

“What Cosmopolitans Can Learn from Classical Realists”

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International political theory today seem reminiscent of an episode of shadow boxing, with participants directing their punches at imaginary antagonists outfitted with crudely stylized arguments, but rarely in fact landing a real punch on an actual opponent. Comfortably ensconced in the disciplinary subfield of “IR” and committed to the systematic empirical study of international politics, Realist political scientists, for example, rarely take notice of the remarkable recent revival of Cosmopolitanism, most of whose representatives hail from the ranks of normative political philosophy. Caught up in their own internecine methodological battles, Realists generally seem oblivious to the efforts of their colleagues (many of whom can be found just down the departmental hallway) in constructing ambitious accounts of global justice, for example, or novel defenses of global democracy.¹ When Realists bother to say something about Cosmopolitanism, they tend to confirm their critics’ worst stereotypes. So contemporary Realists can be found dismissing ongoing experiments in postnational governance (e.g., the European Union),² endorsing one-sidedly instrumentalist views of international law and morality, and going so far as to embrace a thorough-going moral skepticism.³ To the extent that

¹ This, at least, is the situation in US political science.

² John Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19 (1994), pp. 5-49. Tellingly, Mearsheimer’s magnum opus, *The Tragedy of Great Powers* (New York: Norton, 2001), barely touches on international law and international morality, topics on which his mid-century Realist predecessors dealt with at great length and with surprising subtlety.

³ Danilo Zolo, *Cosmopolis: Prospects for World Government* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1997). Zolo’s is the most impressive recent Realist critique of Cosmopolitanism, yet in many respects his is an idiosyncratic Realism. Unlike many mid-century “classical” Realists, for example, he accepts the “subjectivity and contingency” of all moral

they engage with Cosmopolitanism, their response consists of recycled accusations of “idealism,” “moralism,” and “utopianism.” Cosmopolitanism, they claim, remains blind to the fundamental laws of a dangerous anarchical state system, where especially the great powers must do everything they can to garner power advantages in relation to their rivals. Any talk of radical global reform stumbles in the face of the harsh realities of the “security dilemma,” which today as in the distant past requires a more-or-less permanent struggle for power and security among independent states.⁴

Unfortunately, Realists are by no means alone in their preference for shadow boxing. Cosmopolitans have made things too easy for themselves by embracing a simplistic and occasionally caricatured interpretation of Realism. Cosmopolitans regularly ignore versions of Realist international theory --and especially normatively-minded variants of classical Realism-- which offer a serious intellectual challenge, in part because such Realists have endorsed versions of both moral and legal-political universalism analogous to those advocated by present-day defenders of global reform. Like contemporary Cosmopolitanism, Realism comes in many different shapes and sizes. Despite widespread claims to the contrary, influential mid-century Realists did not advocate moral skepticism, evince unmitigated hostility to international law or international morality, or resist far-reaching global reform (I). Sizable common ground between Cosmopolitans and classical Realists can be identified (II). In part because of this shared territory, Cosmopolitans will need to pay closer attention to Realist ideas about the necessary

values (p. 74). For a critical response to Zolo, see Tony Coates, “Neither Cosmopolitanism nor Realism: a Response to Danilo Zolo,” in Barry Holden (ed.), *Global Democracy: Key Debates* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 87-101.

⁴ Both “offensive” and “defensive” Realists share these core assumptions (see Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006], pp. 15-25.)

presuppositions of global democracy. For sound reasons, and in opposition to recent Cosmopolitans, classical Realists argued that any prospective global democracy would need to rest on a mature supranational society capable of performing far-reaching integrative functions. They also insisted that any viable postnational polity will need to take on core state or at least state-like institutional attributes. Their neglected ideas help identify the Achilles' heel of the present-day preference for "global (democratic) governance without government" (III).

In short, only a serious intellectual give-and-take between Cosmopolitans and sophisticated Realists can allow us to put the tedious intellectual shadow boxing to rest. What follows is an attempt to initiate such an exchange.

I. Against Caricatures

Recent Cosmopolitanism comes in manifold theoretical and political versions, but what they all share is a deep enmity to Realism. So how then do Cosmopolitans typically characterize their archrival?

Realism, we are told, "finds moral considerations unfit for the necessities that characterize politics, especially international politics."⁵ The source of this enmity to a rigorous moral code and especially to demanding conceptions of international morality is its roots in the

⁵ Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 106. What follows is a composite portrayal of Realism based on Doyle as well as: Daniele Archibugi, *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 126-31; Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), esp. pp. 11-50; Simon Caney, *Justice Beyond Borders: A Global Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Jürgen Habermas, *The Divided West* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2006), pp. 166-68; David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 74-5; Charles Jones, *Global Justice: Defending Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 114-15.

political theories of Machiavelli and Hobbes.⁶ The former argued in favor of discarding traditional moral norms in order to ensure self-preservation in a dangerous political universe; the latter insisted that shared conceptions of justice presuppose a system of shared sovereignty. Absent a world state, interstate affairs are characterized by a perilous state of nature in which no common moral framework can be rendered effective. Realism thus affirms Realpolitik, meaning that individual states can legitimately pursue their vital power interests even when doing so conflicts with conventional normative prohibitions. Realism's deep skepticism about international law allegedly stems from the same roots. As Machiavelli and Hobbes allegedly taught us, binding law requires sanctions backed up by a coercive state apparatus. Because interstate affairs remain characterized by anarchy, the regular and effective enforcement of law there inevitably is plagued by massive deficits. More often than not, international law --like many appeals to a shared moral code—serve as little more than the political instruments of the most powerful global political interests or “great powers.” When international morality or international law operates effectively, it does so only because significant power interests at the global level happen to decide that it is in their interest for them to do so. But in a Hobbesian political world, their support always remains fragile.

Not surprisingly, or so the argument goes, Realism suffers from institutional conservatism. Given international anarchy, states can do little more than pursue their “national interests.” Of course, the national interests of individual political units occasionally overlap with those of competing states; common action and cooperation may then be possible. In a Hobbesian

⁶ I bracket the question of the validity of this (heavy-handed) reading of Machiavelli and Hobbes for now. Cosmopolitans here follow Martin Wight (*International Theory: The Three Traditions* [New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992]), who linked Realism to early modern European political thought.

environment, however, such incidents represent the exception to the rule. International organization should be seen fundamentally as a tenuous affair, dependent on the cooperation of distinct power units whose interests may rapidly conflict. To be sure, the achievement of a world state might be morally desirable.⁷ Yet the basic dynamics of an international system in which rival political units compete for power and security render utopian any attempt to establish ambitious varieties of global governance. This is why Realists, we are told, remain even today committed to maintaining the institutional primacy of the nation-state, despite significant evidence that the ongoing process of globalization undermines both its efficacy and legitimacy. Their Hobbesian view of international politics constitutes what David Held dubs a “limiting factor’ which will always thwart any attempt to conduct international relations in a manner which transcends the politics of the sovereign state.”⁸

Now there is no question that this account of Realism aptly captures the views of many of its present-day representatives. However, it distorts the contributions of Realist international theory’s most notable twentieth-century defenders. Just as international political theory has witnessed a wide-ranging revival of Cosmopolitanism, over the course of the last decade or so a no-less impressive renewal of interest in the writings of so-called classical Realists like E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and Reinhold Niebuhr has also taken place, mostly among historians of international political thought and normatively minded international relations scholars.⁹ Though

⁷ Zolo denies this, though many other contemporary Realists at least admit that a world state might represent a desirable state of affairs, if it could be achieved, which most ---in contrast to their “classical” predecessors---doubt. See, for example, Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 238.

⁸ Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, pp. 74-5.

⁹ The literature is vast and growing, but see, for example: Duncan Bell (ed.), *Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Michael Cox (ed.), *E.H. Carr: A*

generally ignored by Cosmopolitanism, the quest to salvage the achievements of mid-century Realism, which combined ambitious normative aspirations with an open acknowledgment of the necessity of far-reaching global reform, challenges many widespread theoretical preconceptions. Classical Realists and Cosmopolitans, we will see, have more of a common intellectual and even programmatic basis than typically recognized.

To be sure, classical Realism, like any significant intellectual current, was always a complex and unwieldy intellectual creature. Hugely influential in the US from the late 1930s well into the '60s, its ranks included theologians (e.g., Niebuhr), former lawyers (e.g., Morgenthau, as well as John Herz and Arnold Wolfers), as well as historically-minded political analysts of a radical political bent (e.g., E.H. Carr, Frederick Schuman). The intellectual influences on it were no less wide-ranging:¹⁰ Niebuhr, for example, was intellectually and

Critical Appraisal (New York: Palgrave, 2000); Campbell Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Christoph Frei, *Hans J. Morgenthau: An Intellectual Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001); Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethic, Interests, and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Robert W. Lovin, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Alastair J.H. Murray, *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997); William E. Scheuerman, *Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009); Vibeke Schou Tjalve, *Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and the Politics of Patriotic Dissent: Realist Strategies of Republican Peace* (New York: Palgrave, 2008); Michael C. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Michael C. Williams (ed.), *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). From the (substantial) previous generation of literature on Realism, Michael J. Smith (*Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986]) remains indispensable.

¹⁰ Other classical Realists included, for example, George Kennan and Raymond Aron, though the former was more influential as a practitioner than creative thinker, and the latter had little impact on English-language debates. Most definitions of classical Realism associate it with a pessimistic view of human nature as indeed found, for example, in Morgenthau and Niebuhr. But some (e.g., John Herz) rejected such views. The discussion that follows should help outline some key attributes of classical Realism.

politically linked to the socialist German émigré theologian Paul Tillich,¹¹ as he struggled in the 1930s and '40s to synthesize a fundamentally Augustinian Christian ethics with radical currents in social thought; Carr was a great admirer of the work of Karl Mannheim,¹² Morgenthau drew on a diverse collection of voices, including his Realist ally Niebuhr, but also Hans Kelsen, Carl Schmitt, Max Weber, and the left-wing Weimar legal sociologist and labor lawyer Hugo Sinzheimer.¹³ Not surprisingly, classical Realism had more than its own fair share of internal disagreements, despite important commonalities. Yet its core tenets still conflict in pivotal ways with present-day Cosmopolitan portrayals.

So Morgenthau and Niebuhr, for example, both formulated rigorous political ethics. Morgenthau relied on philosophical anthropology to argue that human beings inevitably seek power over their peers, yet he also insisted that moral action requires “respect for man as an end in himself,” demanding of political actors that even in the context of explosive conflicts requiring some compromise of moral standards (e.g., the universal condemnation of killing) that they heed the call of conscience and reduce necessary compromises to an absolute minimum.¹⁴ For Morgenthau, “the test of a morally good action is the degree to which it is capable of treating others not as means to the actor’s ends but as ends in themselves.”¹⁵ The tragic contours of

¹¹ Paul Merkley, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Political Account* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1975), pp. 77-85.

¹² Charles Jones, *E.H. Carr and International Relations: A Duty to Lie* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 121-43.

¹³ Scheuerman, *Morgenthau*, pp. 11-39.

¹⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau, “The Moral Dilemma of Political Action,” in *Dilemmas of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 247. Though rarely noted in the secondary literature, the Kantian overtones are striking.

¹⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 196. Morgenthau’s key contribution to political ethics, this text rarely even gets referenced in contemporary Cosmopolitan summaries of his ideas. For a detailed discussion, see Scheuerman, *Morgenthau*, pp. 40-69.

existence stemmed in part from the fact that political action required the instrumentalization of other persons and thus violations of the moral imperative to treat them as ends in themselves. Because humankind was fundamentally both a moral and power-seeking creature, however, political actors were required to minimize the resulting evils. The key attribute of admirable political leadership in this view was the capacity to fuse a far-sighted assessment of the oftentimes ugly realities of political struggle and power politics with a principled commitment to moral imperatives: both Hitler and Churchill were masters at the game of power politics, but only the latter was deserving of our accolades for combining political prowess with a deep moral sensibility. In a similar vein, Niebuhr doubted that a rigorous perfectionist ethics could be immediately realized in the political realm, famously accusing Christian pacifists who believed in the self-sufficiency of an ethic of love of succumbing to a well-meaning but ultimately counterproductive political naivete. However, as one commentator has pointed out, he still insisted that political actors ultimately “stand under judgment from a higher ethic (for which [Christian] love is the norm).”¹⁶ The tensions between politics and morality were clearest, to be sure, in the international arena, and thus political actors there typically found it most difficult to combine morality with the successful pursuit of power. Yet the dilemmas of political ethics at the global level were simply manifestations of deeper enigmas deriving from the fundamentally dualistic structure of human existence: we are always both forced to seek power and tame it by strict moral means. For neither Morgenthau nor Niebuhr did the political sphere constitute a

¹⁶ Colin McKeogh, *The Political Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr: A Pragmatic Approach to Just War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), p. 137. For Niebuhr's political ethics, see especially *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1956 [1934]), and *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960 [1932]).

realm in which actors were to pursue the dictates of power politics free from moral considerations.

Niebuhr's political ethics derived its inspiration from Augustine and more recent continental Protestant theologians of "original sin," but hardly Machiavelli or Hobbes. For his part, Morgenthau repeatedly criticized Machiavelli and Hobbes, accusing them on numerous occasions of having irresponsibly abandoned the western political tradition's praiseworthy aspiration to tame the exercise of power by moral means.¹⁷ By demonstrating that ethics, mores, and law all played key roles in regulating state action even absent world government, he directly countered the standard Hobbesian view that interstate relations could be aptly captured by means of the metaphor of the "state of nature."¹⁸ International affairs were not characterized by a norm-less anarchy, but instead by a complex intermeshing "international society of nations" resting on a variety of common moral and legal norms and practices.¹⁹ Morgenthau thus argued emphatically against not only what he took to be exaggerated expectations about international morality and international law, but also against excessively critical assessments which downplayed their accomplishments: "during the four hundred years of its existence international

¹⁷ For example, see Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics*, pp. 33, 169, 174-76; see also the attack on irresponsible "Machiavellian utopias" in "The Machiavellian Utopia," *Ethics* 55 (1945), pp. 145-7. Like Niebuhr, Morgenthau always sought to distinguish his Realism from cynical variants he associated with Machiavelli and contemporary defenders of unmitigated Realpolitik.

¹⁸ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1st ed., 1948), pp. 169, 397, where he directly criticized the metaphor of the "state of nature."

¹⁹ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd Ed., 1954), p. 479. On overlap with the "English School," see Richard Little, "The English School vs. American Realism: A Meeting of Minds or Divided by a Common Language," *Review of International Studies* 29 (2003), pp. 443-60.

law has in most cases been scrupulously observed.”²⁰ Even during moments of extreme crisis or emergency, nation-states typically have respected an international moral code: “the fact of the matter is that nations recognize a moral obligation to refrain from the infliction of death and suffering...despite the possibility of justifying such conduct in the light of a higher purpose, such as the national interest.”²¹ Writing in the immediate aftermath of World War II, he understandably worried that modern total war was decimating international law and international morality. This remained a source of deep anxiety, however, and hardly a state of affairs to be celebrated.

What then of Realism’s alleged institutional conservatism? In fact, prominent classical Realists defended the aspiration to replace the existing Westphalian system of states with a novel postnational order. Although deeming proposals for a world state premature, E.H. Carr considered the nation-state in crucial respects anachronistic, and he favored locating significant powers of economic and security policy making at postnational decision making levels. As Andrew Linklater has correctly noted, for Carr “the evolution of common military and economic policy” was necessitated by the changing spatial contours of social and economic organization, as well as the fact that recent military innovations rendered the whole concept of strategic frontiers obsolescent. Their necessary transnationalization “would involve a radical break with the moral parochialism of the nation-state.”²² Sharing Carr’s skepticism about immediate

²⁰ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd.ed.), p. 251.

²¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, “The Twilight of International Morality,” *Ethics* 58 (1948), p. 82.

²² Andrew Linklater, “E.H. Carr, Nationalism and the Future of the Sovereign State,” in *E.H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal*, p. 236. A crucial text is E.H. Carr, *Nationalism and After* (London: Macmillan, 1967 [1945]), but see also *Conditions of Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1942), pp. 236-75, where he outlined a vision of European integration along democratic socialist lines.

attempts to set up world government, Niebuhr nonetheless conceded that our modern “technical civilization,” whose “instruments of production, transport and communication reduced the space-time dimensions of the world to a fraction of their previous size and led to a phenomenal increase” in social interdependence, pointed directly to the realization of an intermeshed “world community” and eventually a corresponding world state.²³

Although oftentimes ignored by his normatively numb Realist offspring, Morgenthau concluded his famous Politics Among Nations with the claim that the horrors of contemporary (and especially atomic) warfare rendered the existing state system obsolete, declaring that only a novel reorganization of state sovereignty at the global level could protect humankind from the horrific prospects of nuclear war. Even though presently unattainable, the world state represented a long term goal towards which anyone sensibly committed to the preservation of the human species would have to work.²⁴ In a key but typically neglected section of the text, he endorsed David Mitrany’s innovative functionalist model of international reform and applied its tenets to the problems of European integration, which Morgenthau described with ever growing enthusiasm in many subsequent editions of Politics Among Nations.²⁵ In this, he followed Carr,

²³ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1944), p. 158. On Niebuhr’s embrace of the world state, see Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan*, pp. 86-92.

²⁴ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), pp. 469-502. Morgenthau rejected the apocalyptic view, as recently espoused by Kenneth Waltz, that the quest for world government necessarily “would be an invitation to prepare for world civil war” (*Theory of International Politics* [New York: McGraw Hill, 1979], p. 112). This view, by the way, is widely voiced today by scholars sympathetic to Carl Schmitt. Despite Morgenthau’s (now) widely discussed borrowings from Schmitt, he never endorsed this claim.

²⁵ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), pp. 492-93. See David Mitrany is *A Working Peace System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization* (London: National Peace Council, 1946), and on Morgenthau’s uses of Mitrany, whom he praised at many junctures, see Scheuerman, *Morgenthau*, pp. 129-34. For useful background on Mitrany, see Cornelia Navari, “David Mitrany and International Functionalism,”

whose Nationalism and After had previously discussed the potential virtues of the functionalist model of piecemeal international reform, centered pragmatically in concrete nuts-and-bolts policy matters nation-states could best tackle by cooperating intimately with their peers, as a politically sensible starting point for building an alternative order. Neither Carr nor Morgenthau was a principled opponent of far-reaching global reform per se, though both did –as we will see—harshly criticize some models of it. Other Realists –including John Herz and Frederick Schuman—similarly endorsed the move towards a new supranational polity, like Morgenthau emphasizing the ways in which especially the looming possibility of nuclear warfare made the existing state system not only risky but potentially cataclysmic. Schuman joined forces with the “one-world” movement and endorsed a global federal union as an ultimate goal, while Herz devoted many of his writings to an analysis of what he described as the growth of a “universalist” orientation that challenged the international status quo.²⁶

Unsurprisingly in light of this fundamental commitment to global reform, the Realist view of the “national interest” is also more nuanced than noted by recent Cosmopolitans. The now fashionable term “globalization” does not of course appear in their writings. Nonetheless, the classical Realists clearly anticipated key elements of what many more recent analysts have placed under its rubric. Consistently hostile to harmonistic accounts that downplayed the ways in which rapidly increasing cultural, economic, and technological interdependence potentially

in David Long and Peter Wilson (eds.), *Thinkers of the Twenty Years Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), pp. 214-31.

²⁶ John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); Herz, *The Nation-State and the Crisis of World Politics* (New York: David McKay, 1976); Frederick L. Schuman, *The Commonwealth of Man: A Inquiry Into Power Politics and World Government* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1952). Schuman is pretty much forgotten today, but in the 1930s and ‘40s he was a prolific and publicly visible thinker who wrote widely not simply for academic journals, but also for political magazines like *The New Republic*.

generates new sources of conflict, the mid-century Realists nonetheless noted that in an ever more interdependent globe, the clear division between “national” and “global” interests becomes porous, and hence that “nations now have new and expanded moral responsibilities to each other.”²⁷ Writing in The New Republic in 1975, Morgenthau asserted that a sensible interpretation of the US national interest entailed “support of supranational institutions and procedures capable of performing the functions that in view of modern technological developments the individual nation-states are no longer able to perform.”²⁸ This included working towards constructing an international agency outfitted with far-reaching authority to regulate nuclear energy and the production of nuclear weapons, an idea which he had enthusiastically endorsed as early as 1960 and considered indispensable to human survival.²⁹

II. A Realist-Cosmopolitan Alliance?

In light of this revised interpretation of classical Realism, where then can we identify analytic overlap with Cosmopolitanism?

Notwithstanding claims to the contrary, classical Realists did not underwrite moral skepticism or relativism. Like contemporary Cosmopolitans, Morgenthau and Niebuhr, for example, both endorsed a version of moral cosmopolitanism, along the lines described more recently by Thomas Pogge as requiring that we “respect one another’s status as ultimate units of

²⁷ McKeogh, *Political Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr*, p. 130.

²⁸ Hans J. Morgenthau, “Explaining the Failures of US Foreign Policy: Three Paradoxes,” *The New Republic* (October 11, 1975), p. 21.

²⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1960), pp. 169-73, 308-9.

moral concern.”³⁰ Morgenthau, as noted, favored a political ethics according to which moral action demands fundamental respect for other human beings as ends in themselves. Although typically locating its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition, he at times left unanswered the question of whether it could be justified without theological banisters. Similarly, Niebuhr advocated what he forthrightly described as “moral universalism,” defending it on Christian grounds. He also observed that the notion of universal moral obligations to other human beings qua human beings, however, could be justified by moral and political traditions other than Christianity.³¹ Moreover, both writers conceded that this universalistic morality possessed what we might describe as “real-life” consequences: the universal condemnation of killing, for example, could be taken as evidence that all the great moral and religious traditions rested on respect for human life.

Yet the Realists did worry that simplistic versions of moral cosmopolitanism potentially obscured the necessity of prudence, compromise, and tragic choices. Too often moral cosmopolitanism joined arms with a crude political ethics. In countering this danger, Morgenthau and others turned to Weber’s ethic of responsibility, which they interpreted-- in some contradistinction to its original architect-- as consonant with a rigorous moral universalism. In foreign policy making, for example, a crude moral cosmopolitanism motivated actors who irresponsibly believed that (US-style) democracy could be pursued everywhere, with equal fervor, despite the potential costs, and the fact that it was less likely to be productively advanced in some regions than in others: “If universal democracy is the standard of political action, Korea

³⁰ Thomas Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” in Chris Brown (ed.), *Political Restructuring in Europe: Ethical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 90.

³¹ Niebuhr, *Children of Light and Children of Darkness*, pp. 153-59.

is as important as Mexico, China is as worthy an objective to Canada, and there is no difference between Poland and Panama.”³² Writing during the Cold War, they considered this a recipe for political disaster. A politically naïve moral cosmopolitanism –this was the crude “moralism” they famously decried-- was blind to concrete power relations and downplayed the fact that even powerful global actors necessarily operate with limited political resources. Moral aims could never be achieved without discrimination. Even the soundest abstract moral principles posed difficult practical and political questions, in part because their pursuit might require acts –e.g., political violence—that otherwise were rightly condemned.

They also regularly noted that the intellectual soundness of moral cosmopolitanism did not readily translate into an actual empirical consensus about universal moral values or their proper interpretation. The same moral idea could mean “something different to an American, a Russian, and an Indian” since it was still “perceived by, assimilated to, and filtered through minds conditioned by different experiences.”³³ This was unavoidable given disparities in social existence and especially the national framework within which most moral and political experience was still digested: nation states continued to fill the “hearts and minds of men everywhere” with narrow “standards of political morality.”³⁴ Morgenthau thus hammered away at the simple but telling point that apparent agreement on abstract moral matters often masked

³² Hans J. Morgenthau, “National Interest and Moral Principles in Foreign Policy: The Primacy of the National Interest,” *American Scholar* 18 (1949), p. 210. On Morgenthau and Weber, see Scheuerman, *Morgenthau*, 94-100; Stephen P. Turner, “Hans J. Morgenthau and the Legacy of Max Weber,” in Bell (ed.), *Political Thought and International Relations*, pp. 63-82.

³³ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), p. 240; also, Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), pp. 28-9.

³⁴ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), p. 244.

explosive political disagreements. People everywhere should and increasingly do condemn war and acts of violent aggression, for example, yet disparities in lived experience meant that social and especially national groupings, which filter shared moral ideals in decisive ways, still opened the door to explosive political disagreements.³⁵

Neither Realist criticism poses a necessary challenge to a supple moral cosmopolitanism that successfully tackles the complexities and paradoxes of practical action, which even today stem partly from disparities in social and national experience where “the same moral and political concepts take on different meanings in different environments.”³⁶ They do, however, take aim at naive versions of moral cosmopolitanism, along the lines endorsed by one recent defender of global democracy who declares that “it will not be necessary to employ” morally deplorably or “evil means” (i.e., political violence) in order to achieve a novel democratic postnational order.³⁷ As the classical Realists would legitimately have worried, this version of the doctrine ignores the familiar paradoxes of political action: morally good intentions and acts can produce counterproductive and morally deplorable consequences, while otherwise immoral acts (e.g., the employment of violence) may sometimes be necessary if normatively admirable goals are to be secured.

³⁵ For Morgenthau, this was fundamentally an empirical and thus historically contingent fact; readers will search in vain for a normatively-minded nationalist or communitarian argument that abstract moral norms of necessity must be concretized in fundamentally different ways by distinct national communities (see part III below).

³⁶ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), p. 238.

³⁷ Archibugi, *Global Commonwealth of Citizens*, p. 287.

Classical Realists also subscribed to what Cosmopolitans have described as legal (and political) cosmopolitanism, defined by Pogge as a “commitment to a concrete political ideal of a global order under which all persons have equivalent legal and duties –are fellow citizens of a universal republic.”³⁸ Herz, Morgenthau, and Schuman envisioned the establishment of a unified global political order --a world state or global federation-- as a desirable long term institutional goal, seeing its construction as essential to peace and security in a dangerous world haunted by the specter of nuclear warfare. When contemporary Cosmopolitans defend a similar goal by pointing out that in the existing international system “governments therefore have very powerful incentives and very broad opportunities to develop their military might, [and that] this is bound to lead to the proliferation of nuclear, biological, chemical, and conventional weapons of mass destruction,” they are reproducing a stock classical Realist argument in defense of global reform.³⁹ Like recent Cosmopolitans, classical Realists clearly hoped that a prospective global order would take a liberal-democratic form and thus rest on a system of universal rights, though they admittedly said relatively little about the institutional attributes of such a regime because they considered it a long term aim. Some of them –for example, Carr, Herz, and Schuman-- also sympathized with demands for egalitarian social and economic global reforms, positing that far-reaching social change was inextricably linked to the establishment of new and ambitious forms

³⁸ Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” p. 90.

³⁹ Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” p. 103. This preoccupation with the perils of interstate warfare, however, often fades from other recent Cosmopolitan arguments. Pogge, like the Realists, is right to underline it.

of governance “beyond the nation-state.” This position, as well, anticipated a significant strand in contemporary Cosmopolitan thinking.⁴⁰

Now one might reasonably challenge my attribution of legal and political cosmopolitanism to Realism by focusing, as Simon Caney has recently done, on Morgenthau’s disparaging 1979 comments about human rights-oriented foreign policy.⁴¹ But the interpretative perils here are twofold. First, classical Realists had relatively little to say about the impressive growth of human rights law, chiefly because it occurred well after most of them had passed the most productive junctures in their careers. Second, Caney and others miss that Morgenthau and his allies in fact admired the goal of a world (liberal-democratic) government, and thus were by no means opposed to the (eventual) establishment of binding universal rights. When read in this light, Morgenthau can be reasonably interpreted as chiefly worried by what we might describe as the ambivalent character of premature efforts to advance human rights in a divided international system. Although a supporter of many human-rights oriented US foreign policies,⁴² Morgenthau believed that in a state system characterized by power rivalry and deep inequalities, a principled defense of human rights by national governments could not consistently mesh with the pursuit of the national interest. Reasonable interpretations of the national interest might still conflict with a strict human rights-oriented foreign policy; policy makers would inexorably be forced to make unfortunate compromises and tragic choices. Even if moral cosmopolitanism demanded that

⁴⁰ For example, Habermas’s (cosmopolitan) *The Postnational Constellation* (Cambridge, USA: MIT Press, 2001), and especially his social-democratic vision of a reformed EU.

⁴¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Human Rights and Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Religion and International Affairs, 1979); Caney, *Justice Beyond Borders*, pp. 93-5.

⁴² He argued vociferously in the 1970s in favor, for example, of making US Soviet policies conditional on the acceptance by the Soviet leadership of the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate.

political actors vigorously pursue human rights, the best that could reasonably be expected of nationally-based political leaders would be that they minimize sad but unavoidable compromises. How could one plausibly expect of present-day political leaders that they sacrifice power and privilege for moral goals from which their own populations did not benefit and in fact might suffer? Although easily misunderstood, Morgenthau was not attacking the admirable quest for a strengthened human rights regime, but instead the view that nationally-based political leaders could readily and indeed consistently do so in an international system that placed structural restraints on such efforts. A principled commitment to universal rights might require nothing less than massive and perhaps immediate economic redistribution, for example, yet any political leader in a rich country who undertook to do so would surely get driven no less immediately from office.

Morgenthau also noted that under contemporary international conditions the interpretation and enforcement of human rights remained plagued by selectivity and partiality in enforcement typically favoring the great powers. When nation-states pursued policies under the mantle of human rights, they did so in self-interested and narrowly egoistical ways: the United States, for example, has generally advanced an interpretation of human rights reflecting its own idiosyncratic (anti-statist) national political traditions.⁴³ Yet these reservations hardly constituted a principled attack on the quest to strengthen the enforcement of human rights. On the contrary, they implicitly highlighted the limitations of human rights-oriented policies in the context of a Westphalian system, Morgenthau tirelessly repeated, which humankind should work towards transcending.

⁴³ Think, for example, of longstanding US political hostility to social and economic rights.

III. The Realist Contribution to Global Democracy

The gap between Cosmopolitanism and at least one significant variant of Realism is overstated: classical Realists and Cosmopolitans agree on many important matters. So where are the differences, and how might they prove intellectually useful as we pursue global reform?

Cosmopolitans have recently advocated the establishment of extensive democratic decision-making “beyond the nation-state.” Unlike recent Realists, most classical Realists would likely have greeted this argument with some sympathy. Many of them similarly acknowledged the virtues of constructing a new system of global political authority; their anxieties about nuclear war made some of them at least as determined as contemporary writers in their advocacy of substantial global reform. Classical Realists also responded to an array of creative proposals for international reform, though pretty much forgotten today, advanced by global federalists and “one-worlders,” whose ideas became surprisingly popular in the late 1940s, and who at least for a brief historical juncture significantly shaped political and intellectual debate.⁴⁴ So classical Realists were familiar with normative defenses of global democratic federalism and the world state, at least some of which anticipated contemporary Cosmopolitan proposals. Their own alternative account of global reform emerged in the context of a lively worldwide discussion in which activists, major political figures, and famous intellectuals—including Bertrand Russell and Karl Jaspers—avidly debated the pros and cons of competing models of international reform.

⁴⁴ Lawrence S. Wittner, *One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement Through 1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Wesley T. Wooley, *Alternatives to Anarchy: American Supranationalism Since World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 3-134.

Much of that debate today remains of mere historical interest. However, let me suggest that two pivotal classical Realist arguments developed in its context remain relevant to the contemporary discussion about global reform. The first (1) concerns the necessary social presuppositions of effective global political authority, as well as the closely related issue of how institutional change might be put into motion; the second (2) refers to the proper status of state sovereignty in a new global order. The classical Realists' reflections on these matters admittedly remain incomplete. Yet they offer a fruitful starting point for developing a richer understanding of the perplexities of global reform than formulated by many present-day Cosmopolitans.

1.

In the concluding section of his impressive Democracy and the Global Order, David Held asserts that a functioning global democracy will “not require political and cultural integration in the form of a consensus on a wide range of beliefs, values, and norms.” A cosmopolitan democracy might achieve a high level of integration and efficacy merely by citizens “participating in public deliberation and negotiation,” and this chiefly presupposes a basic “‘commitment’ to democracy, for without this there can be no sustained public deliberation, democracy cannot function as a decision-making mechanism, and divergent political aspirations and identities are unlikely to reach an accommodation.”⁴⁵ Because Held apparently believes that the “commitment to democracy” is nearly universal today, he offers a relatively sanguine account of cosmopolitan democracy’s prospects. Although it would be a mistake to try instantly to construct full-fledged global democracy, political actors can and should undertake far-

⁴⁵ Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, p. 282. Held’s proposals have been discussed at great length elsewhere by many scholars; I will not cover familiar territory here. For a recent Cosmopolitan endorsement, see Caney, *Justice Beyond Borders*, pp. 148-88.

reaching institutional alterations to the status quo.⁴⁶ Humankind, it seems, is pretty much ready and willing to embrace global democracy, and “in the wake of, for instance, a severe crisis of the global financial system, or of the environment, or of war,” far-sighted reformers might legitimately undertake institutional change at “extraordinary speed.”⁴⁷

Trying to counter communitarian-inspired models of political community and identity, Held and many other Cosmopolitans outline what Craig Calhoun has accurately described as a “thin conception of social life, commitment, and belonging.”⁴⁸ Indeed, this thin conception contrasts sharply with the ideas of defenders of the nation-state like David Miller, who criticize cosmopolitan reform proposals by insisting on a thicker model of social integration and motivation, arguing that a viable political community presupposes a far-reaching sense of trust, fair play, and an almost spontaneous willingness to cooperate voluntarily among compatriots. In successful political communities, citizens typically follow the rules even when they could get away with not doing so, in part because they expect that others will heed them as well: a desirable liberal democracy can rely only to a circumscribed degree on state coercion, so it must count on citizens to heed “STOP” signs even when no police officer happens to be lurking around the corner. In Miller’s view, a mere “commitment to democracy” is insufficient to the integrative tasks at hand. Instead, the requisite communal ties are generated most effectively by a

⁴⁶ For Held’s ambitious list of short-term measures, see *Democracy and the Global Order*, 279-80.

⁴⁷ Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, p. 281.

⁴⁸ Craig Calhoun, “The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,” in *Debating Cosmopolitics*, ed. Daniele Archibugi (London: Verso, 2003), 96. Habermas seems to endorse a similarly thin view (see *Postnational Constellation*, pp. 73-6, 100-2), as Winfried Thaa observes in a useful article (“‘Lean Citizenship’: The Fading Away of the Political in Transnational Democracy,” *European Journal of International Relations* 7 [2001], pp. 503-23).

robust shared national identity, which many existing nation-states –to varying degrees, depending on historical particularities—have in fact relied on to secure the preconditions of political freedom and social justice. In light of the numerous ways in which political life is necessarily parasitical on particularistic national identity, the call for far-reaching cosmopolitan reform remains an irresponsible panacea.⁴⁹

Like such critics, classical Realists would have expressed concern about the thin account of “social life, commitment, and belonging” found among contemporary global democrats. They also would have raised tough questions about “how social solidarity and public discourse might develop enough” in postnational social relations to become the basis for global governance.⁵⁰ Without succumbing to rigid and sometimes essentialist ideas of community or nationhood, or overstated expectations about democratic participation and citizenship, they at least hinted at the possibility of an alternative and somewhat “thicker” account of social integration.

Morgenthau and Niebuhr regularly criticized “one-worlders” and postwar defenders of international reform for privileging “top-down” institutional and especially constitutional change and for exaggerating the integrative capacities of political institutions. Both thought that effective reform would have to start from the “bottom up,” meaning that its advocates should focus on figuring out how the basic social presuppositions of effective global institutions could be built and gradually strengthened over time. The enormous fascination Mitrany’s functionalist vision exercised among mid-century Realists derived from its claim to mark out a refreshingly

⁴⁹ David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), pp. 90-7.

⁵⁰ Calhoun, “The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers,” p. 96.

down-to-earth reform alternative:⁵¹ nation-states would cooperate in pursuing concrete (economic and technical) tasks, developing along the way creative but eminently practical supranational institutions. By “linking authority to a specific activity” or function, novel modes of international organization could begin to “break away from the traditional link between authority and a definite territory.”⁵² Such cooperation would generate new supranational forms of social practice, shared norms, and complexes of political interest; the preconditions for global governance could be prepared. The central task facing global reformers was not the transfer of national sovereignty by means of constitutional formulas, but instead piecemeal policy reform which might someday transform the true seat of sovereign power. Of course, there was room here as well for institutional creativity and conscious political intervention, but only as part of a broader package of innovations that worked towards establishing a sufficiently robust sense of shared postnational political and social life. In contrast, a premature push for institutional or constitutional reform at the global level potentially put the cart before the horse and would necessarily prove counterproductive.

For the Realists, most models of global reform rested on a one-sided Hobbesianism according to which the state alone can “maintain domestic peace.... That the state is essential, but not sufficient to keep the peace of national societies is demonstrated by the historical experience of civil wars.”⁵³ Any working global political authority presupposed a highly developed “supranational society” or “world community” capable of accomplishing demanding integrative

⁵¹ See also Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age*, 326-27; Schuman, *Commonwealth of Man*, pp. 296-43, for other discussions of international functionalism.

⁵² Mitrany, *A Working Peace System*, p. 6.

⁵³ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (1st. Ed.), p. 397.

tasks presently performed more-or-less automatically by successful nationally-based communities.⁵⁴ Stable political systems rested on a widely shared expectation of fairness or basic justice, which alone encouraged participants to respect the basic rules of the political and social game even when particular outcomes seemed threatening. The employment of coercive power could be minimized because “organic forces of cohesion” operated in subtle and oftentimes easily overlooked ways; naïve models of global government ignored them because their defenders generally took them for granted.⁵⁵ Social cleavages and loyalties would have to be crosscutting, impressing on social actors the fundamental “relativity of their interests and loyalties.” This “plural role of friend and opponent” reduced the potential explosiveness of group conflict: a rival in one social arena might be an ally or friend in another.⁵⁶ For this reason as well, successful political communities only had to rely on coercive force in exceptional circumstances. At the domestic level, a complicated array of social and political mores, norms, and social practices typically brought about peaceful transformations of public opinion. Of course, formal state institutions then sometimes worked to translate public opinion into legally-binding political and social change. Yet state institutions remained limited “agents of society as a whole.”⁵⁷ Without a far-reaching basis in a complex set of community practices, laws would prove ineffective: “laws are obeyed because the community accepts them as corresponding,” and not first and foremost because of the specter of state force.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), p. 479.

⁵⁵ Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems*, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, (2nd. Ed.), p. 471.

⁵⁷ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, (2nd. Ed.), p. 414.

⁵⁸ Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems*, p. 22.

Morgenthau and Niebuhr regularly noted that a sense of shared nationality, language, religion, political history, ethnicity, and even hostility to a foreign enemy had played decisive roles in creating a sufficiently robust “domestic society” and thus the presuppositions of existing forms of nationally-based political organization. Unfortunately, they had little to say about what might replace such ties at the level of an emerging supranational or world community. Yet this analytic vagueness arguably constitutes a hidden forte. Nowhere did they a priori exclude the possibility that new forms of shared social life, commitment, and belonging might take a novel post-national form. They would likely have rejected the communitarian argument that global democracy must founder because it obfuscates the need for a thick sense of shared life based on the commonalities of nationality or a robust and widely shared “conception of the good.” Classical Realists bemoaned the fact that the nation-state and its particularistic identity remained “the recipient of man’s highest earthly loyalties”: for them, this was clear evidence of humankind’s moral and political immaturity. Even though the specific details of any prospective supranational society will necessarily look different from what we observe at the national level, they might plausibly have suggested, basic integrative functions will still need to be performed by global rather than nationally-based mechanisms. Unlike also recent republican critics of global democracy who worry that it conflicts with the preconditions of meaningful citizenship and effective self-government, the mid-century Realists defended sober models of representative liberal democracy and rejected the view that it demanded many intense forms of small-scale or even face-to-face participation.⁵⁹ They never precluded the possibility that global political

⁵⁹ For a subtle version of the republican view, see Richard Bellamy and Dario Castiglione, “Between Cosmopolis and Community: Three Models of Rights and Democracy within the European Union,” in *Re-Imagining Political community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 152-79. For Morgenthau’s democratic theory, see *Purpose of American Politics*.

authority could be made consonant with liberal democratic aspirations, even if they rightly pointed out that familiar decision-making mechanisms –for example, majority rule—seemed highly problematic at the global level.⁶⁰

Yet classical Realists would also have worried that Held’s thin “commitment to democracy” is likely to prove insufficient to a robust cosmopolitan democracy. To be sure, democratic participation and negotiation make indispensable contributions to any shared sense of political belonging and commitment. Yet political life relies on additional social foundations about which global democrats have had far too little to say.⁶¹ A mere “commitment to democracy” does not a world community or supranational society make. Writing at mid-century, the classical Realists vociferously criticized the notion that such a supranational society had already sufficiently emerged to buttress global democracy. Although they never denied the possibility of a global public opinion “that transcends national boundaries and... unites members of different nations in a consensus,” they doubted that global public opinion was already adequately advanced to support global democracy.⁶² At the global level, not much of a politically efficacious shared sense of fairness could be identified, and national identities still trumped the cross-cutting cleavages that would have to operate there, as at the national level, if supranational political institutions were to prove durable. Unfortunately, most residents of the globe still believed “that the national characteristics they have in common are superior in all

⁶⁰ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), p. 480.

⁶¹ This theoretical lacuna also plagues Kai Nelsen, “World Government, Security, and Global Justice” in *Problems of International Justice*, ed. Steven Luper-Foy (Boulder: Westview, 1988), pp. 263-82.

⁶² Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), p. 236.

important respects...to the qualities of those who belong to different nations.”⁶³ They remained first and foremost Americans, Indians, and Russians, and only “citizens of the world” as an afterthought.

To be sure, Cosmopolitan advocates of democratic reform might legitimately point out that in the last half century huge steps have been taken towards creating a deeply rooted supranational society. Global public opinion and civil society have gained in political significance; a host of shared norms, institutions, and complexes of interest (e.g., the UN, EU, IMF, WTO) have built on and simultaneously deepened humankind’s sense of a shared fate and indeed membership in a global community. Yet legitimate grounds for skepticism remain. In part this stems from the fact, astutely predicted by the classical Realists, that globalization produces at least as many new sources of political conflict and enmity as it suggests the virtues of overcoming old ones. Despite occasional claims among Cosmopolitans to the contrary, there is simply no reason to presuppose that globalization’s contradictory social, economic, and cultural dynamics inexorably lead the way towards more sensible forms of global governance: however desirable and rational such reforms might be, political actors –and in particular rich and powerful nation-states systematically privileged by the global status quo —will continue to oppose many normatively attractive demands for reform and especially the call for global democracy. In responding skeptically to reformers of his day, Morgenthau appealed to John Stuart Mill’s famous tripartite test of support for any workable government from Considerations on Representative Government: will people accept it, be willing to do what is necessary to keep it

⁶³ Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), p. 471.

standing, and allow it to fulfill its purposes?⁶⁴ The refusal of many members of the global community --and not simply the US—to support even modest reforms to the Security Council, or to fund the UN adequately or support its peace-keeping operations, should at least put a damper on overblown reform expectations. We continue to subscribe to the universal “rights of man” (and women), but when refugees arrive at our doorstep, we slam the door on them. We shrug our shoulders when reminded that tens of thousands of (foreign) children die daily of curable illness, while keeping our eyes glued to televised news broadcasts blaring out reports about the fate of a handful of national compatriots killed in a plane crash, or subject to criminal attacks abroad.

Daniele Archibugi claims that those who bemoan the lack of a global demos miss the crucial point that “institutions create the demos.”⁶⁵ This argument risks confirming some of the worst anxieties of Realists like Morgenthau and Niebuhr. Institutions obviously have an important role to play in supporting any political community. Yet Archibugi is claiming more: he implies that constitution-making and institutional reform can effectively create their own social and political presuppositions. Taking the US founding as evidence, he conveniently downplays the fact that the post-1787 US system only emerged after a bloody revolution had forged the colonists into a unified people, and that the US Constitution tellingly begins with a preamble declaring its purpose to be the establishment of a “more perfect union”: it indeed built on a previous union, and presupposed far-reaching political, moral, and cultural commonalities that predated the Philadelphia Convention and even the American Revolution.⁶⁶ This naïve

⁶⁴ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), pp. 477-81.

⁶⁵ Archibugi, *Global Commonwealth of Citizens*, p. 143.

⁶⁶ Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems*, pp. 24-5.

constitutional fetishism also opens the door to a paternalistic reformism in which purportedly far-sighted actors are outfitted with the task of creating global democracy –despite the admitted lack of a global demos or even significant evidence that something like it may be emerging.

Global democracy remains an admirable long term aspiration. Yet classical Realists were right to warn of the perils of premature constitutional and institutional reform.

2.

Classical Realists accused postwar global reformers of ignoring the decisive role to be played by a mature supranational society in buttressing a prospective cosmopolitan polity. However, they also adamantly endorsed the “true message of Hobbes’s philosophy” that the state is insufficient yet still “indispensable for the maintenance of domestic peace.”⁶⁷ A global political order would have to be able to mobilize preponderant or overwhelming power against lawbreakers, and this would ultimately require locating the legitimate monopoly of organized violence in (global) state hands. Even if existing international law was widely respected even by the great powers, in the context of explosive conflicts it too often stalled because its decentralized structure delivered “the enforcement of the law to the vicissitudes of the distribution of power between the violator of the law and the victim of the violation.”⁶⁸ So Hobbes was right to link the regular enforcement of law to the establishment of sovereign state institutions capable of forcefully employing their institutional muscle to enforce norms against the powerful and privileged as well as the weak and vulnerable. Hobbes was wrong, however, to tie his defense of sovereignty to an Absolutist vision of politics and law. “Sovereignty is not

⁶⁷ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), p. 476.

⁶⁸ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd. Ed.), p. 270.

freedom from legal restraints,” Morgenthau bluntly declared, because the effective mobilization of preponderant power resources against lawbreakers --the core element of the idea of sovereignty-- by no means demands that state institutions be envisioned as operating beyond or outside the law, or that they literally possess “supremacy” in the sense that no social restraints on them can be identified.⁶⁹ Too often, critics of state sovereignty distorted its lasting insights by associating it with misguided and unnecessary connotations. Well-meaning global reformers, for example, advocated seemingly attractive models of differentiated or divisible sovereignty. In the process they downplayed the unsettling fact that any working global political and legal order will need possession of supreme authority and thus a core feature of state sovereignty as classically interpreted. Viable federal states like Switzerland or the United States, Morgenthau insisted against those who took them as models for a novel “post-sovereign” global order,⁷⁰ established binding political and legal mechanisms for the mobilization of preponderant power against both domestic and foreign challengers: it was wrong to interpret them as evidence for the possibility of effective political authority operating without a monopoly on organized coercion, even if their exceedingly complex constitutional dynamics admittedly veiled this fact.⁷¹

Classical Realists typically insisted that any viable system of global governance would ultimately need to take the form of a global government possessing key attributes of modern statehood. Otherwise it would prove unable to guarantee the equal or at least consistent

⁶⁹ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 291.

⁷⁰ This type of argument, by the way, is still made for Switzerland by many global reformers. See, for example, Hauke Brunkhorst, “State and Constitution –A Reply to Scheuerman,” *Constellations* 15 (2008), 494.

⁷¹ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 303-8, 473-77, 482-85. Not also the implication of the Realist view that the aspiration for a world state is consistent with competing institutional variants –including a federal state.

enforcement of law, or the systematic implementation of general policies even when opposed by powerful political and social interests. Supranational society could contribute significantly to the integration of such interests so as to reduce the necessity of employing police and military force. However, at crucial junctures recourse to the state's legitimate monopoly on organized violence would remain essential.

Even some hitherto enthusiastic defenders of the presently fashionable idea of “global governance without government” have recently begun to concede the basic soundness of this position.⁷² Nonetheless, many Cosmopolitan political reformers reject it. For example, Archibugi and Held repudiate the suggestion that their ambitious models of cosmopolitan democracy point to the necessity of a global or world state. Archibugi contrasts his model favorably to that of competing ideas of a global federal republic by asserting that it successfully circumvents the ominous specter of a world state outfitted with a centralized monopoly on violence. Final coercive power would be “distributed...among several actors and subjected to the judicial control of existing and suitably reformed international institutions.”⁷³ This is achievable, he insists, because cosmopolitan democracy allegedly demands entrusting only a “minimal list” of regulatory tasks to global institutions. State sovereignty, the conceptual backbone of the modern state, is accordingly criticized and discarded.⁷⁴

A glance at Archibugi's anything but minimal list, however, immediately complicates matters. Global institutions would be given authority to regulate the use of force, strengthen the

⁷² Thomas Weiss, *What's Wrong with the UN and what can we do about it?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008), pp. 215-33.

⁷³ Archibugi, *Global Commonwealth of Citizens*, p. 129. Also, Held, *Democracy and Global Order*, pp. 230-31.

⁷⁴ Archibugi, *Global Commonwealth of Citizens*, p. 89.

self-determination of peoples, secure cultural diversity, monitor the internal affairs of states to ensure fidelity to democracy and human rights, and encourage the “participatory management of global problems.”⁷⁵ His proposal calls for a massive augmentation of global decision making authority but no corresponding increase in global-level state enforcement capacities. So what happens when a reformed UN, for example, tries to enforce the legal prohibition on torture against the US or other great powers which decide to violate it? Or when redistributive social and economic measures are supposed to be pursued even in opposition to an (outvoted) minority of powerful rich countries? How the dispersion of coercive authority along with a world court (minus an effective global executive) could ever get the job done remains unexplained.

The classical Realists were probably right to insist that a normatively attractive as well as viable cosmopolitan polity will have to rest on core elements of modern statehood.⁷⁶ This, of course, was a major reason why they conceived of it as representing a distant –though still normatively meaningful-- goal: powerful states in particular are unlikely to rush to hand over core attributes of sovereignty to novel supranational institutions over which they will possess relatively limited authority. Another crucial reason for their advocacy of world government was that they believed, like Pogge and other contemporary Cosmopolitans, that the terrible destructiveness of contemporary weaponry called for its “centrally enforced reduction and elimination,” which in the nuclear age was “much less dangerous than continuing the status quo.” Such a reduction indeed seems improbable if it remains directly dependent on “the

⁷⁵ Archibugi, *Global Commonwealth of Citizens*, pp. 88-89.

⁷⁶ In a similar (and refreshingly unfashionable) vein, see Glyn Morgan, “Democratic Equality, Transnational Institutions, and the Constraints of Modernity” in Bruce Morrison (ed.), *Transnational Democracy in Critical and Comparative Perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 187-90.

voluntary co-operation of each and every national government.”⁷⁷ Nonetheless, they would almost certainly have criticized Pogge’s version of the Cosmopolitan critique of state sovereignty, according to which the centralized regulation of weapons of mass destruction is consonant with what he describes as a “vertical dispersion of sovereignty” and therefore requires no movement towards a world state. To be sure, power at the global level as elsewhere rests on many sources, military or otherwise. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to fathom the possibility of global institutions exercising an effective monopoly over legitimate violence –and this is ultimately what Pogge is advocating-- without them in fact gaining a preponderant power status in relation to their national institutional rivals.⁷⁸

To be sure, the theoretical and practical issues raised by the concept of state sovereignty remain exceedingly complex especially as they relate to global reform. However, Pogge reproduces at least some common Cosmopolitan misunderstandings about it.⁷⁹ He mistakenly associates state sovereignty with a normatively troublesome as well as empirically implausible idea of legally absolute authority, whose anachronistic character is purportedly demonstrated by successful federal states which allegedly already disperse sovereignty.⁸⁰ Sovereignty, it seems, is ultimately little more than an anachronistic Hobbesian leftover that has already been overtaken by institutional practice. Unfortunately, the argument downplays the decisive point that

⁷⁷ Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” p. 103. See also Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, pp. 169-73, 308-9.

⁷⁸ This is surely one reason why the great powers have been so reluctant to strengthen the Security Council in minimal ways, let alone outfit the UN with nuclear weaponry.

⁷⁹ See also the critical comments in Jean L. Cohen, “Whose Sovereignty? Empire Versus International Law,” *Ethics & International Affairs* 18(2004), pp. 1-24.

⁸⁰ Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” pp. 98-103.

successful federal states possess clear legal and political, as well as underlying social and cultural, devices for mobilizing preponderant power resources to resolve dire conflicts: citizens in most federal states do not in fact “live in permanent danger of” constitutional crises, as Pogge idiosyncratically suggests, merely because of the constitutionally based separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judiciary.⁸¹ The idea of state sovereignty is consistent with a variety of institutional models and far-reaching institutional differentiation as long as effective devices for marshalling superior power resources remain operative. For the global arena Pogge accordingly proposes that “persons should be citizens of, and govern themselves through a number of political units of various sizes, without any one political unit being dominant and thus occupying the traditional role of the state.”⁸² A multilayered Cosmopolitan political order apparently can do without a world state.⁸³ Here as well, however, the question of how potentially explosive conflicts between and among competing political units could be effectively resolved absent an overarching –and universally binding—system of general law, supported by global institutions exercising fundamental state or at least state-like functions, is never sufficiently sketched out.

IV. Conclusion

This essay has tried to make a number of arguments, none of which is likely to cheer significant constituencies within present-day international political theory. In opposition to

⁸¹ Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” p. 100.

⁸² Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” 99.

⁸³ See also Habermas, *Divided West*, pp. 132-39.

contemporary mainstream Realists, I have argued that Realism's mid-century founding fathers⁸⁴ embraced powerful ideas consistent with Cosmopolitan political theory as now practiced. Contemporary Realists need to rethink their knee-jerk hostility to Cosmopolitanism. Against Cosmopolitanism, I have suggested that its standard account of (classical) Realism is one-sided and simplistic. Once we move beyond the intellectual shadow boxing we can begin to see how classical Realism might provide useful correctives to otherwise appealing Cosmopolitan reform ideals. Admittedly, the news on that front remains sobering. The admirable goal of a global (democratic) order presupposes a functioning supranational or world society, which we probably still lack. Anyone serious about democratic global governance will need to think hard about the ultimate necessity of a global or world state, which hardly seems to be on the immediate political horizon.

For those understandably impatient for overdue global reform, this conclusion will inevitably seem unsatisfactory. Yet it surely remains better to look the hard tasks of reform directly in the eyes than pretend that global democracy can be constructed without also building its fundamental prerequisites. A house without a sturdy foundation is unlikely to remain standing for long. As Morgenthau warned global reformers half a century ago, suggesting that one might build such a house would be “tantamount to the advice to close one's eyes and dream that one can eat one's cake and have it, too.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Readers should excuse the sexist language: as far I can tell they were in fact all men.

⁸⁵ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2nd.ed.), p. 308.
