
the same malady. Reagan's legacy to democracies the world over is that a society built on freedom and a firm moral sense can be a source of pride for its citizens, and that such well-founded pride is the key to resolving the challenges, whatever their nature, that democracies confront. Americans turned their society around by reaffirming their belief

in their own values, traditions and achievements. One hopes that the Jewish state, now plunged in self-doubt about the meaning and worth of its own values and traditions, will learn to do the same.

Yitzhak Klein is a public policy analyst, and a Contributing Editor of AZURE.

Transcending IR

*Thomas L. Pangle
and Peter J. Abrens Dorf*

**Justice Among Nations:
On the Moral Basis
Of Power and Peace**

*University Press of Kansas,
362 pages.*

Reviewed by Adam Wolfson

For generations, the landscape of foreign policy debates has been characterized by a philosophical split between idealists and realists. Idealists, it will be recalled, believe that nations should conduct their foreign policy based on universal moral principles or

ideals, and are morally culpable when they fail to do so; realists, on the other hand, see interests of state as the exclusive consideration of foreign policy, and the well-being of the nation as the only moral standard according to which governments may be judged.

In our time, this fundamental dispute has shaped the debate on a host of foreign policy issues. The idealist today places great faith in such transnational organizations as the United Nations, and in the idea that nations can no longer rely exclusively on their own "sovereignty" to maintain peace and security. From the lofty vantage of idealism, nation-states and their wars are thought to be anachronisms,

rendered irrelevant by a new order made up of multinational bodies. But this does not mean that the idealist will never commit his nation to war; it only means that he will not do so to defend something called the “national interest.” In the United States, for example, the idealist President Bill Clinton has, by some measures, been far more promiscuous in committing U.S. troops abroad than the realist President George Bush ever was. Or consider the fact that many idealists who opposed the war to save Kuwait supported the war to save Kosovo. The former mission, in their estimation, was tainted because America had a strategic and economic interest in not allowing Saddam to control Kuwait’s oil fields. “No blood for oil,” said many a war protester who would later demand a war to save Kosovo precisely because such a war could not be traced back to any definable American interest.

Realism today comes, to be sure, in many varieties, but most of them are rooted in this concept of the national interest. As George Washington once said: “No nation is to be trusted farther than it is bound by its interests.” And a modern-day corollary of this axiom might be that no nation should act where its national interest is not at stake. Thus most American realists opposed the war in Kosovo, as well as Clinton’s many other peace-keeping missions around the globe. Why

should we fight for Kosovo, they asked, when our national interest is so clearly not at issue? Why should we send American troops to keep the peace in places like Haiti and Bosnia which have only a marginal relation to America’s security needs? That’s not foreign policy, they said, but social work.

Anyone seeking to understand the foreign policy debate now raging in the United States and around the world could do no better than read *Justice Among Nations: On the Moral Basis of Power and Peace*, a challenging and original new book on what the great philosophers had to say about international justice, co-written by two of North America’s leading political theorists, Thomas L. Pangle and Peter J. Ahrens Dorf. As followers of the philosopher Leo Strauss, the authors take a textual approach to their subject, offering close readings of Thucydides, Plato, Cicero, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Kant, as well as more contemporary thinkers on international relations. They follow Strauss in another way too: They take the thought of these philosophers with utmost seriousness, as possibly representing the truth about human nature and international justice. The book’s chapters make up a sort of dialogue among the greatest minds on the subject of international relations. That dialogue spans 2,500 years and pits, for example, the classical realism of the Athenians as

described by Thucydides against Kantian idealism, and both of these alternatives against Hobbes' more pacific version of realism, as well as its contemporary variants as found in the thought of Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz.

While the principal aim of *Justice Among Nations* is to reinvigorate the study of international relations and to provoke readers to think more deeply about justice, Pangle and Ahrens Dorf appear to have another goal as well: That of transcending the modern debate between idealism and realism. Though they do not present a foreign policy approach of their own, and though they for the most part do not discuss the issues of the present day, their exegesis of philosophers of ages past encourages us to reexamine the truths inherent in the pre-modern conceptions of international relations, and in so doing helps us see the limits of our own thinking.

What is wrong with the contemporary debate? To begin with, there is more than a whiff of utopian nonsense in the modern idealist's position. Is it really possible that the American people will sacrifice their sons and daughters when the interests of their own nation are not implicated? Americans were not willing to risk their blood and treasure to stop the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 or the

slaughter in East Timor in 1999; nor were they willing to do anything but bomb to help the Kosovars in 1999. At least until the typical American's political loyalties are radically transformed and internationalized, the idealist pledge to stop human slaughters wherever they may occur will remain unredeemed.

What is lacking in the foreign policy of the modern idealist is a realistic appreciation of the limits of politics. As Pangle and Ahrens Dorf point out, Plato and Aristotle, while maintaining a belief in transcendent justice, did not make this mistake:

The Socratics tend on the whole to teach not only the impracticality, but even the undesirability, of any radical transformation of the patriotic, pre-philosophic citizen's attitude toward foreign policy. The classics do not fail to observe that every decent citizen will demand a moral justification for his city's foreign policy and above all for its resort to war. But they equally recognize that every such citizen will also consider it a duty to care for fellow citizens more than for outsiders.

This is not to say, as the authors note, that citizens of the Socratic city will be indifferent to the plight of their neighbors, for they also "conceive of themselves as sharing with all humans in a single cosmic community." Nonetheless, one remains the citizen of this or that particular regime and hence

concerned first and foremost with its affairs.

Are the realists who opposed the war in Kosovo or the commitment of American troops in places like Haiti thus vindicated? Well, not exactly. Modern-day realists are not the heirs of Thucydides' or Socrates' versions of realism; few of them subscribe to the "single cosmic community." Instead, as told by Pangle and Ahrens-dorf, modern realists are at the end of a very long and complex historical development in modern thought that began with Machiavelli, the first modern "realist," and ended in the relativistic approach of contemporary "neo-realists." In other words, realism is not a single concept but an approach to foreign affairs with many different, if complementary, strains.

The birth of modern realism begins with Machiavelli: In reaction against the pious cruelty associated with wars of religion, Machiavelli urged a more realistic foreign policy that rejected religious crusades in favor of wars of worldly conquest. His realism was later modified by the early-modern liberals, including Hobbes, Locke and Montesquieu, who sought to end even wars for power and glory, replacing them with peaceful competition over economic goods.

But still the ground was not yet prepared for realism's most modern variant. As the authors describe in some

detail, first had to come the idealist reaction against the low, realistic ends of the commercial republic defended by Locke and Montesquieu:

Does the liberal, capitalist achievement of a secure and physically comfortable existence constitute a goal worthy of our human being, or does it not ultimately sap our moral spirit and render apathetic or heartless our civic association? Does the success of the modern dream not undermine our willingness to subordinate, and even sacrifice, our own physical welfare for the sake of something higher or broader than our poor selves? This is the doubt that drove Rousseau, Kant and their successors to strive to rescue... what they saw to be the dying spiritual life of humanity.

The idealist reaction to the bourgeois aspirations of earlier realistic liberals, however, created its own set of problems, setting the stage eventually for the emergence of a version of realism which came to full flower only in the twentieth century. Certainly, idealism reinvigorated the human spirit, but it also caused untold carnage and bloodshed, as Wilsonian liberals went to war to make the world safe for democracy, while communists fought for an international workers' paradise, and various romanticized nationalisms—most virulently, national socialism in Nazi Germany—fought for world conquest. So, in response to the idealist reaction, there was, the authors explain, a realist

counter-reaction. And thus was modern realism born.

The realism of such modern scholars as E.H. Carr, George Kennan, Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz, however, is not a simple recapitulation of Machiavelli's realism. For one thing, modern realists are more akin to Hobbes than to Machiavelli, in that their aim is world peace, or at least peaceful coexistence, not glory or power. More fundamentally, modern realists became, to one degree or another, what one might call neo-relativists. They are not complete relativists in that they believe, like Hobbes, that peace is better than the war of all against all. But they adopt at least a limited version of relativism in their fight against modern idealism.

To discredit the various claims of idealism to universality, modern realists thought it necessary to question whether there is such a thing as universal principles or even justice. "Morgenthau contends not only that there is no conception of justice that can be known to be true," the authors write, "but, moreover, that every conception of justice or of the common good is lacking in either 'universality' or 'concreteness' or both." Similarly, the authors point out, "Waltz bases his opposition to idealism in part on a claim that 'justice cannot be objectively defined' and hence that the appeal to

justice is a mask for the powerful." Many realists would have objected to Ronald Reagan's characterization of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," agreeing instead with Morgenthau's assessment of the Cold War: It is, he said at the time, "not a struggle between good and evil, truth and falsehood, but of power with power."

Pangle and Ahrens Dorf bring to light the shortcomings of the modern realist's view. Just as there is something utopian in the idealist's attempt to convince people to give their lives for causes that are not really their own, so too there is something unrealistic about realism.

In their chapter devoted to Thucydides' "classical realism," for example, the authors brilliantly explore why those master realists, the Athenians, lost to their moralistic antagonists, the Spartans. Their primary problem was that from a psychological standpoint, the realist principle is impossible to maintain. The Athenians insisted not so much that might makes right, but that right simply has no place in the international domain. All is self-interest, and self-interest is all. But if this were so, then the Athenians themselves could not blame other nations for attacking them, since the latter were not acting unjustly but only according to their self-interest. Neither could the Athenians claim moral superiority to their enemies or to be fighting for a

“just” cause without giving up their realism. As the authors put it: “Such a nation [as Athens] must face the fact that it is nothing more than a collection of self-interested beings struggling against other groups of self-interested beings in a world that is fundamentally indifferent to its fate.”

It is Thucydides’ argument that even the supremely realistic Athenians could not, in the end, live by such a code. Their “realistic thesis,” the authors write, “cannot satisfy the powerful human longings apparently rooted in the divination that we are not merely self-interested beings, that we are capable of rising above our interests and behaving nobly and justly, and that there are gods who may recognize our nobility and reward our justice.” Moreover, this longing is more than a psychological fact, according to Thucydides; for there genuinely is a good that transcends self-interest, namely “the good of understanding or wisdom.”

In the light of classical political thought, modern realism is thus shown to be—like its modern antithesis, idealism—psychologically untenable and metaphysically questionable. The pure realist would have us not care about what happens in Kosovo and Rwanda, while the pure idealist would have us die for these small nation-states. Neither alternative ultimately answers to our human nature, which cares most about what is

near and dear but also about what transcends its own place and time. In sum, neither the realist nor the idealist offers a foreign policy that is humanly satisfying; and for that reason neither ideological position ultimately meets the demands of justice.

What’s needed, argue the authors, is a foreign policy that reaches back beyond the current debate between modern idealism and realism to “the pre-modern alternatives.” If there is a shortcoming to this excellent book, it is that the authors do not very often leave off from their textual analysis to explain how these pre-modern alternatives might apply in the modern world. But the markers for a new beginning are there.

Consider the case of America in an earlier day. Americans have always viewed their country as exceptional, as dedicated to certain universal propositions applicable to all of humanity. But at the same time, Americans (Woodrow Wilson being the outstanding exception) have generally avoided making an abstract ideology of their idealism. The American Founders, for example, spoke not only of abstract principles but of honor and love of country and the interests of the state as well. The point is that America’s foreign policy was to be a genuine mix of idealism and realism. Human rights would be championed not so much because they are universal but

because they are America's own birth-right—which is also to say, they are a part of our national interest. Somewhere in this middle region between idealism and realism lies the security

and prosperity of liberal democracies everywhere.

Adam Wolfson is Executive Editor of The Public Interest.

After Virtue

Mark A. Raider

**The Emergence
Of American Zionism**

*New York University Press,
296 pages.*

Reviewed by Gil Troy

For over a century now, American Zionism has been a movement riddled with contradictions. Too comfortable to crave a homeland other than the United States, by 1948 most American Jews nonetheless championed the establishment of a Jewish state. Even as they became successful, committed capitalists, still they bankrolled what was billed as a socialist paradise in Israel. And although most Israelis have defined themselves and their state in secular terms, most American Jews

have made support for Israel a central aspect of their religion. In short, American Jews have devoted untold resources—emotional, political, financial—to fulfilling a dream which in many ways contradicts the lives they themselves have lived.

Recently, a number of authors have tried to explain just how this anomalous hybrid developed, including Michael Berkowitz in *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project, 1914-1933* (1997) and Rafael Medoff in *Zionism and the Arabs: An American Jewish Dilemma, 1898-1948* (1997). The most recent attempt is *The Emergence of American Zionism* by Mark A. Raider, a promising young historian at the State University of New York at Albany. In this well-organized study, Raider traces the transformation of American Zionism from a disjointed,