities and states depend on for survival. Moreover, the territory is crucial because it provides a solid benchmark for measuring the extent of real and potential power.

The second aspect of Morgenthau's inquiry on power relates to the social Darwinist stronger (superior) vs weaker (inferior) dyad.² One of the core beliefs of social Darwinism is that life is a struggle in which the strong prevail and the weak succumb (Lakoff 2011, 157). Social Darwinists believed the same logic must apply since politics is a part of life. One French social Darwinist named Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) summed this up nicely by saying that “International relations are today what they have been since the beginning of the world [...] Right and justice have never played any part in the relations of nations of unequal strength” (Le Bon 1899, 329). Likewise, regarding this matter, Herbert Spencer claimed that “The superior shall have the good of his superiority; and the inferior the evil of his inferiority” (Spencer 1969, 541). Alternatively, in the words of Walter Bagehot “The strongest nation has always been conquering the weaker; sometimes even subduing it, but always prevailing over it” (Bagehot 2001, 31).

As mentioned above, Morgenthau held that the struggle for power is an innate urge in man that constitutes a fundamental essence of life. As such, power, therefore, represents an important dynamic of interaction between states. However scarcely, stronger vs weaker reasoning appears in some of his lines. For instance, Morgenthau asserts that the right of a weak state threatened by a strong one only exists if there is some form of balance of power (Morgenthau 2005, 312). If not, the weak will, in one way or the other, be subjugated to the strong. As an example, Morgenthau gives a historical account of how the powerful states make their own authority supreme within the territory of the weak one, destroying its sovereignty (Morgenthau 2005, 332). Furthermore, in a social Darwinist manner, Morgenthau reminds his audience that in any ensuing conflict, the ultimate result between the strong state and the weak one is that the weaker will be subjugated by the stronger (Pichler 1998, 191). Likewise, in the case of the so-called “international law”, Morgenthau shares the same position: “In the relations between a very powerful and a very weak nation, international law cannot be enforced, obviously, against the powerful nation” (Morgenthau 1956, 8).

Now the question arises about how certain social Darwinists identify power and how much importance they attach to this phenomenon. For instance, British sociologist and social Darwinist Benjamin Kidd (1858–1916) devoted an entire book that explores the concept of power (Kidd 1919). However, Friedrich von Bernhardi, Heinrich von Treitschke and Ludwig Gumplowicz have the most in common with classical realism when it comes to the role of power. Gumplowicz, for example, sees that reason for the state's existence and its interests permit it to use any means of power to achieve its objectives. In a clear classical realist manner, Gumplowicz reminds us that “At present politics is strife after power. Each state, party and faction, every man even, is striving after power with all the means at command” (Gumplowicz 1999, 85). Essentially, for Gumplowicz, both state and human beings possess a natural lust for power. In addition, Gumplowicz also identi-

2 Way before social Darwinists, ancient political realist Thucydides claimed that “The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” This famous sentence was often used to describe and defend the principles of political realism and power-politics in general. See Low 2023, 322.

fies that “state possesses power and not the right, although it creates, develops, and fosters the latter” (as cited in Pesch and Ederer 1998, 27).

Furthermore, both Bernhardi and Treitschke place the struggle for power at the centre of (international) politics. Bernhardi underscores that “It is a persistent struggle for possessions, power, and sovereignty, which primarily governs the relations of one nation to another” (Bernhardi 1914b, 19). For Bernhardi, the increase of power is the first and foremost duty of the state and the only regulator of foreign policy (Bernhardi 1914b, 47). He also reminds us that the gain of more power represents the highest moral duty as well (Bernhardi 1914b, 46). Accordingly, the statesman has only one guiding star, and that is power: “[...] the advancement of the power of the State must be first and foremost the object that guides the statesman’s policy” (Bernhardi 1914b, 47). Heinrich von Treitschke also believes that all questions among states are, in the last instance, decided exclusively by the realities of power (Treitschke 1916, 601). For him, the state equals power, and if it neglects its power in favour of some vague ideal of humanity, it will only bring about its own demise (Davis 1914, 142). To put it briefly, the increase, the conservation and the reduction of power is all that matters in the international arena. In this respect, Treitschke adds “If we apply the standards of a deeper Christian morality to the State, and if we bear in mind that the essence of this great collective individuality is power, we realize that the highest moral duty of a State is to maintain its power” (as cited in Davis 1914, 166–167). In essence “Power is the principle of the State, as Faith is the principle of the Church, and Love of the family” (Treitschke 1914, 12). By and large, the understanding of power among these three social Darwinists does sound remarkably similar to Hans J. Morgenthau’s understanding of power as the ultimate and immediate aim of (international) politics (Morgenthau 2005, 31).

The final topic of political realism examined here is the question of survival or self-preservation. The notion of survival represents one of the key subjects in Morgenthau’s theory and is often intertwined with the notion of power. Social Darwinist insights on this matter will be examined primarily, after which it will be contrasted with Hans J. Morgenthau’s perspective.

First off, it is well known that Hans J. Morgenthau shared and accepted a Hobbesian vision of survival in an anarchic environment. However, it is much more honest and precise to say that he shared both Hobbesian and Darwinian notions of survival because, from that standpoint, organisms in nature, human beings in the state of nature and states in the anarchic environment share the same “survive or perish” logic. There are several reasons to equate the portrayal of nature in Darwinism and Hobbesian “state of nature” (Hawkins 1997, 45). For starters, the importance of competition lies at the core of both Darwinism and Hobbesian reasoning. Because of survival, competition is intense, and the stakes are extremely high. In the Darwinian world, competition is inevitable since material capabilities are not infinite in the biosphere. Organisms must always be on guard against rapacious predation. For Hobbes as well, there is that constant need to secure available resources. He asserts that human beings are inherently egocentric and, given the scarcity

of resources, inevitably engage in competition for resources and power. Furthermore, he identifies the strong relationship between zero-sum bias and egoism because human inherent egoism leads them into a state of primal entanglement characterized by zero-sum competition. In other words, in order to fulfill one's egoistic desires, it is inherently necessary to impede the desires of other individuals (Spragens 2014, 164). All things considered, both in the Darwinian and Hobbesian world, survival is dominated by constant fear and constant scarcity.

Many orthodox Darwinists followed this Hobbesian line of thought. Charles Darwin himself bolstered this idea in his famous passages on the violent reality that lies beneath "the contented face of a bright landscape or a tropical forest glowing with life [...] the doctrine that all nature is at war is most true" (as cited in Crook 2007, 3). Ernst Haeckel also aligns with this Hobbesian vision when he declares that "We know that the whole of organic nature on our planet exists only by a relentless war of all against all. [...] The raging war of interests in human society is only a feeble picture of an unceasing and terrible war of existence which reigns throughout the whole of the living world" (as cited in Foster 2000, 196). Haeckel further adds that "Nowhere in nature, no matter where we turn our eyes, does that idyllic peace, celebrated by the poets, exist; we find everywhere a struggle and a striving to annihilate neighbors and competitors" (as cited in Sapp 2003, 56). More importantly, according to Haeckel, the laws of eternal competition and survival are especially apparent and universal in international politics (Knutsen 1992, 180). The reason Haeckel makes such a claim is because he sees politics as nothing else than applied biology (Rice 2007, 185).

Thomas Huxley also saw that man's early history was nothing less than a Hobbesian war of each against all (Crook 1994, 60). According to Huxley, prior to the first formation of society, humans had set themselves against one another: "Life was a continual free fight, and beyond the limited and temporary relations of the family, the Hobbesian war of each against all was the normal state of existence" (as cited in Hale 2014, 217). In an article titled "The Struggle for Existence", Huxley recognized that in the animal world as well, Hobbesian war of all against all was commonplace (Kokko 2013, 38). William Graham Sumner also thought that the struggle for survival was the main characteristic of international politics in the past and will stay that way in the future (Knutsen 1992, 183). In Sumner's own words: "It is the competition of life which makes war, and that is why war always has existed and always will. It is in the conditions of human existence" (Sumner 1911, 10). Ludwig Gumplowicz gives the same account on this matter. According to him "All of man's 'free acts' may be reduced to a universal concept and a common denominator: preservation" (Gumplowicz 1999, 178). Consequently, state survival is no different: "The aspirations of statesmen are directed toward political and national preservation and expansion" (Gumplowicz 1999, 181).

General Friedrich von Bernhardi also firmly believed that the essence of international politics is the struggle for power and survival. First and foremost, this German representative of *Machtpolitik* and social Darwinism asserts that "Struggle is, therefore, a universal law

of Nature, and the instinct of self-preservation which leads to struggle is acknowledged to be a natural condition of existence" (Bernhardi 1914b, 21). Bernhardi further argues that

Every nation possesses an individuality of its own, and all progress among nations is based on their competition among themselves. As the competition among nations leads occasionally and unavoidably to differences among them, all real progress is founded upon the struggle for existence and struggle for power prevailing among them (Bernhardi 1914a, 27; O'Connell and Ruse 2021, 17).

As a result, the relations among nations are primarily dominated by an unceasing struggle for survival, power and predominance (Bernhardi 1914a, 109). Heinrich von Treitschke likewise saw world politics as a battlefield in which only the relentless struggle for power ensures the state's survival (Kohn 1945, 437). In his own words: "The highest duty of the State is self-preservation. Self-preservation is for the State an absolute moral obligation" (as cited in Davis 1914, 167). As one could clearly identify, social Darwinists prized highly survival for both the individual and the state.

Hans J. Morgenthau has, of course, the same perspective regarding this subject. Firstly, he acknowledges that the observance of the "laws of nature is vouchsafed by man's instinct for self-preservation" (Morgenthau 1962a, 310). Laws of nature are the laws of the struggle for survival in a relentless war of all against all. Furthermore, Morgenthau adds that for the individual "the most basic fact of existence which cannot be subdivided further is the fact of life itself [...] Before and in all combinations of human motivation there is one basic force: the impulse for life" (Morgenthau 1930, 10). Life itself, according to Morgenthau, has evolutionary background because "[...] life is in constant flux. Life is always in a 'period of transition'" (Morgenthau 1947, 14). These sentences show that Morgenthau explicitly relies on the Darwinian scientific notion of survival. He further indicates that our reason will always support those impulses that are most favourable to survival and growth (Morgenthau 1947, 137). In other words, Morgenthau was quite aware that humans evolved to think in terms of survival and growth. Here again Morgenthau explicitly relies on the Darwinian scientific notion of survival. Accordingly, survival in the anarchic environment is nothing else than a supreme imperative for the individual and the state. He expresses the biological depiction of the state in the context of survival: "The very simile of life and death has an objective, empirically verifiable meaning for biological units and is still susceptible of a high degree of empirical precision in the political sphere: a state or a party can be said to live and die" (Morgenthau 1962b, 58). National self-preservation through the maximization of power is thus the highest universal value which lies at the very core of international politics. Regarding this, Morgenthau writes: "In a world where a number of sovereign nations compete with and oppose each other for power, the foreign policies of all nations must necessarily refer to their survival as their minimum requirement" (Morgenthau 1958, 66).

Like power, survival represents another core principle in Hans J. Morgenthau's theory of international politics. This concept has both Hobbesian and Darwinian roots. While Morgenthau emphasized the primacy of state survival, social Darwinists had already done so – essentially in the same way. For those reasons, survival in its Darwinian scientific and social Darwinist sense must also be included in Morgenthau's theoretical hard core, especially if his theory wants to maintain its coherence, distinctiveness, and theoretical identity.

Conclusion

This article has argued that key elements of Hans J. Morgenthau's classical realism – namely his views on human nature, power, and survival – exhibit structural affinities with Darwinian thought. These affinities do not suggest that Morgenthau was a Darwinist in any doctrinal sense, nor that his theory is reducible to either evolutionary biology or social Darwinism. Rather, the Darwinian framework operating beneath the surface helps illuminate the deeper assumptions that underpin Morgenthau's theory and, by extension, the foundational logic of classical realism. Morgenthau's emphasis on egoistic human nature, the inevitability of power struggles, and the centrality of survival reflects a biologically deterministic worldview that parallels both scientific and ideological forms of Darwinism.

Firstly, Morgenthau's emphasis on the pessimistic understanding of human nature aligns with the social Darwinist view of human nature as egoistic and dominant. Morgenthau's theory implicitly relies on Darwinism because, just like him, many social Darwinists also framed determinism with regard to human nature. Likewise, modern scientific findings show us that these negative human traits can be traced back to the principles of evolution. Specifically, it is apparent that Hans J. Morgenthau inadvertently asserted that the evil of politics derived from two drives rooted in Darwinian scientific ideas. The first is selfishness (egoism) which originates in the necessity provoked by the demands of survival. The second one is domination which originates as an urge for power and mastery. If human nature is driven by egoism and domination, as Morgenthau claims, one cannot help but accept the fact that Darwinian scientific ideas serve to confirm and consolidate those claims. On the other hand, his arguments with regards to human nature are in harmony with representatives of social Darwinism. Many social Darwinists did not just justify selfishness and dominance; they also saw these two traits as something intrinsically human. Taken together, ideas of Darwinism enhance and support one of the pillars of Hans J. Morgenthau's theory, i.e., the pessimistic understanding of human nature. In Lakatosian terms, this view of human nature functions as part of the hard core of Morgenthau's theory, and Darwinian logic reinforces its structure.

Secondly, Morgenthau's depiction of power dynamics and the struggle for power reflects Darwinian roots. Findings from evolutionary biology reveal that power is equally important in the animal kingdom. In order to achieve either aim – resources which are necessary for life or status recognition – one needs to encompass power. Basically, if one peels

the layers of power, one finds evolution at its foundation. Power in its essence represents an evolutionary necessity of life. This deep connection suggests that power operates as a biologically informed category within the hard core of classical realism. On the other hand, social Darwinism is notoriously stigmatized for its emphasis on a stronger (superior) vs weaker (inferior) pecking order, which exists on both social and international levels. However marginal it may seem; this is something that is present in Morgenthau's writings as well. Last but not least, the three social Darwinists mentioned above valued power in the political realm just as much and in the same way as Morgenthau did. German militant representatives of social Darwinism were all in favour of power politics. In essence, Morgenthau's espousal of the notion of power is linked with the ideas of Darwinism since it is rooted in evolutionary biology and shares many similarities with social Darwinism. Therefore, power, as the hard-core principle of Morgenthau's theory of international politics, must comprise a Darwinian scientific foundation in order to maintain its theoretical identity, uniqueness, and coherence. Also, the social Darwinist perception of power shouldn't be neglected or dismissed but rather acknowledged, as it is in tone with Morgenthau's depiction of international politics as a realm defined by struggle.

Finally, survival serves as a conceptual bridge between Morgenthau's theory and Darwinism – an anchor point that stabilizes the hard core of both frameworks. The analysis has shown that even though survival in the anarchical environment is Hobbesian in nature, it is equally Darwinian because the ethos and the imperative of survival are pivotal for the entire Darwinian thought. Social Darwinists especially pointed to the uncertainty of survival in a dangerous environment. Haeckel, Huxley, Sumner, and Gumplowicz all shared the classical realist position of survival as a top priority. Morgenthau however, as proponent of Thomas Hobbes, drew on his notion of "survival" without taking into account that this was something that Darwin and his followers were also famous for, not just Hobbes. What is especially noticeable at first glance is that the Hobbesian vision of survival and the social Darwinist one are, to the greatest extent, tantamount. Social Darwinists saw that international politics represented a natural and inevitable struggle for survival and dominance among nations. Again, just like Morgenthau, Treitschke and Bernhardt recognized that survival and power are basically two sides of the same coin.

In sum, tracing the Darwinian dimensions of Morgenthau's classical realism enriches our understanding of both his work and the broader realist tradition. It challenges simplistic readings of classical realism as timeless or universal, and informs contemporary debates about the role of biology in this IR theory. It also highlights the need for IR scholars to pay closer attention to the often-unspoken assumptions that underlie political theories, particularly those related to human nature and conflict. While this analysis focuses on Morgenthau, who is arguably the most systematic classical realist, further work could extend these findings to other classical realists to determine whether similar conceptual patterns or Darwinian assumptions appear across the broader realist tradition.

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