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Green Power Politics: Traditional Realism and the Dynamics of Sustainability in International Relations

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Abstract

This research examines the global green energy transition through the lens of Hans Morgenthau's Traditional Realism, challenging the dominant Liberal Institutionalist narrative of climate cooperation. Using a qualitative descriptive method and library research, the study analyzes how sustainability is being operationalized as a tool of statecraft, prestige, and dominance. The results indicate that initiatives like the EU Green Deal and CBAM function as "Regulatory Imperialism," satisfying the animus dominandi of established powers by imposing normative hierarchies. Conversely, Indonesia's nickel downstreaming and "polyalignment" strategy represent a redefinition of the national interest in terms of industrial power and ecological sovereignty. The study also finds that Morgenthau's Policy of Prestige explains why states pursue climate leadership, even absent immediate material gain, since green credentials function as diplomatic capital that secures legitimacy and shields industrial interests from international scrutiny. The study concludes that the "Green Consensus" is a theater of prestige where states compete for moral authority to secure hierarchical advantages. It recommends that developing nations utilize resource nationalism to negotiate their ascent in the international order, treating sustainability not merely as a moral obligation but as a sophisticated instrument of power politics. These findings suggest that scholarship and policymaking on climate cooperation should account more explicitly for the persistence of power-seeking behavior beneath ostensibly cooperative environmental frameworks.

Keywords—*Animus Dominandi, Green Statecraft, Indonesia, Nickel Downstreaming, Traditional Realism*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In the twenty-first century, the discourse of International Relations (IR) has been increasingly colonized by the language of environmentalism. Supranational bodies and global summits routinely frame the climate crisis as a "collective action problem," necessitating a unified response from the international community. This dominant narrative, deeply rooted in Liberal Institutionalism, presupposes that the existential threat of ecological collapse will inevitably drive states toward deeper cooperation, prioritizing the global public good over narrow self-interest (Keohane & Victor, 2011).Under this paradigm, international regimes like the Paris Agreement are viewed as the primary mechanisms to

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manage interdependence and reduce the transaction costs of compliance (Frank, Biermann, Kanie Norichika, 2017).

However, this "depoliticized" view obscures the fierce geopolitical contestation occurring beneath the surface. This article asserts a fundamental counter-narrative: sustainability isn't just "protecting nature"—it is a battleground of ideas. Far from erasing conflict, the transition to a "Green Economy" is intensifying the struggle for dominance. State actors are aggressively competing to define the norms, standards, and technologies that will govern the future global order.

The current literature often fails to explain why, despite the proliferation of climate treaties, state behavior remains fiercely competitive. Why do major powers utilize environmental regulations, such as the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), as de facto trade barriers? Why is the race for renewable energy dominance characterized by protectionism rather than technology sharing? The answer lies in the neglect of power dynamics in environmental scholarship.

(Carr, 1939) famously argued, the assumption of a "harmony of interests" is merely a utopian illusion used by dominant powers to justify the status quo. To understand the true motives of green statecraft, it is necessary to return to the foundational logic of Traditional Realism (Classical Realism), particularly the insights of Hans J. Morgenthau, which locate the roots of political behavior not in systemic cooperation, but in the immutable human drive for power.

1.2. Problem Formulation

The central problem identified in this research is the theoretical misalignment between the reality of state behavior in the sustainability domain and the interpretation of that behavior by mainstream IR theory. While states increasingly use green policies to project power and secure hierarchical advantages, the academic analysis remains largely trapped in frameworks of "regime compliance" and "cooperation".

Specifically, this research addresses the failure of Liberal Institutionalism to account for the *animus dominandi*—the lust for power—that permeates climate diplomacy. Politics is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature, where the desire to dominate is a constitutive element of state behavior. The problem, therefore, is to explain how this primal drive manifests in the supposedly "altruistic" realm of environmental protection (Morgenthau, 1948).

Based on this, the research formulates the following non-prescriptive research questions:

1. What dimensions of strategic competition between the Global North and the Global South can the Liberal "global green consensus" framework explain, and what are its analytical limitations?

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2. How is environmental leadership conceptualized and integrated within iterations of the National Interest among competing state actors?
3. How do state actors operationalize Morgenthau's "Policy of Prestige" (Morgenthau, 1948) within climate diplomacy to generate international leverage?

1.3. Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this article is to develop a theoretical module that re-politicizes the concept of sustainability. By shifting the analytical lens from "saving the planet" to "statecraft," this study aims to demonstrate that environmentalism is a continuation of power politics by other means.

Specifically, the objectives are:

1. To deconstruct the "Green Consensus" by applying Morgenthau's six principles of political realism to contemporary environmental governance.
2. To analyze the role of *animus dominandi* in driving the competition for "Green Hegemony," distinguishing it from the Neorealist focus on defensive security (Waltz, 1979).
3. To conceptualize "Sustainability as Statecraft," providing a framework for understanding how states use moral authority in the climate arena to maximize their relative power and influence.

1.4. Utility of Research

Theoretically, this research contributes to the revitalization of Traditional Realist thought. While recent scholarship has favored Structural Realism (Neorealism), Classical Realism offers superior tools for understanding the psychological and diplomatic aspects of the "Battle of Ideas". This study bridges the gap between classical theory and modern environmental problems.

Practically, this study offers significant utility for policymakers in the Developmentalist State, particularly in Indonesia and the Global South. For emerging economies, accepting the Liberal view of sustainability as a "cooperative burden" risks institutional and structural entrapment within a regime complex designed by advanced industrial powers. By understanding sustainability as a power game involving prestige and hierarchy, Developmentalist policymakers can formulate more robust strategies—using their natural resources and environmental status not merely to comply with global rules, but to negotiate their ascent in the international order.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Review

The academic scholarship regarding sustainability in International Relations (IR) is vast yet theoretically fragmented. To situate the argument for

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Traditional Realism, this review categorizes the existing literature into three dominant streams: the Liberal Institutionalist consensus, the Critical/Marxist critique, and the Neorealist security turn. A critical evaluation of these streams reveals a significant gap in understanding the psychological and diplomatic dimensions of green statecraft.

2.1.1 The Liberal Consensus: Regimes as Governance

The most prolific body of work stems from the Liberal Institutionalist tradition. Scholars such as Keohane and Victor (Keohane & Victor, 2011) conceptualize climate governance not as a hierarchy, but as a "Regime Complex"—a loosely coupled set of institutions that allows states to manage interdependence. The central premise here is the Lockean view of nature: that through reason and institutional design, a "harmony of interests" can be achieved.

Literature in this vein focuses heavily on the mechanics of compliance and the design of treaties. For instance, Falkner (Falkner, 2016) analyzes the Paris Agreement's "pledge and review" system as a diplomatic breakthrough, arguing that "soft law" mechanisms are more effective than binding treaties in fostering global consensus. Similarly, (Frank, Biermann, Kanie Norichika, 2017) champion the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a normative framework that steers state behavior toward a "logic of consequences" where cooperation yields absolute gains. While this perspective effectively explains the proliferation of treaties, it fails to explain the persistence of conflict. It assumes states are rational utility-maximizers solving a collective problem, blinding itself to the possibility that states might use these very institutions to maximize relative power.

2.1.2 Critical Perspectives: Sustainability as Hegemony

In stark opposition to the Liberal view, Critical and Marxist scholars argue that the current sustainability regime is not a neutral forum for cooperation, but a vehicle for structural domination. This literature reframes sustainability as a tool of "Green Imperialism." Brand and Wissen (Brand & Wissen, 2017) argue that the "Imperial Mode of Living" in the Global North is sustained by outsourcing ecological costs to the Global South, while retaining the economic benefits of industrialization.

Furthermore, environmental standards—such as the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) or deforestation regulations—act as "protectionism in disguise." From this perspective, sustainability is a mechanism used by advanced industrial economies to "kick away the ladder" of development, preventing emerging powers from industrializing. While this school of thought accurately identifies power imbalances, it focuses primarily on economic structure and class relations. It often neglects the agency of the state and the specific diplomatic maneuvering of

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political leaders who use environmentalism for national prestige.

2.1.3 The Neorealist Turn: Scarcity and Security

A third stream of literature attempts to "securitize" the environment through a Neorealist lens. This scholarship, led by authors like (Homer-Dixon, 1999; T., 2001) focuses on "Resource Wars." They posit that climate change exacerbates scarcity (water, arable land, energy), which in turn drives conflict. More recently, the focus has shifted to the "Geopolitics of the Energy Transition." (Scholten, 2018) argues that the shift to renewables is creating a new dependency on "Critical Minerals" (lithium, cobalt, nickel), replacing the old oil politics with new supply chain vulnerabilities.

However, this literature remains predominantly Structural. It views states as defensive actors reacting to external material constraints (scarcity). It treats the state as a "black box" and sustainability merely as a "security dilemma." It fails to capture the offensive, prestige-seeking nature of climate diplomacy.

2.1.4 The Theoretical Gap

Despite these rich debates, there remains a critical theoretical void. The existing literature largely overlooks the Traditional Realist dimension: the role of human nature (*animus dominandi*) and the deliberate use of sustainability as a tool of Statecraft and Prestige. Current theories explain why states cooperate (Liberalism), why they exploit (Marxism), or why they fear scarcity (Neorealism). They do not, however, explain why states strive for "Climate Leadership" even when it offers no immediate material gain. They fail to account for the psychological dimension of power the desire to be seen as a "Moral Superpower." This research fills that gap by returning to the classical insights of Hans Morgenthau, positing that sustainability is not just about economics or security, but about the eternal struggle for status and the projection of the national will on the global stage (Waltz, 1979).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

To critically analyze the intersection of ecology and statecraft, this study employs the lens of Traditional Realism, anchored in the intellectual legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau. While the dominant Neorealist paradigm explains state behavior through the external constraints of anarchy (Waltz, 1979).Traditional Realism focuses on the internal drive of political actors. It posits that the roots of international conflict lie in the immutable characteristics of human nature. By adopting this framework, the research moves beyond the "security dilemma" of resource scarcity and instead examines the psychological and diplomatic utility of environmentalism.

2.2.1. The Green *Animus Dominandi*

The central tenet of Morgenthau's realism is the *animus dominandi*—the

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limitless human lust for power (Morgenthau, 1948). In the context of sustainability, this principle suggests that the push for global environmental governance is not merely a technical response to climate change, but a manifestation of the will to dominate.

When major powers like the European Union or the United States export their environmental standards (e.g., through supply chain due diligence laws), they are exercising a form of "Regulatory Imperialism". They are not simply protecting the biosphere; they are satisfying the *animus dominandi* by imposing their domestic values as universal laws. Thus, the "Green Transition" is interpreted here as a sophisticated arena for domination, where the ability to define what counts as "sustainable" becomes the ultimate form of power over the behavior of other nations.

2.2.2. National Interest and the Redefinition of Power

Morgenthau's second principle asserts that "interest is defined in terms of power"(Morgenthau, 1948). However, the content of power is fluid and determined by the political circumstances of the era. In the mid-20th century, power was defined by industrial capacity and nuclear deterrence. In the Anthropocene, the definition of the National Interest has expanded to include "Ecological Sovereignty."

A Traditional Realist reading argues that states pursue green policies to maximize their autonomy. The shift from fossil fuels (which rely on volatile global markets) to renewable energy (which relies on domestic infrastructure) is a strategic maneuver to reduce external vulnerability. Therefore, sustainability is operationalized as a component of hard power: it is the struggle to secure energy independence and dominate the technological frontiers of the future economy, ensuring the state's survival in a post-carbon hierarchy.

2.2.3. Sustainability as the Policy of Prestige

Perhaps the most underutilized aspect of Morgenthau's theory in environmental studies is the "Policy of Prestige" (Morgenthau, 1948).Prestige is the reputation for power, which allows a state to influence others without the costly expenditure of material force.

In contemporary diplomacy, "Green Credentials" act as a primary source of prestige in international society. A state that successfully frames itself as a "Climate Leader" accumulates diplomatic capital, allowing it to shame rivals and attract investment. Conversely, the label of "polluter" serves as a diplomatic stigma that isolates a state. For the Developmentalist State, managing this prestige is not a matter of vanity but of survival; acquiring "Green Legitimacy" is essential to avoid sanctions and maintain a seat at the negotiation table (Bernstein, 2001).

Thus, climate diplomacy, spanning multilateral summits, unilateral regulatory

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frameworks, and green industrial branding is analyzed not as a series of mere collaborative workshops, but as an arena of prestige where global power hierarchies are contested and reinforced (Bernstein, 2001).

3. Research Object and Method

3.1. Research Object

The primary object of this research is the strategic political behavior of state actors within the framework of global environmental governance. Unlike natural science studies that focus on ecological metrics (Do, 2025), this International Relations (IR) study treats "Sustainability" as a political object—specifically, as a diplomatic instrument used to navigate the international hierarchy. The research focuses on two distinct categories of actors: the established Great Powers (such as the European Union and the United States) who function as "Norm Setters," (Manners, 2002)and the Developmentalist States (such as Indonesia and Brazil) who navigate these norms to secure their sovereign development (Warburton & Gammon, 2025). The substance of the inquiry is the correlation between Green Policy Rhetoric (the normative claim of saving the planet) and Realist Statecraft (the underlying pursuit of power and prestige).

3.2. Research Design and Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design. This methodological approach is mandated by the theoretical framework of Traditional Realism, which emphasizes the psychological and diplomatic drivers of state behavior—specifically *animus dominandi* (the lust for power) and prestige. These variables are interpretive constructs that cannot be adequately measured through quantitative statistical analysis. As Creswell (Creswell, 2018) notes, qualitative inquiry is essential when the objective is to explore the "meaning" that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In this context, the research aims to interpret the intent behind state environmental policies, moving beyond the technical surface to uncover the power dynamics underneath.

3.3. Data Collection Technique

Data collection is conducted through the library research method (studi pustaka). This involves the systematic retrieval, categorization, and critical analysis of documents relevant to the research problem. The data sources are divided into:

1. Primary Data: Foundational theoretical texts, specifically Hans J. Morgenthau's Politics Among Nations (Morgenthau, 1948)which serves as the primary hermeneutic lens. Additionally, key primary policy and regulatory documents are directly analyzed, including the European Union Green Deal

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(COM(2019) 640 final), the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (EU Regulation 2023/956), the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR 2023/1115), and Indonesia's mineral export ban mandates (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019), to identify instances of regulatory expansionism and resource statecraft.

2. Secondary Data: Academic literature, geopolitical reports, and credible analysis regarding the "Energy Transition," "Critical Mineral Supply Chains," and "Green Industrial Policy."
3. To maintain analytical focus, the data collection is bounded both sectorally and geographically. Sectorally, this study does not evaluate all global sustainability domains (such as agriculture, forestry, or municipal waste management); rather, it focuses strictly on the green energy transition and critical mineral supply chains (specifically nickel extraction and Electric Vehicle battery processing). Geographically, the document retrieval centers on the regulatory axis between the European Union (as the primary exemplar of Global North "Norm Setters" through the EU Green Deal and CBAM) and Indonesia (as a primary exemplar of Global South "Developmentalist States" through its resource nationalism and *hilirisasi* policies).

3.4. Data Analysis Technique

The collected data is analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles et al., 2014). This process consists of three concurrent flows of activity:

1. Data Condensation: The process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the raw data. This involves filtering vast amounts of environmental discourse to isolate specific narratives where sustainability is operationalized as a tool of exclusion or coercion.
2. Data Display: Organizing the compressed information into structured arguments that map the relationship between specific "Green Mandates" (Do, 2025) and "National Power"
3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Synthesizing the findings to validate the proposition that the dynamics of sustainability are fundamentally driven by the Traditional Realist logic of competition and prestige.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Manifestation of *Animus Dominandi*: The EU Green Deal as Regulatory Imperialism

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The application of Traditional Realism to the post-2020 international landscape reveals a fundamental transformation in the nature of power. Hans Morgenthau's central concept of *animus dominandi*—the limitless human lust for power—has not dissipated with the rise of environmentalism; rather, it has found a new, more sophisticated vessel (Morgenthau, 1948). In the twentieth century, the *animus dominandi* was satisfied through the conquest of territory, the accumulation of nuclear warheads, and the direct subjugation of populations. In the twenty-first century, however, this drive for dominance has shifted from Territorial Conquest to Regulatory Dominance. The "Green Transition" is not, as Liberal Institutionalists suggest, a cooperative exit from anarchy into a "global moral community." Instead, it represents a new battlefield where major powers compete for the authority to set the "Green Standards" that govern the global economy (Biresselioğlu et al., 2023).

To evaluate its geopolitical implications through a Realist lens, it is necessary to establish the operational baseline of the European Green Deal (EGD). Formally launched by the European Commission in December (European Commission, 2019) the EGD is a comprehensive growth strategy aimed at transforming the European Union into a resource-efficient, modern, and competitive economy. Its primary targets were legally enshrined in the European Climate Law (Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 in July 2021), committing the bloc to reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 (relative to 1990 levels) and achieving net-zero climate neutrality by 2050.

To operationalize these targets, the EU introduced the "Fit for 55" legislative package in July 2021, deploying concrete trade and supply-chain instruments such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM, Regulation (EU) 2023/956) and the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR, Regulation (EU) 2023/1115). While internally framed as a domestic decarbonization strategy, the EGD inherently projects extraterritorial jurisdiction: it mandates that foreign producers seeking access to the EU Single Market adhere to stringent European carbon accounting, due diligence, and geolocational supply-chain traceability standards.

This shift marks the emergence of "Regulatory Imperialism." In this new configuration, the European Union (EU) acts not merely as a market actor, but as a "Normative Empire." By utilizing the European Green Deal as a geopolitical instrument, the EU satisfies its drive to dominate by imposing its domestic values as universal laws. The mechanism of this dominance is subtle yet coercive: by setting stringent sustainability criteria for market access—such as deforestation-free mandates or carbon intensity limits—the EU effectively extends its jurisdiction beyond its physical borders. State actors in the Global South are presented with a non-negotiable choice: align their domestic industrial policies with Brussels' preferences or face economic isolation. As

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noted by Biresselioğlu, Solak, and Savaş (Biresselioğlu et al., 2023), this is a deliberate projection of "Normative Power," where the capacity to define what counts as "sustainable" becomes the ultimate form of power over the behavior of rival nations.

From a Traditional Realist perspective, this behavior validates the continuity of the *animus dominandi*. The "Green Consensus" serves as a moral camouflage for the assertion of hierarchy. When the EU dictates environmental standards to the Global South, it exercises a "will to power" that forces domestic policy realignments in Developmentalist States.

Direct empirical evidence of this regulatory pressure is visible in structural policy shifts across key export sectors. For instance, the enforcement of the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) compelled Indonesia to alter its domestic Timber Legality Verification System (SVLK) and mandate geolocational supply-chain tracking for palm oil and timber exporters seeking market access. Similarly, the rollout of CBAM has forced developing nations—such as Indonesia and Turkey—to initiate domestic carbon pricing and verification mechanisms to prevent export revenues from being captured by European treasuries (Pangestu & Rahman, 2023). These mandatory domestic regulatory adjustments demonstrate how extraterritorial green mandates directly alter state economic trajectories to conform with the hegemon's normative requirements.

The relationship established is not one of partnership, but of subordination: a rigid hierarchy between the "Norm Setters" (the industrialized North) and the "Norm Takers" (the developing South). This dynamic confirms that the international system remains anarchic and competitive; the weapons have simply changed from gunboats to carbon taxes. The *animus dominandi* drives the Great Powers to ensure that the transition to a low-carbon economy occurs on their terms, preserving their position at the top of the value chain while relegating emerging powers to the role of raw material suppliers (Claar, 2022). Thus, the "Green Era" is not the end of power politics, but its most sophisticated evolution.

The second dimension of the *animus dominandi* in the green era manifests as what contemporary scholars term Green Colonialism. Traditional Realism posits that powerful states will always seek to clothe their power-seeking behavior in the language of universal morality to minimize resistance and legitimize strategic expansion (Morgenthau, 1948). In the 2020s, official environmental discourse serves this exact obfuscating function. Direct evidence of this moral framing is explicit in the foundational text of the European Green Deal (Philipsen, 2019).

The document frames the EU's unilateral market rules not as competitive economic statecraft, but as an altruistic moral crusade, stating that "the EU has the collective ability to transform its economy and society to put it on a more sustainable path" and pledging that "the EU will continue to lead international efforts and

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wants to build alliances with the like-minded... ensuring high environmental standards are promoted globally"(Philipsen, 2019). By rhetoricizing trade conditions and sustainability mandates as an existential "duty to lead global stewardship," the EU disguises protectionist barriers and extraterritorial jurisdiction as universal moral goods (Claar, 2022). From a Realist lens, this textual framing provides concrete proof of how dominant powers use moralistic rhetoric to mask the assertion of regulatory hierarchy over peripheral economies.

This structural dependency is reinforced through the Externalization of Costs. which is vividly demonstrated in the case of Indonesia's nickel extraction for the global Electric Vehicle (EV) battery supply chain. While the Global North projects an image of environmental leadership, its green transition relies directly on critical mineral extraction in the Global South.This creates a stark empirical asymmetry where developing nations absorb the immediate ecological and social costs of production while advanced economies capture high-value technological and moral capital (Claar, 2022; Heijlen & Duhayon, 2024).

To move beyond normative assertions, the structural impact of Indonesia’s nickel downstreaming (hilirisasi) policy must be evaluated through concrete empirical and trade metrics. Prior to the full implementation of the raw ore export ban in January 2020, Indonesia exported low-value unprocessed nickel ore (HS 2604), generating approximately USD 1.1 billion to USD 3.3 billion annually in export revenues (United States International Trade Commission [USITC], 2024b). Following the mandatory domestic processing requirements, the export value of processed nickel products—specifically Nickel Pig Iron (NPI), Ferronickel (FeNi), and Mixed Hydroxide Precipitate (MHP)—surged exponentially to USD 30.8 billion in 2022 and over USD 33.5 billion in 2023, representing a nearly tenfold increase in top-line export value.

Geographically, the destination of Indonesia's nickel exports underwent a radical structural realign. Over 75% to 80% of intermediate refined nickel products are exported directly to China, driven by joint-venture industrial parks such as the Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP) and Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park (IWIP), where Chinese smelting technology dominates the refining capacity. The remaining processed volume is distributed to high-value manufacturing hubs in Japan, South Korea, and European markets attempting to secure battery-grade materials. At the macroeconomic level, this capital-intensive strategy attracted over USD 20

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billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) into processing infrastructure between 2019 and 2023. Consequently, resource-rich industrial provinces experienced unprecedented regional GDP growth rates—averaging 12% to 15% annually in Central Sulawesi and North Maluku—significantly outperforming the national average GDP growth of ~5%.

However, from a Realist perspective, these quantitative gains reveal a double-edged asymmetry: while Indonesia successfully captured top-line export value and expanded its industrial hard power, the structural value-chain capture remains heavily concentrated in foreign capital and technological ownership, while the localized environmental burden of captive coal generation remains within domestic borders.

Empirically, this asymmetry is reflected in the environmental footprint of Indonesia's primary nickel processing hubs in Morowali (Central Sulawesi) and Weda Bay (North Maluku). To supply the high-purity nickel required for global battery precursors, processing facilities rely heavily on high-pressure acid leach (HPAL) technology and energy-intensive Rotary Kiln-Electric Furnace (RKEF) smelters.

These industrial complexes are predominantly powered by off-grid captive coal-fired power plants, which significantly increase localized carbon intensity and defeat the "clean" narrative at the extraction origin (Heijlen & Duhayon, 2024; United States International Trade Commission [USITC], 2024b). Furthermore, intensive land clearing and deep-sea tailing placement (DSTP) have led to severe deforestation and coastal marine degradation in Halmahera and Sulawesi. While Indonesian extraction sites bear these tangible ecological deficits, European and Western end-manufacturers utilize regulatory mechanisms (such as EUDR and CBAM) to penalize the high carbon footprint of these very processes (Do, 2025). Within the framework of Traditional Realism, this dynamic is not an accidental market failure, but a calculated policy of hierarchy that keeps resource-rich developing states at the bottom of the value chain while preserving the moral and technological dominance of the North.

Within the framework of Traditional Realism, this is a calculated policy of hierarchy. The North uses sustainability mandates to kick away the ladder of industrialization, ensuring that emerging powers cannot compete on an equal footing. Thus, the pursuit of a Net Zero world is revealed as a strategic maneuver to maintain the status quo of global power, where environmental standards act as a gatekeeping mechanism controlled by the dominant hegemon.

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Furthermore, this dynamic creates a Participation Trap for the Developmentalist State. To maintain access to global markets and preserve their international prestige, states like Indonesia are forced to adopt Green Certifications and standards that are designed without their input. This is the essence of the lust for power: the ability to force an opponent to follow your rules while making them believe they are participating in a global moral good. As Claar (Claar, 2022) notes, this continuity of dependency ensures that the North maintains its Imperial Mode of Living at the expense of the South development (Brand & Wissen, 2017). By stripping away the philanthropic rhetoric of the EU Green Deal, Traditional Realism exposes a cold reality: sustainability has become the new frontier of the struggle for dominance, where saving the planet is functionally synonymous with securing the hierarchy.

The third manifestation of the *animus dominandi* within global environmental governance is found in the specific technical instruments of trade, most notably the European Union Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). From a Traditional Realist perspective, CBAM is not merely a technical fix for carbon leakage; it is a protectionist weapon designed to preserve the industrial hierarchy of the Global North. Morgenthau (Morgenthau, 1948) argued that states will always use legal and economic instruments to consolidate their power relative to others. By imposing a carbon price on imports of steel, aluminum, cement, and fertilizers, the EU effectively creates a trade barrier that penalizes the industrializing Global South for using the same energy-intensive development path that the North used to achieve its own wealth.

Recent research by Do (Do, 2025) in the Indonesian Journal of Energy highlights that CBAM functions as a mechanism of economic coercion. For Developmentalist States like Indonesia, whose industrial sectors still rely on affordable, carbon-intensive energy to grow, CBAM represents a significant threat to the National Interest. The cost of compliance for Indonesian exporters is estimated to rise significantly, making their products less competitive in the European market (Do, 2025). This is a classic Realist maneuver: the EU uses its market power to force foreign states to internalize European costs. This ensures that even as the Global South attempts to industrialize, it is forced to do so under a cost structure dictated by the North, effectively preventing the South from achieving the same level of competitive industrial power.

Furthermore, CBAM serves to reinforce the Policy of Prestige. By framing this trade barrier as a moral necessity for the survival of the planet, the EU maintains its reputation for leadership while simultaneously weakening the economic foundations of its potential rivals. This is the duality of Traditional Realism: the use of a moralistic ideology to justify an exercise of hard economic power. As noted by Do (Do, 2025), the lack of revenue-sharing mechanisms in

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CBAM—where the taxes collected go to the EU treasury rather than back to developing nations for green technology—proves that the primary objective is not global carbon reduction but the maintenance of European fiscal and industrial dominance. In this light, CBAM is the modern equivalent of the colonial tariff, designed to ensure that the periphery remains economically subordinate to the center under the guise of the common good.

The final manifestation of the *animus dominandi* in the context of global environmental governance is the deliberate construction of a rigid international hierarchy. Traditional

Realism emphasizes that politics is a struggle for position within a social structure (Morgenthau, 1948). Through the combined application of the Green Deal, CBAM, and structural dependency, a permanent divide has been established between the Norm Setters of the Global North and the Norm Takers of the Global South. This hierarchy is not based on consent or mutual benefit, but on the ability of dominant states to institutionalize their preferences as global imperatives. By controlling the international organizations and the legal frameworks that define sustainability, the North ensures that it remains the judge of what is considered legitimate state behavior in the Anthropocene.

This hierarchy functions as a form of social and political closure. As Biresselioğlu, Solak, and Savaş (Biresselioğlu et al., 2023) argue, the European Union uses its normative power to create a system where developing nations must constantly prove their environmental credentials to maintain market access. This creates a state of perpetual diplomatic vulnerability for the Developmentalist State. The power to define what is green and what is not allows the dominant powers to weaponize morality. When a state like Indonesia attempts to industrialize through nickel processing, its methods are labeled as environmentally destructive by the Norm Setters nickel processing, its methods are labeled as environmentally destructive by the Norm Setters. This delegitimization occurs despite the existence of formal European climate assistance mechanisms, such as the EU Global Gateway, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe), and EU participation in Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP).

While Brussels frames these programs as frameworks of global solidarity, a structural evaluation reveals their profound inadequacy and half-hearted nature. First, the financial architecture relies overwhelmingly on market-linked commercial loans and sovereign debt rather than non-repayable grants (Timperley, 2021). In the case of Indonesia's $20 billion JETP framework, less than 3% of the pledged funds consist of direct grants, effectively forcing the host state to assume foreign debt to finance industrial adjustments that primarily serve European supply-chain compliance. Second, the total volume of concessional aid is quantitatively incommensurate with the multi-billion-

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dollar export losses threatened by CBAM and EUDR penalties (OECD, 2023). Third, access to these financial pools is bound by strict regulatory conditionality, requiring recipient states to adopt European technical and legal standards as pre-conditions for capital disbursement. From a Realist perspective, these support systems do not constitute genuine burden-sharing; rather, they function as half-hearted mitigation tools that deepen financial dependency while shifting the ultimate cost of the green transition onto the Global South.

This labeling is not a neutral scientific assessment, but a strategic act of delegitimization designed to keep the rising powers of the South in a state of moral and economic probation.

Consequently, the global environmental order is revealed to be a mirror of the traditional power structures that Morgenthau described in the mid-twentieth century. The transition to a green economy has not changed the fundamental nature of international relations; it has merely provided a new set of tools for the maintenance of hierarchy. The North maintains its prestige and dominance by occupying the top of the technological and normative ladder, while the South is forced into a defensive posture, struggling to protect its sovereign development goals within a system designed to restrict them. As Biresselioğlu et al. (Biresselioğlu et al., 2023) conclude, this normative empire ensures that the struggle for power continues under the guise of global stewardship, where the survival of the planet is used as a justification for the survival of the existing global hierarchy.

4.2. Interest Defined in Terms of Power: Indonesia's Resource Nationalism and Polyalignment

The second pillar of Morgenthau's Traditional Realism posits that the primary objective of statecraft is the pursuit of the National Interest, which is defined strictly in terms of power (Morgenthau, 1948). In the context of the global green transition, this principle explains the aggressive shift toward Energy Sovereignty among Developmentalist States. For a state like Indonesia, the National Interest is no longer secured by adhering to the Liberal norms of raw material exportation, but by capturing the industrial value of its natural resources. Indonesia's policy of banning raw nickel exports (downstreaming) is a classic manifestation of this Realist logic. To evaluate this strategy empirically, it is necessary to establish the regulatory and chronological baseline of Indonesia's nickel downstreaming (hilirisasi) policy. Formally anchored in Law No. 4/2009 on Mineral and Coal Mining (Indonesia, 2009), the policy mandated that mining concession holders process raw ores domestically prior to export. While initially subject to transitional waivers, the policy was decisively accelerated through Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (MEMR) Regulation No. 11/2019, which imposed a complete, non-negotiable ban on the export of

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unprocessed nickel ore (specifically ore with nickel content below 1.7%) effective January 1, 2020—three years ahead of the original 2023 target schedule. This requirement was further codified in Law No. 3/2020.

Operationally, hilirisasi forces foreign and domestic mining firms to invest in onshore refining infrastructure, shifting production from low-value raw extraction to intermediate and high-value materials. This processing infrastructure primarily relies on two technological pathways: Rotary Kiln-Electric Furnace (RKEF) smelters producing Nickel Pig Iron (NPI) and Ferronickel for stainless steel, and High-Pressure Acid Leach (HPAL) plants producing Mixed Hydroxide Precipitate (MHP), Nickel Sulfate, and Cobalt Sulfate required for EV battery precursors. Concentrated in integrated industrial mega-parks such as the Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP) in Central Sulawesi and the Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park (IWIP) in North Maluku, this regulatory prohibition effectively repurposed Indonesia's supply monopoly—holding approximately 21% to 24% of global nickel reserves—to leverage foreign direct investment and capture industrial value onshore (USITC, 2024). It represents a strategic move to transform the state from a peripheral raw-material supplier into a central hub of the global Electric Vehicle (EV) battery supply chain.

A critical analysis by (Warburton & Gammon, 2025) describes Indonesia's strategy as a sophisticated maneuver of Polyalignment. In a world characterized by the Second Cold War between the United States and China, Indonesia does not choose a side; instead, it uses its control over approximately 22 percent of global nickel reserves to play rival powers against each other to maximize national benefit. This is not protectionism in the economic sense, but Statecraft in the Realist sense. By refusing to export raw ore, Indonesia forces foreign powers to bring their technology and capital into Indonesian territory. This strategy has proven successful; a by the United States International Trade Commission (United States International Trade Commission (USITC), 2024; United States International Trade Commission [USITC], 2024a) confirmed that the export ban effectively surged foreign investment in Indonesian smelting and refining, directly increasing the state's material power.

Furthermore, this redefinition of interest challenges the Regulatory Imperialism of the North. When the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled against Indonesia's export ban, the Indonesian government's decision to appeal and maintain the policy demonstrated that the state prioritizes Power (industrial capacity) over International Law (Liberal norms). From a Traditional Realist perspective, this is the only rational course for a state seeking to climb the international hierarchy. As (Warburton & Gammon, 2025) argue, Indonesia's Green Realpolitik allows it to navigate the transition by weaponizing its resources, ensuring that Sustainability serves the state's survival rather than the state serving

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a global environmental order defined by others.

The second point within this section examines how the redefinition of interest extends beyond external diplomacy into the realm of domestic state-building. Traditional Realism emphasizes that the power of a state is rooted in its industrial capacity and its ability to mobilize resources for national survival (Morgenthau, 1948). Indonesia's "Hilirisasi" policy is therefore analyzed not merely as a commercial venture, but as a project of internal consolidation designed to build "Hard Power" in the twenty-first century. By mandating the domestic processing of nickel, the state creates a sophisticated industrial base that serves as a foundation for long-term strategic autonomy.

According to a 2024 analysis by the United States International Trade Commission (United States International Trade Commission (USITC), 2024) confirmed that, the export ban has functioned as a catalyst for "forced industrialization." This process has enabled the Indonesian state to capture significant portions of the global value chain that were previously located in foreign territories. From a Realist perspective, this is a calculated accumulation of material power. By developing high-tech smelting facilities and battery precursors locally, Indonesia reduces its reliance on manufactured imports from the Global North, thereby decreasing its strategic vulnerability. This internal strengthening allows the state to negotiate from a position of relative strength, as it controls the physical infrastructure necessary for the global green transition (United States International Trade Commission (USITC), 2024).

Furthermore, the pursuit of industrial sovereignty through hilirisasi acts as a deterrent against "Economic Coercion." When a state possesses the internal capacity to process its own strategic minerals, it becomes less susceptible to the "Participation Trap" described in Section 4.1. As(Warburton & Gammon, 2025)note, Indonesia's ability to resist WTO pressures and maintain its export ban is a direct result of this increased domestic capability. The state has successfully demonstrated that it can weather international legal challenges because its "Hard Power"—rooted in its control over the physical supply of refined nickel—is more significant in the global hierarchy than normative compliance. Thus, downstreaming is the ultimate expression of the National Interest: it transforms a natural endowment into a permanent instrument of state power, ensuring that Indonesia remains a central, rather than peripheral, actor in the new global energy order.

4.3. The Policy of Prestige: The Paradox of Green Legitimacy in Global Value Chains

The third pillar of Hans Morgenthau's theoretical framework is the Policy of Prestige, which he defines as the reputation for power (Morgenthau, 1948). Prestige is not a matter of vanity but a strategic necessity; it is the diplomatic

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capital that allows a state to influence the minds of others and achieve its objectives without the immediate expenditure of material force. In the contemporary international system, Green Legitimacy has emerged as the primary currency of prestige. States compete to be recognized as climate leaders not merely for environmental reasons, but to secure their moral authority and standing in the global hierarchy. For the Developmentalist State, acquiring the status of a Green Superpower or a critical hub for Electric Vehicles (EV) is a calculated move to project a reputation of being indispensable to the future of the global economy.

This competition for prestige is visible in the theater of global climate diplomacy. As research by the Indonesian Journal of Energy (Muhammad, 2025)suggests, the rush to announce Net Zero targets by 2050 or 2060 functions as a strategic signaling mechanism. By aligning with the global green consensus, a state like Indonesia enhances its prestige, which in turn facilitates the inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and minimizes the risk of diplomatic isolation. This reputation for being a responsible global actor acts as a shield; it provides the state with the moral leverage needed to protect its industrial interests when they clash with the standards of the Global North. From a Traditional Realist perspective, green credentials are the modern equivalent of a powerful navy or an industrial surplus—they are symbols of a state's capacity to lead and adapt to the changing requirements of global power (Morgenthau, 1948).

Furthermore, the Policy of Prestige allows the state to navigate the Battle of Ideas. When Indonesia brands its nickel downstreaming as the foundation of the world's green battery supply chain, it is using prestige to redefine its extractive industries as a global moral good. As noted by (Heijlen & Duhayon, 2024), this strategic branding creates a narrative of indispensability. Even when the state faces international criticism for its domestic environmental policies, its prestige as a critical supplier of green technology provides it with a unique diplomatic immunity. This demonstrates that in the Green Realpolitik of the 2020s, the reputation for environmental leadership is a vital instrument of statecraft, used to consolidate a state's position within the Global Value Chain and ensure its continued relevance in a post-carbon world order.

The second point regarding the Policy of Prestige involves the inherent tension between a state's international reputation and its domestic realities. Traditional Realism acknowledges that the pursuit of prestige often requires a state to project an image that may contradict its internal conditions (Morgenthau, 1948). This creates the Paradox of Green Legitimacy: a Developmentalist State must maintain the prestige of being a "Green Battery Hub" to attract global capital, even while the industrial processes required to achieve that status—such as intensive nickel mining and smelting—result in localized environmental degradation. From a Realist perspective, the state's priority remains the accumulation of

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international leverage and diplomatic standing, often at the expense of local ecological conservation.

Recent research by Heijlen and Duhayon (Heijlen & Duhayon, 2024)explores this paradox within the Indonesian context. They find that while the state successfully markets its nickel industry as an essential component of the global climate solution, the actual extraction process in regions like Sulawesi and North Maluku often leads to significant deforestation and water pollution. In Traditional Realist theory, this is a calculated trade-off. The state manages this paradox by utilizing its "Green Prestige" to silence or delegitimize local environmental critics. By framing the nickel industry as a contribution to the "Global Good," the state creates a moral shield that protects its industrial path from domestic and international interference (Heijlen & Duhayon, 2024). This demonstrates that prestige is not just for external display; it is a tool used to consolidate the state's power over its own territory and resources.

Ultimately, the management of this paradox confirms that in the struggle for power, the "Image of Progress" is often more strategically valuable than the "Reality of Protection." As long as the state remains an indispensable node in the Global Value Chain (GVC), its prestige as a green leader remains intact despite localized environmental failures. This allows the state to continue its ascent in the international hierarchy while maintaining domestic industrial momentum. As Heijlen and Duhayon (Heijlen & Duhayon, 2024) conclude, the ability to project Green Legitimacy while bypassing stringent local environmental standards is the ultimate sign of a sophisticated Realpolitik. It ensures that the state captures the benefits of the green transition—wealth, technology, and status—without sacrificing the material power generated by its extractive industries.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Conclusion

This research concludes that the global sustainability transition, specifically operationalized through the green energy transition and critical mineral supply chains is not a shift toward harmonious cosmopolitan cooperation, but rather a new arena for the manifestation of classic power politics.

Through the lens of Hans Morgenthau’s Traditional Realism, it is found that contemporary environmental policies, such as the EU Green Deal and the CBAM mechanism, are modern expressions of the *animus dominandi*. Power in the 21st century is no longer contested solely through physical territorial conquest, but through regulatory dominance and the setting of normative standards that create a hierarchy between the "Norm Setters" in the North and the "Norm Takers" in the South.

On the other hand, Indonesia’s response through its nickel

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downstreaming (hilirisasi) policy proves that national interest remains defined in terms of power. The strategy of "Polyalignment" and the resource nationalism applied by Indonesia are rational efforts to increase domestic industrial capacity (hard power) while securing bargaining positions amidst Great Power competition. Furthermore, the use of green economy issues as a tool for image-building in international diplomacy confirms the vital role of the "Policy of Prestige." Green prestige is not merely a matter of morality; it is a strategic diplomatic tool that provides legitimacy for a state to pursue its industrial interests without facing international isolation. Ultimately, this study affirms that as long as the international system remains anarchic, the energy transition will always serve as an instrument to maintain or challenge the global power hierarchy.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings above, several constructive alternative solutions for the development of science and policy are recommended:

1. Development of Green Realist Theory: Academics should expand the study of Traditional Realism to include ecological security and critical minerals as new variables in the calculation of state power. This is necessary to avoid the trap of Liberal thinking that is overly optimistic about environmental institutions.
2. Diplomacy Based on Resource Sovereignty: Developing nations are advised to strengthen alliances among owners of mineral reserves (such as forming an "OPEC for Nickel") to balance the regulatory dominance of the European Union and other developed nations.
3. Synchronization of Domestic Environmental Standards: Indonesia needs to improve environmental governance at the local level to maintain its "Green Prestige" internationally. This is crucial so that downstreaming produces not only material power but also a moral legitimacy that cannot be easily delegitimized by protectionist instruments such as CBAM.

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