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POLITICAL THEORY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.* By Charles R. Beitz. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 1979. Pp. ix, 212. \$16.50.

To paraphrase Francis Bacon, some authors prepare tasty snacks — small, richly flavored morsels of thought that go down easily and leave the reader with the pleasant aftertaste of civilization. Others produce heavier meals, feasts that must be approached with respect, devoured in small bites, and chewed well. In *Political Theory and International Relations*, Charles Beitz presents ideas that require thorough digestion, but chops them up to disguise them as light snacks. Unfortunately, his carving shows.

Beitz's thesis is that a normative political theory of foreign affairs is possible. In essence, he argues that skepticism toward moral judgments in international relations (which he calls "international skepticism") must proceed from a pervasive skepticism about the place of morality in all political theory. If moral judgments are accepted as appropriate in domestic politics, then analogous principles can be derived that must have equivalent force in the international sphere. The book argues this point, then illustrates it by outlining the international analogues of John Rawls's difference principle in domestic distributive justice.

In Part I, Beitz presents and refutes arguments in favor of international skepticism. His primary target is the view — shared by Raymond Aron and others — that international politics is an example of Thomas Hobbes's state of nature. According to that view, nothing exists to compel nations to comply with moral rules that conflict with their self-interest. And without assurance of reciprocity, each nation will follow its self-interest because unilateral compliance is irrational.

Beitz identifies two flaws in the analogy between the state of nature and foreign affairs. First, empirically, the world does not seem to fit Hobbes's mold. Unlike a person in the state of nature, a nation is neither self-sufficient nor a unitary source of ends. Indeed, nations are not the only significant actors in world politics: their decisions can be influenced by transnational groups, such as large corporations. They are also subject to peaceful coercion through censure, economic embargo, and other sanctions. Because of these weakening factors, Beitz notes that nations can have common interests and can rationally expect mutual compliance with rules that foster those interests. Unfortunately, Beitz fails to explain the practical importance of these expectations. If the analogy between international re-

* This book review was prepared by an Editor of the *Michigan Law Review* — Ed.

lations and the state of nature is imperfect, then a theory of foreign affairs derived exclusively from Hobbes is incomplete. Yet the state-of-nature model's failure to account for areas of reciprocal compliance may be either fatal or trivial, depending upon the strength of the expectations and the range of activities in which they arise. A gap between theory and observation does not necessarily extinguish the value of the analogy.

Second, Beitz criticizes the analogy on theoretical grounds. Most Hobbesian theorists assume that the survival of nations is the ultimate moral goal. Beitz rejects this assumption:

The argument that states should pursue their own interests in the absence of reliable expectations of reciprocal compliance with common rules depends on the analogy drawn between persons in the interpersonal state of nature and states in international relations. . . .

. . . .

Those who wish to apply Hobbes's argument to international relations should say that the parties to the international state of nature, when it is used as a device for showing which rules of conduct are rational, are to be conceived as persons rather than as states. This state of nature is international in the sense that the parties to it are of diverse citizenship. But they are still persons, and their choice of rules for the behavior of states (in such a revised Hobbesian view) is guided by their desire to preserve themselves as persons rather than simply to preserve their states as state. . . .

. . . [N]othing is gained, and considerable clarity is lost, by attempting to justify principles of international conduct with reference to their effects on the interests of states. It is the rights and interests of persons that are of fundamental importance from the moral point of view, and it is to these considerations that the justification of principles for international relations should appeal. [Pp. 51-55.]

Again, Beitz criticizes international skepticism without explaining why his criticism is important. He does not describe circumstances in which a citizen's conception of his individual self-interest diverges from his conception of the national interest. To the extent that these two interests are identified with each other, Beitz amends the analogy in a minor detail, but does not destroy its probative value.

Having rejected international skepticism, at least in its purest form, Beitz struggles to give substance to his international moral principles. In Part II, he attacks the second most popular formulation of international political theory, which he calls "morality of states." This theory, traced to the writings of Samuel Pufendorf and others, also draws an analogy between nations and people. Unlike international skepticism, however, it concludes that nations have a right of autonomy that insulates them from external moral criticism and political interference. Thus, nations have rights of self-determination, free from foreign intervention and economic imperialism.

Beitz argues that the morality of states analogy is also flawed. He

contends that a state's claim to national autonomy is only justified when it respects the autonomy of its citizens. "[T]he claim that unjust states should not be accorded the respect demanded by the principle of state autonomy follows from the claim that it is only considerations of personal autonomy, appropriately interpreted, that constitute the moral personality of the state" (p. 81).

Beitz next outlines his own theory, drawing heavily on John Rawls. He begins with unborn parties in a hypothetical "original position" who know they must cooperate to produce goods and services. They do not know their nationalities, their roles, their abilities, or their proximity to natural resources. Their task is to agree on principles to govern the distribution of goods and services. Beitz argues that they would conform to Rawls's "difference principle," agreeing to depart from perfect equality only when the departure would increase the total benefits received by the least advantaged person. Such a global difference principle has important implications for the allocation of natural resources:

In the case of natural resources the parties to the international original position would know that resources are unevenly distributed with respect to population, that adequate access to resource is a prerequisite for successful operation of (domestic) cooperative schemes, and that resources are scarce. They would view the natural distribution of resources as arbitrary in the sense that no one has a natural *prima facie* claim to the resources that happen to be under one's feet. The appropriation of scarce resources by some requires a justification against the competing claims of others and the needs of future generations. Not knowing the resource endowments of their own societies, the parties would agree on a resource redistribution principle that would give each society a fair chance to develop just political institutions and an economy capable of satisfying its members' basic needs. [P. 141.]

A new perspective on foreign aid emerges from this global difference principle:

Once the existence of global redistributive obligations founded on justice is recognized, however, the view of aid as charity must be given up. It is inappropriate to regard foreign assistance as discretionary in the way charitable contributions are, nor can the attachment of political conditions be easily defended Furthermore, one cannot acknowledge a duty of justice to contribute to economic development elsewhere without acknowledging that existing legal property rights lack a firm moral foundation. Aid should not be regarded as a voluntary contribution of a portion of a state's own wealth, but rather as a transfer of wealth to redress distributive injustice. [Pp. 172-73.]

Political Theory and International Relations is frequently provocative. Beitz points out, for instance, that definitions of impermissible foreign intervention are oversimplified. If the goal is to protect individuals' autonomy (a goal usually served by nonintervention), then

intervention may be justified if it reforms a society's unjust institutions. Thus, a complete ban on intervention is unjustified.

Despite its insights, however, the book remains frustrating. Beitz resembles a professor who attempts to explain a thousand years of Western civilization in sixty minutes; 183 pages cannot accommodate his many intricate ideas. Surely Locke deserves more than a few scattered paragraphs (pp. 59, 60, 78-79), and Rousseau more than a few footnotes (p. 33 n.47, p. 45 n.75, p. 62 n.106). A measured pace and a longer book would have provided more satisfactory reading.

Moreover, Beitz wanders from his mission. He sets out "to work out a more satisfactory international normative political theory" (p. vii), yet the reader suffers through the first two thirds of the book waiting for him to get started. During this initial period, the author laboriously develops the more general and less interesting proposition that *some* kind of international political theory based on individual autonomy is possible. Sadly, he squanders most of his energy defending that proposition in abbreviated battles with Morgenthau, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Grotius, Wolff, and a host of other opponents. When he reaches Rawls's theory, he is too tired to argue its wisdom on the merits. He professes only to "explore the relevance of Rawls's view for international relations" (p. 129). Even this modest exploration quietly trails off into a few comments on the nature of foreign aid.

Beitz establishes that nations can rationally rely on compliance with rules in some areas. Recent world events, however, are a reminder of the fragility of such patterns of reliance. Perhaps the author's failure to elaborate upon his international principles stems from the futility of attempting to do so. If these principles exist, but are weak and limited in scope, then Hobbes is correct in result and Beitz only adds a scholarly clarification to his theory. Are international moral principles trivial? Without more analysis, one cannot know.