

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

## Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories

<https://www.e-ir.info/2016/07/13/cosmopolitanism-and-classical-realism-as-morally-defensible-theories/>

GERALD SIM, JUL 13 2016

With the study of international relations having been defined by a strong Realist outlook since the 1950s, Charles Beitz in 1979 published his *Political Theory of International Relations* which would expand the Rawlsian distribution of justice to a broader international coverage. The intention of Beitz's work was clear, to challenge the stranglehold of the Realist state-based prescriptions on international relations,[1] and in the process recalibrate the field of international relations theory. This essay will serve to analyse Beitz's challenge to Realism, by ascertaining if Cosmopolitanism is a morally defensible theory, and if there are other theories which can be counted as defensible.

True to the premise he has set out, I will be utilizing Beitz's three conceptions of international morality[2] – Cosmopolitanism, Morality of States, and Moral Skepticism – as the perimeters of this study. I will be comparing Cosmopolitanism with Classical Realism which I will equate to the Morality of States, and Neo-Realism to Moral Skepticism. To ascertain the moral defensibility of the theories, this essay will be adopting a consequentialist approach to morality. The essay will first consider the work of Beitz and Peter Singer, which I will argue consequentially rest on strong moral grounds, regarding all human beings as “equal objects” of moral concern universally. [3] I will proceed to feature Hans Morgenthau's work on Classical Realism, and argue that Beitz's broad assertion of all Realist theories as morally skeptical to be inaccurate, given Classical Realism's efforts to accommodate universal moral principles with the interest of the state. In terms of the moral skepticism of neo-Realism, I will argue that it is futile to label the theory as skeptical and immoral, given the incompatibility between morality and neo-Realism's design as a systematic, neo-positivist drive to understand the continuities of conflict and polarity. In essence, this effectively nullifies Beitz's categorization of Realism as a morally skeptical theory. Nevertheless, I will argue that both Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism whilst possessing divergent perspectives towards morality, are both morally defensible theories. Whilst Cosmopolitanism possesses a stronger moral grounding given its clear vision of universal moral coverage, Classical Realism with its invocation of prudence in political action possesses greater ease for actors to attain the envisioned moral objective.

### Methodology: Morality as a Consequence

In order to genuinely evaluate the moral persuasion of the three theories, this essay will be adopting two separate approaches from the onset. First, this paper will reject the binary between moral and immoral theories. Rather, it will focus on the moral strengths inherent within each theory, and not castigate a theory as being unacceptable for international relations theorizing on the basis of moral judgment. Second, for the purpose of this paper, morality will be defined as consequentialist in nature, in where moral judgment should be predicated on the evaluative outcome of actions.[4] We will evaluate the theories on three consequential aspects. First, the preservation of peace and stability within the theories' scope of coverage – a key objective of international relations theorizing. Second, the consideration of the material and physical well-being of individuals within the theory's scope of coverage. Third, other additional consequential factors to consider. Another aspect which would be considered outside the realm of morality would be the ease of attaining the moral objectives set forth by the respective theories to understand the applicability from theory to practice. I will proceed to lay out the moral tenets of each theory and the consequential outlook based upon the three aspects described.

# **Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories**

Written by Gerald Sim

## **Charles Beitz's Rendering of Cosmopolitanism and Evolution From Rawls**

Cosmopolitanism comprises of an ideational set of theories that argue for a "single scheme of cooperation"[5] between all "human beings", based upon the notion of our shared humanity.[6] Unlike the traditional theories of international relations that are largely constructed on the basis of national identities, state interests, and material considerations,[7] cosmopolitan theories absolves itself from the particular, and instead commits itself towards a humanist project of universal moral coverage. Hence, the theory makes a compelling case in terms of its moral defensibility through the rubrics of consequential morality we have set for ourselves. For an affirmation of cosmopolitan's defensibility, we will consider the works from Charles Beitz and Peter Singer.

Beitz's conceptualization of "moral cosmopolitanism"[8] – where choices should be based upon the claims of each individual[9] – is derived from the Rawlsian conception of distributive justice. To sustain a deeper understanding of Beitz's vision, this essay will sketch out the similarities and differences between both approaches. In essence, Beitz would pose two key disagreements to Rawl's second original position, which would form the basis of his version of cosmopolitanism. First, Beitz took issue with Rawl's claims that there is no difference principle on the grounds that since each society in the international realm was "self-contained and self-sufficient" and constitutes a "co-operative scheme for mutual advantage", but has no output to distribute a semblance of international justice.[10] Instead, Beitz countered that Rawl's assumption of "self-sufficient co-operative schemes" were invalid,[11] given that enhanced international economic cooperation creates a new basis for international morality in a world where national boundaries "can no longer be considered as the outer limits of social cooperation". [12]

Second, Beitz challenged Rawl's assumptions tied to the veil of ignorance in the second original position, countering that contractors would be aware that the distribution of natural resources are arbitrary[13]. Hence, contractors would seek a resource distributive principle to preserve their interests and ensure the equitable distribution of resources across state borders.[14] In totality, Beitz endorses Rawl's framework of distributive justice, but serves to expand its coverage across national borders into the international realm where each individual is given "equal moral standing" as part of a single scheme of social cooperation.[15]

In terms of substance, Beitz's theory holds two key moral developments over Rawl's theory of justice. First, Beitz's redefinition of Rawl's global co-operative scheme rendered national boundaries as morally arbitrary and challenged the state-centered image of the world, by referencing the complex chains of economic interdependence in the non-ideal realm. In Beitz's view, states only possess "derivative but not fundamental moral importance" given that states derive their moral importance from individuals who make up the state.[16] Hence, Beitz expanded Rawl's domestic centered distribution of justice to a cosmopolitan universalist distribution of justice. Second, Beitz placed the individual at the forefront of moral consideration in the international realm above and beyond contingencies such as nationality, ethnicity and culture. In the process, he considered the interest of the "worse-off participants" [17], where the absence of global justice and the pervasiveness of national borders render resulted in their loss of autonomy as they would have to "participate in the only terms available".[18] Hence, Beitz's focus on the people and individuals as the apex of his moral world deviates from traditional international relations theories focused on the interest of states.

## **Peter Singer's Consequential Cosmopolitanism**

To further assess the Cosmopolitan approach, this essay turns to Peter Singer's work on developmental issues. In his famous set of arguments on famine relief, he argues that as long as moral agents do not sacrifice anything morally significant, we have an obligation to provide relief in the aftermath of disasters.[19] Singer would allegorize that such a principle is akin to witnessing a child drowning, and saving the child would come at the expense of our expensive clothing. As we will likely conclude that our clothes are not as morally significant, it is right therefore to jump into the water and save the child.[20] Similarly, the same obligation and principle would be mandated to help a Bengali child dying from famine, regardless of distance and geographical borders.[21] In essence, Singer argues that there is no moral reason why the needs of the drowning child that one is standing by, is any different from a starving child in Bangladesh. As moral agents, giving up a \$50 donation which hardly counts as a morally significant cost by most people, would consequentially play a part to alleviate the child's suffering.

# **Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories**

Written by Gerald Sim

In tandem with Beitz's view of cosmopolitanism, Singer's exposition shows the consequentialist approach has similar considerations and conclusions to the deontological approach of Beitz. First, Singer shows that universal coverage could be derived from consequential considerations, the assertion that one would save the drowning boy and not the Bengali child struck by famine on the basis of distance and nationality leads to an inconsistency in principles.[22] Hence, every human should be featured as an "equal object" of moral concern, and we should consider their well-being prior to our actions.[23] Second, much like Beitz, Singer also places all beings at the forefront of his ethical thinking, without the contingencies of nationality, race, culture that were deemed morally arbitrary by Beitz. Thirdly, both theories held that moral agents are committed to the redistribution of resources to ensure the underprivileged are better off regardless of their geographic or ethnic background.

While I concede that there are multiple moral perspectives within cosmopolitanism, we will aggregately adopt cosmopolitan's general dictums as follows. First, all human beings regardless of their universal location will be an "equal object" of moral concern, and as moral agents ourselves should consider their well-being prior to our actions. Second all moral agents should be committed towards the redistribution of resources to the least advantaged regardless of their location to fulfill their basic needs, but to the extent their sacrifice are not morally significant. Third, States should only possess "derivative but not direct moral considerations", with the individual serving as the primary moral agent. In essence, I have adopted Singer's more conservative percept and weaved it with Beitz's difference principle for the purpose of this essay.

## **Realist Criticisms of Cosmopolitanism**

Realist would likely hold two main criticisms against Cosmopolitan thought. First, Realist of both stripes will allege that in spite of Cosmopolitan's ideational grand design, the weight of its moral objectives does not commensurate with the ability of its moral agents to fulfil those objectives.[24] Take for example if there is a famine in Bangladesh and concurrently a famine in Pakistan that have the same degree of dire need, as a moral agent who is compelled to morally hold both situations as an "equal object", to which situation aid should be prioritized? Extending aid to Bangladesh ahead of Pakistan on the grounds of one country being economically affluent than the other would not be permissible, given the notion of national borders being a morally arbitrary construct. In essence, the realist criticism will be that cosmopolitanism by defining all known characteristics within society as arbitrary in an effort to create a global society governed by universal morality has paradoxically warped itself into a cacophony of dilemmas and social binds. In response to such a criticism, a cosmopolitan like Beitz will argue that the realist has used a non-ideal paradigm to criticize cosmopolitan's ideational outlook. First, he would emphasize that (his brand of) cosmopolitanism is not inconsistent with a view of the world where states are the "principal form of human social and political organization".[25] Second, in a non-ideal world, cosmopolitans recognize, as Rawls does, the moral imperative to "support and comply with just institutions that exist" which could be utilized as vehicles of resource redistribution for both famines in Pakistan and Bangladesh.[26]

In terms of competing epistemologies, Realist would view the state as the central unit in international politics and would be critical of cosmopolitan's efforts to negate national identity and borders as morally arbitrary, as this defies fundamental rules of international relations. Criticisms would be levelled against Beitz's notion that the world "should be treated as a single society" on the grounds of economic interdependence between states.[27] Critics have argued that economic interdependence whilst pervasive, does not cover all aspects of global interactions to upend the present system of states, and be represented as a co-operative venture for mutual advantage.[28] Hence, this raises questions on the prematurity of distributive justice being attributable beyond state borders. Beitz will counter that he was attempting to define social cooperation existing beyond borders, which does not require the diminishment of national societies or complete economic integration.[29] Given that interdependent cooperative relationships occur beyond the confines of state interactions, it is necessary to define mutual cooperation as such. Nevertheless, such a debate will likely persist as realist view the state as the fundamental core unit of interaction in the global polity, whilst cosmopolitans view the state as unreflective of the present mode of economic and social interactions and goes against the aspirations of a global society.

## **Classical Realism and the Morality of States**

# Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories

Written by Gerald Sim

As part of the three-tiered conception of international morality, Charles Beitz would have categorically placed Realism as part of moral skepticism,[30] on the account that Realism is an “amoral theory” which has shown a lack of discussion on the percepts of morality.[31] Instead, I would argue that Classical Realist do hold an intricate accommodative relationship[32] between morality and political power, and that Beitz’s definition of “Morality of States” is too restrictive and tied to his own views of morality being a seamless continuity between the domestic and international realms.[33] As defined by Beitz, the “Morality of States” category consists of theories that states possess obligations towards relevant international moral rules and would be willing to theoretically sacrifice self-interest to uphold the international moral order.[34] There are three points that could be made in response to Beitz’s categorizations.

First Classical Realism, to varying degrees, holds that universal moral principles have to be applied contextually when adjudging political action.[35] Hans Morgenthau in his *Politics Amongst Nations* upholds the permissibility of individuals and the state to judge political action on the basis of universal moral standards, but this should be contextualized upon the present set of circumstances.[36] Whilst the theory recognizes the relevance of a universal moral standard, the primacy of political action and the interest of states in committing towards political action takes precedence. Morgenthau would advocate that states have to place the consideration of successful political action at the forefront ahead of universal moral considerations, as “moral approbation” should not get in the way of political action of the statesman.[37]

Cosmopolitan thinkers will likely argue against the notion of dual standards for actions by individuals and states – in that moral standards could be utilized to judge individual action but not the action of states.[38] At the heart of the cosmopolitan concern is that states will be free from moral scrutiny, which goes against the cosmopolitan universal moral vision. The realist will likely reply that political action of states must be in line with national interest, and not just the quest for power, and it must thus “reflect national ideals of more universal significance”. [39] Hence, counter to the Cosmopolitan, political action is measured and calibrated. Moreover, political action cannot be curtailed by international morality because of the uncertainty and dangers of the international arena, which is a world of “opposing interest and conflict” and tied to the forces in human nature.[40] Such a view of human nature stands opposed to the Cosmopolitan’s Lockean view of human nature – of risk averse individuals willing to cooperate to promote peace and order.

Second, the primacy of national interest and political action over international morality stems for a concern over the deterioration of international moral standards in the context of the post-war years.[41] Morgenthau in his discussion of international morality argues that the moral consensus had diminished at the time of his writing. Such moral rules, which were upheld by diplomats of the 19<sup>th</sup> century marked by their common aristocratic links had been usurped by the “ethics of nationalism”. The rise of democratically elected statesmen, he argues, has diminished the influence of “supranational ethics” as loyalty to the nation has required the abandonment of moral rules.[42] Entrenched within Morgenthau’s suspicion of democratic elected statesmen was his suspicions of human nature.[43] Given such concerns, classical realist will argue that it is imprudent to place absolute trust in universal values that could be cloaked in one’s self-interest.[44] As noted by Alison McQueen, the insight on Morgenthau’s view on international morality highlights the “possibility and fragility” of international moral progress[45] – in where his acceptance of a moral universality is tied to the political context of his time. Hence, far from being a moral skeptic, Morgenthau holds that moral principles could be applied over the considerations of political expediency and state interests if the present political situation had permitted it. But that would have been a premature conclusion due to the excesses of human nature on display after the two wars.

Third, whilst political actions of states should not be curtailed by universal moral pronouncements, it has to be judged by political morality and prudence – the consideration of the consequences of one’s actions against its alternatives.[46] Critics might argue that prudence might seem sensible but could be interpreted objectively. Moreover, the notion of political morality seem tied to the notion of “national self-interest” and devoid of moral accountability – a key criticism cosmopolitans hold of Realism.[47] In response, cosmopolitans need to consider that even with the embrace of universal moral principles by a society, adherence to those principles would be subjective. The only prevention against transgressions is the cost society attributes towards the particular form of moral deviance. Similarly, the failure of a statesman to exercise prudence in ascertaining the consequences of one’s

# **Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories**

Written by Gerald Sim

actions will come with a cost – which is political immorality, much like a failure to consider another individual as an “equal object” of moral concern in the cosmopolitan universe. Hence for the Classical Realist, prudence serves as the statesman’s regulating factor in ensuring that the desired political action serves the interest of the state, and as a measure against the human tendencies of hubris and the misuse of power.

In essence, Classical Realism does not stand as a morally skeptical theory of international relations as defined by Beitz. Instead, it does recognize the existence and the utility of international morality to guide political actions. Nevertheless, given the tendencies of human nature to seek power, and the ability to subsume moral principles for one’s grandiose designs, it is imperative for political leaders not to permit international moral dictums from obstructing political action. But political actions are not opaque to scrutiny in the context of the global world, with actors required to exercise political morality as defined by prudence to weigh the consequences of an act before its commission.

## **Neo-Realism and Moral Skepticism**

As for Moral Skepticism, Beitz classifies such a category as theories that reject the “intelligibility and meaningfulness” of moral narratives about international relations, and justifies “raison d’etat” as the penultimate norm that regulates the actions of states.[48] This essay will argue that it serves little purpose in casting neo-Realism as immoral or skeptical, but rather to recognize the theory for what it is – a limited neo-positivist systematic framework seeking to understand the continuity of polarity and conflict through time.[49] Second, unlike Cosmopolitanism or to a lesser extent Classical Realism, morality was an afterthought for neo-Realism, contingent to the interactions between the overarching structure of polarity, and the key objectives sustaining national survival through the balance of power in global politics.

First, neo-Realism serves as a systemic, neo-positivist scientific drive to understand the continuity of conflict and polarity within international relations, and as such adopts a different approach from other theories. It holds that the international system is defined by a political structure that is anarchic, with states as atomistic units that are “utility maximizers”. [50] Whilst sharing similar functionalities, states possess varied capabilities which define their power in relation to one another, but are ultimately bound to the polarity of major powers in the system.[51] Unlike Cosmopolitanism where individuals are placed at the center of analysis, individuals are not featured in Waltz’s model as it serves to explain a simple ordinate reality with as few assumptions as possible. Moreover, both theories stand apart as ideational and non-ideational prescriptions of reality that could hamper any prospective moral judgment. Apart from its Classical Realist roots, neo-Realism views human nature as an “in deterministic value” towards altering the international structure,[52] as human nature in the view of neo-Realist cannot be defined. Hence, the contrasting approaches between neo-Realism and the two other theories raises difficulties in placing moral attributions towards a framework that was not designed to explain it. It will be akin to seeking a moral explanation for a scientific theory, with such approbations usually delving into the realm of religion and myth.

Second, from the neo-Realist perspective, it could be argued that morality served as an afterthought that was contingent to the balance of power politics in its quest for survival in an anarchic world order. For individuals such as John Mearsheimer, states are “pre-occupied” with the balance of power between states, and would seek to gain power at the expense of each other given the lack of trust and the inability to decipher each other’s intentions.[53] Hence, morality as a term seem removed from the narrative. If one could expand the confines of morality and define it as the right action contingent to the survival of states, neo-realist would argue that the morally right course would be actions which uphold the balance of power and ensure the survival of the state. Against cosmopolitanism that upholds universal moral principles to regulate a single scheme of cooperation, or the subjectivities of political morality to contain the excesses of human nature in Classical Realism, neo-Realism seems misplaced in the arena to define moral concern. Rather than casting it as immoral, which could diametrically split the field around moral platitudes, it is better to recognize neo-Realism for what it is – a non-moral neo-positivist theory of international relations.

## **Contentions of Human Nature and Morality Between the Theories**

Fundamentally, Cosmopolitanism and the two variants of Realism hold divergent views of morality, based upon their

# **Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories**

Written by Gerald Sim

different views of human nature. On human nature, Cosmopolitans seem to adopt a Lockean view of risk averse individuals seeking mutual cooperation for the common good. This stands opposed to Classical Realism which holds human nature as capable of goodness, but more often than not marred in a world of “opposing interest and conflict”. Such divergent views could be reflective of the epoch such theories were constructed – a time of conflict and uncertainty during the post-War years for Classical Realism, and post Civil Rights Movement in the 1970s where rights and emancipation were the key themes for Cosmopolitans.

It is from this divergent view of human nature that likely formed the basis of the various theory’s respective views of morality. For the Cosmopolitan, morality is at the heart of its ideational enterprise, ensuring that all individuals will be covered as an “equal object” of moral concern.[54] It also serves as an appropriate code of conduct as to how individuals should conduct themselves towards improving the well-being of those less well-off. The Classical Realist in spite of the uncertainty of the times and the wilful temptation to abrogate supreme authority and political power to the state, sought instead to intersperse their political concerns with the sensibility of weighing the political consequences of their action through the advocacy of prudence – which is the key virtue in Morgenthau’s project. As noted by Alastair Murray:

“the continued relevance of universal moral principles is central to realism...but given the difficulty of employment in a realm recalcitrant to...such principles, consequentialist conditions must be adopted to take into account the dissonance between intentions and outcomes”.[55]

While the visions of the various theories differ, the vague commonalities of their moral consequential ends allow for a common assessment of their respective moral strengths.

## **Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories**

Cosmopolitanism as a theory holds strong ideational visions of universal moral coverage where the individual serves as the basic unit of concern, and determine that moral agents are compelled to act in pursuit of greater well-being for the least advantaged in society. I will argue that such inclinations place Cosmopolitanism as a morally defensible theory of international relations based upon the three aspects identified earlier, in spite of some issues identified to its logical construction. First, the economic interdependence that defines the schemes of cooperation within global society, coupled with individuals as the core moral actors ahead of states, would ideationally enhance cooperation and reduce tensions between societies. Moreover, the dedication towards universal moral coverage opens up the state to “external moral assessments” and thereby hold the actions of states accountable to an international moral standard.[56]

Second, the moral compunction to ensure the fair distribution of resources to ensure that the underprivileged are better-off, coupled with the theory’s humanistic focus serves to ensure the material and physical well being of individuals within the society. The extremities of Singer’s demandingness that one should give till it hurts as compared to Beitz’s more conservative effort to ensure that everyone’s basic needs are satisfied as a first step.[57] Third, the theory is based on a broad aspirational universal coverage of all individuals as the base units of analysis, which optimizes the range of coverage beyond traditional states-based theories. This would in essence place all peoples as an “equal object” of moral concern. Although cosmopolitanism faces criticisms over the imbalance between the sheer weight of moral objectives and the practical fulfilment of its objectives, such expectations are aspirational in nature. The key value of Beitz’s cosmopolitanism is that it distinguishes between its ideational aspirations and reality, with ideal theory offering a set of benchmarks to guide the formulation and evaluation of policies in the non-ideal world.[58] Most importantly, he encourages readers towards aspiring and working towards a universal morality by critically evaluating the dissonance between aspiration and reality. Hence, I would argue that cosmopolitanism in its aspiration for universal moral coverage and placing the individual at forefront of moral concern features as a morally defensible theory of international relations.

Classic Realism as a theory strives to formulate a rational understanding of international relations shaped by the imperfectness of human nature. Whilst accepting the importance of international moral standards, the theory upholds the primacy of political action of states as guided by political morality and prudence as a guiding principle. This essay

# **Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories**

Written by Gerald Sim

holds that in spite of the uneasy relationship between the primacy of political action over international moral principles, Classical Realism could be ascertained as a morally defensible theory, based on a distinct vision of morality from cosmopolitanism that places the percept of national survival as the core moral value.[59]

First, classical realism possesses a set of prescriptions to ensure the preservation of peace and security within the international community. The action of statesmen should be guided by political morality and prudence – to weigh the consequential benefits and costs of action- based upon a rational foreign policy that interpret the motivations of states.[60] This would prevent the risk of misperception and miscalculation, and sustain the prospect for diplomacy in preserving peace amongst nations.[61] Second, given the focus on national power and influence, classical Realist do not prescribe any clear moral dictums to improve the material and physical well-being of individuals under its scope of moral concern. Nevertheless, the enhancing of one's economic capabilities to boost one's national power and influence in the international arena would consequentially have an effect on the material and security well-being of its citizens. Such a prescription would be criticized as tangential in nature. Nevertheless, there has been instances where state driven development such as the economic emergence of East Asian states in the 1970s which consequently improved the standard of living for their populations. Hence, with the knowledge that national-level policies and initiatives do affect domestic economic and social outcomes,[62] it could be argued that efforts to strengthen national power could present positive results.

Third, in spite of its moral coverage contained to the nation state, Classical Realism merits consideration as a morally defensible theory given its efforts to balance and regulate political action through the consequential consideration of its implications, despite the theory's assumptions of a chaotic and uncertain international arena shaped by the excesses of human nature. Moreover, in spite of its concerns with the deterioration of international morality given the uncertainties of Morgenthau's era, international moral standards are featured as a guide to individual and political actions.[63] Hence, classical Realism as a theory that seeks to accommodate the moral imperative whilst upholding the necessity of political action to uphold the state's interest features as a morally defensible theory of international relations.

## **Ease of Attaining Theoretical Objectives**

From a consequentialist standpoint, I would argue that Cosmopolitanism possesses a stronger moral grounding as compared to Classical Realism or neo-Realism. First, the clear vision of universal moral coverage on the basis of equal concern for all individuals features as a strong moral ideal, as compared to the tacit moral accommodation of Classical Realism and the pursuance of systemic perfection in explaining continuity in international relations in neo-Realism. Second, the consequential benefits of Cosmopolitanism vision of redistribution of resources disregarding moral arbitrary characteristics will benefit the lives of individuals, if put into practice. The consequential outcomes for Classical Realism on the other hand seemed less opaque and limited to the nation-state, especially in terms of the physical and material well-being of individuals.

Nevertheless, as much as moral consideration is pertinent towards assessing a theory's value, other non-moral factors such as the ease of attaining the moral objectives set forth in the theory should be given due consideration. On this count, Classical Realism seem to be more applicable as part of today's system of states, where the accommodation of moral tenets and political action is central to the political decision making process of states, from drone strikes targeting terrorist groups outside of a nation's borders to the funding of dam projects for development in third-world countries but having to bear their incipient ecological cost. It is in this light that prudence, whilst a subjective and self-regulative term, features as a cogent restraint towards the excesses of political overreach and ambition. Cosmopolitanism whilst a more robust moral theory, faces problems with its applicability given the gap between its ideational aspirations and political reality. It remains unlikely that the dominant state-centric system that defines world politics today, along with national borders will diminish in the near future. Moreover, Cosmopolitanism faces issues with the immense weight of its moral objectives, and that magnitude of self-sacrifice required of moral agents that could limit its appeal as a theory. Whilst Cosmopolitanism features as a theory with a stronger moral vision, Classical Realism provides greater applicability given its provision of prudent guidelines towards preserving the national interest in the present state of international relations.

# Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories

Written by Gerald Sim

## Conclusion

This paper has argued that Cosmopolitanism is not the only morally defensible theory of international relations, although it acknowledges the moral strength of Cosmopolitan's vision of emancipatory universal moral coverage, and redistribution of resources to the disadvantaged. Classical Realism, a theory criticized by Cosmopolitanism for its state-centered morality, is also deemed morally defensible. This is given its efforts to accommodate universal moral guidelines and form a balance with what it sees as the moral necessity to preserve the state's national security interests. Whilst this paper has stressed that the opposing visions held by both theories is driven by their divergent conceptions of human nature and morality, there are areas within both theories that could strengthen each other mutually.

One of the key criticisms levelled at Cosmopolitanism is the weight of its moral expectations and coverage. The adoption of the Classical Realist notion of prudence could calibrate the immensity of moral actions required of the agent, to one which asserts a degree of personal limitations to the action. Additionally, prudence would also temper fears by state-centered theories of overreach by Cosmopolitans, coupled with the erosion of the nation state's centrality. Conversely, Classical Realism could adopt a more resonant contextual definition of morality, that would provide greater oversight to political action. Perhaps the creation of a secondary theoretical device such as "oversight" could temper the criticisms of Cosmopolitans over the overreach of state power, yet maintain the flexibility to execute political actions beyond the confines of international moral standards.

## References

- Altham J.E.J, "Rawl's Difference Principle", in *Philosophy*, Vol 48, No. 183 (Jan 1973)
- Barry Brian, "International Society From a Cosmopolitan Perspective", in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010)
- Beitz Charles R, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979)
- Beitz Charles R, "Bounded Morality: Justice and the State in World Politics", *International Organization* 33(3), Summer 1979
- Beitz Charles R, "Philosophy of International Relations" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998)
- Beitz Charles R, "Recent International Thought". *International Journal*, Vol 43, No 2 (Spring 1988)
- Beitz Charles R, "Justice and International Relations", in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010)
- Brown Chris, *Sovereign, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2002)
- Brown Garrett Wallace and Held David, "Editors Introduction", in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010)
- "Consequentialism", *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, last modified 22 Oct 15, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/#WhaGooHedVsPluCon>
- Davies Matthew, "Neo-Realism", Lecture, International Relations Theory Seminar from Australian National University, Canberra, ACT, March 24, 2016
- Donnelly Jack, *"Realism" in Theories of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013)



# Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories

Written by Gerald Sim

McQueen Allison, "On Hans J Morgenthau's "Twilight of International Morality"" in *Ethics* 125 (April 2015)

Miller David, "Cosmopolitanism" in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010)

Molloy Sean, "Hans J Morgenthau Versus E.H. Carr: Conflicting Conceptions of Ethics in Realism" in *Political Thought and International Relations*, ed. Duncan Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Mearsheimer John J., "Structural Realism," in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, 3rd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Morgenthau Hans J., *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Alfred.A.Knopf, 1973, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition)

Murray Alastair J.H., *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics* (Edinburgh, Keele University Press, 1997)

Pogge Thomas, "Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty," in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010)

Rawls John, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1971)

Rawls John, "Law of the People" in *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Autumn 1993)

Singer Peter, "Famine, Affluence and Death" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol 1, No 3 (Spring 1972)

Van Hooft Stan, *Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy For Global Ethics*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009)

Waltz Kenneth, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979)

## Footnotes

[1] Charles R Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) 15

[2] Charles R Beitz, "Bounded Morality: Justice and the State in World Politics", *International Organization* 33(3), Summer 1979, 405-406

[3] Charles R Beitz, "Recent International Thought". *International Journal*, Vol 43, No 2 (Spring 1988), 378

[4] "Consequentialism", *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, last modified 22 Oct 15, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/#WhaGooHedVsPluCon>

[5] Charles R Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, 130

[6] Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, "Editors Introduction", in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010) 1

[7] *ibid* 1

[8] As opposed to "Political cosmopolitanism" which delves into the notion of political structures to introduce and enforce moral laws such as equal treatment under the law regardless on where they live. This essay will focus on the on moral aspects of cosmopolitanism.

# **Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories**

Written by Gerald Sim

David Miller, "Cosmopolitanism" in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010) 377

[9] Brian Barry, "International Society From a Cosmopolitan Perspective", in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010) 100

[10] John Rawls, "Law of the People" in *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Autumn 1993), 37

[11] Charles R Beitz, "Justice and International Relations", in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010) 96

[12] *ibid.*, 91

[13] *ibid.*, 89

[14] *ibid.*, 89

[15] Charles R Beitz, "Recent International Thought", 378

[16] *ibid.*, 378

[17] Charles R Beitz, "Justice and International Relations", 92

[18] *ibid.*, 92

[19] Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Death" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol 1, No 3 (Spring 1972) 232

[20] Stan Van Hooft, *Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy For Global Ethics*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009) 85

[21] Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Death" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 232

[22] Stan Van Hooft, *Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy For Global Ethics*, 85

[23] David Miller, "Cosmopolitanism", 379

[24] David Miller, "Cosmopolitanism", 380

[25] Charles R Beitz, "Philosophy of International Relations" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998) 831

[26] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1971) 115

[27] Chris Brown, *Sovereign, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2002) 173

[28] *ibid* 173

[29] Charles R Beitz, "Justice and International Relations", 92

[30] Charles R Beitz, "Bounded Morality: Justice and the State in World Politics", 408

[31] *ibid.*, 408

# **Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories**

Written by Gerald Sim

[32] Sean Molloy, "Hans J Morgenthau Versus E.H. Carr: Conflicting Conceptions of Ethics in Realism" in *Political Thought and International Relations*, ed. Duncan Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 232

[33] Charles R Beitz, "Bounded Morality: Justice and the State in World Politics", 408

[34] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Alfred.A.Knopf, 1973, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition) 10

[35] *ibid.*,. 10

[36] *ibid.*,. 10

[37] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*,11

[38] Charles R Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, 21

[39] Alastair J.H. Murray, *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics* (Edinburgh, Keele University Press, 1997) 121

[40] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*,3

[41] *ibid.*,231

[42] *ibid.*,242

[43] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3

Morgenthau's conception of human nature was said to have been inspired by fellow Classical Realist, Reinhold Niebuhr who theologically argues that men possesses the ability for goodness, but are constantly in conflict with the "sinful acquisitive" and "aggressive drivers" inherent within human nature.

[44] *Ibid.*,. 11

[45] Allison McQueen, "On Hans J Morgentahu's "Twilight of International Morality"" in *Ethics* 125 (April 2015), 842

[46] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 11

[47] Thomas Pogge has warned of the negative effects of sovereignty being too heavy concentrated in the state, which will curtail the autonomy of other political units and individuals

Thomas Pogge, "Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty," in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, (Malden: Polity Press, 2010) 120

[48] Charles R Beitz, "Bounded Morality: Justice and the State in World Politics", 408

[49] Matthew Davies, "Neo-Realism", Lecture, International Relations Theory Seminar from Australian National University, Canberra, ACT, March 24, 2016.

[50] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979) 107

[51] Jack Donnelly, "Realism" in *Theories of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013) 37

[52] John J. Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., *International*

# **Cosmopolitanism and Classical Realism as Morally Defensible Theories**

Written by Gerald Sim

Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, 3rd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 72

[53] *ibid.*, 74

[54] David Miller, "Cosmopolitanism", 380

[55] Alastair J.H. Murray, *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics* (Edinburgh, Keele University Press, 1997) 108

[56] Charles R Beitz, "Bounded Morality: Justice and the State in World Politics", 409

[57] Charles R Beitz, "Justice and International Relations" 93

[58] *ibid.*, 97

[59] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* 8

[60] *ibid.*, 10

[61] *ibid.*, 549

[62] Such instances include the state driven economic policies dubbed the "Asian Miracle" that saw the economic emergence of East Asian states economically from the 1960s, and an improvement in the standard of living for their populations.

[63] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* 10

*Written by: Gerald Sim*  
*Written at: Australia National University*  
*Written for: Mathew Davies*  
*Date written: May 2016*