Strategy as a vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and modern strategic studies*

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Abstract. This essay introduces Max Weber's sociology of modern culture to International Relations. Previous treatments of Weber in the discipline have focused on Morgenthau's use of Weberian ideas rather than on the differences between their positions. In appropriating Weber's 'ethic of responsibility' for his theory of power politics, Morgenthau neglected Weber's sociology of 'rationalization' and analysis of the displacement of cultural values in modern policy-making. In Morgenthau's theory foreign policy is judged in terms of consequences for state power, while for Weber policy is judged in terms of consequences for cultural values. This crucial difference in their understanding of the political ethics of realism is anatomized. Using Weber's sociology of modern culture and often misunderstood view of the relation between science and values, the article then traces the repercussions of Morgenthau's influential understanding of realism in strategic policy science.

International Relations is increasingly aware of realism's 'Weberian legacy' and specifically of the role of Max Weber's political ethics in underpinning realist policy science. But the way in which Weberian ideas entered the discipline, and were transformed in the process, is not generally known. Weber's thought exercised a 'formative' influence on the young Hans Morgenthau, who appropriated for his own purposes a variety of recognizably Weberian positions, including the 'ethic of responsibility' which he used as the centre-piece of Scientific Man vs. Power Politics. An ethic of responsibility entails the rational selection of means, ethical or otherwise, to attain valued ends. Weber designed this ethic in response to processes of rationalization and disenchantment identified and analysed in his sociology of modern culture, processes which involve the retreat and displacement of ideal ends

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1 Philip K. Lawrence, 'Strategy, the State and the Weberian Legacy', Review of International Studies, 13 (1987); Michael Joseph Smith, Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger (Baton Rouge, LA, 1986), chs. 1–2; R. B. J. Walker, Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory (Cambridge, 1993), and 'Violence, Modernity, Silence: From Max Weber to International Relations', in David Campbell and Michael Dillon (eds.), The Political Subject of Violence (Manchester, 1993). Throughout this article, the phrases 'realist policy science' and 'realist science' refer to the tradition of realism in political theory and International Relations, not to realist philosophy of science. By 'science', I mean the systematic crafting of knowledge and generally refer only to social science unless context indicates otherwise.

from public life. Morgenthau and International Relations have overlooked the connection between Weber’s political thought and his sociology of modern culture.3

For Weber, the ethic of responsibility not only involved willingness to use violence to secure valued ends, the core of realist political ethics, but also sought to secure a central role for ethical and cultural values in political decision-making. In tying the ethic to his realist theory of international politics, Morgenthau neglected this latter function, leaving it vulnerable to the very dangers Weber sought to avert. Morgenthau admitted as rational only those policies designed to maintain or increase a state’s power position. In the language of realist defence intellectuals, or ‘strategists’, policies were to be assessed in terms of the degree to which they maintained or furthered national security. According to Morgenthau’s theory, the only way national values can survive and flourish in international politics is by means of ‘national security’; for Weber, policies are always to be assessed in terms of their consequences for national values, for fear that the means become ends-in-themselves. Even as Morgenthau reminded statespersons and their advisers to choose the ‘least evil means’,4 he introduced a critical slippage between means and ends into realist theory and policy science of international politics. Policies, instead of being judged in terms of whether they furthered national values, were to be judged in terms of whether they furthered the means—power and security—to those values.

Morgenthau believed he could provide scientific content as to what the ethic of responsibility required in practice for foreign policy, directly contradicting Weber’s view of the limitations of a policy science. For Morgenthau, policy science can play a fundamental role in policy decisions since the end, the national interest ‘defined in terms of power’, is given.5 By contrast, for Weber all non-trivial questions of policy involve choice among competing values, as to which are pursued over others and which are sacrificed in the pursuit, and such choices cannot be made scientifically. Weber judged German foreign policies in terms of their consequences not only for the power of the German state but also for national cultural values and the domestic institutions which embodied and furthered those values in practice.6 Turning policy over to the guidance of a policy science based on the end of national security would be, for Weber, a direct path to rationalization, to the national security means becoming ends-in-themselves. Morgenthau’s understanding of a realist policy science, involving as it does an increasing dependence on science for policy-makers even as he polemicsizes against a utopian science, threatens the continued salience of values in foreign policy making. As such, it can be understood as a theoretic step in

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the very processes of rationalization and disenchantment analysed in Weber's sociology of modern culture.

For Weber, modern culture is characterized by ‘disenchantment’, the retreat and displacement of ultimate values from public life, and by ‘rationalization’, the proliferation and intensive development of intellectual, organizational and material means. While the application of scientific rationality makes modern economies more profitable, organizations more efficient and armed forces more deadly, the capacity to impose value-oriented ends upon such powerful means is increasingly lacking. ‘Strategic rationalization’ can be defined as the proliferation of means to national security occurring simultaneously with disenchantment, the detachment of national values and political purposes from the development and analysis of military means. This is precisely the charge that ‘classical’ or Clausewitzian strategists levelled at nuclear war-fighting strategies. During the Cold War, the US developed weaponry, strategies and targeting doctrine for the waging of nuclear war in the absence of convincing analysis of political purpose. Moreover, the existence and intensive development of these means for waging nuclear war increased the probability of its occurrence. For Weber’s sociology of modern culture, these historical and social processes are not just the result of arms racing, balance-of-power dynamics or the idiosyncratic products of the ‘wizards of Armageddon’, but are in fact characteristic of modern culture, in which intensive development of rational means displaces and undermines the ends sought. War-fighting strategy and US nuclear operational planning, which reflected war-fighting strategy even when it was out of favour among civilian authorities, not only lacked political purpose but actually threatened national and possibly human survival.

The dispute between war-fighting strategists and their opponents was carried on in scientific terms, that is in terms of the best means to national security. In Weberian epistemology, scientific analysis takes place only within value-oriented conceptual schemes. When the values underlying scientific analysis are not made explicit, as when national security is substituted for the values to be secured, their influence can still be decisive for judging the ‘rationality’ of results. That is, a strategy, no matter how scientifically rigorous its formulation, is only rational for some set of ultimate values, for some conception of what is to be secured and who it is to be secured from. Behind the Western strategic disputes of the Cold War, both within and outside of government, lie different meaningful constructions of that conflict, of the nature of the Western ‘self’ to be secured and of the Communist ‘other’ it was to be secured from. It was these constructions which provided the meaning, the purpose or calling, strategists found in their vocation. On a Weberian view, the values embodied in these meaningful constructions are decisive in shaping scientific analysis, in establishing the value-oriented conceptual schemes within

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9 In Weber scholarship, the notion that Weber believed social science could produce ‘objective knowledge’ in some strong sense is no longer seriously maintained. See below, pp. 165–8.
which empirical inquiry takes place. Thus the choice between two strategies, two conceptions of the best means to national security, cannot be made in scientific terms; hidden behind the science are different meaningful constructions of what values are at stake. In a world of rationalized and disenchanted strategy, epitomized by the systems analysis approaches of ‘scientific strategy’, the decisive role of values in making one strategy seem rational and another not is obscured. Indeed, as a perspective committed to a realistic view of the facts of power and to the eschewing or at least minimizing of ‘moral qualms’, realism is particularly ill-suited to grasping that its greatest policy disagreements may lie outside the realm of scientific analysis altogether, in that of conflicting values.

This article uses Max Weber’s sociology of modern culture to trace the fate of Weberian ideas in Hans Morgenthau’s construction of a realist policy science of international politics. This science is seen as a moment in the rationalization of strategic advice to that modern ‘Prince’, the state. Morgenthau was the conduit for these Weberian ideas, to which he added his own distinctive contribution. He significantly influenced the training of postwar defence intellectuals, many of whom adopted his view of the role of realist policy science, if not his specific policy positions. His writing best captured the spirit of those who sought to use a realist and scientific approach to further their national cause in the wake of Hitler and in the face of what was interpreted as the Soviet challenge. But Morgenthau is also a transitional figure who in his insistence on the importance of national purpose and of ethics, and in his view of social science as value-related systematic inquiry, remained closer to a Weberian outlook than many of those realists who came to see him as the flawed progenitor of their tradition in its modern form.

I proceed by first placing Morgenthau and Weber within the context of ‘the strategic approach to international relations’.11 I then turn to Weber’s construction of a realist policy science and its relation to his sociology of modern culture. Third, I contrast the Weberian perspective with Morgenthau’s construction of a policy science which focuses on means to state power. In conclusion, I look at some of the consequences of this view of policy science in US nuclear strategy.

**The strategic approach to international relations**

Michael Howard’s concept of the strategic approach to international relations serves as a useful framework for interpreting Morgenthau and Weber. The cultural values embodied in a political unit are vulnerable in a world in which other such units have the capacity to threaten or use force. ‘[T]he political system which makes possible our cultural activities and aspirations is not immortal.’12 Statespersons must take account of the consequences of their policies (or non-action) with respect to the survival and flourishing of their political associations. There is a particularly close relationship between realism, as a political and scientific approach to world politics, and strategic analysis.13 The strategic approach logically entails a realist policy

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12 Ibid., p. 39.
science of international politics which can increase the sphere of rational direction by advising political leadership on which goals are attainable in international politics and by analysing the consequences, desired or otherwise, that would attend various courses of action. Science potentially provides the intellectual means by which a political unit achieves its purposes. The strategic approach, then, links the values of a political community, most often ‘the nation’, with strategic policy science.

Weber and Morgenthau take this approach in that: (1) they assume the importance of coercive power and the necessity of using force to secure national values in international politics; (2) while national survival is thus a foremost value, for both thinkers a nation’s purposes are more than simply material wealth and physical security but are derived ultimately from the national character or culture; and (3) they share the hope that a policy science can aid in rationally directing state policy in world affairs, a hope qualified by the realization that the fate of states is by no means always, or even regularly, in the control of their leaderships. This dimension of fate, of the uncertainty and ultimate unknowability of the consequences of even the most carefully crafted policy, is one source of their sense of the tragic in history, a sense which separates them from those with a more optimistic view of the powers of science or human reason in general. The other source is their profound awareness of the unethical nature of the essential means of political action, power and force.

An ethic of responsibility underlies the strategic approach to international relations. It involves the rational selection of appropriate means to secure a state’s political values, which, in questions of strategy, always contemplate the use of organized violence. The ethic of responsibility embraces the dictum that at least in politics the end can justify the means. It is contrasted with an ethic of absolute conviction in which only actions ethical from the point of view of one’s ultimate values are undertaken. The dictum here is ‘if I act rightly, good is attained’. The ethic of responsibility was popularized in Weber’s famous lecture and essay ‘Politics as a Vocation’ and is the centre-piece of Morgenthau’s Scientific Man vs. Power Politics.14 It provides the ethos of realist policy science. Strategists advise the leadership of their political communities on the appropriate means by which organized violence. The ethic of responsibility embraces the dictum that at least in politics the end can justify the means. It is contrasted with an ethic of absolute conviction in which only actions ethical from the point of view of one’s ultimate values are undertaken. The dictum here is ‘if I act rightly, good is attained’. The ethic of responsibility was popularized in Weber’s famous lecture and essay ‘Politics as a Vocation’ and is the centre-piece of Morgenthau’s Scientific Man vs. Power Politics.14 It provides the ethos of realist policy science. Strategists advise the leadership of their political communities on the appropriate means by which the values they serve, the survival and flourishing of their state, may be attained. It is the ‘leitmotif’ of realism that these means should not be determined by ethical or ‘ideal’ considerations but rather by power-political ones.15 With Weber, realism argues ‘it is not true that good can follow only from good and evil only from evil, but that often the opposite is true’.16 It is this political and ethical stand of Weber’s, as much as his power-political view of international politics,17 that warrants M. J. Smith’s designation of Weber as the first modern thinker to systematically develop a realist approach to international relations.18

As it applies to both Morgenthau and Weber, the strategic approach involves a political ethical stance of realism and the use of policy science in guiding a state’s

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15 Smith, Realist Thought, pp. 15–16.
18 Smith, Realist Thought, pp. 15, 53.
strategy. The statesperson must adopt an ethic of responsibility towards national values, being willing to use force to secure them and scientific analysis in determining the consequences of various policies for those values. The statesperson must avoid conceiving of the world as a moral order in which ethical action or good intentions secure valued ends on their own, as in an ethic of conviction. M. J. Smith notes that the ethic of responsibility has the curious feature of being silent as to the nature of the valued ends themselves; by itself it has no moral content. Indeed, an ethic of responsibility can be adopted towards any set of values. This raises the question whether, and if so how, the values the statesperson seeks to further shape the nature of the policy science from which advice is sought. What is the relationship between values, policy science and policy decision? Morgenthau and Weber provide different constructions of policy science in this regard. That is, they provide contrasting frameworks by which the knowledge produced by a policy science is related, on the one hand, to the values political leadership wishes to realize and, on the other, to policy decision itself.

For Morgenthau’s realist theory, the fact that nations have different values does not change the general character of realist policy science. In international politics, whatever ultimate goals a statesperson may seek, the means will always be power. The framework of policy science need not be concerned with the values of any particular nation or statesperson. Realist science provides knowledge on how to secure the necessary and inevitable means, power, to whatever values are sought, giving scientific content to the ethic of responsibility for foreign policy. However, the contingencies and complexities of world politics are such that the application of realist scientific principles in practice requires the wisdom and judgment of statespersons. The application of realist principles to policy is a matter of the statesperson’s craft or artistry.

By contrast, in Weber’s construction, the nature of scientific inquiry is decisively shaped by the values it serves and science cannot directly inform policy. Only the valued ends at stake in a question of policy can determine what the ethic of responsibility requires in practice. Science can never determine that the constraints on policy in world politics are so tight that a single course of action is rational, as what is rational depends only on what ultimate values a statesperson seeks to realize. While science can provide means to valued ends, it cannot judge the values at stake themselves. Only political leadership can decide which value trade-offs are worthwhile, which values are worth risky courses of action and which values might be worth going down to certain defeat for. Weber identified the limits of science because he was concerned that science, along with bureaucracy and capitalism, was driving out of the public sphere the cultural values which should inform policy decisions. The imperatives of political party machines and state bureaucracies, and considerations of efficiency divorced from valued ends, would drive policy rather than national values.

The policy science Weber and Morgenthau sought became a reality in the post-1945 period as academics with professional training in the natural sciences, mathematics, economics and political science turned their attention to strategy. In an influential article entitled ‘Strategy as a Science’ published in 1949, Bernard Brodie provided the theoretical basis for a strategic science to replace military ‘judgment’,
which was so often based on unexamined tradition, service loyalties and other affectual criteria. ‘The profession of arms requires inevitably a subordination of rational to romantic values.’

Systems analysis based on marginal utility and opportunity cost techniques borrowed from economics was to determine which weapons and tactics most efficiently contributed to the ‘end of maximising the total effectiveness of the nation in war’. However, the simultaneous advent of nuclear weapons reversed the means–end relationship of military power and political objectives, at least as concerned war between great powers. As Brodie put it in 1946, ‘[t]hus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them.’ The response to this novel strategic situation was to develop tremendous means for the waging of nuclear war, involving a massive military, scientific and industrial ‘complex’ devoted to the production, analysis and operational deployment of nuclear weaponry, with built-in tendencies towards its own expansion.

In the next two sections of this article, Weber’s and Morgenthau’s contrasting views of the relation between values, policy science and policy decision will be explicated. In the final section, the conceptual resources of Weber’s epistemology and sociology of modern culture are used to analyse the relationship between military means and political ends in US nuclear strategy.

Values, culture and science in the work of Max Weber

Although Max Weber’s role in supplying the political ethics underpinning realist policy science is increasingly evident, International Relations has largely ignored his sociology. Adequate interpretation, however, of Weber’s political ethics must place them within the context of both his philosophy of social science and his sociology of processes of rationalization and disenchantment.

Science and value in Weber’s philosophy of social science

Weber’s philosophy of social science, and his conception of how science can be used to further human purposes in the world, is based on a sharp distinction between ‘ends’ and ‘means’. Science can further freedom both by providing knowledge of means to pursue ends based upon ‘ultimate values’ and by enabling humans to criticize and clarify their values. Weber retains a Kantian conception of human freedom in which autonomous individuals act according to ethical standards of

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21 Ibid., p. 476.
24 The major exception to this generalization is Weber’s definition of the state. Max Weber, Economy and Society (Berkeley, CA, 1978), pp. 54–6.
conduct. Humans ought to orient their conduct towards ‘ideal ends’ derived from their highest standards of value. But in Weber’s Nietzschean departure from Kant, there is no rational foundation for our values. Different ultimate values entail different world-views which cannot be rationally reconciled. Any value position or standard presupposed some set of ultimate premises which had to be taken on faith.26 Science offers no escape as values are decisive in shaping the nature of social scientific inquiry.

Central to the distinction between the ethics of conviction and responsibility is the notion that human experience of history is not in accord with the presuppositions and expectations of one or another ethical system or world-view. Not only are there different and irreconcilable ultimate accounts of the meaning and nature of human existence, but the everyday course of human existence is often in conflict with these accounts. For instance, people suffer ‘unjustly’ from the perspective of such accounts. This ‘ethical irrationality of the world’ was decisive for Weber’s view of the relation of science to value. Those who hold an ethic of conviction presuppose that the world is in fact so arranged that only actions ethical from the point of view of their absolute values are necessary to realize those values, as when religious conduct secures salvation. In an ethic of responsibility, scientific inquiry seeks to mediate between ultimate values and the fate of those values in human history. By providing knowledge of the world, science can aid humans in furthering their values in practice. Brodie’s effort to rationalize strategy, tactics and weapons development by wresting them away from the ‘romantic values’ of the military is an example.

However, in Weberian epistemology, social scientific inquiry is itself decisively shaped by the point of view of the inquirer, by the inquirer’s own values. Scientific facts are accessible only within value-oriented conceptual schemes; scientific inquiry is based on subjective normative premises.27 Weber drew a close comparison between theology and science in that both consisted of intellectual rationalizations from specific, evaluative points of view.28 A field of inquiry can ‘be rationalized in terms of very different ultimate values and ends, and what is rational from one point of view may well be irrational from another’.29

Weber’s distinction between facts and values is often misrepresented as simply one in which scientists share the values of science, say a commitment to truth or solving some practical problem confronting society, and then turn to an objective or presuppositionless inquiry.30 But as Karl Löwith points out, Weber never speaks of objectivity except as ‘so-called’ and in inverted commas.31 For Weber, one is scientifically interested only in those questions which have cultural, that is value, significance, and only ‘facts’ illuminated by this interest appear as objects for inquiry from the infinite mass of social phenomena. ‘Only a small portion of existing concrete reality is coloured by our value-conditioned interest and it alone is significant to us. It is significant because it reveals relationships which are important to us

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28 Weber, Methodology, p. 110.
31 Löwith, Max Weber and Karl Marx, p. 53. Scaff suggests that Weber intended the inverted commas to convey the meaning, ‘that which we choose to call objectivity’. Scaff, Fleeing the Iron Cage, p. 78.
due to their connection with our values'.\textsuperscript{32} Meaningfulness or cultural significance is a precondition for any social phenomenon to become an object of investigation in the first place. ‘[P]erception of its meaningfulness to us is the presupposition of its becoming an object of investigation’.\textsuperscript{33} Values, Weber is arguing, ‘constitute’ the objects of social science inquiry by defining them from a particular point of view.\textsuperscript{34} ‘To be sure, without the investigator’s evaluative ideas, there would be no principle of selection of subject-matter . . . so the direction of his personal belief, the refraction of values in the prism of his mind, gives direction to his work.’\textsuperscript{35}

Clearly, science could never be free from values for Weber, a situation all the more paradoxical since, for him, values are ultimately subjective. No amount of factual inquiry can establish the validity of an ultimate value or its associated world-view.\textsuperscript{36} And factual inquiry itself is ‘shot through’ with the value orientation of the inquirer. So of what does social scientific ‘objectivity’ consist? It consists of being explicit about the values to which analytic categories are oriented. ‘The “objectivity” of the social sciences depends rather on the fact that the empirical data are always related to those evaluative ideas which alone make them worth knowing and the significance of the empirical data is derived from these evaluative ideas. But these data can never become the foundation for the empirically impossible proof of the validity of the evaluative ideas.’\textsuperscript{37} The evaluative ideas in question are not fixed, nor universally shared, they are simply those values to which the scientist has oriented inquiry. In Weber’s own case, his sociology was fundamentally shaped by an evaluative concern for the ‘type of human’ that various socio-economic arrangements produced, what is termed his ‘characterology’.\textsuperscript{38} In the Freiburg address, Weber argues that a science of political economy should not be oriented towards the production of wealth and happiness but towards the ‘quality of the human beings who are brought up’ in specific social and economic conditions. ‘The question . . . is not “how will human beings feel in the future” but “how will they be” . . . We do not want to train up feelings of well-being in people, but rather those characteristics we think constitute the greatness and nobility of our human nature.’\textsuperscript{39} His cultural nationalism and power-political view of international relations were related to this interest in ‘characterology’. An imperial policy for Germany could secure the necessary power and autonomy for the nation to develop citizens capable of Weber’s version of Kantian freedom under modern conditions. State power was to be used for the valued end of creating socio-economic arrangements necessary for the production of a certain type of human being. However, a power-political policy which failed to contribute to this end, or which undermined it, would be irrational. This was the basis of Weber’s criticism of Bismarck, whose efforts to retain control of policy left

\begin{itemize}
  \item Weber, \textit{Methodology}, p. 76.
  \item Ibid., p. 76.
  \item Weber, \textit{Methodology}, p. 51.
  \item Ibid., p. 111.
  \item ‘Without exception every order of social relations (however constituted) is, if one wishes to evaluate it, ultimately to be examined in terms of the human type to which it, by way of external or internal (motivational) selection, provides the optimal chances of becoming the dominant type.’ Weber, \textit{Methodology}, p. 27 (translation adapted from Hennis, \textit{Max Weber}, p. 59). See also Hennis, \textit{Max Weber}, chs. 1–2.
\end{itemize}
the citizenry passive and created political structures incapable of producing leadership.40

Before I turn to Weber’s construction of policy science, the connections between his view of scientific ‘objectivity’ and his analysis of modern culture must be spelled out. Unlike positivist approaches to social science, Weber’s concern is not that values bias analysis, but rather that modern culture is undergoing processes of rationalization and disenchantment that involve the retreat and disappearance of cultural values from public life, and hence from scientific inquiry and state policy decision. His interest in being explicit about the dependence of scientific inquiry on values, and his intense concern that humans be capable of acting according to their ultimate standards of value, are directly related to his view of modern culture. The growth of scientific knowledge was destroying the religious basis of cultural values, while modern social conditions, in particular capitalism and the prevalence of bureaucratic organization, were making the rational relation of means to valued ends increasingly difficult.

Rationalization and disenchantment in modern culture

‘The fate of our age,’ Weber writes, ‘with its characteristic rationalization and intellectualisation and above all the disenchantment of the world, is that the ultimate, most sublime values have withdrawn from public life’.41 The pre-eminent historical source of values for Weber is the confrontation between religious prophecy and ever-present human suffering. Since suffering is a constant, religious intellectuals are driven to further refine or ‘rationalise’ their explanations, or theodicies, for the continuance of suffering in the face of an all-powerful God or when religious practices have been scrupulously observed.42 Western theology took the decisive steps towards disenchantment, which is more faithfully translated as ‘de-magicification’ and means that no mysterious forces come into play, that ‘one could in principle master everything through calculation’.43 Protestantism eliminated magical powers and priestly intervention as means to the salvation of the soul. The believer was forced to methodically organize daily conduct in the interest of salvation.

The advance of science, in particular natural science, dramatically increased the pace of disenchantment. Science makes the world ‘calculable’ by mastering it through increasingly precise and abstract concepts, transforming it into a series of causal mechanisms. Religious and mystical interpretations of nature, history and society are delegitimated. But these interpretations are the sources of cultural values, which consequently lack rational foundation and cannot be replaced or created anew by scientific means.

While processes of disenchantment corrode valued ends, those of rationalization proliferate intellectual, institutional and technical means. Science becomes bound up with the other main features of modernity, capitalism and the dominance of bureaucratic organizations, staffed by specialized officials, in all spheres. Bureaucracies are oriented towards efficiency or instrumental rationality. They are means to some specified end, such as administering a social programme or earning a profit. In this form of social organization, the application of scientific reasoning multiplies increasingly specific means, such that there are ever more ‘steps’ to an end, which itself, from the point of view of any particular step in the process, recedes into the distance. Rationality comes to mean only the ‘calculability of the most important technical factors’. The various ‘ends’ to which such calculation is directed are generally means from an evaluative point of view. This is especially clear in the case of capitalist organizations oriented towards profit.

For Weber bureaucratic organization is an inevitability in modern society. While bureaucracies are potentially powerful instruments, they pose significant dangers to the possibility of pursuing valued ends in politics and to Weber’s vision of Kantian freedom. Bureaucracies lack means of assessing the ‘value rationality’ of the ends or goals they serve. The experiences and responsibilities of bureaucrats ‘train them to disregard the rationality of the organization’s goals and the ultimate consequences of these goals’. When the state is bureaucratically organized, the danger of the ‘bureaucratic displacement of politics’ arises. ‘When bureaucratic power displaces political institutions . . . [bureaucrats] make what are in fact irresponsible political decisions under the guise of technical expertise.’ Precisely such processes, in Weber’s view, allowed Germany to drift into World War I.

The modern development of scientific thought offered the opportunity of increasing human agency, supplying unparalleled intellectual means for achieving value-oriented goals. But embodied in Weber’s sociology is a ‘negative heterogeny of purposes’ in which human intentions are subverted in a negative direction by the fateful working out of historical processes outside the control of individuals. Weber seems profoundly . . . moved, above all, by the fact that on its earthly course an idea always and everywhere operates in opposition to its original meaning and thereby destroys itself. As Bryan Turner notes, the story of the Protestant ethic is not one in which religious values maintain their autonomy from economic conditions, but rather one of the failure of those values to retain their authenticity in the face of modernization. What is true for Protestants may be true for those using science to achieve valued ends. Turner argues that the problem at the centre of the two essays on politics and science as vocations is that modern science becomes the central criterion by which any rational person approaches reality, but science itself is not a source of ultimate values. Science is merely a routinized procedure for evaluating means for achieving goals. The ultimate ends of human activity

46 Ibid., p. 34–5.
therefore take on a random, irrational quality, because science cannot tell us what we ought to do.\textsuperscript{51}

Michael Howard points out that one of the greatest dangers of the strategic approach to international relations is ‘that in fighting to defend a system of values one loses sight of the very values one is fighting to defend’.\textsuperscript{52} The demands of engaging in power politics can undermine the values one seeks to preserve, say by subverting domestic democratic institutions for purposes of waging war. Weber’s sociology addresses the question whether and in what form the cultural values strategy seeks to preserve can survive the ‘onslaught of modernization’.\textsuperscript{53} As processes of rationalization and disenchantment advance, the powerful administrative and intellectual means at the disposal of political leadership increasingly become divorced from national values. In such a situation, only intense concern for values by political leadership offers the hope of imposing valued ends on public policy of any kind.

\textit{Weber’s construction of policy science}

Given this analysis of modern culture, Weber sought to place a ‘calculus of values’ at the centre of his construction of policy science.

The distinctive characteristic of a problem of social policy is indeed the fact that it cannot be resolved merely on the basis of purely technical considerations which assume already settled ends. Normative standards of value can and must be the objects of dispute in a discussion of a problem of social policy because the problem lies in the domain of general cultural values.\textsuperscript{54} Part of what is at issue in a policy decision is the question of which values to pursue and which to sacrifice. Thus scientific inquiry itself can never determine policy choice. ‘[I]t can never be the task of an empirical science to provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived.’\textsuperscript{55} The question Weber poses on the basis of such considerations is ‘what is the meaning and purpose of the scientific criticism of ideals and value-judgements?’\textsuperscript{56} How can science responsibly engage with political questions which involve the clash of different values?

Scientific knowledge can be used to further Weber’s vision of freedom in two ways, through ‘technical criticism’ and ‘value clarification’.\textsuperscript{57} In technical criticism, science provides knowledge of necessary means to achieve valued ends, enabling us to ‘direct our practical activities to the expectations which scientific experience suggests to us’.\textsuperscript{58} This involves the provision of social and natural technologies by which ‘acting, willing’ persons can set realistic ends and achieve them. In value clarification, science aids leadership in thinking about the context, meaning and
significance of the ends desired by analysing in a logically consistent manner the values which underlie those ends. In this way, science aids the ‘acting, willing’ person in ‘attaining self-clarification concerning the final axioms from which his desired ends are derived’ and in ‘becoming aware of the ultimate standards of value which he does not make explicit to himself, or which he must presuppose to be logical’.59

Science cannot make policy decisions itself; it can only analyse means and clarify the values at stake. This is the most that science can legitimately offer for Weber. Science can only tell people what they can do, not what they should do.60 Weber’s construction of policy science is based upon the ethic of responsibility. This ethic sought an integration of valued ends with practical activity in the world.61 The choice of which ends to pursue is beyond scientific determination, even beyond reason, on Weber’s account. However, through value clarification science enables leadership to gain a ‘critical distance’ from their values,62 to assess the foreseeable consequences of pursuing their values in practice. Given Weber’s account of the dependence of social science on a value orientation, the inquiry involved in value clarification would explicitly acknowledge the value orientation of its analytic categories. Discussion of values was not to be excluded from scientific inquiry. ‘Criticism is not to be suspended in the presence of value-judgements.’63 Policy science should not simply ‘accept’ the values of political leadership. Rather, value clarification requires that scientific inquiry be conducted from different evaluative points of view.64 Analysis should seek to show the costs and benefits in terms of the values at stake in various courses of action. But which values are at stake differs with one’s evaluative orientation. Clarification is attained by viewing the facts not from a single point of view, but from several. A value-related policy science, conducting inquiry from multiple points of view, enables the decision-maker to arrive at a full appreciation of the values at stake.

As facts could be identified and analysed only from a particular point of view, the determination of the significance of any factual state of affairs identified by scientific work is a matter of evaluation. ‘All knowledge of cultural reality . . . is always knowledge from particular points of view.’65 However, there is a characteristic ambiguity in Weber’s construction of policy science regarding the relationship between facts and values. Weber’s political writings often sought to place ‘empirical limits’ around practical possibilities.66 While his position in the methodological essays is that all scientific knowledge is constituted through a particular value orientation, in his policy advocacy he often writes as if factual states of affairs identified by scientific work are true for all value positions. This ambiguity can result in a slippery slope by which science might come to directly determine policy. Scientific knowledge can be represented as excluding the practical pursuit of a range of

60 Ibid., p. 54.
63 Weber, Methodology, p. 52.
64 Ibid., pp. 59–60.
65 Ibid. p. 81.
values on grounds of impossibility. Only one course of action is shown to be practically possible. This course of action may also be the one which the scholar is advocating on the basis of his or her values. Thus the slippery slope is fully compatible with the analyst’s explicit acknowledgement of a value orientation, as in Weber’s own case. Alternatively, the advocate may not make Weber’s distinctions between science and value, and represent a state of affairs as a truth with which any policy must grapple. Morgenthau walked down the slope in this way, by arguing on scientific grounds that the pursuit of any values in international politics requires a power-political foreign policy.

The countervailing factor for this ambiguity in Weber’s framework for policy science is his insistence that the only way to clarify the values at stake in a question of policy is through a ‘clash’ of perspectives in open discussion.67 The influence of the German state on academic appointments, the poor career prospects for socialist and Jewish scholars, and the question of academic freedom in general were consistent concerns of Weber’s.68 However, the danger remains that if decision-makers and policy scientists share the same values, or if particular perspectives are excluded from policy analysis, such a ‘clash’ will not occur, the dependence of scientific work upon a value orientation will be obscured, and the critical task of value clarification not carried out.

The context of US Cold War strategic analysis was not one conducive to the task of value clarification and the clash of evaluative perspectives. Many policy-makers and analysts shared a similar meaningful account of the nature of the Cold War and the Communist opponent. Policy advice from alternative evaluative perspectives was often interpreted as threatening to national security, as when J. Robert Oppenheimer’s security clearance was revoked over the question whether or not to build the H-bomb.69 In the absence of an open clash of perspectives, the dependence of strategic policy advice on a particular evaluative orientation was obscured. Rationalized forms of strategic analysis sought to analyse threats to national security and suggest responses without explicit reference to political values, as in the various RAND vulnerability studies. Mathematical demonstrations of the vulnerability of missile silos or SAC airfields to possible Soviet first strike relied on unstated evaluative assumptions, related to meaningful constructions of the Cold War, regarding the nature of Soviet leadership, their attitudes towards their own civilian casualties and their willingness to risk nuclear war in the absence of any experience with wartime nuclear operations.70 The technical proof of the logical possibility of a Soviet disarming first strike was significant only if one shared such evaluative assumptions. That many of these studies were conducted with exaggerated and false estimates of Soviet capabilities magnified further US national security requirements. The presumption that US national security was dependent upon responding to threats constructed in the technical imagination created pressures for continued expansion of preparations for nuclear war with little analysis of the political objectives at stake. Morgenthau became a critic of war-fighting strategies and

69 McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years (New York, 1990), pp. 305–18.
indiscriminate anti-Communism in US national security policy. However, in the immediate postwar years, he provided the theoretical and political basis for a science of national security. His inattention to Weber’s sociology of modern culture and related views on the dependence of scientific inquiry on evaluative orientations left that science vulnerable to processes of rationalization.

Values, science and strategy in the work of Hans Morgenthau

In *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* and *Politics among Nations* Morgenthau provides the political ethical basis for and develops a realist policy science. These books dominate Morgenthau’s legacy to International Relations. While making use of Weberian arguments, they are a substantial departure from Weber’s construction of policy science. In Morgenthau’s science, international politics is structured in such a way that the means to all values is a foreign policy which pursues the end of maintaining or enhancing a state’s power position. For Weber, the state is a means to valued ends. Policy must be judged, and policy science conducted, in terms of those ends, not only that of the power position of the state.71 Weber is rarely cited or mentioned in Morgenthau’s work. Noting the Weberian character of the central arguments of *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, Stephen Turner and Regis Factor argue it would have been self-defeating for Morgenthau to acknowledge the German origins of his theory of politics in 1946.72

Morgenthau’s construction of policy science

Morgenthau made use of several core realist themes that appear together in Weber’s political thought. These themes are derived from classical and ‘republican’ realist political theory. ‘The political’ is an autonomous sphere of action characterized by struggle and tragedy. Statespersons can never be entirely certain of the consequences of their actions; they must be willing to act in the unknown. To act politically is to use unethical means of power and force. Politics cannot be judged solely in terms of, or reduced entirely to, ethics. ‘Idealism’ or ‘moralism’ denies the autonomy of the political sphere by equating it with morality. Political action is to be judged in terms of its success, not only its morality.

In Morgenthau’s version of the ethic of responsibility, science directly informs foreign policy to contribute to its success in achieving national values. He makes use of Weber’s ideal typical method to link science to this purpose. An ideal type is the ‘one-sided accentuation’ of complex concrete phenomena unified into an ‘analytical construct’.73 Because social reality is grasped through ideal typical constructs necessarily rooted in a value orientation, ideal types are potentially critical tools by which reality can be evaluated from the point of view of a set of ultimate value

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premises. In general, Morgenthau’s realist theory is a critical instrument of this kind. It begins from the premise that the state is the ‘repository of the common good’.74 International politics are structured in such a way that serving this good depends on the maintenance and enhancement of the state’s power position. To accomplish this, statespersons need to be rational in matching the appropriate means to realistically attainable ends. In international politics the scope for rational action is extremely limited, since the means for whatever end a state may be seeking is always power. To the extent actually existing statespersons are rational, they think in terms of ‘interest defined as power’.75 Morgenthau believed that this principle is ‘universally valid’.76 It is the essence of the ‘rational element’ in international politics that made them theorizable, the realistic adjustment of means and ends.77 A ‘one-sided’ theory about this element can ignore historically variable ultimate aims statespersons pursue, because if they are to seek their ends rationally, they have to engage in power-political behaviour; any other way of acting is unlikely to achieve ends whatever they may be. Moreover, it is only rational power-political behaviour that can prevent international politics from descending into the violent clash of conflicting and uncompromisable ultimate values or ideologies.

Wise statespersons, although historically they may not have had the benefit of Morgenthau’s science, understand that to achieve their goals they must think in terms of their state’s power position. To the extent this is the case, Morgenthau’s theory has explanatory power, but when statespersons fail to act in such a manner, the critical role of his theory comes into play. ‘[P]olitical realism maintains not only that theory must focus upon the rational elements of political reality, but also that foreign policy ought to be rational in view of its own moral and practical purposes’.78 As Raymond Aron says, Morgenthau is a ‘crusader’ for realism.79 Morgenthau’s theory is practice-informing, seeking to guide statespersons towards prudent policies, and it provides a standard by which the actual conduct of foreign policy can be evaluated. He assessed US Cold War foreign policy in just this way, leading one scholar to conclude that ‘Morgenthau was arguing not from the practice of power politics of his times, but against it.’80 By one-sidedly emphasizing the rational element of foreign policy, Morgenthau constructs an ideal picture of international politics in which prudent statespersons carefully weigh the consequences of alternative policies and act accordingly. For Morgenthau this is the best that can be hoped for, given the forces of human nature inherent in politics, a world in which power politics is rationally conducted.81 Such a theory is clearly an ideal theory, even a utopia as Weber referred to ideal types.82 Morgenthau, despite his insistence that his realism concerns international politics ‘as they really are’, is in

76 Ibid., pp. 10–11.
78 Ibid., *Politics among Nations*, p. 10.
81 Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, p. 3.
Morgenthau has a qualified optimism about the role realist science can play. ‘What a theory of international relations can state is the likely consequences of choosing one alternative as opposed to another and the conditions under which one alternative is more likely to occur and be successful than the other. Theory can also say that under certain conditions one alternative is to be preferred to another.’ The role of science for cultural criticism and value clarification, aiding policy-makers in understanding the nature of the ends they pursue, so prominent in Weber’s understanding, was not addressed in Morgenthau’s realist theory. The reason is quite straightforward. On Morgenthau’s view, many ends which statespersons might strive for are simply unachievable, such as world government or disarmament. Prudent power-political behaviour is the only rational option in international relations, as it is the only means by which to ensure as far as possible a state’s survival and flourishing. Morgenthau’s scientific criticism of the ends was limited to pointing out those which were impossible to achieve. His science was oriented towards providing the intellectual means by which states could achieve the limited ends that were possible.

However, the large role played by contingency in international politics limits the efficacy of realist science. There is neither a ‘rationalist’ scientific solution that would end power politics nor a scientifically certain realist approach to the balance of power; in practice, the wisdom of the statesperson is required to apply artfully the objective axioms of realism to the demands of the moment. Thus there is a distinction in Morgenthau’s theory between a science which can determine both the broad outlines of the possible and general principles of action and the artful application of those principles to the complexities of particular situations. This distinction between theoretical formulation and artful application places a premium on creativity and innovation in policy-making and produces its own critique of bureaucracy as ‘administrative stagnation’. Morgenthau’s policy commentary was not limited by the content of his theoretical formulations. For instance, he criticized Henry Kissinger’s pursuit of ‘stability’ in the Third World for aligning American national purpose with tyranny, a consideration impossible to derive from his theory of international politics.

87 See Nobel, ‘Morgenthau’s Struggle’, p. 62, on reading Morgenthau’s ‘objective laws’ as general principles of action.
89 See Nobel, ‘Morgenthau’s Struggle’.
security means. For Alexander George and Richard Smoke, the policy scientist ‘accepts’ the values of a ‘constitutionally authorised’ superior.\(^91\) Policy science is not, in itself, concerned with values. That is the role of the decision-maker who ‘generates’ the values the ‘value-free’ policy scientist ‘accepts’. Values are conceptualized as beyond scientific criticism, rather than debated and clarified by scientific inquiry, as in Weber’s construction of policy science. For Brodie, ‘the most profound issues in strategy . . . do not lend themselves to scientific analysis, usually because they are so laden with value judgements. They therefore tend to escape any kind of disciplined or searching thought altogether.’\(^92\) Realist policy science did not engage in value criticism, orienting itself toward the end of national security. This conception of the relation of science to value was contradictory: a policy science that avoided explicit and sustained normative inquiry, but in which policy scientists regularly, and with some determination, engaged in policy advocacy, which by definition entails a vision of what a state ought to do. As Arnold Wolfers noted, the normative import of the invocation of national security is that other values should be sacrificed for higher increments of security.\(^93\) The question concerning who was to engage in disciplined discussion of the values at stake in questions of national security was left unanswered.

Eschewing discussion of values produces a characteristic difficulty in Morgenthau’s construction of policy science, that of scientific disagreement over the best means to national security. National security is the value to be served, and argument over how best to secure this value is carried on largely in the form of competing realist empirical analyses. This conception of policy science implicitly presumes that the choice of the best means to national security can be determined scientifically. There is a possibility for scientific advice to become identical with decision, as policy-makers lack any other basis for policy than such advice. Yet Western strategic analysis during the Cold War was rife with scientific disagreement over the best means to national security. It is hard to see on what basis one chooses between two views of what the artful application of realist policy science requires in practice. Morgenthau was acutely aware of this difficulty. His response was to develop an account of the corruption of science by political power and his own version of Weber’s rationalization thesis.\(^94\) Neither of these aspects of his intellectual contribution has had enduring influence, nor do they deal adequately with the core problem of the relation of science to value. If scientific inquiry is dependent on a value orientation, and if the values at stake in a question of policy are in conflict with one another and subject to dispute, how can science responsibly advise political leadership?

**The Weberian critique**

A Weberian critique of Morgenthau’s construction of policy science begins with a little-remarked but fundamental distinction between realism as a political theory and

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as a tradition of inquiry in International Relations. In ‘Politics as a Vocation’, Weber offers a realist definition of politics which makes no distinction between the domestic and the international. ‘[P]olitics . . . means striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state.’ By contrast, in Morgenthau’s realist theory, the logic of power politics applies only beyond a state’s borders. As Turner and Factor note, this is a serious inconsistency in Morgenthau’s thought as a whole, as his assault on ‘rationalism’ in Scientific Man vs. Power Politics is based on the notion that ‘the forces inherent in human nature’ in the realm of politics, the will to dominate and the logic of egotisms, mean that all politics is struggle for power. Yet Morgenthau argues that the state is the ‘repository of the common good’ and that any means employed on its behalf are justified. Why is the state not, say, an expression of the interests of the ruling order? How do state officials escape the ‘forces inherent in human nature’?

This inconsistency is essential to Morgenthau’s construction of realist policy science. The state is seen as a container of domestic values, and power-political foreign policy as the only way of preserving these values in international politics. The ends of policy are displaced from cultural values and replaced onto state power. In Weberian epistemology, any scientific analysis of national security means will be ‘shot through’ with the value orientation of the inquirer. This draws attention to two problems with the view of the state as a container of domestic values which are simply ‘accepted’ by the policy scientist seeking the best means to national security. The first is that in a policy science which avoids disciplined discussion of values, the value orientation of strategic analyses is potentially obscured. Second, the view that state power ‘protects’ cultural values from a potentially hostile world neglects the interaction between the domestic institutions which embody those values and international relations. The pursuit of national security means can affect the nature of those institutions. Power-political foreign policy may undermine the very domestic institutions it seeks to protect, say by turning the country into a garrison state for purposes of meeting a perceived foreign challenge. Together, these two aspects of Morgenthau’s construction of policy science leave it vulnerable to processes of rationalization. A science of national security proliferates means to state power, while its value-free orientation prevents it from regularly assessing the consequences of such means for valued ends.

Weber did not seek to exclude values from policy scientific work but insisted rather that the distinction between facts and values be explicitly made within such work. ‘[Weber] is seeking to bring those extra-scientific criteria of judgement into the scientific equation . . . to highlight and make accountable precisely those factors which are not scientifically demonstrable but which are none the less relevant to science.’ The clash of evaluative perspectives is obviated by a construction of policy science in which values are to be ‘protected’ by national security means. The values embodied in a political community are often in conflict with one another and

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95 Walker, Inside/Outside.
97 Morgenthau, Scientific Man, pp. 191–3; Turner and Factor, Max Weber and the Dispute, p. 175.
98 Ibid., p. 181.
99 Bud Duvall formulated the issue in this way.
are subject to dispute and contestation among the members of that community. *If* values are decisive in orienting scientific inquiry, *then* the ‘version’ of those values held by the policy scientist is fundamental to scientific analysis of national security means. But when values are not explicit objects of discussion, their decisive role in judging the significance and rationality of results is obscured, even though they still fundamentally inform the conduct of policy science and are the basis for judgments about the significance of any particular results. For modern decision-makers, a science of national security is the only ‘rational’ means of assessing and choosing policy. Morgenthau noted upon the advent of the Kennedy administration that the ‘command posts of foreign policy’ are now ‘staffed by theoreticians’.101 Constructing this science as unable to criticize values, and orienting it towards the end of national security, provides no resources for policy-makers to weigh the political values at stake in a question of strategy. Such a science provides means to security, not to valued ends.

The vulnerability of this construction of policy science to processes of rationalization is increased by conceptualizing state power as the essential means to valued ends. Domestic institutions which embody the values statespersons wish to preserve are often in constant interaction with international processes. When the focus is on the end of state power, the consequences of policies for these institutions are not regularly assessed. The end of state power may overtake other domestic values. For instance, Brodie’s standard for scientific strategy, ‘the total effectiveness of the nation at war’, is potentially a recipe for the formation of a garrison state, as ‘total effectiveness’ is not reached until all domestic resources are devoted to military power. While Brodie insists that other values should not be subordinated to national security,102 a value-free policy science provides no conceptual resources to make the necessary distinctions. Legitimate domestic political activity, from the point of view of the values embodied in a political association, can be interpreted as detracting from the security of the state and subject to regulation by national security means, as when US intelligence agencies were deployed against political opposition to the Vietnam War and other Cold War policies. The intelligence services established to conduct covert operations abroad provided the organizational basis for their domestic use and the direct undermining of the civil and political rights of US citizens. The ‘secret wars’103 of the US executive had severe corrosive effects on the war powers of Congress, as did the deployment of nuclear weaponry on high alert. Realism for Weber involves the acceptance of the necessity to use unethical, often violent, means to attain valued ends. With Morgenthau’s legacy, realism became the position favouring ‘security’ over valued ends.

In Morgenthau’s own analyses of international relations, the vulnerability of his realist theory to rationalization was not realized. Although the role of ethics in his theory is largely limited to the imperative to choose the ‘least evil means’, his policy commentary often invoked ethical consideration of ends. His view that America has a ‘national purpose’ or moral role to play in world history cannot be arrived at through his realist theory of international politics. It parallels Weber’s view of

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German national purpose to preserve Western culture from ‘the conventions of Anglo-Saxon society’, on the one hand, and from Russian bureaucracy, on the other.104 Also like Weber, Morgenthau believed that the advent of ‘rational international relations’ was dependent on internal political reform in great powers.105 His criticism of US policy often drew attention to the impact on domestic institutions of misguided foreign policies, as when he noted that McCarthyism was partially the consequence of stalemate in Korea and that continued involvement in Indochina would affect ‘the political health of the nation’.106 These considerations suggest that a full appreciation of Weber’s and Morgenthau’s views on International Relations place them within a ‘state-society’ approach, which focuses on the interaction between international and domestic processes and, in turn, their mutual constitution, rather than within more ‘state-centric’ approaches which view the state itself as the fundamental unit of international politics. Speculations of this sort are beyond the task of the present article, which has sought to compare Weber’s and Morgenthau’s constructions of realist policy science. The decisive difference between them on the role of science in formulating strategy is that for Weber science can never establish that the constraints on policy are so tight that only one course of action is rational; what is rational depends only upon what values a statesperson seeks to realize. For Morgenthau, statespersons must think in terms of ‘interest defined as power’. There is only one rational way of acting in international politics.

**Strategy as a vocation**

In this section, I explore some of the consequences of Morgenthau’s vision of policy science by outlining aspects of US nuclear strategy and operational deployment in which the vulnerability of Morgenthau’s construction to rationalization was realized. Morgenthau did not ‘cause’ rationalization in US nuclear weapons development and strategy by himself. He is perhaps best conceptualized as the bearer of efficacious ideas with an ‘elective affinity’ to broader social processes. Indeed, those elements of Morgenthau’s thought lacking this affinity, such as his critique of Cold War foreign policy or his own effort to understand scientific rationalization processes, were ‘selected out’ of the discipline of International Relations and the practice of strategic analysis. No attempt is made here to assess the causal impact of his ideas; rather, the purpose is to outline some of the consequences for cultural values of the use of science to guide strategic policy.

Weber’s epistemology draws attention to the role of values, a ‘kernel of faith’, in making particular strategies ‘rational’. The ‘kernel of faith’ is based on a value commitment to the state the strategist serves. As Edward Luttwak writes, ‘strategy is not a neutral pursuit and its only purpose is to strengthen one’s side in the contention of nations’.107 The ‘kernel of faith’ involves the sentiment that one is on the ‘right’ side, that one serves something ‘good’, that one is helping to preserve or

107 Quoted in Lawrence, ‘Strategy, the State and the Weberian Legacy’, p. 307.
extend that ‘good’. It provides the ‘inner calling’ of the strategic vocation, the meaning and purpose for those involved in scientific debate, policy advice and the operational command of military forces. The values embodied in political associations, and which constitute this ‘good’, are subject to multiple and contradictory interpretations. So strategies involve commitment to some ‘version’ of the values embodied in a political community. Strategists are engaged in meaningful political action, seeking to preserve values in the face of threat. As threat can only be conceptualized as a threat to some value, the ‘kernel of faith’ decisively orients the strategist’s analysis of what is to be protected and what it is to be protected from. It is the irrational premise of rationalized strategy. Indeed, the irrational commitment to rationality is the hallmark of the intellectual personality. There will inevitably be a gap between the state’s actual strategic policy and that which the strategist thinks it ought to be on the basis of an evaluative orientation and related empirical analysis. This gap provides meaningful incentive to advocate policy change, an ‘ideal interest’ in the pursuit of advocacy and analysis.

While this ‘kernel of faith’ constitutes a relatively small portion of the text of nuclear war-fighting strategy, it is not difficult to identify. The Cold War was viewed as a conflict between the US as defender and protector of Western values and the Soviet Union as an expansionist power antithetical to those values. This conviction was embodied in fears of a Soviet first strike, expressed at various points in the Cold War, which generated demands for additional US weapons. Fred Iklé, based his analysis of the ‘window of vulnerability’ on the imbalance between ‘totalitarian terrorists’ and ‘fearful democrats’. The Soviet Union was seen as particularly difficult to deter because its leadership supposedly did not value the lives of its citizens and would therefore be willing to accept tremendous numbers of civilian casualties. ‘One need not draw any very rigorous conclusions from the fact that Joseph Stalin caused the deaths of far more Soviet citizens than did Adolph Hitler.’ To threaten Soviet civilians as in a countervailing strategy would not deter the Soviet state. In rejecting arguments that when the US and USSR both possessed deliverable nuclear stockpiles a situation of mutual deterrence would develop, Eisenhower commented that such a view depended on an assumption that we are opposed by people who would think as we do with regard to the value of human life. This view of the Soviet ‘other’ naturally entailed a direct contrast with the threatened American or Western ‘self’. For Colin Gray, the US could not adopt countervailing strategies, because it is ‘virtually self-evident that a country like the United States that has a founding state ideology of commitment to the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of individual Americans, cannot credibly threaten to initiate an “exchange” of nuclear strikes against essentially civilian targets’.

Howard comments that such a view of the Soviet Union—and, one might add, the US—is ‘rooted in a visceral conviction beyond the reach of any discourse’ he

108 See Raymond Duvall et al. (eds.), Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger (forthcoming, 1998).
110 Bundy, Danger and Survival, p. 576.
commands. But it is precisely this conviction, this matter of faith, that makes war-fighting a rational strategy. To paraphrase Weber, a strategy is never rational in itself, but only from a particular point of view, from some conception of a valued end to be served by military means. War-fighting strategy only makes sense to the extent that one meaningfully constructs the Cold War in such terms. The problem is not that this construction is oriented to a set of evaluative commitments, but rather that unless it is ‘opposed’ by alternative constructions, the role of a specific value orientation in making war-fighting strategy seem rational is potentially obscured.

Lawrence Freedman wrote near the end of the Cold War that ‘the political framework has been taken too much for granted and strategic studies have become infatuated with the microscopic analysis of military technology and the acquisition of equipment by the forces of both sides’. The ‘political framework’ of the Cold War was contested in Western societies, just not in strategic studies. In 1971, Brodie identified the ‘felt necessity’ to oppose the spread of Communism as a ‘determinant’ of strategic policy. National purposes and values were not explicit objects of discussion and critique in Cold War nuclear strategy, yet it is precisely such purposes and values to which classical conceptions of strategy sought to link military means.

‘At the highest levels’, Howard writes of Clausewitz, there ‘can be no distinction drawn between strategy and statesmanship, and the strategist’s achievements had ultimately to be judged not in military but in political terms’. The choice of a strategy involves a decision about which values to pursue, and analysis should explore the consequences for values in questions of strategic policy. By eschewing disciplined discussion of values, realist policy science disarmed itself from consideration of the strategic question, that of the political objectives at stake. The acceptance of a ‘political framework’ can be compared usefully to Weber’s own, highly unpopular calls upon the German Government for a negotiated peace to end World War I in 1916, for which he was labelled a ‘defeatist’. Like Morgenthau in his criticism of Cold War foreign policy, Weber did not allow himself to be swept along by the ‘felt necessity’ of continuing the war. The contrast with the integration of Cold War realist policy science into the service of state power and its focus on analysis of means of containment, rather than consideration of political ends, could not be greater.

Weber’s sociology identifies ways in which processes internal to the scientific analysis and operational deployment of nuclear weaponry contribute to the proliferation of means to wage nuclear war in disregard of political objectives. Careers in scientific and operational organizations concerned with nuclear weaponry were advanced by identifying threats to national security and designing efficient responses, often through use of the systems analysis approaches of ‘scientific strategy’. In ‘Strategy as a Science’, Brodie argues there is a need for a rigorous

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114 Howard, Causes of Wars, p. 137.
115 ‘A thing is never irrational in itself, but only from a particular rational point of view.’ Weber, Protestant Ethic, p. 194.
conceptual framework to evaluate whether a strategy is a good one and to choose between alternative strategies. He suggests that strategy turn to economics for this framework because both fields have similar objectives, the maximization of efficiency, whether of economic resources or of military ones, and that therefore economic tools such as marginal utility theory and opportunity cost can be employed. Brodie realizes that both wealth and security are derivative values, but thinks this does not militate against the use of economic forms of analysis as ‘in any case we are dealing primarily with problems of efficiency in the allocation of limited resources’. Security policy, military strategy and even tactics are essentially problems of ‘economy of means, i.e., the most efficient utilisation of potential and available resources to the end of enhancing our security’. There is no doubt that questions of the appropriate military force required for a specific task can be analysed as a problem of efficient allocation of resources. In systems analysis approaches—no small portion of US strategic analysis as a whole—considerations of efficiency, not of valued ends, drive analysis.

The Clausewitzian criticism of such approaches is that they are limited to comparison of different weapon systems designed to achieve the same strategic goal, which itself is not subjected to analysis. What Weber draws attention to are ‘the consequences of the specifically modern calculating attitude’. He noted of marginal utility theory that it has the curious feature of more closely approximating reality as the capitalist epoch progresses. As marginal utility theory is increasingly used in arriving at instrumentally rational economic decisions, it becomes more accurate as a theory of economic life. To the extent that one envisions strategy as a problem of efficiency, to be evaluated in terms of ‘cost-effectiveness’, the practice of strategy will alter accordingly. ‘[M]any factors which might not seem to be amenable to dollar-value comparison turn out to be so on closer examination.’ While scientific analysis of efficiency promises the rational allocation of defence budgets, it entails the danger that comparable intellectual resources are not devoted to the analysis of the political ends which should guide arms acquisition and strategic policy choice. Conceptualizing such ends as value-laden, and therefore beyond scientific analysis, contributes further to this neglect. What ‘scientific strategy’ can provide is the efficient acquisition of means to state power. But systems analysis approaches are even subject to rationalization processes within their own terms. In what is called the ‘routinization of analysis’, standard analytic measures for cost-effectiveness are applied ‘off the shelf’ without careful regard for whether they are appropriate. Weber wrote of specialized social science that once it is oriented towards a given subject matter through particular settings of problems and has established its methodological principles, [it] will consider the analysis of the data an end in itself. It will discontinue assessing the value of the individual facts in terms of their

122 Weber, Economy and Society, p. 86.
relationships to ultimate value-ideas. Indeed, it will lose its awareness of its ultimate rootedness in the value-ideas in general.126

As the ability to impose political values on military means is lost, bureaucratic processes replace political decision. In ‘The Origins of Overkill’, David Alan Rosenberg discusses how nuclear strategy, as a science of high-policy guidance, failed to regulate the acquisition and deployment of nuclear weaponry. He identifies the phenomenon of ‘bootstrapping’.127 Targeting nuclear weapons on the basis of counterforce principles generated demands for additional warheads as improved intelligence identified more targets and the enemy deployed more weapons. If enemy strategic nuclear forces were targeted on the same principles, the potential for a limitless counterforce race arises. Complex calculations of capability, survivability and targeting ‘made it natural for senior commanders of strategic forces always to want more’.128 Yet, from the vantage point of political leadership, the prospect of only a few enemy warheads detonating on one’s homeland is sufficient for purposes of deterrence.129 Speculation about the possibility of a Soviet counterforce attack consistently underestimated the fact that Soviet leaders contemplating nuclear war ‘would think first of what nuclear weapons could do to their homeland and themselves’.130

One of the obvious complementarities between strategic rationalization, the proliferation of means to security in disregard of political objectives, and war-fighting strategy is the number of casualties war-fighting strategists believed the US could suffer and be victorious in a nuclear war. Efforts to harden silos and protect C3I facilities in order to continue an extended exchange of nuclear strikes meant that the state, as an administrative and military apparatus, might survive nuclear war while some large portion of the citizenry was killed off. In summing up Weber’s account of rationalization, Karl Löwith commented ‘every instance of radical rationalization is inevitably fated to engender irrationality’.131 How is it that strategy came to disregard the lives of the members of the political community in its very efforts to secure them? How are values displaced in the process of strategic rationalization? Morgenthau took the decisive first steps by restricting the various values a political association might pursue in its foreign relations to power-political policies, to issues of security. The ethic of responsibility is invoked to cordon off ethical evaluation of security policy on grounds this would jeopardize the primary value, the security of the state. By orienting inquiry towards means to state security, a science of national security surrenders the ability to assess rationally the political values at stake in questions of strategy. What is lost is precisely the purpose for which Weber invoked his ethic, namely, to place a ‘calculus of values’ at the centre of decision-making. Such values are not ‘moral qualms’ about using violence, but the ends which political leadership seeks to realize. In the form of the ‘kernel of faith’, whether Morgenthau’s belief that modern states embody the common good or meaningful constructions of the Cold War, values do inform realist policy science.

126 Weber, Methodology, p. 112.
128 Bundy, Danger and Survival, p. 419.
129 On this point, see Bundy’s discussion, ibid., pp. 589–607.
130 Ibid., p. 565.
131 Löwith, Max Weber and Karl Marx, p. 62.
They do so, however, in a random way, not as explicit objects of dispute and discussion, but as underlying premises, making one strategy rational for its advocates and irrational for its detractors, all the while scientific debate centres on questions of means to security. Weber is saddled with the irony that the rationalization he feared is conducted in the name of the ethic he designed to avert it. In their ‘earthly course’ his political ethics operated against their original meaning.