From Moral to Political Responsibility in a Globalized Age

Richard Beardsworth[*]

The notion of responsibility constitutes a major concept in the contemporary normative language of global politics.[1] With regard to both the practical reasoning behind global governance and the empirical challenges posed by a globalized world, responsibility has become a key organizing term in academic and policy circles. Indeed, major leaders regularly lean on the concept to situate themselves or others before global threats and challenges.[2] In short, the governance of such challenges is framed today in terms of *responsibility*. This language of responsibility appears chiefly in two forms. The first is moral. World leaders have, for example, repetitively spoken over the last twenty years of the *moral responsibility* to alleviate undue human suffering, climate change vulnerability, and global poverty.[3] However important in its own terms, this language of moral responsibility covers over a deficit in global political agency with regard to these same challenges and crises. That is, the oft-repeated allusion to "our moral responsibility" toward the vulnerable of humankind is not so much evidence of an emerging global moral conscience (although it is also that) as it is of a lack of political will and action.

The second form is, conversely, political, but at present pitched in normative terms alone—the emerging norm of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP). Under RtoP an international majority of states is positing a norm that ties external sovereignty (independence from other states) to the fulfillment of specific conditions of internal sovereignty (respect of basic human and civil rights). These conditions concern the *political responsibility* of persons who assume offices of state and their decision-making structures. RtoP shifts, in this sense, the normative language of responsibility of the last two decades from a moral register to a

political one—or, at least, to a normative register reinforced by the increasing robustness of international human rights law.

This article formulates an intellectual move from moral to political responsibility in world politics and outlines the conceptual contours of what political responsibility and political duty in a globalized age might look like. It does so within the ambivalent tension between these two dominant ways of talking about responsibility—one that translates a global political deficit, the other that anticipates sovereignty as responsibility. My central contention is that, in a world beset by empirical global problems and global collective inaction, we need less to speak of the *moral* responsibility of political agents than to develop a new language of *political* responsibility that has purchase on practical politics.

My argument proceeds in four steps. Section one briefly considers the way in which moral responsibility is presently conceived in the field of International Relations. Section two addresses the ways in which moral and political interests are in fact inextricable at the international level. These two sections provide a background set of arguments (some well known, others less so) from which the rest of the article can then delimit the specificity of political responsibility in a globalized age. Section three addresses this specificity in three stages: first, *pragmatically*, in terms of efficacy of government; second, *ideologically*, in terms of legitimacy of government; and third, *existentially*, in terms of the risks of political leadership. My main argument is that global interdependence of needs requires a rearticulation of the conception of *the responsibility of national governments to their own people*.[4] This rearticulation should be lexically ordered—understood first in functional terms of task-efficacy and second in terms of republican political authority. This is because government is concerned with the effective management of problems and the legitimate wielding of power, in that order. With this lexical ordering, my argument also makes universal claims, but is context-dependent. That is, depending on the global issue at hand and on the state's level of development, sovereignty should be ceded upward to supranational authority, sideways to international institutions, or downward to subnational bodies *in the very name of national sovereignty*. Section three argues that political responsibility also involves assuming the risk of ceded sovereignty. As the present resurgence in national populism in Europe indicates, meeting the need for the pooling and/or cession of sovereignty constitutes an important political risk. I suggest that the practice of cosmopolitan and/or global political responsibility assumes this risk.[5] The fourth and final section then clarifies what my argument is *not* doing, and I conclude

Richard Beardsworth

with a general comment on my distinction throughout the article between the moral and the political.

Since there are many understandings of the term "political," a final word on my use of the term will be helpful. I am concerned with empirically driven normative theory, and understand "the political" as harnessed to political norm, rule, and practice. I therefore understand the concept of "political responsibility" in terms of a social set of responsibilities and duties particular to the governance of relevant problems. In short, I understand it as *responsible government.*[6]

Moral Responsibility in International Relations

The problematic of moral responsibility in international relations involves questions of moral agency, causal responsibility, and accountability on the one hand, and questions about which international actor is the responsible and accountable agent on the other. Drawing from work in analytical philosophy and applied ethics in the 1970s and 1980s, recent normative reflection in international relations on collective responsibility has tied questions of moral responsibility to the major agents of international affairs: states, international organizations, and global corporations.[7] The basic argument runs as follows.

Moral responsibility lies with an identified "moral person" who can be held accountable in intention and consequence for his or her acts. In *Collective and Corporate Responsibility* the philosopher Peter French argues that the collective equivalence of this moral person is the *decision-making structure* within a collective entity. This structure licenses the predication of institutional intentionality and accountability (opposed to either the conception of a mob or that of an aggregate of individual actors).[8] Consequently, it is this structure that allows one to bring the question of collective moral agency squarely to the table of world politics. Following French, Toni Erskine argues for instance that a collectivity is a candidate for moral agency if it has "an identity that is more than the sum of its parts . . . ; a decision-making structure; an identity over time; and a conception of itself as a unit."[9] She thus holds the major powers and the United Nations morally accountable for the Rwandan genocide of 1994.[10]

Focusing on decision-making structures, one can indeed ascribe moral praise and blame to a whole series of international actors based on their commission or omission of certain acts regarding the global economy, the environment, the conduct of war, past and present international crimes and punishments, and

other areas. With regard to global warming, for example, one can argue that all states have a moral responsibility toward the future flourishing of human capabilities, but that developed countries have a specific moral responsibility toward climate change mitigation given their historical responsibilities. Moreover, one can argue that while Chinese leaders now accept a forward-looking moral obligation to greenhouse gas emission reductions given the country's present rate of emissions, Indian decision-makers can still refuse any such moral obligation on the basis of a perceived historical injustice, and so on. Whatever its precise institutional form (state, institution, corporation, or organized group), moral responsibility in world politics has accordingly, to my mind, three minimum requirements: (1) an office of decision; (2) the possibility of moral interest in x event; and (3) the moral fact that this possibility is contingent (in the sense that, despite the moral obligation, it is possible to do otherwise).[11] Locating moral responsibility in international relations is therefore always possible. Its specificity, however, is circumscribed, as I will now argue.

The Inextricability of Moral and Political Interest in World Politics

The autonomy of moral responsibility—in the technical sense of what is "irreducibly moral" (that is, morally independent from other factors) in a political decision—continues to be a bone of contention between those who advocate morality and those who contest it in world politics. Against the amoralism of the international-relations doctrine of realism and the potential moralism of moral cosmopolitanism, this section argues that this autonomy is necessarily mediated by other interests and is accordingly empirically complex. As a result, I suggest that the debates in international relations between those advocating for international morality and those denying it have become theoretically sterile. Rather, the inextricability of moral and political interest in world politics constitutes the *starting place* for reflecting upon and practicing international ethics.[12]

The reasons for locating morality in world politics have not simply been contested by the schools of realist and rationalist thought in international-relations theory. They are *structurally* contested in the fact that ethical behavior in international relations is placed within the separate fields of international ethics, global ethics, and normative international relations theory. This confinement is not simply an act of disciplinary specialization (although it is also that); it is informed by

Richard Beardsworth

the field's separation between normative and explanatory modes of thinking, a separation underpinned by a neopositivist conception of social science.[13] This confinement has *political consequences* since it isolates empirically driven international-relations thought from the normative framing of world politics.[14] The separation of the normative from the factual should be contested. One way to do this is to expound how a complex of causal factors constitutes the motivation behind decision-makers addressing global concerns.

For example, what motivates a state to intervene abroad in order to alleviate undue human suffering must entertain *some* relation with how it understands its national interest. A state would not otherwise intervene.[15] Had not, for example, civil war in Libya posed an immigration problem for the European Union, had not intervention in Libya allowed both the British government under David Cameron to refashion its image in the Middle East and French President Nicolas Sarkozy to redress his own domestic reputation, neither the United Kingdom nor France would have acted in 2011 in Libya without international coercion. To take an earlier case, had not the members of NATO sensed that intervention in Kosovo in 1999 would also help redefine NATO's mission in Europe after the cold war, the evident moral interest in the intervention might not have been sufficient to motivate action. My point is this: in any system of *subglobal differentiation*, the interests within this differentiation must play a critical role in globally minded action. Consequently, in the present system of states the self-interest of states *must* play a role in global governance issues (in the above examples, upholding the norm of "RtoP"). Without self-interest, international moral action on the part of a state is highly improbable since its primary moral and legal obligations are to its own people. That said, the policy advisors and decision-makers *within* a state's executive branch can argue for international moral action—for example, the moral use of force, humanitarian relief, generous refugee policies, and so on. If the arguments of self-interest and altruism line up, taking international moral responsibility becomes state policy.

This type of argument for the necessarily mixed nature of state interest seems self-evident, but it does make international thought that either brackets the self-interest of states (variants of moral cosmopolitanism) or takes account of their self-interest alone (structural variants of realism and rationalism) theoretically sterile. In the contemporary world order the desire to act morally must be mixed—self-interested and altruistic—if moral behavior on the part of state actors is to be possible in the first place. My argument focuses on the question of moral

motivation and obligation within the seat of executive government, that is, on executive decision-making. I am obviously bracketing here questions of exogenous constraint upon state behavior in the form of international law and of international prestige. I emphasize the inextricability of moral interest (in the Kantian sense) and political interest (in the realist sense) within the internal decision-structures of government.

This two-stage reflection on the specificity of moral responsibility and on the inextricability of moral and political interest in a system of subglobal decision-making takes me to the main focus of the article: the problematic of political responsibility in a globalized age.

Conceiving Political Responsibility in a Globalized Age

In contrast with the previous conception of collective moral responsibility, I understand political responsibility as a question of *responsible government*. In the modern era this responsibility redounds to the state. We remain in the modern era until the state is replaced, at the level of government, by another group-unit.[16] Modern political responsibility is constituted accordingly by (1) an institutionalized relation between governors and governed (the state and civil society); (2) an institutionalized disposition that answers the needs of the governed (the social contract ensuring the welfare of citizens); and (3) an institutionalized disposition that is accountable in some form or other to the will of the governed (modern political authority). In contrast with moral responsibility and its contingency within the internal decision-structure of a collective entity, political responsibility involves an explicit *rule-bound* set of duties and responsibilities as well as a *rule-bound* set of accountability levers concerning the decision-making structures of government. That decisions involve moral difficulty *per se* is not what is at issue; rather, taking political responsibility is a question of leadership. And leadership, as I argue below, involves discretion and judgment between political choices; for instance, between the morally right and the politically expedient.

I separate political duties and structures into two distinct modalities: one of *efficacy*, the other of *legitimacy*. The first concerns the government of needs: following the political philosopher Leslie Green, I call this modality the "duty to govern," and my approach is functionalist at this level.[17] The second concerns the terms of government or the provenance of government authority, and my approach is republican. These two modalities of modern government are, to my mind, lexically

Richard Beardsworth

ordered. The question of political authority follows the management of needs. I link them so in order to make it clear that government is first a question of efficacy with regard to the fulfillment of a population's needs (that is, government is responsible for acts that meet these needs); and that, second, the model of government I consider the most appropriate to make the management of needs legitimate does not constitute an *initial* condition of government. Nonrepublican governments can obviously manage the increasing interdependence of needs.

From the perspective of political authority, however, the federal republican idea of government appears, under globalizing processes, the most appropriate; that is, the idea of government as freedom from domination through a differentiated system of political restraint.[18] In the context of problems ensuing from the processes of global interdependence, freedom from structural dependence on external power can only be guaranteed through multilevel, mutually self-restraining forms of government. I suggest that, within political theory, the federal republican idea still meets this precondition of freedom best.[19] Thus, those who assume political office, by the very fact of having rights of power over citizens of the state, have responsibilities toward them. In sum, these responsibilities concern (1) their needs and (2) their freedom. To assume these responsibilities is in turn a matter of (1) political office and (2) political virtue and leadership. Conceiving of political responsibility in terms of responsible government, I accordingly argue for a distinct modality of (1) national responsibility and (2) national leadership in a globalized age.[20]

Political Responsibility as Task-Efficacy in a Globalized Age
As previously mentioned, Leslie Green (commenting on John Finnis) has recently argued for a fundamental "duty to govern."[21] He justifies this primary duty neither in terms of legitimacy nor in terms of obligation, but in terms of effective capacity. The duty to govern is "called forth by the *needs* of the common good. . . . Those who have the effective capacity to solve it bear the responsibility of doing so."[22] In this functional approach to government, political authority is exercised where there is a certain kind of problem to be solved and should be exercised by those who have the effective capacity to solve it. As a question of task-efficacy, political responsibility entails government—the management of political, social, and economic events in order to maintain the "basic goods" of a people.[23] Good

government means that the primary needs of a people, or in modern terms the "fundamental rights" of a people, are satisfied.

My first major argument emerges here. First, if according to the governing principle states are duty-bound to meet the needs of their peoples and provide for them the minimally good life—if, that is, the fulfillment of need is a primary political duty of government—and if these needs are now systemically determined by events beyond the borders of the governed polity, then it follows that, *within the very concept of political duty*, those states that are affected and able to respond have a responsibility to do so *in order to answer their peoples' needs in the first place*. Second, those states that are affected and have the capacity to respond will find themselves increasingly *responding to the needs of the peoples of other states* in order to answer their *own* peoples' needs. Let me work through both points.

There is nothing contentious about the first point—except its political specificity. If one considers political duty under the light of task-efficacy, then, in order to govern the needs of their people, state leaders have the political responsibility to manage transborder events that qualitatively affect these needs. These events can be categorized on a sliding scale of existential intensity and systemic risk. Nuclear arms, climate change, and the structural consequences of a global capitalist economy are currently the three predominant issues that demand global collective action on the part of national governments. Since these issues all concern "hard" issues of security (from nuclear to food security), strong political responses are in principle necessary. And if *efficacy of remedy is only possible through limited cession of sovereignty*, the concept of "political duty" must be appropriately rethought in order to frame this requirement normatively. States have accordingly the political duty to pool and/or yield national sovereignty so that effective action on these issues is possible. They have the duty, that is, to pool and/or yield external sovereignty (sovereign independence) *in order to maintain internal sovereignty* (the maintenance of primary domestic state functions).[24] The willingness of governments to cede some of their unilateral decision-making power to international agencies—while not full cession of sovereignty—demonstrates that governments do see the benefits to their own populations of "pooling sovereignty" in such areas as maritime law, international trade standards, and communication systems. In these areas of "low" politics, governments have delegated powers to an external authority *over which they have no veto* (the clearest example being the World Trade Organization). It is already the case, to varying extent, with regard to

Richard Beardsworth

regional and global security networks, tackling international crime (such as trafficking and money laundering), and terrorism. My argument is that it *should* also be the case when dealing with major issues that affect the physical and social integrity of a state's people.

With respect to the nuclear, environmental, and economic security of a people, the incomplete cession of sovereignty sideways (toward international agencies of oversight) and the complete cession of sovereignty upward (toward supranational rules and global political arrangements) are both analytically and normatively required *if* effective management of these insecurities is to be made possible.[25]

There is nothing contentious about my second point, either—that response to one people's needs requires responding to the needs of others at the same time—except, again, its political specificity. The concept of "special responsibilities" of the most powerful states is particular to international-relations thought, and is predicated on the equivalence between material power and responsibility: the greater the capability, the greater the responsibility.[26] Bukovansky et al. have recently argued that the concept should be extended to cover duties toward the globally vulnerable.[27] Their arguments are normatively and empirically persuasive. But my point here is political, not ethical. Given the increasing interdependence of need, a state's political duty to solve a challenging problem requires a political responsibility toward events that determine that problem. If those events are transnational or supranational and affect other people's needs at the same time, a state's political duty involves not only coordinating collective action at a global level for its own people *but also responding to other peoples' needs*. This response to the needs of others constitutes an *indirect consequence* (that is, an amoral one) of fulfilling the political duty to respond to the minimal common welfare of one's own polity. It is therefore motivated by political interest, and not necessarily by moral interest (although, as we have seen, the two interests can work together). And yet, inversely, if political responsibility is first considered in terms of need, service, and efficacy of government, it is inevitably also oriented in a globalized age toward the satisfaction of nonnational need. Accordingly, from a consequentialist perspective, moral responsibility toward others and political responsibility toward one's self intersect. The conclusion that they can overlap is not morally cynical. As section two suggested, moral and political interests are two different orders of interest, but orders that may nevertheless converge. Concerns behind the call to global moral responsibility can (and should) be placed within a political logic of duty that is attentive to political deeds.[28] Framing this logic for state leaders with

office-specific political duties is, I suggest, an important, empirically driven normative task.

With regard, for example, to the end of nuclear disarmament (whether this end is practicable is not my concern here), some kind of world-government-lite is required to secure cooperation among nuclear-armed states and between these states and those without nuclear weapons.[29] With regard to climate change, after the failure to finalize a global climate covenant in Copenhagen in 2009, the cession of some sovereignty sideways to international agencies of oversight and downward in the form of treaties among affected stakeholders (on deforestation, for example) or cities has become the rule of thumb.[30] Regardless, climate change insecurity still requires a comprehensive agreement between all states on the supranational rules coordinating action between developed and developing countries. With regard to economic security, supranational rules are equally required on banking reserves, short-term capital investments, and the overall global balance of trade in order to prevent global financial contagion and sudden economic instability. These global public "bads" cannot be resolved without national cession of sovereignty sideways and upward to accountable agencies of technical expertise and institutions of political decision-making; for example, through a strengthened International Monetary Fund (IMF) serving its original mission to secure global financial stability, or the Appellate Body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) judging trade agreements in the interest of development/sustainability instead of economic growth alone.

Political Responsibility as Republican Authority in a Globalized Age

I emphasized above the questions of task-efficacy and needs as the primary duty of government and realigned them with global collective action in an interdependent world. It is odd that Finnis and Green do not address the question of legitimacy in the *same* group of justificatory arguments.[31] If, as Green argues, political leadership is concerned with the basic "needs of the common good," failure to be task-efficacious leads to delegitimization. Efficacy *is* related to the common good, and this good is not empirically given, but normatively constructed. Those who accept the duty to govern with efficacy must therefore, in principle, deal with the status of their own political authority. With regard to empirical challenges to the polity, the political authority of an officeholder is secondary to his or her efficacy of management; but the instance of political authority cannot be kept distinct from the analysis of efficacy as such. Consequently, the duty to govern

80   *Richard Beardsworth*

should be considered in two interrelated stages of efficacy *and* legitimacy. The question regarding global challenges is: what are the terms of global/national political authority for states? I consider the language of republicanism and republican federalism the most promising in a globalized age. Let me lay out the reasons why political responsibility may be best articulated in their terms.

The first reason concerns the *size* and *scope* of the polity with regard to external challenges and threats to the state as a whole (government and civil society), and it introduces the modern question of political freedom through the problem of security. As Daniel Deudney has persuasively argued within the logic of his republican security theory, the "freedom of the citizenry from violence" is relative to the state's capacity for overcoming violence.[32] Following his reading of the "Philadelphian system," the security threat to the individual American states posed by British, French, and Spanish military interference could *only* be remedied by an increase in the size and scope of political association.[33] Without this increase of scale, freedom from the arbitrary interference/violence of the European powers would be lost. With an increase in scale, freedom could be renegotiated in the new context of extended military powers (that is, the Atlantic projection of sea power by European states). This republican renegotiation of freedom entailed a new articulation, in turn, of local and distant structures of government with regard to both external and internal domination (anarchy and hierarchy). Republican federalism answered, therefore, both the security threat abroad and the political risk of new domestic tyranny (a centripetal union). For Deudney, in sum, the Philadelphian system furthers the legacy of the classical republican tradition in the material context of new technologies of destruction and extended geography.

Deudney's materialist argument captures a fundamental logic of freedom in an interdependent world. Addressing the challenges of a transborder nature by delegating power upward, the state is not only answering the needs of its people, it is also ensuring their freedom from both empirical and structural forms of violence. To return to my previous examples, one can think of these forms of violence in terms of the concrete events of climate change (such as floods and drought), the empirical consequences of capital accumulation (such as financial runs, sudden food price hikes, or pharmaceutical cartels), or the structural logic of nuclear arms (the domination of peoples by fear). The political duty to govern these empirical and structural forms of violence can be made not simply in terms of need but in the name of "republican freedom" qua freedom from arbitrary interference

or domination. Deudney's republican security theory thus offers us an account of political authority, in the context of security-efficacy and polity-size, which marries the national with the global through the concept of post-Machiavellian republican civic freedom.

The second reason why political responsibility in an interdependent world is best articulated, to my mind, in republican terms requires further analysis of the concept of freedom within republican federalism itself. Deudney, for one, distances himself from the republican tradition of civic humanism due to what he considers its communitarian tendencies.[34] His republican security theory has been sharply criticized for emptying out the normative social content of international relations by so doing.[35] Whether this particular criticism is justified or not, one can further explicate the concept of freedom (in the global/national nexus that interests me here with regard to political authority) without unduly advocating the political virtue of citizens. One of the staunchest defenders of civic republicanism, Quentin Skinner, argues that the political liberty of the classical republican tradition, running from Niccolò Machiavelli to James Harrington and Richard Price, is founded on state nondomination. A free citizen must, in other words, live in a free state. Reflecting on the relation between republican political theory and international relations, Skinner concludes:

> With this chain of reasoning [individual freedom←free state←independent states], we arrive at a conclusion of considerable importance for the proper conduct of international affairs. The argument I have been outlining gives us strong reasons for requiring that no state—and no agency of comparable power—should dominate or seek to dominate any other state. We have been presented with a powerful principle for the better regulation of relations between individual states.[36]

This far-reaching conclusion on freedom leaves, however, the relation between the global and the national under-theorized. Since global threats undermine free states and place the weight of domination on individual life, we need a better articulation of the relationship between local and distant political arrangements.

In an excellent article, Miriam Ronzoni has recently argued that a people's self-determination can only be exercised effectively if national sovereign institutions are *supplemented* by global political arrangements.[37] The argument appears close to Deudney's above, but it is explicitly made in terms of the republican tradition of social self-determination from which Deudney takes distance. If a state wishes to develop its own internal sovereignty in a globalized age, it may need,

Richard Beardsworth

precisely, to cede its external sovereignty. Ronzoni considers the example of tax evasion in a global economy. In order to have mastery over its own economic development, a state requires global corporate tax regulation. Without a *supranational* regulatory institution, transnational capital flows and tax havens prevent national self-governance. Ronzoni advocates positive interference in national sovereignty in order that social freedom from the arbitrary interference of international capital is regained. As with Deudney, but at a social level, Ronzoni maintains that the concept of republican freedom can only be articulated in an interdependent world through the relation between the global and the national. The republican language of individual and collective freedom from domination provides, I suggest, both the terms of this articulation and, for my argument, the terms of authority through which political responsibility and political duty can be legitimated. Those who fulfill their political responsibility by answering the needs of the people are not therefore being *task-effective alone*. By upholding the people's welfare, those fulfilling their political duty to govern can be considered to maintain the polity free from domination.

   "Domination" here is understood broadly to include a range of global issues, on a sliding scale from hard to soft security threats that potentially lead to domination. In terms of both hard issues such as the threats of nuclear arms, of climate change, and of global economic instability, and (now, after such a broadening) softer issues such as the domination of global capital over popular sovereignty and social justice, national political responsibility lies in constructing appropriate political architecture that not only manages empirical and structural forms of violence but, in doing so, keeps its citizens free (civic republicanism). I draw four conclusions from bringing together the argument of task-efficacy and that of republican political authority.

   First, if one understands transborder events in terms of either empirical or structural violence, one can place the "first" freedoms of security and the more "derived" freedoms of a common good like social justice within a republican logic of freedom as nondomination, appropriate to global interdependence.

   Second, in order for a state to provide for the needs of its people, it must at the same time respond (if able) to the needs of other peoples so that these other needs *do not come to dominate its own polity and rid its citizenry of their freedom*. This argument is amoral from the perspective of motivation. Its republican dialectic between self and other is nevertheless critical, I suggest, to the present political imperative to tie national interest to global interest. Helping foreigners in need

beyond the borders of the nation-state maintains republican freedom *within* the borders of the state.[38] (A key issue-area here, with regard to both economic and climate change security, is migration.[39])

Third, given the global dimension of specific governance problems, the freedoms associated with the modern nation-state can only be achieved through the institutional division of popular sovereignty. On issues requiring global-wide cooperation and regulation, this division entails global political arrangements and national cession of sovereignty upwards. On global issues that can be best managed either technically or more locally, this division entails the establishment of functional agencies or the devolution of power in the form of subnational political arrangements. Supranational, technocratic, or subnational formations do not, therefore, replace the *polity* of the nation-state; in their different architectural responses to different global issues, they can be considered to maintain the progressive liberal politics of the modern state under the historically new conditions of interdependence. I argue that it is, therefore, both incumbent upon those who have political responsibility at the national level to assume this necessity and incumbent upon empirically driven normative international-relations theory to provide the intellectual framework through which this nationally led assumption is made feasible.

Fourth, and last, one should ask how the above argument about legitimacy contends with the immediate counterargument that supranational authority severely weakens such localized legitimacy by instituting new forms of technocratic and elitist domination over democratic self-determination. Since the issue of supranational political accountability is critical given the current ideological predominance of neoliberal thinking and in light of the global financial crisis of 2007–2008 and its socioeconomic consequences, a response to this question requires more space than that of the other conclusions.

The argument that supranational authority cannot be democratic (and that cession of sovereignty is therefore dangerous) assumes that democracy is only provided through the proximity of electoral representation and participation. As the sociologist Pierre Rosanvallon has argued, however, given the complexity of contemporary social functions, modern democracies are increasingly "decentralized."[40] Courts, commissions, and review bodies that are isolated from direct public oversight constitute, for example, a growing part of our national democratic life, ensuring, in principle, the impartiality of both the different branches of government and market society. This pluralization of authority not only works with

Richard Beardsworth

the republican pattern of political authority through mutual constraint; it suggests that the delegation of authority sideways to international institutions and upward to supranational authority so that global-national problems are effectively managed could be understood as *part* of this pluralization of powers.[41] Consequently, from this perspective any cession of sovereignty does not have to constitute a trade-off between efficacy and democratic legitimacy. It can be considered to anticipate new forms of democratic legitimacy that are based on what is *already* happening within the nation-state. For this normative argument to be persuasive, however, it is critical that international institutions that already have supranational authority, like the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions, become more accountable through greater power sharing with developing countries and specific stakeholders and through procedures of internal review. That there is equivalence between decision-makers and decision-takers regarding global problems is impossible; that there is social ownership of power structures through the multiplication of government levels between the global and the subnational domains constitutes an important political challenge of our time.

Global Political Responsibility and Leadership

It is often said that the greatest dilemma of global governance is the self-interest of the powerful and the corresponding "need to persuade them against their perceived self-interest."[42] I argue that those who govern have the rule-bound political duty to cede power to higher or lower levels of authority in order to continue governing their polity in the first place. However, political responsibility to one's people is clearly not just rule-bound. It also concerns the discretion to judge when delegation of power is required and what form it should take. Together with state capacity, it necessitates, in turn, the ability on the part of the decision-maker *to assume the risk* of ceding sovereignty in the name of national sovereignty. I would argue that this judgment and the willingness to take such a risk constitute the political virtues of state leadership in a globalized era.

The normative landscape within which empirical political choice is made is characterized by four major traits: (1) it is a political duty of government to cede power where and when it no longer wields power effectively in order to rebuild executive capacity and political agency; (2) this cession involves political leadership, and national political leadership will be increasingly characterized by the judgment of this cession (or its refusal); (3) this judgment necessarily entails embodying trade-offs (assuming, as part of political responsibility, the choice

between contending priorities); and 4) this judgment will necessarily be inconsistent, given that it involves embodying "dirty hands," to use Walzer's term (assuming as part of political responsibility the inability to be consistent in a complex world). The classical republican tradition is again helpful for forging the appropriate normative language by which to frame both these contemporary political choices and the dilemmas and paradoxes they involve.

For the Machiavelli of the *Discourses*, political virtue defines the state practice of tailoring civic freedom to a particular time, context, and circumstance.[43] This tailoring involves prudential judgment, self-restraint, and risk-taking; and such risk-taking, in turn, involves *assuming* one's judgment and risks, that is, accepting responsibility for the line one draws in the political field of conflicting forces (in Nietzschean terms). The ability to tie the national interest to the global interest and to articulate the independence of national sovereignty *through* its dependence on "post-national" political arrangements requires these virtues. The latter virtues are not moral, but explicitly political. They entail the appropriate act of sovereign self-restraint: that the delegation of power upward, sideways, or downward, in order to retain state efficacy and legitimacy, is the most politically responsible choice in *x* circumstances.

To take an example that brings back the question of global domination, in the context of the global regulation of tax havens, it is prudent for both advanced and developing states to cede sovereignty over matters of fiscal transparency, as long as there is oversight over the supranational fiscal body mandated to report and control tax evasion.[44] If one is the leader of a developing country, it is probably prudent *not* to cede sovereignty to the IMF regarding capital controls but to develop a domestic industrial policy, staggering integration into the global economy on one's own terms.[45] Indeed, ceding sovereignty on this issue has permitted new forms of global domination. If, however, the IMF and the WTO come to understand global financial and trade policy in more developmental terms, the decision to cede sovereignty on the part of developing states *in return for* greater financial stability and trade reciprocity would become a risk worth taking. To decide whether industrial development should cede priority to climate change mitigation requires taking another risk regarding freedom from domination. This risk would require delegating power to regions and cities and assuming the national consequences of deferring economic growth. I could go on, but the general point is, I hope, clear. To assume the requirements of political leadership today, a revived republican notion of political virtue is needed—one that embodies republican self-

Richard Beardsworth

restraint in the choice to cede national power (or not) to higher and/or lower units of restrained efficacy.

Clarifications of Argument

This article is not advocating the replacement of moral responsibility in world politics by global political responsibility. The move would simply annul the reality and challenge of moral agency and make nonsense of my arguments on the inextricability of moral and political interests and the political responsibility of aligning moral responsibility with perceived self-interest. I am arguing, rather, in the context of the internal decision structures of government, for greater focus on the *logic of political responsibility in a globalized age w*ith regard to the self/other, national/non-national dichotomy—a dichotomy that blocks global collective action. This logic covers some of the *content* of moral responsibility (for example, toward the needs of foreigners), but it pitches the argument in the form of political power and responsibility rather than in that of moral interest and responsibility. It places the responsibility of executive officers who wield power and make decisions within both a rule-bound and discretionary logic of political efficacy, legitimacy, will, and self-restraint, and not a contingent logic of moral obligation, interest, and advocacy. It thereby argues for a major amplification of domestic political responsibility in response to the empirical challenges of globalization, and it conceives present cosmopolitan arguments for global governance in terms of national responsibility, judgment, and risk.

In order to make the specificity of my argument as clear as possible, let me underscore what this argument is *not* saying in the context of important contemporary realignments of national interest with responsibility:

This article is not arguing for an additive logic of national interest and moral responsibility, but for a reconceptualization of political responsibility so that action toward others in need is considered as *politically binding*. This reconceptualization places political responsibility in an effective and legitimate marriage between the national and the global.

It is not concerned to replace, in Habermasian vein, the failure of political will at a global level with the juridification of global responsibilities through international law so that action toward others in need is considered as legally binding.[46] This future legal duty is critical to the notion of a global public realm that has transcended empirical and structural violence. It is only possible politically,

however, on the condition that leading countries in the world have *already* reconceptualized their own understanding of political power. It is this *political* precondition that interests me here.

It is not making the argument that national interest be considered an ideational issue. The soft constructivist argument, *contra* both realism and neoliberalism, that national interest is a social construction, not simply a material given, is persuasive. I am arguing, rather, that the notion of domestic political responsibility needs to be reconstructed in response to concrete, empirical global challenges in order to retain its very value. I am presenting an empirically driven normative argument for a specific form of institutional responsibility that is ultimately underpinned by a republican federal argument.

It is not arguing for a cosmopolitan ethics of special responsibilities on the part of the most powerful toward the most vulnerable, but for a politics of domestic power that includes the world's most vulnerable in the very definition of its responsibility toward the needs of *its own citizens*. *Contra* nationalism, it is this last argument that is politically most effective.

Finally, it is not arguing for a supranational politics that *transcends* national structures but for a political articulation *between* the national and the global. This articulation assumes the global challenges to the nation-state within the lexically ordered languages of task-efficacy and republican freedom and self-restraint. The political arrangements (supranational or otherwise) it looks to *within* these languages depend on the matter-at-hand (functionalism); they are, at the same time, oriented toward the normative goal of freedom in a complex world (republicanism).

Conclusion

The central aim of this article has been to refocus morally informed reflection on international relations onto the problematic of political responsibility in a globalized age. While calls to the moral responsibility of political agents such as states remain important, sorting out a normative landscape of political duty and political responsibility to global collective action is equally, if not more, important at this historical juncture—at least regarding global challenges. I have laid out a consistent theoretical narrative of political efficacy, legitimacy, and leadership to achieve this objective. I will conclude on a general point regarding the relation between the moral and the political in this article.

Richard Beardsworth

I make a clear distinction between the moral and the political. Moral responsibility toward others entails, rightly, the fact that one can always do otherwise. But this contingency of the moral covers over political inaction toward critical global challenges. Political responsibility (within which is embedded the concept of political duty) concerns, in contrast, both rule-bound action and discretionary choice. To argue that it is the political duty of those who govern to address global challenges both due to the effective capacity they wield and in the name of those they govern offers a normative language that has purchase on practical politics, specifically the practice of political leadership. This distinction does not entail, however, that state leaders should not attempt to align moral responsibility with national self-interest nor act out of moral interest alone (although, as section two suggested, the last is highly improbable in a subglobal system of states). I have argued rather that the ends of moral responsibility toward noncitizens and of national responsibility to one's own citizens can overlap in a political logic of efficacy and republican freedom, and that it is worthwhile pursuing this limited overlapping for the sake of global collective action. While this convergence may well become, incrementally, superannuated by more cosmopolitan-minded state behavior in the future, my point concerns the promotion of global political deeds now. To make an empirically driven normative case for political responsibility through a marriage between the national and the global constitutes one argument toward that political end.

NOTES

[1] Following general usage, I understand "global politics" as a politics concerning the world as a whole and "world politics" as international politics within the world. The discipline of international relations is abbreviated "IR."

[2] The four challenges most referred to are: nuclear weaponry, global warming, the functioning of the global economy, and development/sustainability. Given their systemic global dimension, this article is focused on these four challenges. Specific issues (and their priority) within each challenge are taken up as the argument develops.

[3] Amid a plethora of examples, with regard to the failure to stop genocide in Rwanda in 1994, to complete the Doha round of world trade negotiations in 2006, to forge a new global agreement on differentiated responsibilities at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009, and to intervene in Syria from 2012, Bill Clinton, Kofi Annan, Gordon Brown, Barack Obama, Catherine Ashton, and their delegated spokespeople have consistently *foregrounded* the notion of "our moral responsibility to act." The notion is now directed toward middle-income countries, especially regarding climate change mitigation.

[4] A former critic of cosmopolitanism, the philosopher David Miller has expounded the justificatory terms of national responsibility toward undue human suffering from a communitarian perspective in his *National Responsibility and Global Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). While indebted to his argument, I consider that the gap between national responsibility and global problems needs to be bridged in more ambitious terms of scope and justification.

[5] "Cosmopolitan" political responsibility points to the *moral* side of the choice informing the assumption of political responsibility toward global threats and challenges; "global" political responsibility underscores the *political* nature of this choice.

⁶ Compare Iris Young's *Responsibility for Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) where the specificity of political responsibility lies not in government action, but in the civic taking-up of shared responsibility for (making change in) structures of injustice (p. 92 and p. 146). For Young, a state has too many interests in these structures to be politically responsible in this sense (p. 112 and p. 151). While I believe, among others, that aligning moral responsibility toward others with state self-interest is possible (see section two), my major argument here concerns understanding global action for all in terms of national responsibility for self, and vice versa. The conclusion returns to this last point.

⁷ On the evolution of the concept of collective responsibility, see Larry May and Stacey Hoffman, eds., *Collective Responsibility: Five Decades of Debate in Theoretical and Applied Ethics* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991). On the application of the concept to IR theory, see Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002); Ariel Colonomos, *Moralizing International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); and Toni Erskine, "Locating Responsibility: The Problem of Moral Agency in International Relations," in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 699–707.

⁸ See Peter French, "The Corporation as a Moral Person," in *Collective Responsibility*, pp. 133–49, especially pp. 141–44.

⁹ Toni Erskine, "Assigning Responsibilities to Institutional Moral Agents," in her *Can Institutions Have Responsibilities?: Collective Moral Agency and International Relations* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 19–40, p. 24.

¹⁰ Toni Erskine, "'Blood on the UN's Hands'? Assigning Duties and Apportioning Blame to an Intergovernmental Organisation," *Global Society* 18, no. 1 (2004), pp. 21–42.

¹¹ For Kantians, a "moral fact" exists in the realm of possibility and/or feeling.

¹² Stanley Hoffmann made the point almost two decades ago in his *Ethics and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 1996).

¹³ Compare Chris Brown's comments in the introduction to *Practical Judgement in International Political Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁴ See Richard Beardsworth, "Political Vision in the Discipline of International Relations," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 40, no. 3 (2012), pp. 538–58.

¹⁵ See Brown, *Practical Judgement in International Political Theory*, pp. 222–35; Aidan Hehir, *The Responsibility to Protect: Rhetoric, Reality and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Jean-Baptiste. J. Vilmer, *La Guerre au Nom de l'Humanite: Tuer ou Laisser Mourir* (Paris: PUF, 2012).

¹⁶ Robert Jackson, *Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 22.

¹⁷ See Leslie Green, "The Duty to Govern," *Legal Theory* 13, no. 3–4 (2007), pp. 165–85; on functionalism, see David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1946). For an excellent account of the functional approach to government, see Cornelia Navari, "David Mitrany and International Functionalism," in David Long and Peter Wilson, eds., *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) pp. 215–46; see also Lucian Ashworth and David Long, eds., *New Perspectives on International Functionalism* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

¹⁸ For the definition of republican freedom as one of nondomination, see Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also Steven Slaughter, *Liberty Beyond Neo-Liberalism: A Republican Critique of Liberal Governance in A Globalizing Age* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). For a republican, I am "dominated" if my ability to make choices is interfered with not simply concretely, but also structurally. Institutions like government are therefore necessary conditions of freedom in order to prevent structural partiality. For an analysis of republican self-restraint, see Daniel Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), especially pp. 48–52 on "negarchical political structures." I take up the concept of political restraint in federal republican political arrangements in the section "Political Responsibility as Republican Authority in a Globalized Age."

¹⁹ The principle of subsidiarity, as constitutionalized by the European Union, is becoming an important one for the practice of post-national politics—that is, the principle that centralized power is limited in favor of matters being resolved at the lowest possible level. The federal republican idea dovetails with this principle on issues that can be resolved locally. Its emphasis is nevertheless on interlocking, multilevel governance responses to threats of domination; not on the priority of levels of government closest to the citizen. The distinction is small, but critical. This article does not, however, examine it as such.

Richard Beardsworth

For two contrasting views on subsidiarity or republicanism as the normative core of freedom in an age of increasing interdependence, see Michelle Evans and Augusto Zimmermann, eds., *Global Perspectives on Subsidiarity* (Perth: Springer, 2014) and James Bohman, *Democracy across Borders: From Dêmos to Dêmoi* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007).

[20] National responsibility to one's people concerns political duty toward its needs; national leadership concerns assuming the implications of carrying out this duty and, therefore, the political risks that such a duty entails in a globalized age.

[21] Green, "The Duty to Govern."

[22] Ibid., p. 166 and p. 171, my emphasis.

[23] Ibid., p. 168.

[24] For this distinction between internal and external sovereignty, see Robert Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 39–49.

[25] My argument is a functionalist one about efficacy of means to attain order for peoples. I do understand that stepping stones are required to make this argument feasible, but the argument is here analytical (given the problem addressed) and normative (what should be done if this end is sought). I agree that to convince states to cede military sovereignty is a very difficult issue, and the normative framework is not in place to argue for it in practical ethical terms (that is, in terms of a supranational preemption of a nuclear explosion before its event, given its catastrophic consequences for the human species).

[26] Inis Claude, "The Common Defense and Great-Power Responsibilities," *Political Science Quarterly* 101, no. 5, (1986), pp. 719–32; Bruce Jones, Carlos Pascual, and Stephen John Stedman, *Power and Responsibility* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2009).

[27] Mlada Bukovansky et al., *Special Responsibilities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[28] For a recent strong reflection on political specificity, see Bernard Williams, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[29] See Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka, "The Nonproliferation Complex," *Ethics & International Affairs* 27, no. 3 (2013), pp. 329–48.

[30] See Robert Falkner, John Vogler, and Hannes Stephan, "International Climate Policy after Copenhagen: Toward a 'Building Blocks' Approach," in David Held, Marika Theros, and Angus Fane-Hervey, eds., *The Governance of Climate Change* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), pp. 202–22.

[31] Green only *concludes* with a consent-based theory of governance: Green, "The Duty to Govern," p. 183.

[32] Deudney, *Bounding Power*, p. 27.

[33] Ibid., pp. 161–87.

[34] Ibid., pp. 66–67, where republican security theory is set against "republican revivalism." This opposing of traditions is confusing since it does not distinguish between the republican tradition of *civic humanism* (taken up by J. G. A. Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*) and the neo-Roman tradition of *civic republicanism*, advanced by the work of Quentin Skinner, Philip Pettit, and Maurizio Viroli. See Frank Lovett, "Republicanism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013 ed.*, Edward Zalta, ed., plato.stanford.edu /archives/spr2013/entries/republicanism. The tradition of civic republicanism, more focused on institutions as a condition of freedom than on "neo-Aristotelian" participation in the polity, appears compatible with Deudney's liberal republicanism.

[35] See William Scheuerman, *The Realist Case for Global Reform* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), pp. 136–43.

[36] Quentin Skinner, "On the Slogans of Republican Political Theory," *European Journal of Political Theory* 9, no. 1 (2010), pp. 95–102, p. 101.

[37] Miriam Ronzoni, "Two Conceptions of State Sovereignty and Their Implications for Global Design," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 15, no. 5 (2012), pp. 573–91.

[38] The point is political: it does *not* entail the consequence that a state will refuse to intervene to aid foreigners in need *unless* it is in its national interest to do so. Rather, it contends that, to one side of the moral argument, it is politically appropriate to help foreigners in need because, without doing so, one's own freedom is jeopardized in an interdependent world. Assuming political responsibility can then, *as a consequence*, be also about aligning moral responsibility towards others with perceived self-interest (compare Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, p. 146).

[39] In a republican vein, Paul Collier has recently suggested limits on immigration to secure simultaneously social cohesion in the host country and development in the country of origin. See *Exodus: Immigration and Multiculturalism in the 21st Century* (London: Allen Lane, 2013).

[40] Pierre Rosanvallon, *La Légitimité Démocratique* (Paris: Seuil, 2008). For the argument that there exists no democratic deficit in the EU polity anyway in comparison with existing democratic institutions, see Andrew Moravcsik, "Is there a 'Democratic Deficit' in World Politics? A Framework for Analysis," *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 2 (2004), pp. 360–63.

[41] Compare Deudney's term of "recessed sovereignty" in his *Bounding Power* (pp. 51–52), which refers to democratic political arrangements based on the separation of political authority from popular will and on mutual restraint.

[42] Ian Goldin, *Divided Nations: Why Global Governance is Failing, and What We Can Do about It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 111.

[43] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (London: Penguin Classics, 1983), Book Three, where Machiavelli argues that the rise to greatness of cities is founded, to one side of luck, on the leader's self-rule. See also Quentin Skinner, "Machiavelli on *Virtū* and the Maintenance of Liberty," in his *Visions of Politics: Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 160–85.

[44] One good suggestion is a supervisory body mandated by a special UN committee made up of rotating member states. This would therefore be a hybrid body of cosmopolitan-minded technocrats accountable to a nonpermanent supervisory body within an intergovernmental organization.

[45] Ha-Joon Chang, *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* (London: Anthem Press, 2003) and Dani Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy* (New York: W. W Norton & Co, 2011).

[46] See Jürgen Habermas, "Kant's Idea of Perpetual Peace, with the Benefit of Two Hundred Years' Hindsight," in James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, eds., *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1997); and Jürgen Habermas, *The Divided West* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

Richard Beardsworth