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The Good State: in praise of 'classical' internationalism

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Abstract. The end of the Cold War has seen Western internationalism migrate from the margins to the centre of International Relations theory and practice. As a consequence the modest ambitions of what we might now call 'classical internationalism' have come under challenge from more thoroughly cosmopolitan varieties from both the right and left of the mainstream Western political spectrum whose commonalities, moreover, are arguably becoming as prominent as their differences. This article attempts to recover the classical internationalist project and, more specifically, the understanding of statehood that underpins it. Some observations on the distinctions and tensions between varieties of contemporary internationalist and cosmopolitan thinking about international politics are followed by a critique of a pervasive scholarly disinterest in the varieties of Western internationalist states. These two exercises form the backdrop to advocacy of the idea of 'the Good State' as a response to dominant forms of contemporary Western cosmopolitanism and their critics.

The crisis of internationalism

Having endured relegation to the 'idealist' margins of the International Relations (IR) discipline for decades, internationalists could seemingly take heart from the end of the Cold War. Momentarily at least, the fall of the Wall suggested that progressive thinking about the future trajectory of Western foreign policies would acquire greater prominence outside the small group of mostly North-West European states who had bucked the foreign policy mainstream, albeit modestly, and acquired internationalist reputations. The last 15 years or so suggest that at face value those aspirations have in some respects been fulfilled; even a cursory survey of the web pages of Western foreign ministries shows that internationalist sentiments now pepper the foreign policy pronouncements of most Western states.

This has, however, come at a price. More often than not, internationalism has been historically treated – erroneously of course – in the singular, a product of the common usage of internationalism as a generic code-word for a range of normative critiques of realism and international moral pessimism. The post-Cold War era

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initially promised a healthy and vigorous debate *within* internationalist thought, feeding critically off the debates surrounding the practical merits of cooperation and multilateralism in a post-Cold War globalising world as well as the much remarked upon normative turn in IR thinking. Instead, the spectre of a return to a new kind of singularity now haunts internationalism, increasingly so in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001. The January 2005 inauguration speech of George W. Bush,[1] centred on a quasi-theological evocation of a radical, neo-conservative activist foreign policy dedicated to the universal realisation of 'freedom', was just the most recent of a series of proclamations from the heart of Western power to shake a long-standing presumption. This is that the natural home of a morally-suffused internationalist foreign policy doctrine lies somewhere between the liberal centre and the left of the traditional Western political spectrum, or, we might say, between the worldviews of John F. Kennedy and Olof Palme.

Of course, there are other voices of a more familiar left-liberal form, found within both national policy circles and Western intelligentsia. These mostly eschew the muscular militarism of the neo-conservative agenda and place their faith, to greater and lesser degree, in the transformative and universalising potential of perceived global political and economic trends, such as economic globalisation, increasing multilateralism, a consolidating, self-aware Europe, developments in the international legal order, the emergence of a global civil society, the spread of democracy, and so on. For some, this potential is sufficient in fact to leave the limited aspirations of Cold War era internationalism far behind in the wake of an emergent cosmopolitan world order whose design will represent the ultimate triumph of progressive Western liberalism. Yet one of the features of the shifting terrain of internationalist thought and practice is that, in spite of this apparent polarisation within contemporary internationalist thinking, it is the shared geopolitical and cultural origins and the universalising aspirations of the competing global political visions that increasingly stand out. As a consequence, declaration of a commitment to any strong version of internationalism today runs the risk of guilt by association with a range of foreign and security policies of a kind which what we can now call classical internationalism was once seen to be set against.

In what follows, some of the key dilemmas that confront the contemporary advocate of internationalism are reviewed in an attempt to recover the classical internationalist project and, more specifically, the understanding of statehood that underpins it. To this end, the discussion commences with some observations on the distinctions and tensions between varieties of cosmopolitan and internationalist thinking about international politics. This is followed by a brief, critical examination of a pervasive scholarly disinterest in the internationalist state. These two exercises form the backdrop to what is the central purpose of this discussion: advocacy of the idea of 'the Good State' as a response to varieties of contemporary Western cosmopolitanism and their critics. No pretence of stepping outside a resolutely Western intellectual and political framework is intended in any of this. What is effectively being argued for is a return to modesty in Western cosmopolitanism, not its wholesale abandonment. Equally, the invocation of the idea of the Good State, whilst clearly parasitic upon the practices of some actually existing Western states, is not intended simply to promote the straightforward universal reproduction of the

[1] ⟨http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/ 0050120–1.html⟩ (accessed 21 January 2005).

foreign policy of some preferred state.[2] It is intended to question, however, the near-universal presumption within critical IR scholarship, in either its cosmopolitan or anti-universalist forms, that the cosmopolitan-minded sovereign state *per se* is inimical to the realisation of a more just and less violent world.

Cosmopolitanism, anti-cosmopolitanism and internationalism

Debates about the ethical dimensions of international politics have long been hamstrung by the straightforward carrying over of categories from normative political theory. Cosmopolitanism is usually deemed to be 'the established source of human rights theory'[3] and the bulk of scholarship foregrounding morality and ethics more generally in the study of international politics is usually framed within some variety of cosmopolitan reasoning.[4] Contemporary advocates of a cosmopolitan world order are not, however, of like mind as to the shape of such an order, how to bring it about, or the place of the state within it. A useful preliminary exercise is to distinguish between 'Westphalian' and 'post-Westphalian' accounts of contemporary world order. These are united in their commitment to realising some form of a 'liberal peace' but divided with regard to what such a commitment entails.[5] Thus, at one end of the spectrum we find a select group of developed, mostly Western states who see themselves as the bearers of a responsibility to create a world largely in their own image. Especially prominent in the post-Cold War era, this commitment, in its political dimensions at least, does not require the emergence of a post-Westphalian international order but does anticipate increasingly challenging the sovereignty of other non-liberal or non-democratic states, supposedly on the basis of emerging universal humanitarian norms. It is very much about setting and imposing a pre-given standard for contemporary sovereign statehood rather than leaving it behind. Debate here centres less on the rights or wrongs of such an objective and more on the degree to which the pace of change should be forced along. Michael Ignatieff's recent advocacy of a US-led 'Empire-Lite' strategy of nation-building – which he recognises as deeply flawed with regard to the motives underpinning it and the manner of its realisation but which he thinks is nonetheless ultimately morally defensible – provides one notable illustration. Drawing upon the experience of recent interventions in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan, Ignatieff approvingly sees 'the humanitarian empire' as 'the new face of an old figure: the democratic free world, the Christian West'.[6] Such sentiments are now frequently echoed, often in far more shrill tones, by key national leaders, notably, but not only, from the US and the UK, and most recently with reference to the 'new Iraq'.[7]

[2] Although I confess from the outset to being seduced at times by the simple idea that a world of, say, many Swedens, would be infinitely preferable to the world we have now.

[3] Peter Sutch, 'Human Rights as Settled Norms: Mervyn Frost and Hegelian Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 26:2 (2000), p. 216, fn. 8.

[4] Key examples include: Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

[5] The distinction is borrowed from Alex J. Bellamy, Paul Williams and Stuart Griffin, *Understanding Peacekeeping* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), pp. 12–33.

[6] Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

[7] See for example, Tony Blair, 'Why we must never abandon this historic struggle in Iraq', *The Observer*, 11 April 2004, and Jack Straw, 'We are at a pivotal time for international policy', Speech by the Foreign Secretary to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 12 February 2004.

Towards the other end of the liberal spectrum lies a cosmopolitanism that is clearly uncomfortable with an overly belligerent liberal (or neo-conservative) global reformism but nonetheless sees the end of the Cold War and the phenomenon of globalisation as providing new sustenance to long-standing progressive liberal cosmopolitan aspirations. For example, Kaldor, inspired in large part by the successes of peace and human rights movements in the former communist states of Eastern and Central Europe, places her faith (and her own uncertainties about the prospects of her preferred vision suggest that faith is the apposite term) in the emergence of a 'global civil society'. This is depicted as the engine of that leitmotif of liberal progressivism: the 'domestication of the international'.[8] Comparable sentiments can be found among the enthusiasts for 'cosmopolitan democracy' whose vision of a sustainable liberal peace is also cast clearly in post-Westphalian terms.[9] This variety of cosmopolitanism depicts the transformative process as intentionally less violent yet ultimately more far-reaching. The sovereign state in its present form is not intended to survive a process of transformation that entails the fundamental re-visioning of the institutional expression of principles of legitimacy, accountability, and human community itself. A key corollary of this is a much more circumspect advocacy of resort to force in the name of humanitarian values and a corresponding emphasis on the criminalisation of gross breaches of rights and the creation of a more robust global legal and institutional order. Recognising the oxymoronic qualities of 'humanitarian intervention' and informed by the recent history of the consequences of applying orthodox military techniques to the realisation of humanitarian objectives, this variety of cosmopolitanism argues that war-fighting in the name of humanity should give way to crime-fighting or 'life-saving'.[10]

Although in recent years there have been robust articulations of a communitarian response to cosmopolitanism, these have had relatively little impact upon contemporary international political theory. This is arguably because the bulk of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate in political theory is simply not focused on the international. When communitarianism is applied to international politics it can easily be read, and not entirely unfairly, as merely a normative supplement to realism, or as an apologia for self-regarding statism and international moral relativism.[11] Central to realist moral scepticism, of course, is the claim that sovereign states remain the key actors in international politics since no decisive logic of global transformation

[8] Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).

[9] See, for example, David Held and Daniele Archibugi (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995); Daniele Archibugi, David Held and Martin Köhler (eds.), *Re-imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).

[10] On this, see also Peter Lawler, 'The Good War after September 11', *Government and Opposition*, 37 (2002), pp. 151–72. I'm grateful to Helen Dexter for the term 'life-saving'.

[11] For examples of internationally-focused communitarian responses to cosmopolitanism, see: Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame, Ontario: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); Chris Brown, 'Cultural Diversity and International Political Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 26:2 (2000), pp. 199–214, and David Miller, 'Bounded Citzenship', in Kinberley Hutchins and Roland Danreuther (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Citizenship* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999). Although Mervyn Frost also rejects orthodox cosmopolitanism, his unusual trek to the notion of 'settled norms', via Hegel and Dworkin, does not seem to warrant the label of communitarianism. See Mervyn Frost, Ethics *and International Relations: A Constitutive Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). In taking states and their morally constitutive effects seriously, however, Frost's approach does resonate somewhat with the argument being put here.

can be discerned, claims about globalisation's transformative impact notwithstanding. Furthermore, even if the prevalence of chronic global inequity or horrific forms of large-scale violence generates widespread demands that something be done, be it by the 'international community' or individual states, for the realist, international public opinion carries little force, little or no international community exists beyond rhetoric, and the idea of states acting in response primarily to moral dictates is usually tainted by egoistic national self-interest. When states claim to be acting in a 'cosmopolitan-minded' manner, realism suggests that this is more likely to reflect concerns about 'prestige or image', or 'hard interests' which are 'convenient to subsume under the category of ''humanitarian'' '.[12]

There are newer critiques of liberal cosmopolitanism which emanate from post-structuralist sources also hostile to the ethical assumptions of realist orthodoxy. Here, contemporary cosmopolitanism's principal deficiency is seen not to lie in its antipathy to the state, but in its homogenising universalism and linear progressivism and, of course, the assumption that foundations for such universalism can be secured in the first place. Of course, some contemporary explorations of a cosmopolitan world order do claim to have taken on board much of the critique of classical Enlightenment universalism,[13] notably the contemporary emphasis on culture and narrative as mediators of ethical discourse, and advocate in its place a 'thin conception of cosmopolitanism with no fixed and final vision of the future'.[14] They are charged nonetheless with being dependent still upon a set of ethical and political orthodoxies that are highly culturally, socially and politically particularistic and of peddling an evolutionary universalism that aspires to transcend the divisiveness of international *politics* yet whose contours will inevitably be shaped by political, material and discursive power.[15] Variations of this line of critique have come to be particularly widespread and influential in the field of IR theory, if seemingly much less so when it comes to foreign policy practice. They challenge attempts to construct universal moral frameworks on the basis of 'epistemological equations' and 'abstracted theoretical formulas' and key among their intended victims are those conceptions of humanitarianism which depend upon 'the legislation of fixed codes and principles', the elucidation of such clearly being a preoccupation of most contemporary cosmopolitan thinkers.[16] Underpinning all this also seems to be a decisive and immovable hostility to the state – the 'coldest of all cold monsters', as one of postmodernism's key mentors, Nietzsche, famously had it – and the sovereign state in particular. Of course, in this tension between sharing cosmopolitanism's distaste for the exclusionary state and a rejection of its universalising, transcendental

[12] Michael J. Smith, 'Humanitarian Intervention: An Overview of the Ethical Issues', *Ethics and International Affairs*, 12 (1998), p. 70.

[13] The most cogent example of this being Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*.

[14] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, pp. 48–9.

[15] On Linklater's 'thin cosmopolitanism' in particular, see R. B. J. Walker, 'The Hierarchalization of Political Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 25:1 (1999), pp. 151–156. More generally, see R. B. J. Walker, 'Citzenship after the Modern Subject', in Hutchins and Danreuther, *Cosmopolitan Citzenship* ; David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro, 'Introduction: From Ethical Theory to the Ethical Relations', in David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro (eds.), *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); David Campbell, 'Why Fight?', *Millennium: Journal of International Politics*, 27 (1998), pp. 497–521.

[16] Campbell, 'Why Fight?', pp. 521 and 501.

responses to the sovereign boundary lies all of the ambiguities and difficulties of the search for a non-foundationalist ethics.

In sum, the various cosmopolitan schemas for global transformation currently doing the rounds, whether 'thick' or 'thin', Westphalian or post-Westphalian, are being resisted because they are either seen to be flying in the face of trans-historical international political realities, or the value-amalgam legitimating them should be seen as essentially contested. Indeed, such lines of critique suggest that a self-consciously progressivist post-Westphalian line of cosmopolitan thought may end up acting more as the handmaiden to the Westphalian variety rather than as a clear alternative. Although globalisation may appear to facilitate the emergence of cosmopolitan global regimes of, say, law enforcement or economic regulation, because of their overwhelmingly neoliberal character and the ideological commonalities between the states likely to be pre-eminent within them, their costs or benefits, critics argue, will flow in very particular directions.[17] The point can be put more straightforwardly: it matters that international norm-setting and the establishment of standards of state conduct remain predominantly the preserve of a very select group of states (including, it must be said, the key practitioners of the very internationalism that this discussion seeks to defend). If a principle of plurality is applied, however, then the increasingly frequent appeal to a global emerging consensus in support of such things as, say, the redefinition of sovereignty or the right to intervene in cases of extreme violations of human rights, is bound to be exposed as a myth.[18]

The brief summary above of critical responses to cosmopolitanism neglects a long-standing middle ground. This cohabits an intellectual space with aspects of the communitarian critique of cosmopolitanism, ideas of the state as a 'civilian power'[19] or 'good international citizen',[20] and the English School in IR theory.[21] However, it is not neatly reducible to any of them. In fact, its benchmarks are to be found more readily in the historical practices of a select group of developed states than in the academic literature. From these can be gleaned a third way between cosmopolitanism and unalloyed realism: a contemporary version of the long-standing tradition of internationalism. It is a standpoint that necessarily rejects realist moral scepticism. Although by definition it is a variety of statism, internationalism makes little sense without requiring a substantial commitment to what look like cosmopolitan values and the duties they engender. Although these duties embrace issue areas now at the forefront of contemporary international political debate, such as human rights, good governance and humanitarian intervention, the states to whom the label internationalism has been long been attributed acquired their reputations largely in the fields of peacekeeping, UN activism, conflict mediation and generous provision of

[17] For example, see Campbell, 'Why Fight?', p. 499 and Michael Dillon, 'Criminalising Violence Internationally', *Millennium: Journal of International Politics*, 27 (1998), pp. 543–67.

[18] This point is very well made in Ramesh Thakur, 'Global Norms and International Humanitarian Law: An Asian Perspective', *International Review of the Red Cross*, no. 841 (2001), pp. 19–44.

[19] For a summary of the concept of 'civilian power', see 'Introduction' in Sebastian Harnisch and Hanns W. Maull (eds.), *Germany as a Civilian Power? The Foreign Policy of the Berlin Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

[20] Andrew Linklater, 'What is a Good International Citizen?', in Paul Keal (ed.), *Ethics and Foreign Policy* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1992).

[21] See Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society of States* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977); Hedley Bull, *Justice in International Relations*, The Hagey Lectures 1993 (Waterloo, Ontario: University of Waterloo, 1993); Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998).

Official Development Assistance (ODA). In essence this now classical model of internationalism is centred on the seemingly modest, but still demanding idea of the state as a cosmopolitan-minded agent, or, as Hedley Bull put it, a 'local agent of a world common good'.[22] In evoking a spirit of cosmopolitan-mindedness rather than full-blooded cosmopolitanism, it occupies a precarious normative space between the poles of contemporary international political debate. In invoking the possibility of the state as a morally-driven agent with 'purposes beyond itself', it simultaneously invites the charge of 'idealist' naivety from realists, of being timid and anachronistic from more thoroughgoing cosmopolitans, of being an example of 'statist myopias' from post-structuralists, and, most recently and oddly, of representing a cowardly Venusian European reticence from US neo-conservatives.[23] Against the backdrop of evident divisions within current cosmopolitan thinking and the ambiguous recent record of Western interventionist practices, however, it is the very reticence of classical internationalism that starts to acquire the hallmark of (renewed) virtue.

Paradoxically, what is most threatening for the internationalist perspective these days is that the late twentieth century saw a particular version of internationalism as a foreign policy doctrine migrate rapidly from the margins of international debate to its centre. However, the price for the rapid permeation of mainstream Western foreign policy by apparently internationalist discourse is widespread incredulity within the academic community and publics at large. This is because of its close relationship to a distinctively neoliberal account of the developmental trajectory of the world economy and an increasingly aggressive and violent posture towards states deemed to be outside the pale of a predetermined international community. The idea of internationalism has never been so prominent as today and also never so at risk of debasement.

The key here is, of course, what is actually meant by internationalism. As an initial refinement we need to distinguish between predominantly instrumental varieties, which simply connote a sense of being inescapably part of something larger which imposes a general set of moderate behavioural constraints upon states, and, at the other end of the scale, those which connote a more demanding and more overt ethical standpoint intended to promote the transformation of both international order and, ultimately, the states of which it is comprised. When the analysis of international relations theory and practice was largely framed by the crude and misleading dualism of 'realism versus idealism', merely detecting the apparent presence or absence of normative content in foreign policy appeared to have some analytical merit. Clearly, this is no longer the case. As the recent war against Iraq illustrated, even within the narrow confines of the West, clear dividing lines could be detected between the formal positions of key states, as well as between the interpretations of internationalism held by their publics and policy elites. In the debate surrounding the war all Western states declared themselves to be motivated to varying degrees by humanitarian concerns.

[22] Bull, *Justice in International Relations*, p. 14.

[23] Robert Kagan, 'Power and Weakness', *Policy Review*, 113 (2002). See also Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003). Kagan does not appear to be concerned with European states as such, since some European states have overtly aligned themselves with a 'Martian' US, and more with Europe in itself, although quite what he means by Europe is unclear. Nonetheless his account of Venusian 'European' sensibilities chimes very strongly with those of the more overtly internationalist European states. I am grateful to Felix Ciuta for his thoughts on this.

Nonetheless, they differed (sometimes widely) either between themselves or with their own publics with regard to the content of their internationalism or its practical implications, especially the appropriateness of deploying deadly force in the name of humanitarian values.[24] Key to this differentiation were overlapping disputes about such things as the legality of the resort to war, the need to secure prior formal UN approval, the credibility of the findings of UN-appointed arms inspectors, and the merits of exhaustively pursuing other pathways to changing the internal and external conduct of Saddam Hussein's regime.

For Western internationalism, then, the tragedy of the war against Iraq stems from the fact that in spite of the supposedly internationalist reasoning behind it, the resort to deadly force, led by the most militarily powerful state on earth moreover, has been read by many as being either a thinly disguised expression of brute power, or a contemporary form of ideologically suffused imperialism with an ultimately cosmopolitan intent (as overtly suggested, for example, by Ignatieff's argument referred to above). In this respect, the Iraq War could be construed as a failure of internationalism as much as its final arrival. It was a failure, moreover, which will probably damage the case for any future perhaps more convincing and compelling calls to arms in the name of humanitarian values.[25] Above all, it was the latest in a series of violent episodes which have served to further blur the boundaries between cosmopolitan-mindedness on the part of states and more full-blooded varieties of cosmopolitanism, a nuanced distinction perhaps but one that is vital nonetheless in determining any distinctiveness to internationalism as a response to the ethical dilemmas of international politics. Equally, dividing contemporary cosmopolitanism up between Westphalian and post-Westphalian varieties ultimately also obscures as much as it illuminates. The rigidity of such a conceptualisation inhibits a more nuanced contextualisation of state practices and effectively erases a position that sees globalisation as both requiring and facilitating heightened levels of international cooperation and responsibility on the part of states (and in this sense does see state sovereignty as a still evolving form) but is resistant, nonetheless, to visions of a post-sovereign world emerging, benignly or belligerently, solely from the world's political core. In contrast, classical internationalism is premised upon a depiction of the sovereign state as not only a still viable form of human community, but one that remains, in fact, more an aspiration than a reality for millions of people and whose

[24] At the beginning of the war in March 2003 the US State Department named the 46 states who had formally declared support for the 'coalition of the willing'. See: ⟨http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030320–11.html⟩ (accessed 25 January 2005). Of these there were ten that could be identified as belonging to what is usually understood as the West in geopolitical terms: Australia Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the UK, and the US. Spain effectively opted out of the coalition after the general election in March 2004 following the Madrid bombings. The vast bulk of ground forces were provided by the US (250,000) and UK (45,000) with minor contributions from Australia (2,000) and Poland (200) and minor naval support from Spain and Denmark. There were 11 similarly Western states that were absent: Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Note that Austria, Ireland, and Switzerland are formally neutral states and Sweden these days is more ambiguously so, although the latter's absence clearly also reflected real disagreement with the US. The post-communist Central and Eastern European states have not been included here because of the various ambiguities surrounding their inclusion such as the pursuit of NATO membership and /or US economic and military development assistance.

[25] See Ken Roth, 'War in Iraq: Not an Humanitarian Intervention', *Human Rights Watch World Report 2004: Human Rights and Armed Conflict* (Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch, 2004), p. 34.

dissolution is greeted with foreboding by millions of others mindful of what may emerge in its place.[26] On this view, it is a fundamental error to dismiss the defence of the classically internationalist state as merely nostalgia. Indeed, in a world characterised by the simultaneous trends of accelerating globalisation and the revival of various forms of primordialism, a model of the civic state burdened with the task of negotiating a complex set of ethical responsibilities to its own citizens as well as the wider human community arguably recovers, rather than loses, its radical potential.

Classical internationalism reconsidered

Beginning the recovery of classical internationalism requires only a short journey back in history to a time when certain varieties of Western internationalism had still a taint of political progressivism and normative exceptionalism about them. In the late 1980s an international group of scholars, led by the Canadian Cranford Pratt, undertook a comparative analysis of the internationalist policies of a select group of states: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, The Netherlands, and Canada.[27] Their choice was based on the fact that, to greater and lesser degrees, the postwar foreign policies of these states had 'been more responsive to cosmopolitan values and to internationalist considerations than have those of many other states'. They were all prominent members of what was then referred to as the 'like minded group' at the UN, the General Assembly of which, of course, was at that time far more prominent than it is today.[28] The primary focus of that study was these states' 'north-south' policies, particularly their ODA programmes. At the time they headed the UN's DAC list of donor states, with The Netherlands and the Scandinavian states being the only countries ever to have complied with the UN recommendation of 0.7 per cent GNI in ODA. This remains the case today.[29] Of course there is considerable debate about the practice of giving aid – whether it actually reduces or enhances dependency, benefits elites or the masses in recipient states, the degree to which it is tied directly to the interests of the donor states, and so on. The key point, for this discussion, however, is that the few states seriously championing ODA in the 1970s tied it very much to the principle of the right of the then newly independent states to self-determination and the concomitant obligations of the affluent states to *assist* in this. The intended objective fell well short of thoroughgoing cosmopolitanism. Indeed, taken to its logical conclusion, the exceptional commitment to ODA

[26] In this respect Hedley Bull's remark, made some twenty five years ago, that 'Among the Third World countries the idea that we must all bend our efforts to get 'beyond the state' is so alien to recent experience as to be unintelligible', arguably retains its force. See Hedley Bull, 'The State's Positive Role in World Affairs', *Daedalus*, 108 (1979), p. 121.

[27] See: Cranford Pratt (ed.), *Internationalism Under Strain: The North-South Policies of Canada, Norway, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden* (Toronto: The University of Toronto, 1989); Cranford Pratt (ed.), *Middle Power Internationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1990); Olav Stokke (ed.), *Western Middle Powers and Global Poverty* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies/Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 1989).

[28] See also Anthony J. Dolman, 'The Like-Minded Countries and the New International Order: Past, Present and Future Prospects', *Cooperation and Conflict*, XIV (1979).

[29] The top contributors of net ODA as a percentage of GNI in 2002 were: Denmark, 0.96, Norway 0.89, Sweden 0.83, and the Netherlands 0.81. The average among the 22 member states of the DAC was 0.41 and the bottom of the table was occupied by the US at 0.13 ODA/GNI. See ⟨http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/27/25838008.xls⟩ (accessed 22 May 2004).

provision anticipated a world in which through enhanced north-south cooperation more states might see their sovereignty transformed from a merely legal status to a political and economic fact. However, the project's impetus arose from the perception that the internationalism of the states being reviewed was, to greater and lesser degrees, 'under strain', an assessment that recent history suggests was prescient.

Assessing contemporary Western internationalism entails not only recognising the plurality of actual or potential internationalist discourses and practices, but also resisting attempts to cast a currently dominant 'internationalist' discourse as internationalism incarnate. Indeed, a key theme in Pratt's study was the kind of 'humane internationalism' being practised, and a simple three-fold classificatory scheme was employed: liberal internationalism, reform internationalism and radical internationalism. What distinguished these categories was the perceived degree of commitment towards, and concrete action in pursuit of, global distributive justice, ranging from the amelioration of the extant international economic order to its progressive transformation through a commitment to genuinely redistributive actions by developed states. All three strands were found to weave through the foreign policies of the states under review, although there were wide national variations in the specific mixes. In effect it portrayed a spectrum of Western internationalism. On its liberal wing lay Canada, one of the earliest advocates of an active liberal internationalism but one of the less committed of the internationalist states to an ethically-driven ODA policy. On the other lay the Nordic states which, in clear reflection of their domestic political cultures, were the strongest advocates then of 'reform internationalism', effectively 'social democracy applied internationally'.[30] Dutch 'mundialism' arguably occupies a distinctive position in that in its legalism it always has had strongly liberal overtones, yet the Dutch have also consistently matched Scandinavian ODA generosity.[31] Stepping away from the particularities of ODA, the parallels between this spectrum of internationalism and the variation between the 'pluralist' and 'solidarist' wings of English School scholarship are readily apparent.[32]

Although the subsequent prominence of internationalist rhetoric has made the distinctiveness of this group of states much less evident, more than a decade later most of the states in question have retained their internationalist reputations even if their substantive commitments have in some cases diminished and the specific emphases of their internationalist discourses and policies have changed in important respects.[33] In addition, other Western states have since endeavoured overtly to demonstrate an historically exceptional commitment to internationalism: New Zealand, Australia under Labor governments between the mid 1980s and mid 1990s and, since 1997, the UK under New Labour.[34] In the two latter and perhaps better known cases, the new more overt embrace of internationalism fell predominantly at

[30] Pratt, *Internationalism Under Strain*, p. 19.
[31] See J. J. C. Verhoeve, *Peace, Profits and Principles: A Study of Dutch Foreign Policy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979).
[32] On Pluralism and Solidarism in the English School, see especially Nicholas J. Wheeler and Tim Dunne, 'Hedley Bull's Pluralism of the Intellect and Solidarism of the Will', *International Affairs*, 72 (1996), pp. 91–107.
[33] But note here recent shifts in Danish foreign policy discussed below.
[34] Erb's analysis of contemporary German foreign policy suggests that it could also lay claim to being included among this group. See Scott Erb, *German Foreign Policy: Navigating a New Era* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner 1994). I return to this point later.

the liberal end of the classical internationalist spectrum, both countries remaining only moderate ODA donors at best. Nonetheless, the Australian Labor Governments' claim to have adopted an internationalist standpoint received a very mixed reception within both the national public arena and the domestic scholarly community. Australian Labor's slogan of 'good international citizenship', introduced by the Foreign Minister Gareth Evans in the early 1990s did not survive electoral defeat in 1995. It was very visibly abandoned and replaced with a renewed emphasis on the national interest by their conservative successors, who subsequently, and somewhat contrarily, went on to become members of the 'coalition of the willing' that has endorsed the current US administration's policy towards Iraq and its inconsistent blend of muscular unilateralism and fitful multilateralism in foreign policy.[35] In the UK case, the downgrading of New Labour's original commitment to a 'foreign policy with an ethical dimension', especially since the removal of its key instigator Robin Cook from the position of Foreign Secretary, has also been amply evident and only thinly masked by the moralist rhetoric emanating from Number 10, now the real centre of British foreign policy.[36] Reflection on why one of these two relative newcomers to the internationalist fold failed and the other is currently failing to embed securely their brand of internationalism, either in national public political discourse or the policy process, is highly suggestive when it comes to understanding how longer-standing varieties of internationalism emerged and are sustained. Above all, it points to the role of internationalist thought and practice as both sites of mediation between the domestic and the international and, in themselves, as constitutive of these realms. 'Outside-in' explanations of internationalism which overly emphasise such factors as a state's size, its geopolitical and power-political location, or the virtues of internationalism as a form of 'soft power', and relegate so-called domestic factors to a separate field of 'foreign policy analysis' simply cannot capture the complex trans-boundary sociology of Western internationalisms. Even if internationalism is an essentially domestically-generated practice that reflects, moreover, a culturally-specific account of collective identity, its sustenance necessarily requires not only following through rhetorical declarations with practical and financial commitments but also an account of the international in which practices of solidarity at least become possible and can have real consequences.[37]

Broadly, Pratt's project identified a declining impact of radical and reform internationalist thinking in favour of a less-demanding and less overtly normative

[35] Gareth Evans is now President of the Brussels-based NGO the International Crisis Group. On the Australian commitment to good international citizenship, see Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations: In the World of the 1990s* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991), pp. 8–12, 34. On the foreign policy outlook of subsequent conservative coalition governments, see *Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). This is the successor to the 1997 White Paper of the same name. In both cases references to good international citizenship are entirely absent. It is worth noting that the Australian Labor Party has retained a commitment to 'be and been seen to be . . . willing to pursue wider good international citizenship objectives'. The commitment is, however, more guarded than that of the previous Labor administration. See ⟨http://www.alp.org.au/about/values.html⟩ (accessed 22 May 2004).

[36] The shift can be illustrated through comparison of the 1998 FCO Annual Report, especially its 'mission statement' and the recent first foreign policy White Paper, *UK International Priorities: A Strategy for the FCO*, Cmnd 6052, HMSO (2003). For a critical analysis of the current state of UK internationalism, see Nicholas J. Wheeler and Tim Dunne, *Moral Britannia? Evaluating the Ethical Dimension of Labour's Foreign Policy* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2004).

[37] Again, I am grateful to Felix Ciuta for clarifying my thoughts here.

commitment to liberal internationalism within the states under review. Post-Cold War international history seems to confirm such a trend more widely. All the evidence points to a declining willingness on the part of the developed world as a whole to commit national material resources in pursuit of global distributive justice beyond a relatively recent and, as yet, largely unfulfilled commitment to debt relief, the motivations for which are arguably as much instrumental as moral. However, things are not as fixed as some Western national elites might want us to believe. The prototypical evocation, in 1999 while in the US, by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair of a singular cosmopolitan 'doctrine of the international community' presupposed a linearity and uniformity in post-Cold War Western internationalist thought and practice which, as already suggested, the recent history of interventions alone has exposed as false.[38] Equally, radical cosmopolitan visions of a post-statist world seem far removed from the substance of contemporary public debate. The public political activism in most Western states, upon which much of the hope of post-statist visions is pinned, centres on two key issue areas. The first is the impact of 'globalisation' (understood largely as a synonym for a globalising neoliberalism) on the majority world. The second more prominent focus is on the ethical dilemmas surrounding intervention, and armed intervention in particular, by the international community in response to gross violations of human rights, ethnic cleansing and various forms of complex political emergencies. Undermining an straightforwardly progressivist reading of these trends, however, is the concomitant evidence of widespread Western public antipathy towards some of the consequences of both global economic inequality and distant outbreaks of large-scale violence and political turmoil, most notably increased migrant and refugee flows. The ongoing furore surrounding the war against Iraq, as in many previous cases, certainly demonstrated considerable public (and some official) disquiet within Western states about the motivations and conduct of that particular campaign, but it also provided considerable evidence of public commitment to the notion that their states do nonetheless have extensive moral responsibilities that flow across the water's edge, not least in the widespread public aversion to the doing of harm to distant others in humanitarianism's name. Underpinning this is a wealth of opinion research showing that Western publics recognise that their own states should be constrained by external authority; most notable here is the significant public insistence that armed interventions should be sanctioned by the external authority of the UN.[39] Underpinning this seems to be the view that any presumption to know what should be done in the name of the right and the good and any assertion of the right to do something by capable agents should be subjected to some kind of scrutiny.

[38] Tony Blair, 'Doctrine of the International Community', Speech by the Prime Minister to the Economic Club of Chicago, Chicago, 22 April 1999.

[39] On public attitudes in the US to the role of the UN just prior to the Invasion of Iraq, see 'Public Wants Proof of Iraqi Weapons Programs', Survey Report released 16 January 2003, Pew Research Center for People & The Press, ⟨http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=170⟩ (accessed 22 January 2005). See also the nine nation survey 'America's Image Further Erodes, Europeans Want Weaker Ties' Survey Report, released 18 March 2003, Pew Research Center for People & The Press, ⟨http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=175⟩ (accessed 22 January 2005). On attitudes in EU member states, see also 'Iraq and Peace in the World', Flash Eurobarometer 151 Final Report, European Commission, November 2003. On British attitudes, see: 'Blair Losing Public Support on Iraq', MORI, 21 January 2003, ⟨http://www.mori.com/polls/2003/iraq.shtml⟩ (accessed 22 January 2005); 'War With Iraq', MORI, 5 March 2003, ⟨http://www.mori.com/polls/2003/iraq2.shtml⟩ (accessed 22 January 2005).

In combination these developments send out a mixed message: large sections of Western publics clearly remain attached to the exercise of an exclusionary sovereignty by their own states, yet also seem to empathise with distant publics reacting, often violently, to the breach of their state's sovereignty by coalitions of states supposedly acting in the name of humanity, or to a failure to intervene in other, morally compelling cases, or to the evident inequity of a globalising world economy. There is an inconsistency here which undoubtedly feeds much of the widespread Western intellectual antipathy towards sovereign statehood; 'our' sovereignty is ultimately more sacrosanct than 'theirs'. Yet, in this dualism of an inward-looking sovereign defensiveness combined with a sense of complex moral responsibilities beyond the water's edge – that is, intervene sometimes – such public debate expresses in contemporary form the perennial ethical dilemma confronting the modern developed state and the very problematic that spawned classical internationalism as the doctrinal expression of a kind of worldly statism. If a single state had, without UN authorisation, intervened in Rwanda, would that have been the wrong thing to do? If the US-led coalition had obtained unequivocal UN sanction to invade Iraq, would in fact Western publics have flocked to the cause? At the very least, contemporary public debate keeps open the question of whether what now passes for Western internationalism qualifies for the label in a comparable normative sense to that prevailing prior to the Cold War's end. If not, what should now be the key moral imperatives underpinning Western internationalist practice? It also reminds us of the perpetual contingency and contextuality that surrounds the deciding of appropriate paths of ethical action by states.

The scholarly disinterest in internationalism

The very visible normative and critical turn in IR theory in recent years might be judged as conducive to the critical investigation of varieties of internationalism, existing or potential as the basis for constructing answers. However, with a few notable exceptions, it is also largely marked by either hostility or indifference to the classical idea of the internationalist, or 'good', state. Thus, the critically-minded internationalist must confront the claim that US-led Western hegemony, aided and abetted by a very particular brand of liberal internationalist *cum* cosmopolitan discourse, ensures that the prospects of any sustainable countervailing internationalisms emerging are poor to non-existent. Additionally, various readings of globalisation as being simultaneously a unifying and fragmenting process question either or both the desirability and the viability of the sovereign state itself. As already noted above, supplementing this, albeit rarely in a clear or consistent sense, is the multifaceted critique of the various manifestations of Western moral universalism and humanism in contemporary international politics. On face value, such developments seem to suggest that the internationalist states examined by Pratt and his team are either ripe for exposure as witting or unwitting apologists for hegemonic power, or destined to (a perhaps dignified) decline into retirement, or simply to be declared redundant. It is not surprising, therefore, that critical minds and much radical political energy is directed towards the more abstract and speculative realms of

'alternative and transformative models for the practice of world politics'[40] in both neo-cosmopolitan and post-structuralist variations.

There are, I think, at least three reasons why the idea of the Good State may have, indeed, *should* have life in it yet. Firstly, anti-statist or post-statist shifts in recent IR scholarship are not unequivocally detrimental to the idea of the Good State and can arguably equally serve to help reinvigorate and reconfigure it. It is a plausible generalisation to say that one of the notable features of the now vast globalisation literature is a residual ambiguity concerning the future place and role of the state and the meaning of sovereignty in a dynamic global environment. Similarly, much of the cosmopolitan normative literature which sees creative opportunity in globalisation generally is equally ambiguous about the future agency of the state, not least because most blueprints of alternative world orders require states to engage actively in a process of self-dissolution. Only a thoroughly benign and linear reading of accelerating internationalisation or globalisation coupled with an ahistorical account of the practice of sovereignty could lead straightforwardly to a celebration of the decline of the sovereign state. Anything else must concede that there is a real risk that any further erosion in the capacities of states may not be neatly matched by the evolution of effective and legitimate structures of local, regional or global public governance. Furthermore, such structures that do emerge may exhibit much, perhaps all, of the partiality, inequity and unaccountability of the present international order. Even those who are confident in the emergence of robust and superior alternatives to the state 'as the major agency of public governance and the major guarantor of a range of vital requirements for its citizens'[41] must surely concede that these are only likely to come about with the active participation of states themselves. Curiously, those states currently leading the Western humanitarian hunting pack seem especially disinterested in this: the US has refused to sign up to the International Criminal Court – arguably a jewel in the cosmopolitan crown – and the UK continues to equivocate even about further immersion within the EU. Additionally, the now commonplace concern that a commitment to internationalism necessarily serves to naturalise what are in fact contingent and contestable values rightly recommends a critical posture towards much contemporary internationalist practice, but it also risks the erasure of internationalism as a critical standpoint *against* the excesses of a neoliberal globalisation process and Western neo-imperial pretensions.

This leads us into a second reason: much contemporary progressive political discourse and action suggests there is still real *political* impetus behind the idea of the internationalist state, even in a supposedly globalising world and even if it is unfashionable to acknowledge this. Much of the current spate of international political activism (anti-globalisation, anti-war, and so on) is transnational or transversal in genesis and organisation but often resolutely internationalist in its policy focus. It seeks not the dissolution of states or the transcendence of national sovereignty but greater internal and external accountability and responsibility on the part of states. Indeed, it is often mobilised in defence of the acquisition of authentic

[40] L. Elliott and G. Cheeseman, 'Cosmopolitan Theory, Militaries and the Deployment of Force', Working Paper 2002/8, Department of International Relations, Australian National University (2002), p. 14.

[41] R. J. Barry-Jones, *The World Turned Upside Down? Globalization and the Future of the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 270.

sovereignty by groups or weak states effectively denied it.[42] Equally, a stark feature of the public debates within the West (let alone elsewhere) surrounding the war in Iraq, for example, was the widespread sense of public anger at the failure of national governments to adequately reflect in their foreign policy the disquiet among their own citizens, and the failure of the US and the UK specifically to underpin their claims to be acting on behalf of the international community by at least securing the authority of the United Nations prior to resorting to military force in order to breach Iraqi sovereignty. What is at issue, again, is not in fact either sovereign statehood or internationalism themselves, but the manner in which they are concretely expressed.[43] The demand that foreign policy be subjected to the tests of accountability and democratic legitimacy imposed upon other national policy domains remains, even in the democratic world, an area of considerable controversy because of the still powerful mythology of irreducible 'national interests'. But this is not an argument against sovereign statehood but, in a very real sense, an argument for it.

Thirdly, the refusal of much critical IR scholarship to engage with foreign policy theory and practice, although often framed in a contemporary critical discourse of 're-politicisation', is simply bad politics: it lets most states off the hook. Where foreign policy is academically scrutinised, it is overwhelmingly that of the US (and, increasingly, the UK). To generalise from these cases, important though they self-evidently are, as the basis for making general claims about either sovereignty or the state – a practice that I would argue is almost universal within the bulk of recent 'critical' literature – serves as much to sustain existing patterns of hegemony as challenge it. Not only publics and NGOs questioned the legitimacy of the war on Iraq, some states did as well and not always for purely self-interested reasons. Seemingly forgotten, then, is Cox's acute observation, made more than twenty years ago and aimed at the homogenising statism of a then recently emerged neorealism, that the world is populated by a variety of 'state-society complexes'.[44] The key question here is which Western states do not fit so tidily within a generic model of the developed liberal state and why? The answers are likely to be varied, complex and nuanced but among them may lay further insight into the continuing possibility of the Good State.

What is the Good State?

At a minimum, the Good State is simply a state committed to moral purposes beyond itself, to a robust internationalism in its foreign policy. By internationalism is meant a philosophy of foreign policy constructed around an ethical obligation on the part of states actively to pursue *authentically* other-regarding values and interests. In other

[42] Similarly, as Felix Ciuta has pointed out to me, in invoking notions of 'broad' or 'human' security, contemporary critical discourses about security more often than not are making clandestine claims for more, albeit qualitatively different, state agency.

[43] The reaction of the Spanish electorate in their general election (in which the centre-right Aznar government was unexpectedly soundly defeated) held just days after the terrorist bombings in Madrid on 11 March 2004, provides a stark case in point.

[44] Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium*, 10 (1981), pp. 126–55.

words, internationalism is an *intentional* rather than accidental activity, requiring some kind of a 'transcendent' rather than an 'immanent' moral ideology in that it is intended to do more than foster solidarity behind national goals. There are, of course, no simple tests for authenticity and intentionality; it is the task of open and continuing public debate to fix (challenge and, if necessary, reconfigure) their content.

The Good State is, then, an idea that takes seriously the ascription of moral responsibilities to collective entities such as the state. Following on from Peter French's critique of 'anthropocentric bias' in the ascription of moral personality and his distinction between 'conglomerate' and merely 'aggregate' collectivities, Erskine suggests that a collectivity is a candidate for moral agency if it is self-assertive and has 'an identity that is more than the sum of the identities of its constitutive parts and therefore does not rely on a determinate membership; a decision-making structure; an identity over time; and a conception of itself as a unit'.[45] Although clearly not alone, the state self-evidently offers itself as such a candidate. The significance of this is heightened by the difficulty of ascribing such agency to the 'international community', in spite of its evident contemporary rhetorical power. Erskine goes on to note that ascribing moral agency is no mere abstract activity but a 'profoundly important practical exercise'. The ascription of moral agency to a state is neither synonymous with determining the existence of 'collective responsibility' nor a case of conveniently transferring the moral responsibilities of individuals elsewhere, but recognition that 'some duties cannot be distributed among individuals at all'. Erskine cites Onora O'Neill's observation that having 'more extended powers of action and greater independence from other agents and forces than do other institutions', the sovereign state does potentially offer an answer to O'Neill's own question of 'Who can endeavour peace?'[46] Erskine's particular concern, however, is with those 'quasi-states' who may not have the capacities to which O'Neill refers. Resisting the temptation to conclude that the most capable states must simply be cast in the role of 'agents-of-last resort', Erskine recognises nonetheless that in 'a radically unequal world' the different capacities of states to bear moral responsibilities must weigh substantively on any 'coherent distribution of global responsibilities'. She goes on to note that 'it is when an analysis of prospective responsibility is neglected that charges of retrospective responsibility are misdirected – as when the 'international community is mysteriously imbued with agency and blamed for failing to respond to genocide, environmental crisis, or famine'.[47] Although Erskine wishes to keep open the prospect of effective institutional moral agents other than states, the implications of her argument, for Western states at least, seem clear enough: with capacity comes responsibility.

Erskine's criteria allow, then, for considerable variation in the playing out of state moral agency, not least in the emphasis on collective identity and collective self-perception as a functioning social unit. These two criteria are highly suggestive when it comes to examining the genesis of varieties of Western internationalism. Even a cursory survey of Western internationalisms over the past four decades or so would

[45] Toni Erskine, 'Assigning Responsibilities to Institutional Moral Agents: The Case of States and Quasi-States', *Ethics and International Affairs*, 15 (2001), p. 72.
[46] Erskine, 'Assigning Responsibilities to Institutional Moral Agents', p. 76.
[47] Ibid., p. 85.

detect a basic distinction between liberal and social-democratic variants, a distinction that helps, for example, to explain the typology offered in Pratt's study, referred to above. Although tracing the precise relationship between specific state-society complexes and specific forms of internationalist discourse and practice is complex, the outcomes are as unsurprising as they are predictable.

To illustrate: the Scandinavian social democracies exhibit a range of shared 'domestic' attributes which collectively very clearly point to the social construction of their particular internationalism – a tradition of open, consensus-based governance, an historically early settlement of the tripartite relationship between government, organised labour and private capital, a distinctive social-democratic intellectual tradition, the secularisation of Lutheranism and so on – and the manner in which it is discursively and practically reproduced.[48] In particular, Scandinavian political discourse continues to exhibit an emphasis on solidarity as both value and organisational principle, from which the commitment to international 'solidarity' and international economic and social justice are clear tributaries. Understanding and explaining the Netherlands' internationalism requires, *inter alia*, reference to an historical relationship with the development of international law, a commitment to the development of which has been enshrined in the constitution since 1957, the prominence of specific liberal social and political values and, of course, a history of imperialism. Both Sweden and the Netherlands share an historical understanding of themselves as guiding states (*föregångsland* in Swedish or *gidsland* in Dutch), a self-understanding that can, of course, shade into paternalism just as internationalism always risks sliding into moralism. The social histories of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, not least the challenges of mass resettlement including the fraught and often violent history of relations between indigenous peoples and culturally diverse settler immigrants, can tell us much about the character of their particular internationalist traditions and emphases. Although not included in Pratt's group of internationalist states and not particularly noted for solidarity with the developing world, Germany's post-reunification foreign policy (presented by its Foreign Ministry under the headline 'Foreign Policy is Peace Policy'[49]) nonetheless offers itself up for consideration as a distinctive form of Western internationalism. Again the mark of a very particular history is evident, not least in a very visible discomfort with militarism (in spite of having 10,000 troops serving peace-keeping and NATO missions worldwide in 2002) and an ongoing public debate about post-1945 national identity.[50] Germany's opposition to US policy on Iraq (in contrast to its domestically-controversial support of the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001) may have been tainted by domestic electoral politics, but it also accurately reflected public opinion and embedded political norms, particularly an embedded discomfort with power politics.[51] Depictions of German foreign policy as a evolved form of 'reflexive multilateralism' or that of a 'civilian power', a 'semi-sovereign' state, or even symptomatic of a 'post-sovereign foreign policy identity' suggest that Germany's

[48] Some of these themes in Scandinavian internationalism are explored further in Peter Lawler, 'Scandinavian Exceptionalism and European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 35 (1997), pp. 564–94.

[49] ⟨http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/aussenpolitik/friedenspolitik/⟩ (accessed 22 January 2005).

[50] Erb, *German Foreign Policy*, especially chs. 1 and 7.

[51] Peter Katzenstein 'United Germany in an Integrating Europe', in Katzenstein (ed.), *Tamed Power: Germany in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 2 and 9.

recent assertiveness may serve to highlight rather than diminish its potential as an alternative model, both ethically and practically, of Western foreign policy.[52]

Of course, even this brief suggestive account of origins also serves to indicate that the histories of Western internationalisms, or their key instruments such as development cooperation and conflict mediation, are neither morally pure nor without tensions, inconsistencies and contradictions. Equally, internationalism is clearly the outcome of mixed motives and its virtues can only be argued with reference to variations in the relative weight of overt ethical motives, compared to that of collective self-interest, or the desire to compensate for an historical lack of power, presence or influence. But even if it is conceded that states are plausible if imperfect moral agents in some sense or other, two prominent features of much contemporary IR scholarship stand in the way of proceeding further. The first is a peculiar tendency, especially when detected among those supposedly hostile to the idea, to work with a generic, rational-actor model of the state – the behaviour of which, moreover, is seen to be largely determined by exogenous forces. This is often accompanied by a correlative singular account of the practice of sovereignty. It is peculiar simply because so much of contemporary scholarship otherwise emphasises the historicity, contextuality and contingency of international phenomena. It is fashionable now – usually in either a constructivist, critical-theoretic or post-structuralist vein – to emphasise the constitutive relationship between political environments, discourses and actor identities, both domestic and international, and how such relationships sustain the discourse and practice of sovereignty. However, these kinds of analysis are usually conducted in either a politically passive or, contrarily, a purely critical (in the everyday sense of the term) voice aimed primarily at exposing the inherent violence of the generic state. The dominant normative tone of most recent critical scholarship is to implicitly or explicitly critique the perpetuation of exclusionary accounts of collective selfhood *per se*, of which sovereign statehood is supposedly the exemplar. In contrast, what a focus on the Good State points up is certainly not the eradication of *all* forms of social and political exclusion – no matter how benign, the exercise of sovereign statehood is inescapably an exclusionary practice – but the virtue of focusing on the normative dimensions of varieties of exclusionary practices on the simple premise that they are, at the very least, amenable to comparative normative assessment, that is, critique. This provides a starting point for not only defending internationalism but also critiquing its specific forms and future trajectories.

A second related tendency is the discounting of the positive role (in a normative sense) of the state. In addition to the anti-statist bias that permeates current critical IR scholarship, this is arguably, and confusingly, also a consequence of a long-standing and peculiar disinterest in the state which, moreover, shows no signs of abating. It is strange because it occurs within a discipline otherwise frequently rebuked for a history of excessive state-centrism, the very history in fact that stimulates so much of contemporary anti-statism. A key consequence, however, is a paucity of reflection upon the different classes of Western states, historically and

[52] On Germany as a 'reflexive multilateralist', see Simon Bulmer 'Shaping the Rules? The Constitutive Politics of the European Union and German Power', in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *Tamed Power*; as a 'Civilian Power' see the references in fn.19 above; as a semi-sovereign state, see Peter Katzenstein 'United Germany in an Integrating Europe', in Katzenstein (ed.), *Tamed Power*; and on Germany's 'semi-sovereign foreign policy identity' see Erb, *German Foreign Policy*.

presently, let alone significant variation between their normative outlooks. That variation is not dramatic but the key issue here is whether it has ethical significance nonetheless.[53]

What then of the homogenisation of internationalism towards an instrumental liberal mean alluded to earlier? Pratt's study suggested it was already underway and there is considerable evidence to suggest that it is still occurring, but its effects are neither even nor certain. This is especially apparent if one acknowledges that it is an intensely *political* process with a substantial ideological content not reducible to an effect or consequence of phenomena wholly external to specific national contexts, as many national leaders would like us to believe. Historically, internationalism has always been of variable form, either moderate or radical in its purview. It has been aimed primarily at securing stable foundations for peaceful coexistence, or it has entailed a more demanding commitment to varying degrees of the transformation of world order in pursuit of solutions to a range of ethical issues. Although there is much that binds Western internationalism to sustain the image of a generic form, there are good reasons, both empirical and normative, to look below the surface. This requires some kind of sociology of internationalism: an investigation of how and why varieties of internationalism have emerged and are sustained or challenged. To this end, many of the analytical themes now prevalent in critical IR literature could be put to good use. Thus, a focus on internationalisms as collective myths or narratives, instrumental in the articulation and preservation of specific national collective identities, would clearly provide considerable insight not only as part of an account of origins but also as a critical tool for exposing the limitations and dangers of specific internationalist discourses and practices. For example, the current intersection of internationalist tradition and the recent alarming rise of anti-immigrant sentiment in The Netherlands, Denmark and Norway (in the latter two cases coupled with the increasing prevalence of primordial accounts of national identity and belonging) rings clear alarm bells for advocacy of a singular or static model of the Good State. Equally, one might ask why that most famously internationalist state Sweden has eschewed the recent reconfiguration rightward of its foreign policy stance by its traditionally fraternal neighbour Denmark. This reconfiguration entails, *inter alia*, the cutting and refocusing of ODA (although it still remains comfortably above the 0.7 per cent GNI bar), the introduction of extremely stringent controls on refugee and immigration admissions (in spite of criticism from the UN, the EU and its Nordic neighbours), the petty closure of the internationally-renowned Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, and, most controversially, the replacement of a traditionally modest Atlanticism by a new staunchly pro-US stance.[54] Looking to the more

[53] Of course there is an extensive literature outside of the IR discipline which look at domestic variations within the general category of developed capitalist states as well as an extensive historical sociology literature. One body of scholarship where sensitivity to the normative dimensions of different types of Western state is evident is the work of some constructivists, notably Peter Katzenstein. I would claim, however, that this literature has had little discernible impact upon the bulk of critical IR scholarship.

[54] On Denmark's rightward shift, see especially Tonny Brems Knudsen, 'Denmark and the War Against Iraq: Losing Sight of Internationalism?', in Per Carlsen and Hans Mourtizen (eds.), *Danish Foreign Yearbook 2004* (Copenhagen: DIIS, 2004); Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, 'Counting the Cost: Denmark's Changing Migration Policies', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27 (2003), pp. 448–54. See also Peter Lawler, 'Loyalty to the Folkhem? Scandinavian Scepticism and the European Project', in A. Linklater and M. Waller (eds.), *Political Loyalty and the Nation State* (London: Routledge, 2003).

overtly liberal internationalist states, the Canadian, New Zealand and Australian varieties of internationalism are also ripe for comparative analysis, particularly with regard to the relationship between the official embrace of multiculturalism and the degree to which internationalist values have become sufficiently embedded in public political discourse to survive shifts in the political colouring of governments.

It would be otiose to summarily dismiss the virtues of looking beyond the state in pursuit of novel and robust solutions to the ethical dilemmas confronting humanity or to fall back on the kind of ahistorical realism that ascribes immortality to the sovereign state. But what is open to question is the commonplace notion that the sovereign state *necessarily* constitutes part of the problem and cannot be instrumental in developing solutions. The very idea of normative internationalism presupposes the existence of an obligation on the part of states to act not only *in* the world but to greater or lesser degrees, *for* the world as well. Here, Linklater's recollection of Hegel's conception of the 'rational state' is insightful:

> (t)he main insight is that the rational state has ethical responsibilities which other political organisations do not exercise to the same degree. Mediating between the different loyalties, identities and interests which exist in society was, for Hegel, a primary function of the state. The need for political institutions which perform this task would not cease to exist just because national societies had become more responsive to cosmopolitan morality or more sympathetic to claims for the public recognition of cultural differences; nor would it end were states to share authority with institutions in their domestic regions and international organisations.[55]

Linklater's reading is compatible with the notion that states may continue to exercise that mediating role, which internationalisation and globalisation may serve only to render more complex and urgent. The point can be pushed further than perhaps Linklater intends. Once a purely generic model of the state is abandoned, there is no good reason to reject *a priori* the notion that some kinds of states may fulfil that role rather well, possibly better, in fact, that any alternatives we can identify or might imagine.

What might a 'regulative ideal' or imaginary of such a reconstituted internationalist state consist in? The Good State can be understood as an entity that acknowledges its role as a mediating agent between competing moral realms, none of which can decisively claim absolute priority yet among which there may remain a historically and culturally contingent hierarchical relationship. Given the complex responsibilities confronting the state, by virtue of the fact that it represents and at the same time upholds a cohort of duties and obligations which must inevitably be in tension, the notion that it constitutes in itself a moral agent cannot be simply thought away. In many respects the state can also be understood as constituting a moral as well as an instrumental division of labour, with some parts more responsive to the project of normatively driven international reform than others.[56] Perhaps more now than ever

[55] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, pp. 44–5.

[56] This variation was recently brought home to me as a participant in a UK Department of International Development (DFID) future scenarios exercise focused on the global 'very poor', which brought together representatives of DFID, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK academics, development NGOs and the private sector. The range of worldviews that emerged in the exercise mapped onto a wide part of the spectrum of international ethical thinking, from moderate realist scepticism to full-blown cosmopolitanism.

before, the state is encumbered with an increasingly complex ethics of responsibility that is inadequately captured by the commonplace dualism of discrete national and global interests. Equally, the hazy imagery of a sovereignty-less world, in which a variety of collective actors vie for autonomy in a global context of powerful integrative and disintegrative logics, may serve to reinvigorate rather than convincingly dethrone the normative virtues of the distinctive form of collective identity which underpins the modern state.

It can be readily conceded that the long-standing ethical case for the greater porosity of the state boundary, in other words for the reconfiguration of sovereign statehood, appears even more compelling in an apparently globalising world. Yet, given the re-emergence of highly exclusionary and often violent alternative forms of collective identification in recent years, particularly those constructed around blood and ethnicity, the case for an explicitly statist or civic citizenship is, arguably, also strengthened. It is highly debatable that the manner in which a specific state could or should mediate the duties and obligations that confront it can be discerned by appeal to ahistorical ethical principles; time, place and culture are crucial. Quite how it has been and could be played out is a matter for investigation and argument. As has hopefully become clear, contemporary debate about right conduct by Western states is of necessity focused much less on whether there can or should be an ethical dimension to foreign policy at all and much more on the clash of cosmopolitan visions. When we consider the very mixed results produced by recent armed interventions, we might well come to the view that a sustainable and more defensible form of internationalism entails doing less rather than more, and doing it more slowly and cautiously moreover. Here an ethic of 'do no harm' and a commitment to an open-ended, more contextualised solidarity with a range of near and distant others acquire perhaps greater force than doing 'whatever it takes' in the name of what is deemed to be a self-evidently and therefore critically-immune notion of universal right, or to achieve some equally cosseted concept of the good, or of thoroughly remapping a still very divided and politically and economically uneven world.

Conclusion

The history of the modern states system is, in part a least, a history of normative critiques of sovereign statehood and the varying responses of states to that critique. One of Pratt's concluding observations to his own project was that the primary struggle for more humane internationalist policies needs to be shifted to the social and political arenas of the internationalist states themselves. Pratt was appealing then for the revitalisation of critical, post-materialist *national* political cultures as a means for resurrecting robust internationalist sensibilities. Underpinning this seems to be what we might now call a constructivist insight, namely that not only the analytical key but also the political key to understanding the Good State's prospects might lie in a more nuanced understanding of the formation and sustenance of national collective identities appropriate to the articulation of both an authentically internationalist intersubjective account of statehood and collective responsibility, as well as an account of the world within which internationalist action becomes both

necessary and worthwhile.[57] Although Pratt did not flesh the point out, in effect he was pointing to the need for internationalist values to be embedded or *sedimented* within putatively 'domestic' political processes, institutions and narratives. This not only gives a clue as to why actually-existing Good States have been able to sustain internationalist commitments in the face of mounting endogenous and exogenous challenges, it also might provide the key to explaining the failure of internationalism to survive beyond the life of some specific governments that have sought to promote it. In this respect, comparison of the more famously internationalist states reviewed by Pratt with the efforts of Australian Labor governments in the early 1990s to sustain the idea of Australia as 'a good international citizen', or the very mixed reception given to New Labour's intentions to introduce a 'foreign policy with an ethical dimension' in the UK, would be highly instructive. Equally, it justifies critical circumspection towards internationalist claims by states which seemingly emerge out of the blue or which exhibit evident contradictions with the domestic practices of the declaring state.

What Pratt perhaps did not fully appreciate, but we certainly must do now, is that the articulation of political culture and, by extension, political ethics have become increasingly fraught activities in recent years for a variety of reasons. The principal challenge now for any resuscitated internationalist alternative to the dominant narrative of Western foreign policy is an investigation of what kinds of national context can generate an internationalist discourse sufficiently sensitive to the cultural complexities of the contemporary world or contemporary multi-ethnic states and to the dangers of a presumptive moral universalism. As recent public debates in Europe around the issues of refugees and immigrants have shown, the intersection of cultural and moral discourse crosses the boundary between the domestic and the international while often at the same time serving to revitalise it. Even within the actually existing Good States identified above, deeply embedded internationalist public discourse has increasingly exhibited culturally-suffused tensions. For the erstwhile advocate of internationalism then, the evolution of key dimensions of domestic political life – the state-society nexus – should be as important an area of investigation as the supposedly discrete area of foreign policy.

A greater attention paid to culture at the very least should serve, rightly, to deflate assumptions about the ready availability of singular accounts of morally appropriate foreign policy. If we take just two of the established Western internationalist states, Canada and Denmark, we immediately find both have long established and socially embedded internationalist traditions. If we look a bit closer, however, it becomes apparent that the former has a very different approach to the latter regarding the notion of a singular national political culture or the issue of refugees and migrants,

[57] I am thinking here primarily of intersubjectivity as a process largely internal to the state. A more difficult issue is whether the international constitutes a kind of social space within which intersubjective understandings of the internationalist state can proliferate, that is, be considered both possible and legitimate. My hunch is this is currently only partially the case. Many, perhaps most, states might acknowledge that Sweden perceives itself to be an internationalist actor, but whether they think Sweden's internationalism is what Sweden thinks it is or I think it is (rather than, say, merely self-interested free riding or posturing) is another matter. I'm of the view, however, that the greater proliferation of the right kind of internationalist practices cannot but increase the social density, so to speak, of the international and open up the possibility that 'intersubjective constitution' might become a transboundary phenomenon. Again, I'm grateful to Felix Ciuta for pressing me on this point.

whilst operating with a comparatively moderate version of the welfare state and a moderate commitment to ODA. In contrast, the latter is currently experiencing an intense national debate about national identity and its duty to admit strangers as well as the future of what remains at present one of the strongest versions of the welfare state yet maintains one of the world's most generous ODA policies. The key theme here is *variation*, even within the limited and limiting confines of the West. Nonetheless, not only is it not difficult to show that in the post-1945 era Western states have come to understand and articulate their moral purposes differently, but also that they now exhibit significant variation in their settled interpretations of and responses to contemporary international phenomena. How do these variations come about, what sustains them, and what kind of responses do they offer to the principal moral issues in contemporary global politics? A necessary preliminary step in the pursuit of answers is the investigation of the genesis of varieties of Western internationalism, the manner of their reproduction, internally and externally, and how these varieties of internationalism play out against a dynamic global backdrop.

If our starting point is an understanding of the Western state as a variable form, constituted through the interaction of specific political narratives and institutionalised social practices, then a more contingent and contextualised response to the liberal homogenisation thesis emerges. This is not to deny that exogenous homogenising pressures exist, but it is to suggest that the meaning of these pressures and the practical and normative appropriateness of state action in response to them are not givens. Equally, it would be foolish to deny either that there is much that binds all Western states, or that within that very commonality lie very real practical and discursive barriers to thinking and acting creatively in response to, say, contemporary forms of large-scale violence. Nonetheless, the various types of Western internationalist state can be understood as differing resolutions of the multiple practical and moral demands upon the agency of the state. They point also to different constitutions of the domestic-international boundary which, by extension, generate a range of understandings as to the duties and responsibilities that flow across them. We should ignore Waltz's famous advice and pay greater attention to what goes on inside states (not merely their foreign policy domains, moreover), especially those Western states who do not normally attract our attention.