distinguish a legitimate grievance that requires compensation from an unjustified demand that reflects an inflated sense of pride?

Response to David Traven's Review of *The Consequences of Humiliation: Anger and Status in World Politics*

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— Joslyn Barnhart

I am very grateful to David Traven for his insightful review of my book. He touches on four very important questions that the book, at best, only partially answers. Given the space provided, I focus on a subset of these questions. First, what is the value of violence in responding to humiliation, and what affects whether people have violent or more pacific reactions to humiliating events? As these questions imply, individuals and states can respond to humiliation in a variety of ways, some of which might involve physical aggression but some of which might not. Models of humiliation at the individual level describe a pathway to violence by which the pain of humiliation decreases self-regulation and increases self-defeating behavior, thereby increasing the chance of violence (Linda Hartling, "Humiliation: Real Pain, a Pathway to Violence," *RBSE* 6, 2007). Although there is still much to learn about why humiliated actors select one response over another, this may be an area of difference between individuals and states. Within the international sphere, expectations of how states are supposed to behave given their status—and how they are able to behave—do seem to play a role in shaping how they respond to humiliating events. Great powers, which distinguish themselves in part by their material capacity, may be more inclined to respond with the use of force than non-great power states. The latter are not only less militarily capable but are also able to assert their international status through demonstrations of their moral authority; for example, by contributing to global common goods or assuming leadership positions within international institutions. Such a model of self-defeating behavior can likely explain intractable cycles of violent conflict among middle and small states. But states in such conflicts seem less concerned about restoring international status and more intent on punishing those which they believe to be otherwise beyond correction.

This relates to another of Traven's questions about the value of using force against weaker third-party states. Though the individual-level model outlined earlier poses a connection between humiliation and rashness, there is little evidence of this connection with respect to the humiliation of great powers, which tend to engage in aggressive acts of revenge immediately after a humiliating event at much lower rates than their non-great power counterparts. This suggests that the fear of further humiliation constrains humiliated great powers in important ways. The infrequency of revenge among great powers may also be explained by the range of options available to them. Great powers are further distinguished by their ability to project power abroad. Demonstrating this capacity at the expense of a weak third-party state avoids the fate of repeated humiliation at the hands of a rival while also reminding the general public and the world that the state will continue to expect great power status. When compared with the fate of being humiliated twice by a rival if an act of revenge goes wrong, reconfirming national identity through doing what only great powers can do seems like a far less irrational act.

Law and Sentiment in International Politics: Ethics, Emotions, and the Evolution of the Laws of War. By David Traven. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 327p. $99.99 cloth.

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In his ambitious and compelling book, David Traven makes the case that international humanitarian laws of war are grounded in innate, universal moral sentiments backed by emotional impulses. In contrast to realists, who view humanitarian restraints on the conduct of war as reflecting national interests, and constructivists, who tend to view norms as socially constructed all the way down, Traven argues for a more "naturalistic" account of norm emergence rooted in intrinsic moral psychology. Drawing on recent research in psychology and neuroscience, the book describes how empathy and perspective-taking are universal moral intuitions, evidenced in children too young to be shaped by culture or societal expectations. These traits, in Traven's viewing, are essential to understanding the emergence and endurance of similar humanitarian laws of war across time in a diverse array of cultures because, without them, humans would have little capacity for social coordination, altruism, or the desire to protect others from harm.

Traven adds further complexity to his argument, claiming that our evolved moral psychology explains not only the widespread emergence of humanitarian laws of war aimed at protecting civilians against intentional attack but also why we see violence against civilians when we do. Universal moral distinctions that perceive more harm in intentional killings than unintended killings serve to permit higher levels of civilian causalities as a byproduct of war than there might be if humans had evolved with a different set of moral templates.

On the whole, I learned a tremendous amount from this book. I found much of Traven's argument about universal moral sentiment serving as a basis for the emergence of

similar views of conduct during war to be highly compelling. To be frank, I was a pretty easy target for the argument to begin with and largely agreed with the claims before ever reaching the empirical chapters. The experimental evidence for the universality of certain moral sentiments, including empathy and intentionality, among children appears robust, convincing, and profound. (In their defense, constructivist have at times acknowledged that universal morals might serve as the basis for resilient norms, as the book indeed acknowledges on p. 29).

Although the historical chapters of the book did not necessarily sway my views, it is interesting to consider whether they would convince a skeptic. The book spends considerable time examining the emergence of thought about the proper regulation of conduct during war in three historical eras: the Warring States period in China (453–221 BC), the seventh- and eighth- century emergence of Islamic law, and the emergence of natural law theorists in tenth- and eleventh-century Europe. The book examines these cases not for concrete demonstration but rather for demonstration of the *plausibility* of the claim that a shared, affect-backed moral grammar exists across time and place and that these moral intuitions can shape reasoning about the conduct of war. In each of these eras, Traven finds evidence that theorists or statesmen of the day made affect-backed moral arguments in defense of the protection of civilians, even as they, in some cases, also rooted their arguments in the more instrumental terms that realists might expect.

I suspect that skeptics will be largely unconvinced of the book's claims by what could appear as cherry-picked quotes from three historical eras. How do we know that such statements are not evidence of some random draw in which we would expect all sorts of sentiments and statements to find places in the historical record? Might these cases not share some yet undefined cultural similarities that actually drive the occasional expression of moral-seeming sentiment? I think the book could have done a bit more to defend itself from some of these challenges by discussing how we should think about the evidentiary basis for a universal trait that affects human behavior at the highest organizational level. I believe the reader would also have benefited from more systematic description of who were the particular theorists, how representative they were of a given body of thought, and what roles they played within the political and intellectual structure of the day. Without this, the claims that their thoughts influenced practice and behavior often felt tenuous.

Since I am among those convinced by the fundamental argument that shared moral sentiment *can* give rise to similar attitudes and practices about the conduct of law, however, I will discuss where the acceptance of this claim leaves us. Traven is clear that moral sentiment does not determine behavior. Rather, the mind "comes equipped with cognitive and emotional bases that lead people to *endorse* particular norms," but these bases do not explain norm emergence itself. The book also claims that "material and cultural forces" (p. 73) are indeterminate in explaining which norms arise when and where. It shows, for example, that particular political and economic forces are not necessary for the emergence of empathic norms. The process of state formation seems to have been central to the story of humanitarian considerations in the case of Warring State China. In their need to expand the size of the military, leaders were forced to rely more on peasants who would never have previously figured into their notion of a protected in-group, and the expanded exposure to and reliance on a wider class of people paved the way for an expanded sense of in-group. But changes in state structure seem to have played little role in the rise of humanitarian norms in Islamic law or in latter-day Europe, suggesting that such structural changes are not a necessary condition for changes in moral sentiment that generate shifts in thinking about the conduct of war.

This leaves the reader wondering how we are to understand our observed world differently after reading this book. Humans share a range of universal moral sentiments, including disgust and resentment, as the book notes. Demonstrating the universality of a moral intuition like empathy is a first step. But how far does this argument alone get us if we do not then understand what causes the expression of one moral intuition in a time or place? Empathy is malleable. It can be applied to the nearby few or to humanity as a whole, as the book notes. "Culture and tradition" play a key role in determining the target of one's empathy. Leaders may persuade us to adopt a more expansive notion of our in-group, and thereby the circle of people we believe are deserving of empathy and protection. But these forces are always seemingly in competition with moral components like resentment and disgust that push us to tighten and defend our circle from wrongdoers. What then determines which moral sentiments are activated for long enough to shape policy in the international domain? Can we not say anything more specific about *when* we should expect empathy and perspective-taking to shape international laws and practice, rather than more corrosive forces that are just as universal?

In addition, if charismatic politicians and persuasive rhetoric appealing to our moral and emotional intuitions play such a key role in determining the target of our empathy and the number of people we perceive as deserving of protection from harm, how far have we advanced past the constructivist argument? The book suggests that a key contribution of incorporating a more naturalistic element into norm creation is the ability to explain why certain normative content endures. But I am not sure that this more naturalistic framework necessarily explains this. If leaders have a full range of universal moral sentiments to appeal to through emotive rhetoric, why would we expect

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any one of those moral sentiments to have enduring resonance and effect on practice and behavior? Could not domestic political incentive structures then be playing a primary motive for norm emergence after all?

Ultimately, the book need not answer these questions to make several significant contributions. In its approach, it provides a clear model for how to effectively draw on advances in neuroscience and moral psychology to deepen our understanding of international attitudes toward violence. By demonstrating the existence of norms protecting civilians across cultures as diverse as ancient China and medieval Islam and by showing that the arguments for these norms would resonate with those made by European natural law theorists centuries later, the book upends the common view that international humanitarian law is a unique byproduct of Western European thought. Much work remains to understand the profound implications of this argument. I hope this book inspires many others to take up the challenge.

Response to Joslyn Barnhart's Review of *Law and Sentiment in International Politics: Ethics, Emotions, and the Evolution of the Laws of War*

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— David Traven

I would like to thank Joslyn Barnhart for her kind and thoughtful review of my book. I learned quite a bit from her book, so I was pleased to read that she also "learned a tremendous amount" from mine. Regarding the issue of whether my historical case studies would convince a skeptic, I have two responses. First, in the empirical case studies, I reviewed philosophical texts that may seem to conflict with my argument along with texts that seem to confirm it. Given the difficulty of convincing a skeptical reader that I was not just cherry-picking quotes, this seemed like a reasonable strategy, though I now realize that perhaps I could have been a bit more thorough. Second, I see the overall argument of my book as a kind of "inference to the best explanation." In other words, if there is any evidence at all that human beings across cultures share similar values, this requires an explanation —one that even the most skeptical reader would have to provide. One goal of the book was to develop a theory that plausibly explains these similarities. Of course, as with any social phenomenon, it is always possible that the similarities in values that I detected could have arisen by random chance. But given what we know about the nature of individual moral psychology (which I review in the first part of the book), my claim is that the likelihood that these similarities occurred by random chance is relatively low.

Barnhart also asks "how we are to understand our observed world differently after reading this book." Specifically, because individual moral psychology is relatively malleable, "how far does this argument alone get us if we do not then understand what causes the expression of one moral intuition in a time or place?" The simple answer is "not that far, but farther than we would without it." The more complicated answer is that no one theory alone can get us where we want to go. Because the world is complex, political science should not be monocausal. To explain more precisely how international norms emerge and develop over time, my theory should be combined with other theories that emphasize alternative causal factors and mechanisms.

That said, one of my goals in writing the book was to build a case for the idea that some of our moral intuitions are universal and innate. To the extent that the final product came anywhere close to achieving that goal, then I think that the book narrowed down the residual space for explaining what "causes the expression of one moral intuition in a time or place." In terms of "how we [as political scientists] are to understand our observed world differently after reading this book," I would simply say that I hope we build more space in our worldviews and theoretical paradigms for the more universal aspects of human nature, especially the moral aspects of human nature.