

UC Irvine

UC Irvine Previously Published Works

Title

The promise and problems of internationalism

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6cr2p46d>

Journal

Global Governance, 5

ISSN

1075-2846

Author

Lynch, C

Publication Date

1999

Peer reviewed

The Promise and Problems of Internationalism



Cecelia Lynch

Internationalism in the twentieth-century West is seen by its advocates as the antithesis of both nationalism and isolationism. It denotes a cosmopolitan, nonparochial stance toward obligation beyond borders. As Alejandro Colas puts it, internationalism can be treated as “the concrete political expression of cosmopolitan theory.”¹ Internationalism has been conditioned by philosophical debates regarding cosmopolitanism while it has confronted the political backlash against involvement beyond one’s borders, usually termed isolationism. It has also been conditioned by debates over the role of militarism in the life of states and interpretations of the requirements of human dignity (in the form of “rights talk”) and economic equity and well-being.² Most versions of internationalism promote the development of multilateral mechanisms as the primary institutional embodiment of cosmopolitan goals and the primary political means to realize peace, human rights, and economic well-being worldwide.

Internationalists, therefore, engage in both political philosophizing and political praxis. In both thought and policy, they have long formulated particular answers to the “inside/outside” problematique of sovereignty in the global order.³ This problematique resides in the tensions that exist in delineating the boundaries—political, economic, social, and cultural—of the state. These tensions are present, for example, in attempts to seal off the state from the conflicts and threats present in interactions with external political and economic entities. Internationalists reject these attempts as autarkic and isolationist. But the problem of sovereignty in the global order is also present in attempts to create an ideal political community “inside” the state while externalizing or projecting the values, authority, boundaries, culture, or mode of production of this ideal community “outside” to the international polity. These are the tensions of concern for internationalists.

Internationalists thus extol themselves for what they assert is their nonparochial view of international relations but conversely are criticized for masking parochialism, in a paraphrased combination of E. H. Carr and Robert Cox, in a cloak of problem-solving moralism.⁴ Critics of twentieth-century internationalism thus charge its proponents with an unquestioning adherence to liberal ideology, utopian leanings, or insufficient attention to

localized or domestic demands of nationalism, identity, and self-interest. They also charge internationalists with overreliance on multilateral forms of conflict resolution and problem solving. In order to arrive at a judicious assessment of internationalism, both its aspirations and contradictions need further exploration.

Although internationalism, in this sense, remains primarily a Western construct,⁵ even in the West the term does not have a single, consistent meaning. Rather, it has gone through several significant changes during the twentieth century, providing bountiful empirical fodder for any discussion of power, morality, and cooperation in world politics. Internationalism is a concept that has been actively claimed and contested by social groups vying to legitimate particular articulations of obligation beyond national borders. What do these changes mean, especially for the prospects for a coherent internationalist stance today?

I pose three questions for thinking about the problems and possibilities of the internationalist project. First, following Micheline Ishay's recent work on internationalist political thought, I ask whether an internationalist stance can ever be more than, or escape from, nationalist biases, moral codes, and therefore limitations.⁶ Second, following neo-Marxist and Gramscian critiques of liberal internationalism, I ask whether an internationalist stance can be nonhegemonic. More particularly, given the historical record of the twentieth century, can such a stance escape overt U.S. hegemony? To these two questions we should add a third, however. If internationalism historically has been plagued by national biases and undue hegemonic influence, then what should be the content of a sophisticated internationalist stance (i.e., one that transcends parochial biases and hegemonic interests) toward the state? I argue that this question is overlooked, yet an answer to it is essential for a coherent and viable internationalism to develop today. Given that considerations of peace, humanitarianism, and economic welfare combine to comprise the internationalist agenda, a sophisticated internationalist stance cannot simply ignore the state. Rather, it must call the state to accountability in ensuring social and economic welfare while looking to international norms to place controls on statist militarism.

I first discuss several treatments of internationalism in recent literature. Historians, especially of the early post-World War II period, often assume that internationalism is easily definable, speaking of its "triumph" in the post-World War II United States.⁷ Yet recent analyses of the term in international relations and social theory treat internationalism more as a cluster concept and focus on its dangers in political thought and praxis even while attempting to recover its positive aspects. These analyses leave us with important questions with which to assess the empirical record of social contestation over the term.

In the following sections, I delve into the historical debates over internationalism during the early-twentieth-century, Cold War, and contemporary periods. In order to obtain a firmer grasp of the relationship between

the component aspects of internationalism and their implications for the present, I first look at pre-1945 internationalism and then the post-World War II redefinition of the term. Internationalism in the early part of the century embodied tensions between an emergent humanitarianism, a sense of obligation in minimizing economic inequalities, and a vociferous anti-statist antimilitarism. Nevertheless, internationalists promoting each of these agendas channeled tensions through loose collective agreement on using the League of Nations to resolve problems. By 1945 or 1946, most of these elements of debate were subjugated to redefined notions of *collective security*, soon to be transformed in the West into an equation of internationalism with the willingness to intervene militarily abroad. Those who had articulated broader claims for the term in the prewar era in a sense went underground, leaving internationalism to be defined by interventionist liberal elites. In the United States, these elites advocated participation in global international institutions, especially the UN and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as long as such participation coincided with their perception of "American" interests. Although European internationalism had its counterparts to U.S. interventionism in British, French, Portuguese, and Dutch willingness to intervene in colonies and ex-colonies, the dominance of the superpower conflict ensured U.S. liberal internationalism pride of place during the Cold War. Since 1989, the meaning of internationalism is once again a subject of debate. The post-Cold War period provides us with an extraordinary reopening for contestation over the meaning of internationalism, similar to the contestation that occurred from the turn of the century through the 1930s, although with new features. But it also carries with it strong elements of the post-World War II interventionism, this time around without a clear bogey and, hence, without a centralizing focus.

The experiences of both the early twentieth century and the Cold War continue to reverberate in internationalist thought. The tensions between them indicate that contemporary internationalism is not predicated upon a single position that might provide a coherent guide to action in the present. In the final section, the article compares four post-Cold War forms of internationalism with earlier forms and begins to distill the primary issues at stake for internationalism in the contemporary era. At present, each form of contemporary internationalism confronts difficulties in providing an adequate answer to all three questions posed above. The struggle over the meaning of internationalism today will help determine the forms and legitimacy of multilateral mechanisms in the future.

Disciplinary Definitions of Internationalism

Treatments of internationalism in international relations and social theory are not as frequent as we might expect. Nevertheless, there have been

several significant attempts to develop a critical yet sympathetic approach to internationalism's historical project. I focus here on two of these. Fred Halliday, for example, resuscitated the expression in a 1988 article in which he brought forth in clear terms how internationalism "bridges the categories of the analytical—how the world does work—and the normative—how it should work."⁸ Halliday argues helpfully that internationalism, "while often phrased in unhelpfully facile terms, . . . raises issues of considerable analytical and normative value. It is, for all its deficiencies, a standing rejection of the world of states complacent in their sovereignty, inflated with pride and national conceit, and prone to war and hatred."⁹ Halliday focuses on three forms of post-World War II internationalism: *liberal*, *hegemonic*, and *revolutionary*. Liberal internationalism entails an optimistic belief that processes of integration can result in greater cooperation, peace, and prosperity.¹⁰ Hegemonic internationalism, as Halliday notes, was formerly called imperialism, and embodies the position that "the only possible and desirable way for . . . integration to take place" is asymmetrically and unequally, under the direction and influence of a hegemon. Revolutionary internationalism, inversely, seeks to overthrow liberal and hegemonic orders through the means of assistance and collaboration between revolutionary groups.¹¹

All of Halliday's three types of internationalism share, in his view, a symbiotic relationship with *internationalization*, the process(es) by which the world's states and societies are becoming ever more integrated. Thus he defines internationalism as a "cluster concept" that incorporates three broad assertions: first, that the world is being internationalized through economic processes and communications; second, that these processes result in a greater potential for cooperation; and third, that this trend is desirable.¹² Halliday points out, of course, that contemporary internationalization has been "a contradictory process," between processes of integration and sentiments of division and competition in the world.¹³ The upshot of any critique of internationalism, for Halliday, rests on a clear analysis of on whose terms and for whose benefit processes of international integration are taking place. For Halliday, liberal internationalism ignores such questions, hegemonic internationalism believes that the good of the hegemon is the good of all, and revolutionary internationalism has been broken up by nationalist conflict over interests and benefits.

Micheline Ishay's recent critique of internationalism, conducted through a tour of political philosophers from Giambattista Vico and Hugo Grotius to Johann Fichte and G. W. F. Hegel, focuses on essentially the same aspects and problems as Halliday. Ishay defines internationalism as "a process *sui generis* . . . shaped and transformed by progressive thinkers and historical events." For Ishay as for Halliday, internationalism assumes processes of internationalization. It also comprises two components: the "instrumental" (the analytical in Halliday's terms) and the normative.¹⁴

Ishay sees in the internationalist position something of value, that is, to be preserved, but emphasizes its particularistic traits. Internationalism, beginning with its historical incarnation in eighteenth-century liberalism, cannot be viewed as *opposed to* nationalism but rather only makes sense in relation to and even as an outgrowth of it.¹⁵

Ishay highlights the fact that, from the great international law theorists through Immanuel Kant and beyond, the internationalist presupposed the superiority of particular forms of the “national.” Successful contractual arrangements on the international level depended on strong states (resulting, for Grotius, in the unification of the Low Countries); Kant’s perpetual peace depended on a system of states in which each was organized according to a morally superior republicanism. But for Ishay, the inherent presupposition of an ideal nation carried inevitably the seeds of internationalism’s “betrayal.” Internationalism has led, in Halliday’s terms, first to an insouciant liberalism that ignores its false pretenses to harmony and later to a more brashly unapologetic hegemonic internationalism in the form of Napoleon, the late-nineteenth-century imperialists, and their twentieth-century equivalents. Internationalism, for Ishay, sets up the conditions for nationalist sentiment to breed. It thus bears the imprint of nationalist threats and uprisings.¹⁶

None of these authors employs the term *multilateralism*, which overlaps with internationalism in significant ways yet remains an incomplete fulfillment of the internationalist project. Multilateralism refers to the use of mechanisms—legal, military, economic—that entail some form of cooperation between at least three sovereign entities; that is, an institutional form that qualitatively as well as quantitatively goes beyond a bilateral relationship.¹⁷ In practice, multilateralism has become the pragmatic tool of internationalists, who seek to incorporate as much of the global community as possible in institutions such as the UN and its agencies. But because multilateral mechanisms are often largely regional in organization (e.g., NATO, the Organization of American States [OAS], the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA], etc.), they can fall short of internationalist goals. More ominous, where a hegemon or particular nationalist consciousness dominates multilateral institutions, they can work against the promise held out by cosmopolitan internationalism.

The goal of a normative vision that is more than self-serving and that meets the needs of a humane, cosmopolitan world is the positive vision of internationalism. Yet Ishay’s analysis essentially forces us to confront the question of whether it is possible to develop an internationalist political thought that is not, in the end, parochial, with a parochial morality in tow. This is essentially the same question posed by E. H. Carr fifty years ago with regard to internationalist political praxis, but it is one that still needs to be taken note of by those today who wish to develop a world ordered by cosmopolitan norms yet sensitive to cultural and ethnic differences.

Halliday's classification of types of internationalism also reminds us both that the term originated as an expression of working-class solidarity across territorial boundaries and that this understanding was taken over, if not subverted, by liberal and hegemonic forms that pose ethical and normative obstacles to achieving the internationalist project. Because he relates his typology to historical movements and epochs, Halliday ties internationalism's parochialism explicitly to the U.S. post-World War II experience. Yet Halliday's typology inaccurately assumes that all forms of internationalism view processes of internationalization as inherently good. As we shall see, interwar internationalists reacted *against* the globalization of weapons production, trade, and use, while some types of contemporary internationalists strenuously oppose the internationalization of liberal economic norms and practices. Nevertheless, hegemonic internationalism poses dangers that the U.S. experience during the Cold War illustrates.

These and other critiques of internationalism do not, however, provide guideposts for what a normative vision that avoids pitfalls and parochialism might be. In part, this is because of the empirical record and because struggles over the meaning of the term have not yet been able to rise above quasi-nationalist points of view. Moreover, as contemporary forms of internationalism show perhaps more clearly than past forms, a sophisticated internationalist stance must not only transcend the pitfalls of parochialism and hegemony but must also develop a stance toward the state that utilizes its capacity to ensure economic and social well-being. The following section describes the move from multiple, contested internationalist visions in the early-twentieth-century West to the triumphant internationalism celebrated in the aftermath of World War II, as a prelude to reopening the question of the content and ethical implications of internationalism in the contemporary era. The first task is to recover the early twentieth century's multiple uses of the term.

Early-Twentieth-Century Internationalisms

Early-twentieth-century claims on the term *internationalism*, from outward appearances, moved astonishingly quickly from socialist proclamations of international workers' solidarity to legalist moves to enshrine the rule of law through a League of Nations.¹⁸ This period is generally interpreted and critiqued as a "move to institutions" that was largely based on a move to an unworkable ethics. E. H. Carr's reading of the necessity of moral reasoning in international affairs along with his insistence on the impossibility of carrying it out during the interwar period have shaped almost all subsequent understandings of the "lessons" we might draw from the period.¹⁹ For Carr, internationalist ethics during the period are marred by an unreflective utopianism, whether inspired by socialism, pacifism, or legalism.

All promoted a “rule of law” and a moralism that rode roughshod over inevitable intrusions of nationalist sentiment and prudent self-interest.

But Carr’s assessment of interwar internationalism, judicious in some respects, is also seriously lacking.²⁰ Claims to internationalism during the early part of the century, rather than being unreflective and easily identifiable, were actively debated and contested by social groups grappling with understanding the causes and legacy of World War I. Legal scholar David Kennedy, in many ways following in the same vein as Carr in his critique of early-twentieth-century legalism, sheds light on the period while offering a different reading. For Kennedy, the move to legalism was made in part to contain the “excesses” of moral idealism found in much of the “internationalism” of the pre-World War I period. Socialism, feminism, and the like were thereby brought under the “order” of legal internationalism in the form of the League of Nations. For legalists, the point was to remove both the “chaos” of war and violence and the disruptions of utopian projects, such as those of more radical movements and groups. Thus, in Kennedy’s interpretation, the internationalist project began as a broad-based, ideologically diverse endeavor but was eventually contained and defined by legalists, who appropriated the idea and form of the League of Nations for their own mainstream, liberal project.²¹

Kennedy is therefore very helpful in recovering some of the contestation over the early-twentieth-century internationalist project. But the story does not end there. Liberals and legalists, pacifists and socialists came to basic agreement, despite their differences, on three aspects of an internationalist stance during the period between the world wars. First and foremost, internationalism meant an antistatist stance toward militarism. The use of force, internationalists agreed, was no longer to be the prerogative of individual states. Second, internationalism meant humanitarianism, embodied in famine relief for victims of World War I and attention to *rights of peoples* through self-determination. Third, it denoted a move toward economic egalitarianism, seen through debates over war debts and reparations as well as decolonization. Internationalists worked to promote all of these meanings through League mechanisms, although they also welcomed extra-League disarmament efforts, such as the series of interwar naval conferences.

Although any pretense to “revolutionary internationalism” quickly disappeared with World War I, demands to equalize economic opportunity and redistribute wealth remained strong in the war’s aftermath.²² Socialists and labor party advocates, as well as many women’s rights activists and even some liberals, cooperated in promoting an internationalism that took economic inequalities seriously. This internationalism, founded on demands for *economic justice*, remained suspicious of new forms of imperialism and worked for labor rights and decolonization.

In addition to a definition of internationalism that assumed obligations regarding economic welfare, early-twentieth-century internationalism

included a strong humanitarian element. Although not articulated as a system of individual *human rights*, this humanitarianism focused on two elements: famine relief, especially in the defeated countries, and promotion of the rights of peoples, taken over by the term *self-determination*.²³ Humanitarian internationalism thus promoted an obligation to decolonize and encourage moves toward independence while also encouraging an ethic of obligation to reverse instances of privation of the basics of livelihood, even on the part of former enemies.

Finally and most importantly, early-twentieth-century internationalism advocated a normative stance that opposed statist militarism and promoted an international response to aggression. This position embodied many well-known differences and contradictions: whether military force was ever legitimate and if so, under what circumstances; whether the international community should have its own air force; whether nonmilitary means of coercion were ever effective; and whether economic sanctions could be made effective, inevitably led to war, or entailed unjustifiable suffering. Until the Manchurian crisis of the early 1930s, this normative stance smoothed over differences between pacifists and liberal-legalists with regard to the use of military sanctions. Both types of internationalists agreed to promote compulsory arbitration through the World Court. They also agreed on according power to the League council to impose hierarchically ordered sanctions against aggressors, although for pacifists the threshold for sanctions was higher and the debate remained hypothetical until the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and the Spanish civil war in 1936.

Internationalist social groups during the early part of the century mistrusted state military capacity and advocated multilateral solutions through the League (even while remaining extremely disappointed at the constitution of a league of “nations” rather than “peoples”). Social groups promoted multilateral solutions through the League for problems of aggression, disarmament, moves toward self-determination and independence, and equality of economic opportunity. Although most internationalists of the 1920s and 1930s viewed state power primarily as something to be restrained, they did not completely ignore the state. In the economic and humanitarian realms, and to restrain great-power adventurism, they simultaneously promoted non-great-power state solidification through self-determination, decolonization, and equality of economic opportunity. In the industrial powers, they worked in tandem with labor through the years of the Great Depression to institutionalize the underpinnings of the welfare state.²⁴

Through the successive crises of the mid- to late 1930s, therefore, socialists, feminists, and others advocating specific forms of ethical conduct (e.g., pacifists and humanitarians) did not cede either the definition of internationalism or debate over its contents to the legalists. Legal internationalists

determined the “form” that order from chaos would take. But they could not determine the boundaries of ongoing debate over the content of internationalist claims or prevent that debate from occurring. Even the League of Nations, rather than remaining a bastion of legalist technocracy, acted as both a target and opportunity for “outsider” claims to continue to be heard. As early as 1921, League officials decided to facilitate “practical internationalism” through service to “private international organizations.”²⁵ Recognizing the importance of women’s support, they organized “systematic” contacts with national and transnational women’s organizations.²⁶ During the 1920s, the assistance of the League officials primarily consisted of information sharing and developing networks of women’s, church, and peace group contacts. They gave special status to the International Federation of League of Nations Societies (IFLNS), organizing meetings between IFLNS deputations and League officials and providing the group with the same documentation as member states. By the time of the World Disarmament Conference of 1932, these contacts had become a formidable tool for providing channels for unofficial group resolutions and proposals and for organizing disarmament campaigns in Geneva and elsewhere.²⁷

Interwar debates over the use of force eventually culminated, not once and for all but significantly and temporarily, in the neutrality debates of the late-1930s United States. At this point, pacifists and socialists began to lose control of the definition of the term. Activists in the U.S. Emergency Peace Campaign (made up of a coalition of pacifists and socialists), for example, did not see themselves as giving up the mantle of internationalism: indeed, they saw a stance of noninterventionism as the best means to develop a nonjudgmental, “internationalist” humanitarian stance.²⁸ But in advocating neutrality in the late 1930s, they ceded what had become the strongest defining point of debate, that is, developing the means to arrest German aggression. Moreover, a few peace groups (the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, the National Council for Prevention of War) accepted nominal contributions from right-wing groups such as the better-financed America First in their efforts to keep the United States neutral before 1941. Their motives for staying out of war differed widely from those of America First. They distrusted militarism and believed any war would reinforce great-power imperialism; America First promoted “an impregnable defense for America,” simultaneously rejecting all involvement abroad—military (until 1941) or humanitarian.²⁹

Nevertheless, the uneasy relationship of these internationalists with traditional isolationists discredited neutrality. This delegitimization of a neutral U.S. stance toward war resulted in a concomitant delegitimization of strictly nonmilitarist definitions of internationalism. The corresponding tactical and normative losses incurred by those advocating a broad internationalist position resulted first in an equation of internationalism with a

stance in favor of collective security against Germany, then in further narrowing the term to connote the approval of hegemonic interventionism. Both developments encouraged the postwar identification of internationalism with a particular multilateral form, that of military alliances (buttressed by economic arrangements); both resulted in merging internationalism with hegemonic state interests. Internationalism and multilateralism worked together symbiotically during this period in ways that demonstrated empirically the critique of Halliday, Ishay, and others. Internationalism cast away any pretense toward cosmopolitan and non-nationalist goals, and the most powerful multilateral institutions (NATO, the Bretton Woods economic institutions) buttressed its new truncated meaning.

“Realist” Internationalism: Post-World War II Hegemonic Liberalism

Diplomatic historians who study the United States in the period immediately before and after World War II have developed a definition of internationalism that accords with the goals and actions of a segment of the U.S. elite that took over the term during the neutrality debates of the late 1930s. Internationalism in this sense connotes at a minimum “the antithesis of isolationism, and in that sense it has involved a definite commitment or political entanglement through multinational treaties or governmental membership in international organizations.”³⁰ These included the UN, the Bretton Woods monetary institutions, and the NATO military alliance. But in practice, historians acknowledge that internationalism after World War II went much further. After 1945, U.S. elites adhered to the “new internationalism,” which was “essentially a rationale for the role of the United States as world policeman exercised through both unilateral and multilateral methods,” carried out most explicitly in Korea and Vietnam.³¹

After World War II, the internationalist understandings and activities of socialists, pacifists, and some human rights advocates in the West (especially in the United States) either went underground or reappeared under different appellations. Human rights became a focus for some, *nuclear pacifism* a goal of others. Even many liberal internationalists who had acted as strong supporters of collective security under the UN (for example, members of the American Association of the United Nations [AAUN]) sat uneasily in relation to an internationalism whose content was determined increasingly by perceptions of U.S. national (especially security) interests. These liberals continued to advocate strong U.S. participation in the UN, even while the concept of collective security all but disappeared from U.S. foreign policy debates. As Robert Accinelli points out, “Neither the similarities nor the differences between the new internationalism and the AAUN’s perspective can be overlooked. If the similarities help to

explain why citizens sympathetic toward a pro-U.N. internationalism could align themselves in the Cold War consensus, the differences in turn account for their hesitations, anxieties, and objections.”³² Liberals attempted to navigate their way through the narrowing of internationalist ethics, increasing their support of U.S. policy after 1950 (including throwing their support behind the use of the UN by the United States in the Korean War) in the unrealized hope that continued U.S. support for the UN would rein in the most unsavory aspects of U.S. Cold War politics.³³

In the United States and in the West, the Vietnam War began to reopen questions of humanitarian obligations and the morality of economic inequalities, but the prevailing definition of internationalism remained tied to the willingness to intervene in defense of particular notions of freedom. Vietnam represented the clearest expression of an internationalism that went beyond multilateral military cooperation through either the UN or NATO to accord with U.S. *interests* alone. The promotion of an internationalism still tied to national self-interest continued to be justified as the U.S. intervention in Vietnam wound down, illustrated by the suggestion of a prominent historian that “while national consciousness kept people apart and thus stood as an obstacle to internationalism, national interests, especially those related to peace, seemed in full accord with international goals.”³⁴

Thus, debate over internationalism as humanitarianism, socialism, or even collective security all but disappeared during the Cold War. In its place was an internationalism led and championed by U.S. definitions of interest and freedom, which entailed the willingness to intervene militarily abroad to ensure and defend both. Many diplomatic scholars of the period have assumed that internationalism’s primary historical task was to combat isolationism, originally conceived in terms of the unwillingness to provide military aid to the U.K. and France in 1939. In writing from the vantage point of emerging hegemonic internationalism and in promoting the notion of a proper U.S. “place” in the world, they easily fall into the nationalist trap outlined by Ishay. As Warren Kuehl has noted, “What seems to be lacking [in much U.S. historical scholarship], despite repeated admonitions . . . , is a conscious attempt to break the mental lockstep, to recognize the complexity of history, and to rise above self-imposed and limiting national perspectives.”³⁵

Contemporary Internationalisms

Insights developed over the past several decades in social theory, philosophy, and elements of international relations theory privilege the development of a critical stance toward both nationalist and internationalist aspirations. For postmodernism, critical theory, and much of constructivism,

any rigidly foundationalist project or ethics must be either rejected or at the very least subjected to continual reevaluation. In any construction of a nonhegemonic internationalism, what counts is the ability to maintain a critical posture, as opposed to a dogmatic or “problem-solving” posture.³⁶

Seen in this light, much of the criticism and the dominant interpretation of early-twentieth-century conceptions of internationalism need to be rethought. Far from a unified belief that processes of internationalization were positive forces in uniting the world, pre–World War II contestation over the meaning of internationalism demonstrated an active grappling with the contradictions of early-twentieth-century modernity.³⁷ Much of early-twentieth-century internationalism developed in the form of an oppositional stance toward the processes of internationalization represented by world war and worldwide colonization. Against this background and the narrowing of internationalism that occurred during the Cold War, those who might call themselves internationalists today appear at first glance to have an opportunity to regain a more wide-ranging ethical canvas, critical focus, and creative use of multilateral institutional forms.

Today, any internationalist posture must contend with renewed forms of isolationist nationalism. These range from militia movements that refuse multilateral cooperation of all types to prudential neorealists who argue that the United States, the West, or NATO, depending on the case, no longer has an interest in involvement abroad. Contemporary internationalism must also address the growing belief that issues of economic distribution can only be determined by global market forces and that the state has a diminishing role to play in ensuring social welfare. This combination of neoisolationist and global market claims, combined with the lack of dialogue among divergent social groups on the contemporary meaning of internationalism, means that the forms of internationalism in existence today are even more disparate than those of the early part of the century.

At least four types of claims to the internationalist mantle appear to be vying for influence today. These are, first, the promoters of the “democratic peace,” for whom the post–Cold War period represents, if not “the end of history,” at least the long-awaited opportunity for a politics of progress on realizing the cosmopolitan project on a worldwide scale.³⁸ Democratic peace internationalists tend to promote an enlarged NATO and condone U.S. leadership in UN peacekeeping.³⁹ A second type of internationalism is promoted by humanitarian interventionists in the communities of both the UN and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These humanitarian internationalists advocate famine relief, refugee (re)settlement, and sometimes the creation of democratic forms of politics (e.g., voting) in situations of civil strife. They are at the forefront of articulating new forms of UN peacekeeping and peacemaking and assist in election monitoring, preventive diplomacy, and other developing multilateral forms of conflict resolution under UN auspices.⁴⁰ Contemporary forms of economic

globalization also galvanize internationalism, but in two opposite directions. A third type of internationalism is that of economic liberals (particularly in the multinational business community), who see in globalization a process of internationalization that is both irreversible and desirable. These new liberal internationalists are wary of statist intervention in the global market, and they promote the World Trade Organization (WTO), NAFTA, and other regional and global forms of economic liberalization.⁴¹ Activists in the NGO forums held parallel to recent UN conferences (Rio, Beijing, Copenhagen, Vienna, and Istanbul) and the recently formed International Forum on Globalization (IFG) comprise a fourth type of internationalism. Antiglobalization internationalists oppose global market liberalization for inhibiting internationalist concerns of humanitarian, environmental, and economic well-being. Conversely, they promote multilateral forms that privilege participation by locally based NGOs in both economic and political decisionmaking.⁴²

Each of these types of internationalism implies a different sense of "duties beyond borders."⁴³ Each has roots in the past; each also promotes different forms of multilateral cooperation. Finally, each encounters problems in overcoming at least one of the following obstacles identified previously: nationalist limitations, U.S. hegemonic control, and a confused stance toward the state.

Democratic peace internationalism builds on the assertion that democracies do not go to war against each other.⁴⁴ Although this type of internationalism's definition and conceptualization of democracy are contestable, the scholarly discussions of this assertion continue to proliferate and have been taken up by policymakers. In its extreme form, democratic peace internationalism rationalizes the use of force against nondemocracies and justifies an international legal code that recognizes only "liberal states" as meriting the benefits of sovereign status.⁴⁵ In significant ways, these democratic peace internationalists are the inheritors of the Cold War military interventionist stance, both in that they see active participation in constructing specific types of regimes as ethically acceptable and necessary and in that they view the United States or the West as the prototype for such construction projects. Thus, this type of internationalism escapes neither nationalist parochialism nor hegemonic interventionism. Moreover, popular discussion with regard to the construction of democracies sees representative, pluralistic politics and liberal market economics as symbiotically related. This results in a problematic stance toward the state: new democracies are supposed to wield political control over the state through free representation but yield control of economic wealth and distribution to international market forces.

Humanitarian internationalism attempts to relieve suffering in the midst of civil and nationalist strife. Humanitarians uphold extremely laudable positions and in many ways confront head-on the most difficult ethical

issues (e.g., saving lives in the short term versus the long term; providing assistance to suffering groups who have assisted in genocide; using military means to rescue some while possibly endangering others). But because of the immediate nature of most relief work, humanitarian groups often either have no clear position or disagree on the use of military force. They differ on whether they condone U.S.-led intervention or only forms of intervention sanctioned by the international community.⁴⁶ Thus the “norm of humanitarian intervention”⁴⁷ suffers from tensions within, tensions that can leave internationalist tactics open to potentially unacceptable degrees of hegemonic meddling, as was arguably the case in Somalia and Haiti.

Market internationalism resides primarily in sectors of the business community and in the leadership of industrialized states. It insists that economic globalization is both inevitable and the best means of improving economic welfare. It delinks social dislocations and the violation of labor rights nationally and globally from promarket policies and argues that social welfare policies are inefficient and must be dismantled. These promoters of “globalization as a good” thus reject the “embedded liberalism” compromise that subjected economic liberalization to considerations of social welfare and international regulatory restraint.⁴⁸ Market internationalism sees itself as nonparochial and nonhegemonic. But in its reliance on maximizing profitability, it substitutes the hegemony of the market for statist hegemony. Its stance toward the state is also problematic: although it needs the acquiescence of the state (particularly industrialized states) to function, it attempts to take over the state’s distributive decisionmaking functions while providing an inadequate response to the demise of the state’s traditional responsibility for resulting dislocations.

Some critics of globalization, conversely, attempt to articulate a position that rejects economic liberalism but sits uneasily between socialism and communitarianism. This antimarket internationalism resides primarily in an emerging social movement made up of labor, human rights, and environmental activists, which took root during the WTO and NAFTA debates.⁴⁹ It links these issues to an agenda that promotes a measure of economic egalitarianism while providing a frontal challenge to economic globalization. Yet one of its primary goals is a return to localized production and trade, a return that risks delegitimation as an unrealizable and romantic form of communitarianism.⁵⁰ An overemphasis on localization as the solution to economic and social dislocations risks diminishing the force of this form of internationalism’s critique of globalization. More important, however, overemphasizing the *local* as a solution to market internationalism misses the opportunity to call the state—the core entity for meeting social needs—to accountability. In making this critique, we need to recognize that the actual and possible forms of state-society relationships vary. States may have a history of strong welfare institutions, or they

may possess weak institutions. They may lack such institutions but have local communities or ethnic groups that take on aspects of this role. Or, in the case of states in the midst of civil war, they may have destroyed the means to provide social welfare. Although it may not be possible to develop adequate institutions for ensuring social welfare in all types of states in the short term, contemporary forms of internationalism, especially the critics of globalization, should be wary of privileging the local at the expense of the state.

Conclusion

This discussion indicates that internationalist tendencies of both the past and the present vary considerably in their support of processes of internationalization, their identification of the obstacles to a greater cosmopolitanism, and hence their ramifications for the coherent development of multilateral mechanisms. The contestation over internationalism in the early part of the century engendered significant dialogue and debate, whereas the narrowing of internationalism during the Cold War cut off debate in favor of a hegemonic definition of the good. Internationalist tendencies of the present represent a reopening of contestation and debate but also embody significant contradictions that can lead to diametrically opposed guides to praxis. There seems to be, therefore, no coherent internationalist position today.

Internationalism continues to confront the problem of whether it can transcend national parochialism and, more particularly, hegemonic meddling. A coherent internationalism needs to grapple with the question of how to act in defense of cosmopolitan solidarity without abetting practices that might further damage the world in the interests of a few. But in attempting to rein in the excesses of the state, particularly powerful states, it also needs to understand the state's role in ensuring social and economic welfare. Democracy, humanitarianism, economic growth, and ensuring the economic welfare of peoples are all goals that global international organizations have long promoted. Yet humanitarian and democratic peace internationalists, in promoting new forms of peacekeeping, should be wary of reinforcing hegemonic military power in order to realize their goals and should reject the temptation to "enforce" democracy or market liberalization. They should also be wary of more local forms of privatization: as Antonio Donini points out, "if present trends continue, . . . there is an increasing risk [that] the privatization of war and the privatization of relief will mutually reinforce each other."⁵¹ Internationalists concerned with market globalization should place the concerns of labor and economic welfare at the forefront of the international agenda and assist states where possible in strengthening (or developing, where they do not yet exist) systems of

social welfare. To be sure, internationalists must understand the various forms that state-society relations might take and not fall into the liberal trap of attempting to design states from scratch, especially in the most difficult cases, in which state authority and social relations have been destroyed by civil conflict.⁵² A coherent internationalism must develop a stance of healthy skepticism vis-à-vis the globalization of statist military, economic, or cultural power while calling governments to account to ensure the basic needs and rights of their peoples. 🌐

Notes

Cecelia Lynch is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She is the author of *Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics* (Cornell University Press, 1999), and the coeditor, with Michael Loriaux, of *Law and Moral Action in World Politics* (University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming 1999). She is also the author of journal articles related to her interests in social movements, political philosophy and ethics, international organization, and international relations theory.

1. Alejandro Colas, "Putting Cosmopolitanism into Practice: The Case of Socialist Internationalism," *Millennium—Journal of International Studies* 23, no. 3 (winter 1994): 515.

2. As Norberto Bobbio argues from a parallel vantage point, human rights, democracy, and peace are all elements of the same historical movement, although that movement has developed in different ways at different periods of time. Bobbio, *The Age of Rights* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1996).

3. On this theme, see R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

4. Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York: Harper & Row, 1946); Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," in Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

5. There exist and have existed non-Western forms of internationalism, of course, in the form of norms and modes of thought prevalent in empires, religious belief systems, and cosmopolitan sentiment. The twentieth-century forms of internationalism discussed in this article, however, have emanated from Western political thought and social movements.

6. Micheline R. Ishay, *Internationalism and Its Betrayal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

7. See, especially, Robert Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America During World War II* (New York: Atheneum, 1967).

8. Fred Halliday, "Three Concepts of Internationalism," *International Affairs* 64, no. 2 (spring 1988): 187.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

10. To understand the historical trajectory of liberal internationalism in relation to the development of international organizations, see Craig N. Murphy, *International Organization and Industrial Change: Global Governance Since 1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

11. Halliday, "Three Concepts of Internationalism," pp. 193–196.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 188–191.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
14. Ishay, *Internationalism and Its Betrayal*, p. xxi.
15. For Ishay, internationalism at this juncture is analytically separate from both cosmopolitanism and universalism, although it retains some of the pretenses of each. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. John Gerard Ruggie, "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution," in Ruggie, ed., *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Practice of an Institutional Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), especially pp. 10–11. For a critique of extant multilateralism and an exposition of its alternative and possible forms, see Robert W. Cox, "An Alternative Approach to Multilateralism for the Twenty-first Century," *Global Governance* 3, no. 1 (Jan.–Apr. 1997): 103–116.
18. On socialist *cosmopolitanism*, see Colas, "Putting Cosmopolitanism into Practice."
19. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.
20. See Cecelia Lynch, "E. H. Carr, International Relations Theory, and the Societal Origins of International Legal Norms," *Millennium—Journal of International Studies* 23, no. 3 (winter 1994).
21. David Kennedy, "The Move to Institutions," *Cardozo Law Review* 8, no. 5 (April 1987): 878–882.
22. Colas, "Putting Cosmopolitanism into Practice."
23. Women's groups were particularly active in famine relief. See Dorothy Detzer, *Appointment on the Hill* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948). On social groups' support of self-determination, see Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 37–57.
24. Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).
25. Adrian Pelt Papers, p. 105, League of Nations Archives, Geneva, Switzerland.
26. Memo by Gabrielle Radziwill, 17 May 1934, Adrian Pelt Papers, League of Nations Archives, Geneva, Switzerland.
27. International Federation of League of Nations Societies papers, p. 48/no. 13 (undated), League of Nations Archives, Geneva, Switzerland. See also Cecelia Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).
28. Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914–1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971).
29. Lawrence S. Wittner, *Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933–1983* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), pp. 24, 28–29.
30. Warren F. Kuehl, "Internationalism," in Alexander DeConde, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy* (New York: n.p., 1978).
31. Robert D. Accinelli, "Pro-U.N. Internationalists and the Early Cold War: The American Association for the United Nations and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1947–52," *Diplomatic History* 9 (fall 1985): 349. See also Kuehl, "Internationalism."
32. Accinelli, "Pro-U.N. Internationalists and the Early Cold War," p. 362.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 359.
34. This was because "international habits and interests" were being created that allegedly modified nationalistic perceptions and advanced internationalist thinking. Address by Boyd C. Shafer, discussed in Kuehl, "Internationalism."
35. Warren F. Kuehl, "Webs of Common Interests Revisited: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Historians of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 10, no. 2 (spring 1986): 118–119.

36. Here see both Walker, *Inside/Outside*, and Cox, "An Alternative Approach to Multilateralism for the Twenty-first Century."

37. Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement*.

38. See, for example, Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

39. Such as the Clinton administration. See *ibid.* and Fernando R. Tesón, "The Kantian Theory of International Law," *Columbia Law Review* 92 (January 1992): 92–93.

40. Networks of these groups are proliferating. They include NGO Voice (Voluntary Organizations in Cooperation in Emergencies) within the Liaison Committee of NGOs to the European Union; ACT (Action by Churches Together); and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, all based in Geneva; and InterAction, based in Washington, D.C. See also Antonio Donini, "Asserting Humanitarianism in Peace-Maintenance," *Global Governance* 4, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar. 1998): 81–96; Amir Pasic and Thomas G. Weiss, "Yugoslavia's Wars and the Humanitarian Impulse," *Ethics and International Affairs* 11 (1997): 105–132.

41. The views expressed in the Davos Forum, which organizes meetings of business and government leaders, economists, and others, are emblematic of this type of globalization.

42. "We the Peoples" Conference, San Francisco, June 1995. These activists come together most frequently at the NGO forums of recent UN conferences (Rio de Janeiro, Vienna, Copenhagen, Beijing, Istanbul); some have created a new organization, the International Forum on Globalization, located in San Francisco. The IFG has held teach-ins on globalization during the past several years in New York; Washington, D.C.; and Berkeley, California. See also Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith, eds., *The Case Against the Global Economy, and for a Turn Toward the Local* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996).

43. Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

44. See, among others, Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and World Affairs, Part I," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (summer 1983); Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Democracy and Peace," *Journal of Peace Research* 29 (November 1992).

45. Tesón, "The Kantian Theory of International Law." This speaks to the messianic interventionism that Michael Doyle refers to in his article, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and World Affairs, Part I." For a discussion of the twin aspects (peace and war) of liberalism, see John M. Owen IV, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War, American Politics and International Security* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997).

46. For example, some NGOs train with the U.S. Army, others receive a majority of their funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, and still others attempt to distance themselves from U.S. military or financial control. These positions and the conflicts within them have been discussed at recent conferences bringing together NGOs, U.S. State Department officials, and UN officials. These include "We the Peoples: Building Peace," New York, UN, September 1994 (sponsored by the UN Department of Public Information, NGO section), and "Managing Chaos," U.S. Institute of Peace, November 1994.

47. Martha Finnemore, "Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention," in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

48. John Gerard Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order," *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (spring 1982); Ruggie, "At Home Abroad, Abroad at Home: International Liberalisation and Domestic Stability in the New World Economy," *Millennium—Journal of International Studies* 24, no. 3 (winter 1995). Some market internationalists, however, recognize the problems associated with increasingly unregulated trade and finance. See Ethan B. Kapstein, "Workers and the World Economy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 3 (May–June 1996): 16–37.

49. International Forum on Globalization, Statement of Purpose, San Francisco, 1996.

50. Colin Hines, "The New Protectionism: What It Is—Why It Is Coming," 10 November 1995, published by the IFG, 1996; see also Cecelia Lynch, "Social Movements and the Problem of Globalization," *Alternatives* 23, no. 2 (April–June 1998).

51. Donini, "Asserting Humanitarianism in Peace-Maintenance," p. 88.

52. These are often called *failed* or *collapsed* states. I believe such terms should be used with caution, but the problems presented for internationalist action in such cases are very real. For a good discussion, see the articles in the Special Issue on Peace-Maintenance Operations, Jarat Chopra, ed., *Global Governance* 4, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar. 1998).