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State, Power and Global Order¹

Dr Or Rosenboim

Abstract: This article examines the evolution of international thought through the notion of 'political space'. It focuses on two important domains of international politics, the nation-state and the global, to reflect on the discipline's spatial categories. Since its inception, the concept of the nation-state has dominated mainstream International Relations (IR) theory. Yet an investigation of how international order has been theorised over IR's first century shows that this era has also been defined by globalist visions of political order. This study reviews the interplay of the state and the global sphere, using Barbara Ward's analysis of equality and development to shed light on the interplay of the global and the national spaces. Nowadays,

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globalization is sometimes seen as the apex of the historical interplay of particularity and universality. The progression towards global political and economic order, however, is today undermined by the resurgence of state-centric political nationalism which seeks to challenge the legitimacy of the global political space.

Keywords: Globalization; Nationalism; Globalism; International Order; International Relations; State

Introduction: Political spaces and International Relations

The concept of political space, already frequently discussed by political geographers, has received over the last two decades the attention of International Relations (IR) scholars.¹ It may seem a truism to argue that the study of international relations is based on assumptions regarding space and spatiality. In this context, political space can be understood as the broad dynamic webs of political and symbolic relations evolving within, around and in relation to topographical physical settings and terrestrial landscapes.² Yet the interplay of spatial configurations and international relations theory has not been thoroughly mapped. What spatial domains have international relations theorists considered important, and why? How did transformations of spatial perceptions influence ideas about international relations?

This article seeks to demonstrate the close interplay of the national and global political spaces in international thought in the first century of IR, drawing on the concept of political space as an insightful interpretative framework in international relations. The concept of 'political space' embodies the multiple ways in which politics and geographical territory continue to be related. These relations are not passive or deterministic; spatial conditions can define political order, but space is also shaped by political power. Conquest, law-making, border formation and war are some of the activities that modify space and give it political meaning. I will look at two categories of political space that were conceptually and politically important in American and British international thought in the first century of the discipline of IR: the nation-state and the global. It argues that in the last century, the nation-state and the global were considered by international thinkers as important domains of international thought, and seeks to understand how transformations in spatial perceptions, generated by technological and political changes, shaped ideas about international relations. By examining how past international thinkers imagined and interpreted the relations of space and politics in the national and global spheres, I suggest that spatial thinking offers an insightful approach for theorizing international relations.

In the twentieth century, the nation-state was the protagonist in the study of international relations. Discussions about space and spatiality within IR focused on the inexhaustible debate between the persistence vs. the disappearance of the territorial state as the principle form of political

organization in the Westphalian system.³ In the 1940s, the political desirability and adequacy of the post-1919 system of nation-states was challenged by a new political outlook emphasising the importance of the global domain of political order.⁴ While these debates date to the mid-twentieth century, they clearly resonate with more recent arguments that the processes of globalization supposedly dealt the final blow to the nation-state's political and economic sovereign power.⁵ In 1919-2019, the nation-state and the global embodied two important spatial categories for theorizing international relations: their conceptual histories within the discipline of IR offer a glimpse into alternative past and future trajectories for spatial political thought. The analysis of political space gives rise to important questions about the location of practical and conceptual sites of power. The political space of the global, and its related categories 'globalism' and 'globality' will provide an alternative framework for thinking about political power beyond the state.

By juxtaposing the national and global spaces of politics, this article seeks to trace the conceptualization and location of power in the twentieth century world order. To do so, I propose to examine the political ideas and spatial interpretations of a variety of international thinkers, who will offer a lens through which to analyse change and continuity in the international sphere. The British and American thinkers at the core of this study have all contributed in different ways to the evolution of international thought within, and outside of, the academic discipline of International Relations. These figures include Alfred Zimmern, Barbara Ward, Hans Morgenthau, E.

H. Carr and John Herz. Despite their theoretical and political differences, they were all original and influential international thinkers who shared a concern with the desirable and possible relations of the political spaces of the nation-state and the global. Together, this group highlights the pluralistic quality of spatial thinking in the first century of IR. The selection of thinkers is not exhaustive or comprehensive; instead, it aims to inspire further investigation of past ideas about the spaces of international relations.

The history of international thought provides this study with an interpretative method to investigate the ways in which political spaces were conceptualised by scholars of IR.⁶ Some scholars, like Nicolas Guilhot, Duncan Bell and David Armitage, have diagnosed a ‘rapprochement’ between historians of political thought and IR scholars, leading to a new wave of literature on the history of international thought and on the disciplinary history of IR.⁷ Scholars of history, law and international relations have become more attentive to the international, transnational and global dimensions of past ideas, and have sought to expand our understanding of the development of political spaces beyond the state.⁸ I suggest that historical investigations in IR can help understand and explain how spatial conceptions have changed and evolved in international thought.

Looking back at the plurality of competing visions of world order in the first century of IR, it is clear that the evolution of international thought is not a linear process, but an intricate and complex genealogy with false starts,

alternative trajectories and unrealized endeavours. Understanding the role played by spatial categories notably the nation-state and the global in visions of world order can expand our historical knowledge. But this intellectual exercise can also provide sharper conceptual tools for contemporary international theory to interpret and critique the spatial categories of international relations. The argument about spatial categories begins by surveying the rise of the nation-state.

The space of the nation-state

‘Few concepts in International Relations are as controversial and enduring – yet as neglected and under-theorized – as the concepts of the state and sovereignty’.⁹ This assertion, by IR scholar Peter Stirk, reflects the tensions around statehood in IR theory, which endows the territorial nation-state with ‘mortal God’ status without scrutinizing its conceptual qualities and analytical characteristics. For scholars like Michael Mann, the nation-state in the discipline’s early days, was considered the embodiment of modernity.¹⁰ Nation-states were able to make powerful claims on individual allegiance and collective identity, extending their political and symbolic influence to the realm of emotions, morality and norms. Other scholars describe the post-1919 formation of equal and autonomous nation-states as one of the ‘foundational myths’ of IR and challenged its historical accuracy.¹¹

While discussions of the historical and conceptual origins of the modern nation-state remain beyond the scope of this article, it is significant to note the spatial implications of statehood in international theory, and in particular the notion of 'territoriality'.¹² In 1994, Agnew argued that IR theorists such as Keohane, Gilpin and Waltz rely excessively on a simplistic interpretation of the nation-state defined by its capacity to exert power within its territory, and to exclude intervention from outside its borders. IR theory has thus increasingly seen the state as the location where social processes take place. According to this account, the boundaries of the state confine power to a specific territory and draw a neat distinction between internal and external politics.¹³ For Agnew, the misrepresentation of territory in IR theory resulted in the reification of the state as a fixed unit of sovereign space and to the production of research based on the artificial hermetic separation between internal and foreign affairs.¹⁴ More recently, other scholars took a page from Agnew's critique of state-centrism, seeking to question the territorially-based interpretation of the state as a set and fixed unit of sovereignty by exploring, for example, the permeability of boundaries and the interaction of the private and public spheres.¹⁵

After the First World War, the apparent overlap of modernity and statehood generated reflections on the desirable sites of political power, and on the appropriate mechanisms to guarantee peace. Such concerns encouraged the philanthropist and liberal politician David Davies and his sisters to donate the endowment for the foundation of the Woodrow Wilson Chair in International Politics at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth. The

endowment was announced at the end of 1918, and the first professor, Alfred Zimmern, began work in April 1919.¹⁶ The chair was aimed not only at the advancement of knowledge but also at the realization of political goals, such as world peace, justice and security. Thus, the academic discipline of IR became part and parcel of the efforts to envisage a new world order.

Within the new international system, not all members of the League of Nations were territorial states; the most powerful ones were world-spanning empires. Historians have shown that the transition from empire to statehood implied more continuities than previously conceded.¹⁷ Conceptually, the rise of the political space of the state did not eradicate the legacy of the age of empire, which continued to inform and influence some British and American IR thinkers in the early twentieth century.¹⁸ At the time when statehood emerged as the key condition for international political recognition, Zimmern and his colleagues at the pro-imperial Round Table organization outlined alternative orders that circumvented the territorial state and relied on the legacy of the British Empire as a transnational polity.¹⁹ Empires were sites of political power and experience, that Zimmern wanted to employ to challenge the prevalence of the nation-state. The inequalities and hierarchies that characterised the imperial world order permeated the new international order, most evidently in the system of trusteeships, which was presented as an escalator to independence and statehood, but in practice tended to preserve the power of the European empires.²⁰

The political vision advanced by Zimmern distinguished between statehood and nationhood to reject the primacy of the nation-state in world politics. Tomohito Baji suggests that Zimmern envisaged the separation of nationhood from statehood as a means to undermine national self-determination, and advocated the foundation of multi-national Commonwealths, built according to the British imperial model, and extended over vast territories.²¹ Thus, the space of the state was not limited, for him, by its physical territoriality, but depended on transnational bonds that connected individuals all over the world. Zimmern's vision of de-territorialised world order reflected an important challenge to the centrality of the nation-state to international relations theory. His ideas embody an alternative trajectory for spatial thinking in IR, which divorces cultural and symbolic bonds from territorial statehood.

The attempt of Alfred Zimmern to reimagine the nation-state as part of a global order based on the historical experience of the British Commonwealth exemplifies the permeation of empire to international thought. While the influence of imperialism on international thought should not be over-stated, Zimmern was certainly not alone in drawing inspiration from the experience of empire to outline the contours of a new international system. Historians of political thought have already interrogated the entanglement of the discipline of IR with imperialism.²² Transnational institutions across the British Empire, such as the Round Table organization, have been sites of knowledge production and exchange across different political and cultural locations, and contributed to shaping ideas about the world's political

spatiality.²³ South Africa, Australia, Canada and India were not imagined merely as members of the British Commonwealth, but as parts of a global spatial order characterised by political and cultural bonds that transcended the logics of statehood.²⁴ When shifting the gaze from the nation-state to the global sphere, early IR scholars found a trove of practical and theoretical knowledge in the malleable and expanding political space of empire. For scholars like Zimmern, the imperial sphere provided concrete knowledge about political relations beyond the nation-state, as well as a symbolic site of identity.²⁵ In the discipline's early years, imperial knowledge and expertise carried, as Hobson, Long and Bell have noted, an important weight in shaping international theory in nineteenth and twentieth century Britain.²⁶ Yet imperial thought, as Vitalis demonstrated, extended beyond the geopolitical sphere of the British empire; American academic study of IR was implicated in the justification of colonialism and white supremacy until the age of decolonization in the 1960s. Alternative views, proposed by black IR scholars, were erased from the history of the discipline in the United States.²⁷

In the United States and Britain alike, the experience of empire excreted a lasting influence on ideas about 'race development' and 'colonial administration', which remained an integral part of international thinking in the first century of IR. While Zimmern repudiated the racial aspect of imperial heritage, he hoped to resolve the tensions of international relations by separating statehood from nationality and creating a global commonwealth inspired by the British Empire. Yet others had different

plans for reforming the space of the nation-state. The historian and International Relations scholar E. H. Carr shared Zimmern's concern with the desirability and possibility of a state-centric international order, but became his most ferocious critic.²⁸ Carr highlighted the insufficiency of the states' system to overcome challenges such as war and economic crisis, and emphasised the need for different spatial perspectives.²⁹ But he did not look back to the age of empire for inspiration for political reform. Rather, his global thinking sought to transcend and overcome the experience of empire, resonating with a new form of global spatiality that would thrive after the Second World War.

The last chapter of Carr's influential account of the crisis of the League system, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* was dedicated to 'the prospects of a new international order'. After criticising the 'utopias' of economic rationalism and universal progress, Carr turned his attention to the future of the nation-state as 'a unit of power', 'the supreme unit round which centre human demands for equality and human ambitions for predominance'.³⁰

The League's founding principle, the equality of nation-states, was an illusion, according to Carr. His solution sought to disentangle power from the territorial space of the nation-state and create larger continental blocs with centralized power. This idea was motivated not only by the disastrous effects of belligerent nationalistic ideologies, but also by political and economic tendencies towards interdependence and integration.

While Carr recognised the importance of the political space of the nation-state for the construction of a new international order, he did not lose sight of another dimension of human life, the global. In *Nationalism and After* (1945) he followed the political theorist David Mitrany and proposed a functionalist vision of world order.³¹ In wartime London, Mitrany had developed his functionalist approach as an alternative to territorially-based international order. Functionalism sought to identify humanity's 'concrete needs' and address them through a transnational collaborative network of agencies and organization with specific functions. This approach allowed Mitrany and Carr to shift their gaze from the political space of the nation-state and imagine a new political system that could extend without limits, even reaching the whole globe. Thus, without committing themselves to 'utopian' visions of world government, Carr and Mitrany found in functionalism a flexible international system that recognized the potentially world-changing rise of a different political space, the global.

The global political space

It may be tempting to associate the emergence of the global political space with the end of the Cold War and the accelerated processes of globalization, that have encouraged IR scholars to review and contest the centrality of the state to IR theory.³² For some, the new globalized political space was characterised by the extension of the American model of liberal democracy to the entire world.³³ Yet global thinking has deeper historical and conceptual roots.³⁴ Since the mid-twentieth century, world-making

transformations following the growth of communication and transport technologies have reinforced a common perception of shrinking distance, porous borders and planetary unity that undermined the centrality of the nation-state as a hub of power and authority in international affairs.³⁵

Through debates about its nature, prospects and meaning, the global political space emerged as a major domain of political relations.³⁶

What is the global political space? The Oxford Dictionary defines the global as 'relating to the whole world, worldwide'. Such a definition captures the scale and scope of the global political space, but requires additional clarification of meaning and interpretation. What may be the implications of the worldwide scope of the global for thinking about politics? Sylvest and van Munster suggest a complementary term that can help make sense of the global political space: 'globality'. The dictionary definition of globality is 'the quality of being global; universality, totality; specifically the quality of having worldwide inclusiveness, reach, or relevance; (the potential for) global integration, operation, or influence (especially in business and financial contexts).' For Sylvest and van Munster, globality means the circumstances in which the entire world is regarded as a 'single place'.³⁷ This definition enriches the notion of the global by highlighting its major normative characteristic: the material perception of the 'oneness' of the planet as a significant condition of human action.

The notion of 'globality' often operates in conjunction with 'globalism', which refers to 'the operation or planning of economic and foreign policy on a

global basis', according to the Oxford Dictionary. Van Munster and Sylvest draw a distinction between the ideology of globalism and the condition of globality. Yet in the history of international thought, the boundary between these two concepts has often been blurry. 'Globality' is not ideologically neutral: it often entails an explicit or implicit normative position about the desirability of an order grounded in the global political space. Moreover, globalism should not be seen as a coherent ideology.³⁸ Globalism, I suggest, is better understood as a loose and flexible approach to politics which emphasizes the material 'oneness' of the world and seeks to reorganize international relations on a worldwide scale.

The 'global' differs from the 'international', 'transnational' and 'cosmopolitan' political spaces. All four categories make their appearance in twentieth century writings on international politics, in content if not by name. The 'international' political space attributes importance to the *nation* as a defining order-creating unit, and explores the relations between nation-states as sovereign entities. Thus, the international space replicates rather than repudiates the logic of state-centrism discussed in the previous section. The transnational space extends beyond the state's boundaries and explores interconnections across borders without undermining the significance of national communities and states. By contrast, the political category of cosmopolitanism assumes that all humans belong to a world community and should adapt their political and moral allegiances accordingly. While the cosmopolitan approach focuses on individual identity and underlines the universal dimension of ethics, the global approach is less

morally ambitious, and highlights problems capable of affecting every part of the world, without implying political monism or moral unity.³⁹

Many thinkers of different political, theoretical and ideological positions may be described as globalists for their embrace of global perspectives on political order, including Raymond Aron, David Mitrany, Barbara Wootton, Friedrich Hayek, Lionel Robbins, Owen Lattimore, Nicholas Spykman, E. H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, John Herz, Jacques Maritain, and Barbara Ward. They identified globality as a meaningful condition of world politics, and proposed plans to adjust the existing international order accordingly. Thinking globally does not mean ignoring all other spatial domains of politics: those who espoused the globalist approach highlighted connections between different political spaces, and advanced visions recognising the complex interplay between the local, national, regional, federal and global spaces.

The pivotal moment in the emergence of globalism was the mid-twentieth century, when the term 'global' started to gain ground in public debates and scholarly publications as a response to the total world war.⁴⁰ For many mid-century political thinkers, such as Raymond Aron, the global war required an adequately global plan for peacetime order: the interests of the whole world should guide post-war planning of a new international order.⁴¹ In the 1940s, the growing awareness of the world's oneness depended also on novel technologies that presented the image of the world from a bird's-eye perspective, and on new cartographic projections that transformed

conceptions of geography and space.⁴² The global imaginary of a unified and closely-knit political space outlived the war as a perspective on the future of humanity.⁴³ Thus, I argue, in the first century of IR, the ‘global’ political space was employed by a range of political thinkers who sought to challenge the nation-state as the pivotal unit of political order in the name of a political vision that encapsulated the world as a whole.

The global political space embodies an alternative account of modernity, that challenges the idea that the territorial nation-state represents the final stage of human progress.⁴⁴ Thinking globally has meant, for twentieth century thinkers, widening the political imagination beyond the structure of the nation-state to reflect on the various political spaces of the world. Cartographic images, maps, and air travel technologies enhanced the notion of the ‘oneness’ of the world. Mid-century American geopolitical thinkers, such as Nicholas J. Spykman and Owen Lattimore, drew on novel cartographic projections, developed by the American cartographer Richard Ede Harrison, and proposed geopolitical visions that underscored the need for a political response to the world’s material globality.⁴⁵ The nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 mark another important milestone in the consolidation of a global perspective on politics. The atomic bombs were perceived as a danger of global scale, which implicated potentially all parts of the world.⁴⁶ ‘Earthrise’, the image of planet Earth captured by Apollo 8 astronaut Bill Anders in 1968, furthered the perception of global ‘oneness’, and inspired a surge in global political visions.⁴⁷

The rise of the global political space was motivated not only by material conditions of global interconnectedness, facilitated by flight and communication technologies, but also by the upsurge of totalitarian regimes based on universalist ideologies that sought to curb individual liberty. In the mid-twentieth century, key international thinkers such as E. H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, David Mitrany and John Herz built on a shared perception of world crisis to question the political desirability of the nation-state in the post-war era.⁴⁸ Shifting their gaze from the domestic space of the nation-state to the global political space offered a means to envisage a more secure, just and peaceful power distribution in the post-war era.

In *Politics among Nations*, Hans Morgenthau underlined the role of a supranational society united by common ‘moral standards of conduct’ and ‘shared beliefs and common values’ as the premise for the stability of the European system of sovereign states.⁴⁹ The supremacy of national allegiance over supranational ones brought, for him, the system’s demise.⁵⁰ As for the future, he argued that the solution for the world’s crisis would have to be a global one: a ‘world state is unattainable in our world, yet indispensable for survival’.⁵¹ As one of the major realist thinkers of the twentieth century, Morgenthau’s support for a world state became a conundrum for his interpreters: according to Campbell Craig ‘the possibility of world government was so low and the risks of failure so high that the world state notion he [Morgenthau] put forward in *Politics Among Nations* was effectively speculation’.⁵² Others, like William Scheuerman, sought to underline the

prospective nature of Morgenthau's global thinking, which reveals the important influence of Mitrany's functionalist approach on his thought: 'if nation-states worked together in pursuing concrete tasks, inventing along the way creative but eminently practical supranational institutions, the building blocks of global order could be laid.'⁵³ For Scheuerman, Morgenthau embodied the figure of the American left wing realist who proposed plans for global reform aspiring for the creation of a world state, but doubting the feasibility of its immediate realisation. Nonetheless, he identifies in Morgenthau's writing a clear commitment to political investigation based on a global spatiality.

John Herz's embrace of global thinking was more congruous with his original interpretation of realism in international relations, which incorporated aspects of the liberal project of international law.⁵⁴ As an innovative and influential mid-century international thinker in the United States, Herz endorsed the interwar vision of a universalist legal order of the Viennese jurist Hans Kelsen as a response to the global threat of nuclear war.⁵⁵ As Sylvest argues, 'Herz's universalism was based on a 'solid, cool-headed realism' that acknowledged how in a context of globality the distinction between national interest and internationalist ideals was, strictly speaking, invalid. They could be seen to merge in a common interest in survival, but this required changing perceptions and developing 'a "planetary mind"'.⁵⁶ In his 1942 discussion of world order, Herz debated the possible realization of a world federal state, and argued that while such plan would not be 'utopian', it would require a transfer of allegiance from the

nation to the world state, which represented a tremendous political effort. Instead, he oriented his system of collective security to address power struggles on a global scale.⁵⁷ Like Morgenthau, Herz drew inspiration from Mitraný's functionalism, and emphasised the role of institutions in addressing global challenges, but he was much more optimistic than Morgenthau about the role of international law in transforming politics on a global scale.⁵⁸ Herz and Morgenthau both embraced a global perspective on international relations as a response to challenges with global reach, such as nuclear war, without calling for the abolition of nation-states.

In 1950, Herz reviewed a publication which resonated with his earlier ideas in favour of a world federation. It was the Preliminary Draft for a World Constitution, written by a group of scholars led by the University of Chicago professors Richard McKeon and Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, and the University's president Robert Hutchins. The public constitution was the fruit of two years of research and deliberation, with the aim of forming a foundation for the eventual realization of a federal state on global scale.⁵⁹ The group of American and European humanities scholars and social scientists argued that organizing the world in global and regional federations would provide better checks on political power while enhancing democratic representation, pluralism and diversity. Herz's judgment of the final document produced by the 'distinguished' scholars was generally positive: 'from the standpoint of world federalism this draft certainly embodies a good deal of careful thinking. It tries to sum up the most advanced spiritual aspirations of the Western and Eastern civilizations of mankind, and,

technically, to shape a framework of government - complete with law-making, executive, and judicial bodies and, in addition, some novel features - which would combine whatever human endeavours in the field of government and constitutions have proved of enduring value.' His main doubts regarded the project's means of realization and the Soviet reaction: underlining the constitution's excessive rationalism, he suggested that 'genuine realism [...] must take irrational factors into account, to build upon them the realizable ideal'. Thinking globally, from a realist perspective, was a necessity of the time, but required 'a real change in human minds and attitudes'.⁶⁰

While the global political space reflects a degree of conceptual holism, in the quest for a comprehensive understanding of the political order of the world, it did not always imply a centralised conception of political power. Rather, global thinkers sought to find new ways to share and distribute power on a large spatial scale by imagining alternative global political orders based on mid-range polities, such as federations. At the British organization Federal Union, which was founded in 1938 to advocate for the federation of Britain and other democratic states, members such as Wootton, Hayek and Lionel Robbins argued in favour of a federal world order.⁶¹ As its original aim of war prevention failed, Federal Union evolved into a proto-think tank, proposing the formation of a post-war European or Atlantic 'nuclear federation' that would eventually evolve, they hoped, into a global one.

Drawing on the wartime alliance as inspiration, Wootton, Hayek and Robbins envisioned a federation as a response to the post-war challenges, such as economic growth, social welfare and, of course, peace and security. Significantly, the global scale of the federation was not merely a means to prevent war, but also reflected an advantageous scope for social and economic prosperity. In their debates about the desirable and possible scale of social and economic structures beyond, above and across nation-states, the members of Federal Union extended their gaze from the local to the global. While disagreeing on the normative aims of their plans for transnational federation – social welfare for Wootton and liberal capitalism for Hayek – these thinkers were united by their conviction that the appropriate scale for planning post-war order was *global*. As Quinn Slobodian has recently argued, political federation was an early version of Hayek’s globalist thought, which later evolved into an attempt to redeploy government and its regulatory powers on a global scale in the name of capitalist free trade. For both Wootton and Hayek, the nation-state should not be abolished but harnessed to an ambitious global reform project in favour of social justice or capitalism.⁶²

In its early- to mid-century iterations, globalism was meant to counter national ideologies and reconfigure the power of the nation-state, but thinking globally did not mean an attempt to abolish the nation-state as a significant unit in international politics. Rather, many global thinkers, most such as Barbara Wootton, Hans Morgenthau, John Herz and Alfred Zimmern, sought to envisage a world order in which the state and the global

spaces overlapped and co-existed as alternative yet not mutually exclusive political orders.

After the Second World War, the global perspective on politics increasingly enhanced the inequalities that divided the world of states, and undermined the apparent sovereign equality that supposedly defined the post-Second World War order. In the 1950s and 1960s, the end of empire and the rise of the nation-state system in the post-colonial world saw the global space become an arena of contestation about social and economic equality. By thinking globally, political thinkers were able to challenge the structures of the existing international system and underline the limits of the state-centred world order in facing the urgent economic and political problems of equality, development and growth.

Division Lines: equality and development in international relations

The global and national spaces attain their political meanings through divisions as well as interactions and connections. Rather than seeing the political spaces as homogeneous and 'smooth', I propose to examine the conceptual lines that divide them. The focus on divisions helps to make sense of the modus operandi of power in the national and global political spaces by investigating differences, tensions and instability. Through this lens, the political spaces of the global and the national emerge as hierarchical, complex and plural, spaces of contention and struggle that intersect in a variety of power locations. I propose to investigate here how

the global and national divisions generated by the concept of 'equality' were perceived by an influential economist and global thinker, Barbara Ward, in the mid-twentieth century.

The focus on Barbara Ward is motivated by three reasons. First, she proposed an original mode of thinking about equality by weaving together the national and global spaces of politics. Second, Ward's ideas were influential at the time: in an era defined by the processes of decolonization and the Cold War, her *Economist* articles and best-selling books reached a vast audience in Britain and the United States, and political leaders, such as Adlai Stevenson, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson sought her advice. Finally, scholars including Glenda Sluga and Patricia Owens have underlined the absence of women from histories of international thought in the twentieth century; this lacuna will be addressed by highlighting the contribution of Barbara Ward to the theory of international relations.⁶³

In her 1962 bestseller, *The Rich Nations and the Poor Nations*, she launched an approach to economic development based on thinking about equality in the international sphere. The 'revolutionary' idea of equality – of men and of nations – entailed, for her, the 'tap root of modern nationalism'.⁶⁴ Yet its meaning was not always clear: 'is it to do be only a levelling? Does it imply indifference to excellence? Can it be combined with reasonable lines of command and control?'. Regardless of these questions, she underlined 'men's passionate desire to see themselves as the equals of other human beings without distinctions of class or sex or race or nationhood is one of

the driving forces of our day'. For this reason, 'the distinction between rich nations and poor nations is one of the great dominant political and international themes of our century'.⁶⁵

Equality should be understood alongside the notion of 'development' which Ward helped define and popularise. The intersection of the global and the national revolved, for her, around the notion of 'development', which she read in both economic and political terms. Embracing the nation-state as a prime actor in international politics did not lead her to abandon all other spatial order and political allegiances: rather, development should be seen as a global challenge, extending well beyond the geographical reach of the 'poor nations'.

While the book's title refers to 'nations' as the political protagonists of international order, Ward invites her readers to measure political action on a global scale. The responsibility for advancing equality and development fell, for Ward, with poor and rich nations alike, as common inhabitants of a unified, close-knit planet. Through a historical analysis, a political programme and a call for action, Ward aimed to demonstrate the interplay between the national and global political spaces in the mid-twentieth century. It was insufficient for nation-states to attain prosperity and growth within their borders; inequality between states and across continents should also be tackled by state-led initiatives to generate prosperity, peace and growth.

Ward pursued this line of thought in a later publication, which is credited with popularizing and perhaps coining the term 'spaceship earth' (1966).⁶⁶ She described the world as a self-containing globe, a complex unit where natural and human life should co-exist, and envisaged national sovereignty, regional collaboration and global morality as the necessary spring-boards to sustainable global development: "Our physical unity has gone far ahead of our moral unity. Our inability to do anything but live together physically is not matched by any of the institutions that would enable us to live together decently".⁶⁷ On a more concrete level, Ward proposed that wealthier countries should commit a certain proportion of their GDP to the development of poorer countries, which would be administered by appropriate global institutions for aid and development.

Writing about equality did not free Ward of political and historical prejudices – in fact she argued that no one was, citing anti-Western Chinese proverbs as evidence. The advancement of equality on a global scale required a global political vision based on a global moral outlook, which, in light of her Catholic faith, she found in the Judeo-Christian tradition. She embraced a simplistic account of Western-led progress, following a teleological narrative to emphasise the contribution of the Western or Atlantic region to the world's development. Her views on imperialism seem mixed – she recognized the exploitation, abuse and racism of the imperial order yet underlined the important economic, administrative and scientific knowledge brought to the colonial world by its Western rulers. While she strived to capture the complexity of the global political and economic situation, her writings

sought to persuade a readership of well-off Westerners that investment in development of poor nations would benefit the rich.⁶⁸

Ward's work provides two key insights on the national-global spatial nexus. First, she highlighted the 'revolution of equality' as an 'idea now at work from one end of the world to another'.⁶⁹ By emphasizing the centrality of equality in political as well as economic terms, Ward contributed to institutional discussions on global development, especially at the UN conference on the Human Environment (1972) connecting national initiatives with global reform. Thinking about the global and the national spaces of politics in the twentieth century requires mapping out strategies for interaction and collaboration. Ward's ideas paved the way for the emergence of a whole field of development studies, which complemented and complicated the theoretical and practical apparatus of the discipline of International Relations. Her influence extended beyond the academic realm and contributed to the elaboration of the New International Economic Order that aimed to reform the world's economy in the interests of developing and post-colonial states.⁷⁰

Second, Ward employed the categories of 'development' and 'equality' to reflect on the tensions within and across national and global spatial orders. The problem of inequality represented for her a challenge that revealed the insufficiencies of both the global and the national arenas, and the need for both political domains to undertake successful change in international relations after decolonization. Ward's ideas reflect an attempt to

conceptualise the interplay of the global and national political spaces, and to explore ways forward in tackling key issues in world politics, notably sustainable development, national resources, economic growth and equality.

Conclusion: How to see the world.

Over the past century, national and global political spaces attained a central place in the political imagination of IR thinkers in the Anglo-American, or Euro-Atlantic, sphere. The historical exploration in this article gives rise to doubts about a teleological vision that conceptualises modernity in terms of statehood. The national and the global emerged as two analytical categories through which to see the world and the individuals inhabiting it, reflecting multiple spatial and political modernities.⁷¹ Political space provides an analytical lens through which to outline the contours of political, physical and symbolic sites of power in international relations and investigate their forms of interaction.

Since 1919, the global space has been imagined as a response to two apparently contradictory trends: the erosion of state power by technological advances and the enhancement of state power due to national ideological structures. How can such contradictions be resolved? Was the global imaginary a response to the collapse of the national space, or was it an attempt to reinforce it? The above overview of key aspects in past spatial thinking suggests that we should not consider the national and global spaces as smooth, unchanging or uniform, and should not gloss over the

competing interpretations of their political meanings in the past century. A variety of normative ends – including functional system, imperial federation or realist reformism – have risen from the recognition of the overlapping spaces of the nation and the global, generating important insights for IR theory. Unlike the contemporary classification of normative ends as either ‘global’ or ‘national’, the international thinkers examined above sought to advance a spatial interpretation based on the close interplay of these two domains.

One of the main objectives of this article has been to demonstrate the flexible and mutually-constitutive dynamics of the global-national spaces as key analytical categories of International Relations. While contemporary political debates seem to suggest a dominant return to the nation-state as a primary domain of individual and collective allegiance, such changes should not erase from sight other, alternative political spaces. In the future, scholars of IR should continue to study the overlapping dynamics of the national and global spaces. The spatial perspective requires us to be open to complexity about the geographical and symbolic sites of power in world order, and to engage in a critical and dynamic examination of the multiple spatial images of world politics. Diverse interpretations of these spaces of politics may emerge, influencing decision-making and shaping individual and collective identities around the world. In the second century of IR, political spaces can provide an insightful lens through which to see the world.

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³ John H. Herz, "The Rise and Demise of the Territorial State." *World Politics* 9 (1957): 473-93; Gazit, "A Simmelian Approach", 223.

⁴ Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: Allen Lane, 2012).

⁵ See for example Miles Kahler, "Territoriality and Conflict in an Era of Globalization", in Miles Kahler and Barbara F. Walter (eds.) *Territoriality and Conflict in an Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 1-21; Jean Cohen, *Globalization and Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

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¹² See for example Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

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¹⁴ John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory." *Review of International Political Economy*, 1(1994):53-80.

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²⁰ Pedersen, *The Guardians*.

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- ⁵³ Scheuerman, *The Realist Case*, 83.
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