

World Poverty and Justice beyond Borders

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Abstract*

Most cosmopolitans who are concerned about world poverty assume that for citizens of affluent societies, justice beyond national borders is a matter of their positive duty to provide aid to distant people suffering from severe poverty. This assumption is challenged by some authors, notably Tomas Pogge, who maintains that these citizens are actively involved in the incidence of poverty abroad and therefore neglect their negative duty of refraining from harming others. This paper examines the extent to which it is pertinent to contend that citizens in economically advanced countries are morally liable for the impoverishment of a sizable population of the developing world. The contention in question can be interpreted in two nonexclusive ways. First, it might imply that historical injustices, including colonialism and slavery, contributed to both contemporary affluence in some parts of the world and poverty in others. Second, it could imply that the present global economic system, instituted and implemented by the governments of rich and powerful countries acting in the name of their citizens, is benefiting the citizens while harming the world's disadvantaged. The author argues that the idea of reparation for historical injustices suffers from serious philosophical difficulties, including the non-identity problem presented by Derek Parfit, and thus fails to provide a satisfactory approach to the existing problem of poverty. This paper then examines the alleged liability of citizens in affluent countries, with a special reference to empirical observations on the policy process. The paper concludes by suggesting a twofold theory of global justice, which combines material, managerial, and moral assistances for a society lacking a competent government and proposes institutional reforms in the global order in order to achieve poverty reduction.

Keywords: division of labor, global justice, global order, historical injustices, redistribution.

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Three Conceptions of Global Justice

Poverty is a reality of human life. At the beginning of this century, approximately 1,200 million people lived below the World Bank's poverty line of \$1 (equivalent to \$1.08 in the U.S. in 1993, adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP)) per day, while around 2,700 million lived below the \$2 (\$2.15 PPP) per day poverty line. About 18 million of these died from poverty-related causes in a year, including over 12 million children under the age of five. Such severe poverty is painfully highlighted through the huge difference in the basic living conditions of people in different parts of the world. In terms of the infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births, the current average of the least developed countries is 99, while that of high-income countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is 5.

These grim facts on world poverty appear to suggest that citizens of affluent societies have some role to play for the betterment of the poor, for example, writing to legislators, giving donations to humanitarian organizations like Oxfam and UNICEF, and devoting themselves to philanthropic activities abroad. On the other hand, the standard presumption states that compatriots assume moral priority over foreigners¹. In order to defend a humane intuition against this presumption and to develop it into a cosmopolitan theory, one needs to answer several important questions. Why do the wealthy have a moral obligation to be concerned about the poor who live abroad? Which is the alleged obligation, the positive duty of benefiting others or the negative one of refraining from harming them? What specific actions and policies does it demand? Who is the agent responsible for reducing poverty abroad—the government, businesses, intergovernmental institutions, nongovernmental organizations, individual citizens, or all of them? What is the weight of citizens' general duty toward distant strangers in comparison with their special duty toward family, friends, or fellow citizens?

¹ The presumption is susceptible to several different interpretations (Usami 2005: 76). For instance, some might claim that principles governing the policies that are intended to serve compatriots take a lexicographic precedence over those benefiting foreigners, while others might argue that the former group of individuals deserves more weight than the latter.

To answer these and several other questions, a considerable number of ethical studies on justice beyond national borders have been conducted over the past three decades. Earlier this field of study focused only on states and was called international justice; however, its scope has recently been broadened, dealing with not only states but multinational corporations, NGOs, and individual citizens, and it is now termed global justice. A vast majority of authors regard global justice as essentially the redistribution of wealth or resources on a global scale. I shall refer to this view as the redistributive conception of global justice. This conception is widely shared by authors who adopt various theoretical positions. In his seminal article, Peter Singer (1972) addresses a consequentialist principle stating that those who are affluent ought to contribute to preventing starvation in foreign countries if they can do so without sacrificing anything that is of comparable moral importance to them. This principle has both followers (e.g., Unger 1996) and critics (e.g., Nagel 1977). Another important figure in the analysis of justice beyond borders is John Rawls (1999[1971]). Rawls's significance is largely because Brian Barry (1973: 128–133), Charles Beitz (1999[1979]: 127–176), and Thomas Pogge (1989: 211–280; 1994) have applied his concepts and ideas to a context beyond the borders of a society—notwithstanding Rawls's own conception of justice as a political virtue of social institutions—so as to justify the systematic transfer of resources to the world's least advantaged². The idea of human rights is invoked by several authors, notably Henry Shue (1996[1980]). Onora O'Neill (1986: 131–164; 2000: 115–142) takes a Kantian approach to world hunger and transnational economic justice; on the other hand, Hillel Steiner (1999) proposes a global fund from a Lockean perspective.

Many redistributive theorists presume that it is the positive duty of citizens in affluent societies to provide aid to distant people suffering from severe poverty. In other words, they assume that although the wealthy are not morally liable for the circumstances of the needy, the former do carry a responsibility to help the latter. However, some philosophers such as O'Neill (1974) and Thomas Nagel (1977) do not support this perspective.

² Although Rawls (1999) employs the idea of original position in a context beyond societal boundaries, he fails to deal with the question of global justice, since moral units in his account are not individuals but separate societies.

They imply that world poverty and radical inequality are partly a result of the current setup of national and international economic institutions, which may be illegitimate³. Pogge (2002) develops this implication by contending that most citizens in rich and powerful countries are actively involved in the production of poverty through the imposition of the global economic order, and that global justice is a matter of their negative duty of refraining from harming others. From such a perspective, he stresses the need for institutional reforms of the global order. This view represents what I shall call the reformatory conception of global justice⁴.

Pogge (2002: 203–204 cf. 1989: 262–263) also notes that the current state of world poverty is significantly shaped by the period of conquest and colonization, including oppression, enslavement, and genocide. Since the 1990s, in a controversy over redress for historical injustices, a growing number of scholars and lawyers (e.g., du Plessis 2003; Howard-Hassmann 2003) have defended and refined the claim of financial reparations for slavery, which several African states have made against the West⁵. If one considers the perspective of an increasing number of advocates of slavery reparation, one might hold that the same historical injustices played a crucial role in bringing about both contemporary affluence in some parts of the world and poverty in others. One would contend that due to their ancestors' misdeeds, citizens in the affluent West owe financial reparation to the poor in many regions around the world, especially sub-Saharan Africa. This contention indicates the reparative conception of global justice. Both reformatory and reparative conceptions consider global justice as world-scale corrective justice, while the redistributive conception regards it as distributive justice. Reformatory and reparative views, if they had a sound basis, would provide a good reason to reject the conventional presumption of attaching priority to

³ Nagel (2005) very recently argued for the political conception of justice as opposed to the cosmopolitan conception, claiming that the standards of justice apply only within the boundaries of a sovereign state. For my response to his argument, see Usami 2005: 92–93 n.35.

⁴ Pogge (2002: 196–197, 205–214 cf. 1994: 199–205) proposes the redistributive mechanism that he calls the Global Resource Dividend (GRD), according to which each government is obliged to pay a small part of the value of resources it uses or sells. But he specifies that the GRD is not intended to help the poor but rather to protect them from the aggressive rules of the global economic order (Pogge 2002: 23).

⁵ The campaign of African states for slavery reparations has raised a fierce controversy with European countries, as witnessed at the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001.

compatriots. If it were appropriate to state that citizens in affluent societies actively participate in harming millions abroad on a daily basis or that the descendants of those involved in historical wrongs bear compensatory responsibility toward the poor offspring of those victimized, then citizens in the affluent West would be morally required to give the issue of global poverty the highest priority on their national and international political agenda. Despite the significant implications of these views, few authors have thus far examined their validity, while focusing on either Singer's principle or the expanded Rawlsian approach.

This paper attempts to plug this gap by examining the extent to which it is pertinent to claim that most citizens in economically advanced countries are morally liable for the impoverishment of a sizable population in the developing world. I will explore one of the philosophical difficulties persistent with the reparative view: the non-identity problem presented by Derek Parfit. In so doing, I will attempt to show that this view provides an unpromising approach to the current problem of poverty. Then the virtues and limits of the reformative view will be identified, with a special reference to empirical observations on the policy process in industrialized countries. The paper will conclude by suggesting an alternative twofold theory of global justice. On one hand, the theory proposes material, managerial, and moral assistances for a society lacking a competent government which can meet the needs of its population; on the other hand, it argues for reforms in national policies of the developed countries and international trade practices supporting them in order to achieve poverty reduction.

Reparations for Historical Injustices

The reparative conception of global justice encounters several philosophical difficulties. I shall focus on one difficulty here. Parfit (1984: 351–381) addresses and analyzes what he defines as the non-identity problem in the context of the relationship between present and future generations. A similar argument is raised in the philosophical debate over whether descendants of those who were victimized in the past have a right to compensation within a society (e.g., Kershnar 2004: 70–76; Sher 2005). The non-identity problem also arises in

regard to the demands for international compensation for historical misdeeds. I will discuss on the claim of reparations for slavery; however, this discussion is not limited to that particular claim and is applicable to claims of restitution for other kinds of historical injustices such as colonialism and massacre.

The incidence of harm is a necessary condition to establish a claim for reparation. Let us consider the following: if a person *A* was harmed by another person *B*, then *A* is entitled to reparations, provided that those additional conditions (e.g., negligence of *B*) which depend on the nature of the harm are satisfied. A clear interpretation of harm requires a comparison between the actual world in which *A* is injured physically, mentally, or financially and a relevant possible world in which *A* is not. *A* is thus considered to be harmed if and only if *A* is worse off in the actual world as compared with the possible one. This implies that an African person *A**, whose distant ancestors were victimized by slavery, is considered to be harmed if and only if *A** is actually worse off in comparison with a counterfactual world in which *A**'s ancestors were not victimized.

There arises a question: is it possible for *A** to exist in any counterfactual world where *A**'s ancestors were not victimized by slavery? The following example illustrates the reason for this. Suppose that in the actual world with slavery, three hundred years ago, an African woman *W* married a man *M*₁ who had eluded a blanket abduction carried out by slave traders in an African village. Suppose further that in a possible world without slavery, *W* would have preferred to marry another man *M*₂ (or *W*'s parents would have preferred to make her marry *M*₂), but she could not do so since he was actually taken away by the slave traders. Thus, a possible daughter *D*₂, who would have been born to *W* and *M*₂, is a different person from the actual daughter *D*₁, who was born to *W* and *M*₁. Consequently, if *A** is a descendant of *D*₁, *A** does not exist in the possible world where slavery did not occur and where *W* got married to *M*₂ instead of *M*₁.

The nonexistence of *A** can be interpreted in two ways: First, a world in which *A** does not exist is as good to *A** as a world in which *A** exists with zero wellbeing. The result is that *A** is not harmed but benefited by slavery, unless *A** actually exists with negative

wellbeing, which means that A^* is worse off in comparison with A^* 's nonexistence. But it seems misguided to equate the subjective value of the nonexistence of A^* with A^* 's zero wellbeing. When A^* does not exist, there exists no subject who enjoys wellbeing. This forms a basis of the second interpretation of nonexistence: it is logically impossible to compare, in terms of wellbeing, the actual world in which A^* exists and a counterfactual world in which A^* does not. According to this interpretation, A^* is neither harmed nor benefited by events that occurred during the period of slavery. Therefore, considering either of the two interpretations, one cannot help but conclude that A^* is not entitled to any reparation. This conclusion, although counterintuitive, seems coherent.

Some advocates of the reparative view might note that during the period of slavery, the Africans whose family, friends, or fellows were abducted as slaves were harmed by the slave trade and thus had moral entitlements to reparation. They would argue that the Africans of today inherit these entitlements from their distant ancestors, although they were not directly harmed by historical slavery. One possible response to the inheritance argument comes from what I call historical relativism. Historical relativists assume that in history, a victim V had a moral entitlement to reparation for the harm caused by an offender O if and only if most members of the society, including O , believed that the offense was morally wrong. According to the relativists, regardless of the perspective of the present generation, the entitlement of V depends on a common evaluation by relevant people during the time of the offense. Under this assumption, most of the Africans of the past who were victimized by slavery shall not be entitled to reparations, since those who had enslaved them did not consider slavery as a wrongdoing. However, the historical relativist assumption seems mistaken. The assumption stems from a general proposition stating that one has an entitlement to reparation for the harm caused by another if and only if at the time of the injury, a majority of relevant people, including the offending party, believed that the action was morally wrong. This proposition would imply that the survivors of the Holocaust or of the sexual slavery committed by the Japanese Army during World War II do not have any moral right to reparation, merely because most of the perpetrators in both cases did not presumably

view their acts as wrongdoings. Similarly, the survivors of torture during apartheid in South Africa or of hate crimes in the U.S. do not have a moral right to reparation, since most offenders believed that their targets rightfully deserved to be harmed. These implausible implications suggest that the general relativist proposition as well as its temporal version, historical relativism, is highly objectionable.

However, the failure of the historical relativist objection does not necessarily indicate the soundness of the inheritance argument. Rather, this argument encounters a real difficulty—the problem of the temporal boundaries of historical responsibility. The argument claims that the Europeans of today owe the Africans reparation for the period of slavery, lasting from the 16th to the 19th century, because the former group inherited moral debts and the latter inherited correlative entitlements. In that case, one must also consider the following questions. Do the Arabs of today owe the Turks and the East Africans a compensation for the enslavement of non-Muslims since the early 7th century? Do the Athenians owe the Turks and the Bulgarians restitution for slavery during the 5th and 6th centuries B.C.? In response to these questions, advocates of the inheritance claim might draw a line by claiming that it is impossible for those living in the 21st century to trace their inherited entitlement to before the 16th century. To justify this claim, they would argue that the enslavement of the Africans by the Europeans is completely different in character from the misdeeds committed during earlier periods in history, since the implications of slavery have played a pivotal role in the incidence of the current state of African underdevelopment, including the extreme and extensive poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. In so doing, however, those advocating the inheritance argument shift from their original position, which focused on historical injustices, and move closer to the reformative view⁶.

⁶ In his recent article, George Sher (2005: 191–200) proposes a more sophisticated solution to the non-identity problem than the inheritance argument; however, his solution seems susceptible to the problem of temporal boundaries. Stephen Kershnar (2004: 83–91) criticizes the inheritance claim for reasons other than those presented in this paper, but some of which are doubtful.

Reforms of the Global Economic Order

Pogge, who is an outspoken advocate of the reformative conception of global justice, holds that a number of public policies of the rich and powerful countries are causally linked to the production of poverty abroad (Pogge 2002: 18–24, 112–116). The following are examples of Western policies that are unequivocally hurtful to the poor in the developing world and can be remedied without any radical change in the global order. Anti-dumping duties on imports in agriculture and textile and subsidies to domestic farmers hinder developing countries from competing in the international market. The sale of weapons to undemocratic rulers of some developing countries facilitate political oppression, fuel civil wars, and divert public funds from meeting the basic needs of citizens. These policies are supported by certain international rules and principles: article 6 of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade legitimizes anti-dumping duties, the established principle of non-intervention authorizes farm subsidies, and the existing *de facto* rule on the recognition of government sanctions the insensitive export of arms. It is true that these national and international factors do not entirely explain the incidence of global poverty, for example, the incidence of severe poverty in a small number of states that have not yet ratified GATT. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to state that some national policies of the rich and powerful countries and some international practices backing them up play a substantial role in explaining the aggravation of poverty in the developing world.

This gives rise to the following question: how can one identify those who are morally liable for global poverty? One can adopt two different approaches to answer this question. These approaches are exclusive, although Pogge (2002: 20–26, 170–177) seemingly embraces both of them. The first is the formalist approach, which claims that all individuals involved in supporting the current global order are uniformly liable for the poverty it causes, unless they take steps to promote institutional reforms. This approach is implausible. For it implies that those allegedly liable include not only the people enjoying an affluent life in economically advanced countries but also those who are living frugally but are still above the poverty line in developing countries, merely because the latter class of people accept and

follow national and international regimes.

The second approach is the substantivist approach; it requires a two-step examination. As the first step, substantivists analyze each government's domestic policies as well as its contribution to the implementation of international schemes. Based on these parameters they distinguish between culpable and non-culpable governments. As the next step, they assess individual citizen's liability for the government's actions. Their assumption is that (nearly) all governments of affluent countries are culpable, and most citizens living under a culpable government must be found liable. The first part of the assumption seems unconvincing. All governments of high-income countries may not necessarily belong to the class of governments found culpable. While some governments of wealthy countries are considerably protectionist with regard to their agricultural imports, others are not. While some governments are indulgent toward insensitive arms exports, others do not support it. Besides, some governments of countries that have witnessed rapid development in recent years take advantage of the protectionist exemptions in imports and enjoy a substantial increase in the export of agriculture and textile. These examples present a range of disparities, suggesting limited success of the substantivist approach at the first step.

In the second step, there arises the question of how to identify the appropriate method to assess whether a citizen is liable for the actions of the government, provided that the government has played an active role in the global order that is aggressive toward the world's disadvantaged. In this context, there exist a minimum of three conditions for establishing individual liability: representation, interest, and preference. Representation implies that the government enacts and implements public policies in the name of its citizens, including the person in question. The interest condition denotes that a specific policy of the government promotes the economic interest of the individual in question. Finally, the condition of preference implies that the citizen prefers the particular policy to other possible alternatives. The representation condition, which is a minimal condition that can be satisfied for all those who hold citizenship, is necessary for questioning an individual regarding the negative impacts of the government's policies. It is extremely controversial, however, to assess

whether representation in itself is a sufficient condition to determine individual liability.

Pogge (2002: 21) assumes that all the three conditions are met, when he writes that the deaths of the poor are “caused by global economic arrangements designed and imposed by our governments” and that “these governments are elected by us, responsive to our interests and preferences, acting in our name and in ways that benefit us.” But this assumption is open to objection for the following two reasons. First, in empirical terms it is dubious to suggest that the interest condition can be satisfied for a majority of citizens. Anti-dumping duties on imports and other protectionist exemptions provide monopoly rents to a small group of producers at the expense of consumers. In most industrialized countries, farm subsidies are a transfer of wealth from a large portion of the population to a small one⁷. The exportation of weapons specifically benefits the war industry and not the general public. These observations bring us to the second reason to doubt Pogge’s assumption. To obtain monopoly rents or wealth transfers, small and powerful groups of producers devote themselves to the phenomenon of rent seeking, for instance, hiring lobbyists and lawyers, negotiating with politicians and bureaucrats, and supporting politicians who advocate a particular policy. Numerous examples of rent seeking and their economic consequences have been reported and analyzed in the literature on public choice⁸. In contrast with politically active producers, most consumers remain ignorant and indifferent to protectionist exemptions and agricultural subsidies. Their general attitude is “rational” in an economic sense, because the individual consumer loss caused by these policy measures is so low that the cost of obtaining information on these measures is higher than the benefit of political awareness. Arguably, the preference condition remains unfulfilled for many citizens. Substantivists fail to attribute the liability for the negative impacts of a government’s action to its individual

⁷ It may be argued that farm subsidies promote the interest of urban consumers by preventing social cleavages between low-income rural farmers and city residents, who generally belong to the high-income class. The accuracy of this argument, however, depends on several factors such as the ratio of farmers to the entire population, the level of agricultural technology, and the mobility of labor.

⁸ Dennis Mueller (2003: 333–358) contains a recent survey of the rent seeking literature. For rent seeking conducted by farmers and agribusinesses in Canada and the U.S., see Schmitz, Furtan, and Baylis 2002.

citizens, unless they assert that these citizens are liable merely because of their citizenship.

In summary, the reformative conception of global justice appropriately points out that both some national policies in economically advanced countries and some international rules supporting the policies are causally related to the aggravation of world poverty. But its formalist approach is simply implausible. On the other hand, its substantivist approach does not successfully answer the question of whether a government whose policies are not detrimental to the poor abroad bears any responsibility toward them. Nor does this approach establish the claim that most citizens are liable for their government's culpability for poverty. The reformative view fails to prove the general liability of consumers; however, it does imply the specific liabilities of some producers, for example, inefficient businesses demanding tariff barriers, farmers calling for subsidies, and weapon manufacturers seeking governmental sanction for arms exportation. This view also implies that autocratic rulers of some developing countries are culpable for domestic famine and malnutrition. Thus poverty is not merely an economic problem but a political one.

Redistribution and Reforms

From the above discussion, we can conclude that the reparative perspective and the reformative approach are insufficient for a comprehensive conception of global justice. Thus, one tends to revert to the redistributive conception. But reformers cogently maintain that the common assumption of the redistributive conception that acquits citizens in economically advanced societies of any responsibility for the aggravation of poverty abroad is unwarranted. Given the moral liability of some producers in affluent societies and of some political elites in the developing world, a redistributive consideration needs to be complemented with a reformative one. A blend of these two approaches forms the basis for developing a twofold theory of global justice, which identifies a positive duty to provide aid to the poor and suggests a negative duty to reform national policies and international principles so as to reduce poverty.

Let us begin by recalling the conventional presumption mentioned at the outset,

which states that compatriots take priority over foreigners. A major redistributive theory, pioneered by Singer, does not afford any credibility to this presumption and simply urges for the extension of the scope of a citizen's moral concern to a global level. Yet the conventional wisdom is too pervasive in our public life and hence cannot be rejected outright. Rather, a more promising approach might be to explain the reason why this wisdom is sound in many cases and to explore the occasions when it should be overridden by the demands of global justice.

The priority that governments ascribe to their citizens can be explained through a functionalist perspective⁹. The following example illustrates this point. Let us assume the system of universal service (SUS) within a country, in which each local government shoulders a positive duty to benefit all citizens across the country. Suppose further that the SUS was adopted in a country comprising ten provinces, each of which is inhabited by roughly the same number of people. Then, the government of each province is obliged to devote one tenth of its resources to each province, even though it has its legislative body elected by its own citizens and collects taxes from them. To carry out this task, the local government is required to collect and analyze information on the political preferences of residents in all regions as well as on the social and economic conditions prevalent across the country. This system is evidently ineffective and inappropriate, if not unworkable. A more effective alternative is, in principle, the system of division of labor (SDL), in which each local government has a duty toward its own citizens. Some local governments are presumably more competent, responsive, and trustworthy than others, but it is clear that everyone is usually better off under the SDL as compared with the SUS. The current international system is analogous to this example. The international SDL, in which each national government bears a positive duty toward those who happen to live within its borders, is generally more effective and appropriate than the worldwide SUS, in which each government has a duty to all peoples around the world. The assumption here is that at both national and

⁹ A similar explanation is provided in a consequentialist perspective by Robert Goodin (1995: 280–287 cf. 1985: 120-122), but he fails to explore its possible implications for global justice.

international levels, no government harms outsiders by violating their human rights for the sake of its citizens. However, if a government does not live up to this assumption, then for some individuals, the SDL might prove to be worse than the SUS.

According to the functionalist explanation, ascribing priority to compatriots is sound insofar as the global SDL is better than the SUS for all human beings. Unfortunately, this condition is not necessarily satisfied at all times or in all regions of the world. A typical example of the temporary and local lapses of the international SDL is in the case of a catastrophic natural disaster that the government of the suffering country is unable to handle on its own. In such a case, many other national governments as well as international NGOs have often contributed toward supporting the survivors. The current circumstances of severe poverty that the governments in charge have failed to improve represent the persistent and widespread lapses of the SDL. The failures of government fall into three categories that are not exclusive: financial, managerial, and volitional. Sometimes, a government cannot afford the public expense necessary for reducing poverty; at other times, it is in want of relevant technology and professional staff. Volitional failure refers to a particular situation where the political elite are indifferent to domestic famine and malnutrition.

If the government, which is primarily responsible to its citizens, has failed to relieve the poor in one of the three ways mentioned above, then the general and potential responsibility of each individual to benefit all others becomes actual. Therefore, other governments acting on behalf of their respective citizens are obliged to assist the poor in that country. When the government in question financially fails to reduce domestic poverty, governments of affluent societies are required to render financial aid or to provide material aid in the form of food, clothing, shelter, and health care supplies to those affected. When the government fails managerially, its society wants scientific data on poverty, administrative skills to cope with it, and trained personnel including physicians, engineers, and teachers. In such a case, the affected government would not only require the aid of technologically advanced countries but also the corporation of countries with recent experience of a struggle with domestic poverty. The most formidable case is that of a volitional failure, wherein the

political elite take advantage of economic aid in order to maintain their power or reject any offer of assistance considering it as foreign interference. The international community is then advised to induce the government to adopt a more democratic and responsive approach. This requires the lengthy and enduring process of negotiation and efficacious stigmatization.

In addition to material, managerial, and moral assistances to the poor in the developing world, the institutional reformation of national policies and international principles is also required. One particular reform that is highly advisable is the encouragement of fair competition in the international market by abolishing the protectionist exemptions in international trade schemes and cutting down subsidies to domestic farmers. Another possible reform concerns a change in the political dimension of world poverty. A government that has furnished military aid to a suppressive regime that has been unresponsive to the basic needs of its mass population must immediately withdraw the aid. A new international scheme regulating weapon trade is required, and the criteria for developing trade with any nation must include a condition regarding the degree of democratization and of respect for human rights in the consumer state.

Most theories based on the redistributive conception of global justice suffer from two defects: First, they do not appreciate the conventional presumption. To avoid this shortcoming, this paper proposes a theory of global justice that explains the reasons why a government is usually obliged to ascribe priority to its citizens, and specifies certain situations in which the government should help the disadvantaged in other countries. Second, some leading redistributivists incorrectly assume that national policies in affluent societies and international principles supporting them are causally unrelated to world poverty. Amending this misguided assumption, the paper suggests that elements of the redistributive argument must be complemented with the reformative considerations. Accepting the partial relevance of compatriot priority and analyzing closely the reformative view contribute toward the improvement of the redistributive conception of global justice.

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