

**Progress in International Politics:
Procedural Liberalism and Global Collective Identity**

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Abstract:

This paper advances the core theoretical claims of my larger dissertation project, which proposes a theory of progress in international politics. Disturbed by the dearth of literature on progress in mainstream IR theory, I suggest that international politics has actually experienced considerable progress over the last two centuries, most apparent in the liberalization of international politics and the emergence of international community. Seeking to bridge the longstanding division of labor between normative and analytical theory in the study of international politics, I present a liberal cosmopolitan theory of progress that offers procedural liberalism as a link between the normative and analytical in order to better understand and assess these empirical trends. Normatively, I propose global collective identity as an ideal-point in international politics and identify procedural liberalism as a normatively desirable process by which to achieve it. Analytically, I explicate how procedural liberalism's two defining principles – equality and universality – operate through institutions in ways that, taken together, promote global collective identity formation. Bridging the normative and analytical, this suggests that the underlying shifts in international politics over the last two centuries are cause for optimism, while simultaneously offering a credible, pragmatic strategy for their continued advancement.

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Introduction

A few years ago I was called up for jury duty. In answer to jury selection questioning I mentioned that I was a graduate student in international relations. This piqued the judge's interest, and he asked what my dissertation was about. I told him I was writing on progress in international politics. He dryly replied, "That will be a very short book." Though I simply smiled and waited for the next question, I continued to think about the judge's remark – not because of what he had said precisely, but rather how his comment merely echoed a sentiment I hear so often from individuals both inside and outside of academia. Most people would agree that the last two hundred years have brought an unprecedented amount of progress in science, technology, economic production, and, not least, the fields of health and medicine. Yet there remains deep skepticism about the possibility of *political* progress, especially at the international level.¹

In this paper I challenge this conventional skepticism, arguing that international politics has actually experienced considerable progress over the last two centuries, most apparent in the liberalization of international politics and the emergence of international community. To make sense of these shifts, I present a liberal cosmopolitan theory of progress that offers both a normative framework with which to assess these changes and an analytical framework to elucidate the causal mechanisms behind them. The paper unfolds in five sections. The first section draws attention to particular obstacles hindering the study of political progress, while also pointing out why research on political progress is nevertheless important for international relations (IR) theory. I then introduce and briefly outline a theory of progress. This is followed by a review of the (scant) literature on progress in international politics, touching on similarities and drawing contrasts between them and the theory I propose. In the fourth section, I fully lay out the normative and analytical components of my theory. I conclude with its implications for IR theory.

Problems and Promise in Theorizing Progress

Addressing the idea of progress in international politics immediately runs into a variety of obstacles, not least of which is the empirical mixed bag of international history over the last two centuries. On one hand, there seems to be cause for optimism. Considered legitimate practices in past eras, slavery and colonization – along with an array of other now-abhorrent customs – are now proscribed by a robust legal framework that increasingly governs state practices and behaviors. Cooperation and conflict resolution are increasingly mediated multilaterally and transparently, rather than through secret pacts and open war. Despite localized deviations, global life expectancies and educational levels are higher and poverty levels lower than ever before, in no small part due to the diffusion of science and technology, innovation, and trade through the liberalization of international trade and finance. And it appears that growing levels of international cooperation and the recognition of sovereign equality among states have given rise to an emergent sense of international community that encourages states to view their

¹ See, for example, Almond, Chodorow, and Pearce, eds (1982) and Kagan (2008). Gertrude Himmelfarb laments that "this may seem to be the worst of all times to propose this idea [of progress]" (2004:196), and Michael Ruse claims that "[the idea of] progress is in eclipse" (1996:36).

interests in a global context.² On the other hand, it appears that the worst aspects of international politics have only been amplified in recent history. As politics have globalized and interaction intensified, so have conflicts over resources and between ideologies – spurred to ever-greater levels of destructiveness by the march of progress in science and technology. After all, the 20th century witnessed two world wars, unprecedented ethnic genocide, nuclear weapons, and rising global inequality. And the 2003 invasion of Iraq and Russia’s 2008 incursion into Georgia only seem to further the notion that international politics is still the same old game stacked in favor of the strong, in which world leaders perpetually engage in adaptive dishonesty in their continual competition for power. Assessing the progressiveness of international history requires the messy task of arbitrating between these countervailing trends.

Proposing a normative yardstick with which international history can be measured is, in itself, another obstacle. Progress requires assessing the desirability of change, which is to invite debate over scope and domain, or what constitutes progress and for whom. Should political progress be measured by changes in the processes of international politics, or by substantive outcomes? The former trains attention on changes in the underlying rules and norms of international politics, which may overlook the very real conflicts and inequalities that might result from processual change. Conversely, the latter focuses more directly on results, such as the health, wealth, and security of a population, but may fall prey to the ends justifying the means. In terms of domain, is progress being measured in reference to the nation or the global population? Nationalistic conceptions of progress are greatly restricted in their applicability to the study of international politics due to their exclusionary view of whose desires are paramount and can create, euphemistically speaking, negative externalities. One could say that Adolph Hitler had a very clear vision of progress for the German people. Conversely, casting progress in terms of the global population threatens to discount the normative value of community (i.e. nation) in ordering, stabilizing, and promoting the welfare of populations. This suggests that, beyond assessing the empirical record, proposing progress in international politics must address, and stake a position in, ongoing debates in the normative literature.

And if these two obstacles were not enough to discourage talk of progress, the segregation of normative and analytical theory in international relations (IR) imposes a third. Theorizing about progress, defined algorithmically by Eliot Sober as “Progress = Directional Change + Values,”³ requires both normative and analytical components. However, there currently exists a division of labor between mainstream IR and political theory, by which the former primarily addresses the ‘realities’ (or analytical aspect) of politics and the latter primarily addresses the normative issues of morality and ethics. This is in part a legacy of E.H. Carr’s damning critique of interwar Idealism as a naïve and dangerous attempt at social engineering. The idea that normative motivations can cloud an objective assessment of the realities of international politics became something of a credo in post-WWII IR, most apparent in the ascendancy of the Realist research program. Additionally, the behavioral revolution, though primarily epistemological in nature, further squeezed normative issues from mainstream IR (at least in the American academy) by embracing the broader goal of ‘scientizing’ the study of politics; fifty years on it remains a powerful, even dominant, discourse in IR.⁴ In other words,

² See Ellis (2009) on the term ‘international community’ – a speech act that evokes a common international identity.
³ 1994:20

⁴ See Easton (1969) for an early attempt at a ‘post-behavioralist’ movement; See Lapid (1989) on the ‘Third Debate’; See Monroe (2005) and Schram and Caterino, eds. (2006) on the ‘perestroika movement’ – representing successive, and only partially successful, attempts to reform the discipline.

the discipline has partitioned the study of the ‘is’ and the ‘ought,’ neglecting the usefulness of ‘praxeological’ analyses that explore the relationship between empirical realities and moral possibilities.⁵ As the idea of progress requires straddling this divide, it is easy to see how its study has fallen between the cracks.

Yet, while these obstacles certainly go a long way toward explaining the dearth of literature on progress in international politics, they in no way diminish the *importance* of its study in IR theory. This drives directly to the basic purpose of social scientific research. As an academic enterprise, social scientific research is charged with not only uncovering how the world works, but also with exploring the possibilities for change and potential for improvement. As Robert Cox has famously noted, “Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose,” or as he put it in a more recent title, “The Point Is not Just to Explain the World but to Change It.”⁶ Of course these words should always be read with a healthy dose of pragmatism – analytically focused research has contributed immensely to our understanding of how the world works and explicit normative goals expressed in other works should be held to the same rigorous standards as analytical scholarship, and maybe more so when they advocate radical change. However, social scientific research – IR included – is inherently normative *and* analytical. The segregation of normative and analytical theory is an artificial one. While it has been in many ways a useful division of labor, it cannot (or should not) be reified in a way that discourages or discounts scholarly attempts to bridge the two and construct theories that more fully capture the essential purposes of scientific inquiry.

For those less inclined to philosophy of science arguments, this has real world implications for the policy field as well. Ironically, policymakers appear more acutely aware of the limitations imposed by this normative/analytical division of labor than IR theorists. In constructing policy, they must reconcile the realities of international politics with the normative motivations of the nation on a daily basis. E.H. Carr saw this as a clear limitation of his own formulation of Realism:

“Consistent realism excludes four things which appear to be essential ingredients of all effective political thinking: a finite goal, an emotional appeal, a right of moral judgment and a ground for action.”⁷

And continues with:

“Every realist, whatever his professions, is ultimately compelled to believe not only that there is something which man ought to think and do, but that there is something which he can think and do, and that his thought and action are neither mechanical nor meaningless.”⁸

These limitations can be applied to analytical theory more generally, in that it only offers insight into one half of the political decision making equation. This ultimately leaves it to policymakers to mesh sometimes-incongruent normative and analytical frameworks in forming policy, which

⁵ Linklater (1998:5); also see Price (2008:192-3) on this point.

⁶ 1981:128 (emphasis in the original); 2008:84.

⁷ 1939:89

⁸ Ibid:93

can lead to sub-optimal results.⁹ While not feasible in all cases, when analytical arguments can be complimented with normative ones, IR scholars provide more holistic, coherent, and possibly more useful frameworks for policy making. Metaphorically speaking, in eschewing explicitly normative arguments mainstream IR enters the political fray with one arm tied behind its back.

More specifically to the issue of progress, this points to the importance of progressive discourses in political decision-making and underscores the value of producing intellectually rigorous theories that bridge the normative/analytical divide. State elites, like all individuals, are guided by conceptions of progress – what they imagine to be desirable outcomes in political interaction shape their strategic behavior toward these results. History is defined by the contestation between differing interpretations of progress, which served as underlying motivations for Napoleon Bonaparte, Klemens Wenzel (Prince von Metternich), Woodrow Wilson, Adolph Hitler, Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and all other elites alike. Some interpretations are deemed more desirable and others more despicable, but any normative assessment of them itself flows from a particular idea of progress. By constructing theories of progress that provide both normative ideals and analytical theories for how they are achieved, IR scholars can offer (what we hope to be) more intellectually rigorous formulations of the ‘ought,’ and explicitly show how to get from ‘here’ to ‘there’ in a way that is both practical and desirable. While the probability of effecting political change may remain low and IR scholars – like everyone else –speak from a particular historical and social frame of reference that inevitably influence their theories, such attempts to define an idea of progress remain an important part of the social scientific enterprise.

Moreover, the current state of international politics only serves to emphasize the point. After twenty years of unipolarity the United States remains the most dominant state in international politics and possesses somewhat unique advantages in preserving it in the near term,¹⁰ and while the predictions for a relatively swift return to multipolarity have not been borne out,¹¹ shifts in geopolitical and economic power have raised questions about its sustainability into the future.¹² If these shifts continue, what will the future of international politics look like? One potential outcome might be that emerging powers such as China, Russia, and others will choose to work within the framework of the existing liberal international order to pursue their interests.¹³ Though another might be a return to multipolar great power conflict,¹⁴ or an international system remade in the image of a new hegemon. Regardless, how international politics take shape into the future will be a result of the strategic behaviors adopted by the U.S. and rising powers, which in themselves are motivated by normative beliefs of state elites. At root, conceptions of progress held by the U.S. and rising powers will determine whether the U.S. will aggressively confront rising powers or attempt to strengthen the rules and norms of the existing international order, and whether rising powers will work within the existing structure or seek to overthrow it. These conceptions of progress are not arbitrarily constructed, but rather reflect the accumulated knowledge and belief systems of state elites. It is here that work on the idea of progress in IR theory becomes useful in contributing to the state of knowledge in our

⁹ See, for example, Goldsmith (2008) on the misapplication of democratic peace theory in recent U.S. attempts to promote democracy through the use of force.

¹⁰ Wohlforth (1999), Ikenberry (2000). See Ikenberry, ed. (2001) and *World Politics* (Issue 1, 2009) for an overview of the unipolarity literature.

¹¹ Mearsheimer (1990), Layne (1993)

¹² See, for example, Pape (2005) and Zakaria (2008).

¹³ Ambrosio (2005:100-28), Ikenberry (2008), Glosny (2010).

¹⁴ Mearsheimer (2001), Wohlforth (2008)

field and more fully developing understandings of international politics that combine the normative and analytical, helping elites both frame their interests and determine their strategies.

Introducing the Argument

It is with these points in mind that I challenge the conventional skepticism about political progress, arguing that history actually exhibits significant progress in international politics over the last two centuries. Consider the differences between today's international system and that of late 18th century Europe. The American Heritage Dictionary defines autism as, "A pervasive developmental disorder characterized by severe deficits in social interaction and communication, by an extremely limited range of activities and interests, and often by the presence of repetitive, stereotyped behaviors," providing a scarily accurate – and only partly tongue-in-cheek – analogy to late 18th century European politics. The period was characterized by a handful of immensely powerful individuals repeatedly engaging in war with one another, partitioning weaker European states, and colonially subjugating non-European populations in pursuit of (often short term) self-aggrandizement. Talk was cheap, the primary language of diplomacy was the blunt instrument of war, and great power monarchs were inwardly fixated on narrowly defined self-interests. Multilateral diplomacy was reserved for dividing the spoils of war, and there was little that bound the people of Europe (much less the world) with common purposes or interests. Now contrast this with today's international order, in which 192 states continually collaborate through myriad multilateral institutions addressing a wide range of issues of international concern, constructing an international community that operates, however imperfectly, on the ideal of sovereign equality among states. Talk has important implications for the reputation and legitimacy of interacting states, deliberation and negotiation are important languages of diplomacy, war is the exception rather than the rule, and state interests are increasingly defined within the context of international law and community. While the international lacks the traditional stability, order, and intense collective identity of the domestic, and international conflict is far from becoming an artifact of the past, international politics do appear to be overcoming the problems of anarchy in important ways.

This progressive shift in international politics is more precisely captured in two accelerating trends over the last two centuries. The first has been the construction and proliferation of increasingly liberal international institutions premised on the principles of equality and universality. The liberalism of the post-World War II international order is obvious in the many international organizations we are all familiar with today (UN, WTO, etc.), but its pedigree in international politics dates back nearly two centuries. Largely restricted to political theory discourses and limited domestic practices in the 18th century, the seeds of liberalism in international practices were first sown in the international congresses collectively known as the Concert of Europe, and have been growing – albeit in fits and starts – ever since. In the successive two centuries, liberal practices and institutions have proliferated to include a vast array of important security, economic, and social international institutions. Moreover, the proliferation of liberalism has not just been quantitative, but also qualitative.¹⁵ As international institutions have become more common, they have also become more liberal in terms of inclusiveness and equality among participants. Earlier institutions strictly confined to Europe and only loosely adopting principles of equality gave way to institutions with codified (albeit

¹⁵ Ruggie (1992)

limited) rules of equality that welcomed the participation of ‘civilized’ non-European nations, which in turn gave way to institutions that, after decolonization, are truly international and vest ever greater power in increasingly egalitarian decision-making bodies.

The second trend has been an emerging sense of international community, or international collective identity, that has increasingly affected the way in which states define their interests, and can be illustrated through four successive eras. During the 18th century, European great power monarchs generally viewed the world as their oyster, often taking an adversarial approach to other great powers and seeing them as obstacles to be overcome in accumulating greater power and security. The cooperation and intermarriage that took place between monarchies were primarily strategic, and though they shared basic social identities as great powers and Europeans, there was little shared sense of community between them. The self-regulating logic of balance of power politics that characterized the 18th century international order did nothing to encourage identification, and, indeed, actually rewarded egoistic social roles by casting international politics as a zero-sum game.¹⁶ The revolutions of the late 18th century and the Napoleonic Wars not only changed beliefs about the principles of balance of power – from understanding it as a self-regulating system to one that required management – but also shifted the way in which European states viewed one another. Whereas before there was a clearer delineation between Self and Other that rested on territorial boundaries, the recognition that each state’s fate was bound to the stability of Europe led to great powers adopting social roles that served the interests of a collective Europe. While differences certainly remained between European great powers, and between great powers and weaker states in Europe, the salience of a European collective identity began to grow. The Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 provide initial evidence of a third era, in which the (still emergent) identity of Europe began to blur to include other ‘civilized’ states as states increasingly adopted social roles promoting international law and society. Though it ultimately failed to prevent WWII, the Covenant of the League of Nations illustrated the growing salience of an international collective identity among ‘civilized’ states, which helped forge the Allied resistance and presaged the post-WWII international order. Finally, in the modern era we see states adopting social roles that would have been inconceivable in past centuries. Following decolonization, the international system became truly international for the first time, and in no time in history have actors (states) exhibited such a firm commitment to the maintenance and stability of what has come to be ubiquitously termed the international community. From self-aggrandizing European monarchs of the 18th century that put their faith in a self-regulating interpretation of the balance of power, to 19th century leaders who adopted collective social roles for the preservation and maintenance of European order, to the expansion of the idea of international community to include ‘civilized’ countries in the early 20th century, to the modern era’s thick international laws, principles, and norms that continue to promote the adoption of internationally-focused social roles – the idea of international community is as ubiquitous today as it was absurd two centuries ago.

These trends suggest that the social configuration of international politics is in the process of significant transformation, and *if* these trends continue into the future,¹⁷ we can imagine future developments that would increasingly challenge anarchy as the ordering principle of international politics. They point to an incremental thickening of international law and the proliferation of liberal global governance structures with increasingly greater power to both

¹⁶ Schroeder (1994:3-52)

¹⁷ I discuss the non-teleological nature of these trends in the next section; cf. Wendt (2003).

create and enforce it. While its specific character and development is open to speculation,¹⁸ a possible outcome might be a gradual shift toward a federal system of global governance in which nations or regional institutions would retain jurisdiction over national/regional issues, and issues of global concern would increasingly fall under the purview of global institutions. Though it might be hypothesized that without a concrete external Other any global governance structure will remain weaker than in domestic federal models, this would ultimately depend on the salience of global identity and the pressing concerns of global problems (environmental concerns, the threat of nuclear war, etc.). And since much in politics is local and collective identities are rarely totalizing, such a governance system would face many of the same challenges domestic structures do today in terms of individual rights, the jurisdiction of the federal government, and civil unrest. However, this would eliminate the inside/outside divide that has distinguished the domestic from the international and created national fault lines used to justify the most destructive forms of violent conflict. In other words, the progressiveness of these trends lies in the steady domestication of the international, rationalizing political interaction and contestation according to commonly accepted rules and norms that proscribe violent conflict and the arbitrary use of power.

But how do these two empirical trends – the incremental liberalization of international politics and a growing sense of international community – constitute a theory of progress? Evaluating the progressiveness of political change requires both a normative assessment and analytical explanation. Toward this end, I argue that the increasing salience of international collective identity constitutes a normatively desirable shift in the social configuration of international interaction, and that the construction and liberalization of international institutions represents both a manifestation and active driver of collective identifications. This draws attention to positive changes in the *processes* of international politics and the construction of global governance structures. While the substantive changes over the last two centuries have been more varied, though still generally positive in the aggregate, underlying shifts in the rules and norms of international politics have been developing toward greater self-restraint in interstate conduct, more consensual forms of conflict resolution, and increasing equality and universality in decision-making bodies.

Normatively, I propose global collective identity as an ideal-point for international politics. Its desirability is based on collective identity's positive effects on the collective action problem, distributional conflict, and social instability, all of which are key sources of conflict and obstacles to peace and cooperation in international politics. If the most salient form of political identification rested at the global level rather than the national one, one can imagine the pacifying effect this would have on political, economic, and social disputes. While such a world would still surely face a host of conflicts and demands – just as the domestic sphere does today – it would nevertheless represent a progressive shift away from the vagaries of modern international politics. Global collective identity, however, only represents an ideal endpoint, and one that is multiply realizable. A more immediate concern, then, would be how to get from 'here' to 'there' in a way that is also normatively desirable. Therefore, I propose procedural liberalism – minimally defined in terms of liberalism's principles of equality and universality – as a desirable pathway to constructing global collective identity. Distinct from other pathways, I argue that procedural liberalism offers a minimalistic, collaborative, and ultimately pragmatic approach to collective identification, offering an incremental, processual approach to political

¹⁸ See Wendt (2003:516-28) for one potential evolution.

interaction that can lay the foundations for identification without coercively suppressing cultural pluralism or dictating *ex ante* the specific normative content of collective identity.

Analytically, I explore the relationship between procedural liberalism and global collective identity formation. This has been, I posit, a mutually reinforcing process – the recognition of collective identifications has been instrumental in the construction of liberal institutions, and in turn these institutions themselves promote the deepening and widening of identification. Given the complex interaction between the two, accounting for both directional processes is beyond the scope of this study, and, as I will touch on in a moment, there are already very persuasive arguments explicating the process by which collective identity drives liberal institutional formation.¹⁹ Therefore, my analytical argument focuses on how the dual principles of procedural liberalism – equality and universality – work through liberal institutions to reinforce and expand collective identifications. In so doing, I hope to show that liberal institutions are not just manifestations of existing collective interests and identifications, but that the principles and operating procedures of liberal institutions actively encourage collective identifications, contributing to our understanding of institutional socialization and the role of procedural liberalism in effecting progressive change.²⁰

This is accomplished in a two-step process. First, I hypothesize that procedural liberalism's principle of equality, manifest in liberal institutional rules, promotes norms of deliberative and collaborative decision-making that encourage participants to forge collective identifications. Drawing on the growing socialization literature, this suggests that institutions act as socializing arenas that affect actors' behaviors and interests, and that, more specifically, liberal institutional rules of equality structure political interactions in a way that incentivizes actors to adopt pro-social behaviors and redefine interests toward the collective. Second, I hypothesize that procedural liberalism's principle of universality places pressure on the domain of liberal institutional participation when they exclude actors who claim a legitimate right to participate. As political interaction is intensified and 'scaled up' due to the pressures of globalization, existing institutional frameworks become outdated not just in the scope of issues they address, but also in their representation of those affected by institutional outcomes. Discursively, the principle of universality serves to catalyze and reinforce 'accusations of hypocrisy' against exclusionary institutional frameworks that, emerging from inside or outside the institution (or both), attempt to mobilize support for reform toward greater inclusiveness. Taken together, this elucidates how procedural liberalism (1) promotes collective identity formation among participants within institutions, while also (2) catalyzing a shift in the purview of liberal institutional structures from the regional to the international, and potentially toward the global, as political decisions increasingly produce global consequences.

Furthermore, this suggests that progress in international politics is 'in process,' or actively 'becoming.' The trends outlined above are important steps in an ongoing process *toward* more liberal institutional frameworks of governance, and *toward* the emergence of a salient global collective identity. Today we do not see perfectly liberal governance, but rather liberal international institutions that are increasingly embracing notions of equality and universality; and we do not see a unified global collective identity, but rather a solidifying international collective identity. This temporally situates my theory 'midstream,' attempting to look backward to account for the historical trends introduced above while also looking forward

¹⁹ See, for example, Adler and Crawford, eds (1992) and Haas (1997).

²⁰ This draws attention to the dual nature of procedural liberalism as both a normative framework and an institutional form.

to assess the probability and elucidate the process by which these trends might continue toward a global, rather than international, configuration for governance and collective identity. Though these processes are ultimately historically and culturally contingent with a grounding in the European political experience, and though they are not immune to exogenous shocks or endogenous shifts in ideological beliefs that may reverse or shift the tide, the liberalization of international politics and the emergence of international collective identity appear to exert an inertial path dependence toward their continued progression.

Before laying out the normative and analytical aspects of progress in more depth, however, it is useful to situate my argument in the existing literature in order to highlight similarities and draw contrasts between them and the theory I am proposing.

The Idea of Progress in IR Theory

The idea of progress has received scant attention in the IR literature, largely due to the retreat from Idealism and the push to ‘scientize’ the study of politics discussed above. The rationalist frameworks that dominated IR during the Cold War era and continue to represent the foundations of our field today preclude the possibility of significant progressive change. Though they differ over the extent to which it can be ameliorated in order to allow for cooperative behavior among states, both Realism and Neo-liberalism work from a common ‘logic of anarchy’ that posits an unalterable state egoism, prohibiting collective identifications that might modify the rules and norms of political interaction. Realists express this general pessimism most forcefully. Since, according to the basic tenets of Realism, significant change in international politics is either elusory or cyclical and temporary, real progress is impossible. Whether history is an interminable balance of power between adversaries²¹ or a succession of hegemonies,²² the logic of anarchy is self-perpetuating and unchanging, and talk of progress belongs to the bygone era of interwar Idealism. Though Neo-liberals speak of progress in a thin sense by highlighting the potential for cooperation through international regimes and institutions, reputational effects, and the opportunity costs of future interaction, such cooperation exists only to the extent to which it fulfills the strategic interests of rational, egoistic states.²³ Whether it is used as a simplifying assumption or reflects an implicit belief about international politics, Neo-liberalism’s commitment to the logic of anarchy forestalls any discussion about deeper change in the international system.

Constructivist and critical approaches to IR theory are more amenable to significant political change, but have generally avoided the idea of progress for other reasons. Much of the more ‘conventional’ Constructivism trains attention on specific issue-areas of social change rather than more comprehensive assessments of broader periods of international history.²⁴ Additionally, they often eschew normative arguments in favor of analytical ones that advance Constructivism as a valid method for analytical theory. This literature has not precluded the idea of general progress so much as avoided its study in favor of other research questions.

²¹ Waltz (1979), Mearsheimer (2003)

²² Gilpin (1981)

²³ See, for example, Axelrod (1981), Keohane (1984), and Oye (1985). Though see Milner (1991) for a Neo-liberal critique of the logic of anarchy.

²⁴ For example, see Price (1997) and Tannenwald (2007) on the chemical and nuclear weapons taboos, Crawford (2002) on decolonization, and Finnemore (2003) on humanitarian intervention. See Hall (1999) and Wendt (1999) for notable exceptions.

Conversely, more critical approaches to IR readily tackle broader trends in international history, but often question its progressiveness. New modes of political interaction and economic production may be progressive to the extent to which they offer new alternatives for resistance and change, but are usually not in and of themselves progressive.²⁵ The inherent relativism of normative arguments and the contingent nature of social change continue to frustrate advancing ideas of desirable directional change.

In a general sense, however, my analytical argument operates within the ‘cultures of anarchy’ framework developed by Alexander Wendt in *Social Theory of International Politics*,²⁶ seeking to specify the processes by which political change occurs. Whereas Wendt provides a macro-level typology of international politics populated by Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian cultures that vary in their degree of internalization, I train attention on the specific institutional mechanisms by which collective identifications are sustained and advanced within the current Lockean culture, while simultaneously illuminating how these processes might catalyze a shift toward a Kantian one. At the same time, I depart from Wendt’s later assertion that the evolution of international politics can be interpreted as a teleological unfolding of history toward global collective identity through the struggle for recognition and the construction of a world state.²⁷ Instead, I interpret the liberalization of international politics and the emerging sense of international community to be directional changes that exert a path dependence promoting their continuation. Concretely, this is in part due to the many barriers to dissolving existing institutional frameworks and constructing new ones, as well as the increasing returns of existing institutions that can subsequently incentivize path dependence in future institutional evolution.²⁸ Further, procedural liberalism – like all normative frameworks – implies an internal teleology, in that its adherents take into account its desired outcomes in determining their interests and actions. Therefore the proliferation of procedural liberalism, as both an institutional form and a normatively desired process for decision-making, over the last two centuries should grant it advantages against alternative frameworks into the future. This does not, however, imply teleology. Procedural liberalism has been *developed* in Western political thought rather than *discovered* as a universal form of political interaction, underscoring both its historical and cultural contingency. Even as it exerts growing path dependence in its proliferation, procedural liberalism remains contestable; aside from potential exogenous shocks, it is vulnerable to endogenous challenges from alternative belief systems and forms of governance. Indeed, the contingency of procedural liberalism’s future development and the possibility of its reversal grant my normative argument greater urgency, especially if/when U.S. (and more generally Western) hegemony gives way to new distributions of power.

Turning attention to the broader concept of progress, two important works on international progress emerged in the 1990s that reflected the cautious optimism in IR following the Cold War, both of which provide important touch-points for my argument. These were Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford’s edited volume, *Progress in Postwar International Relations*, and Ernst Haas’s two volume work, *Nationalism, Liberalism, and Progress*.²⁹ Both works advance similar, substantive definitions of progress. The first defines progress as

²⁵ See, for example, Cox (1987:8-9) and Hardt and Negri (2000:xv). The Marxist view of progress is addressed separately later in the paper.

²⁶ 1999

²⁷ 2003

²⁸ North (1990:92-104); Ikenberry (2001:69-72)

²⁹ 1991, and 1997 and 2000, respectively. The edited volume is actually dedicated to Ernst Haas.

“changes in the pursuit of states’ national interests in ways that further human interests... defined here as security, welfare, and human rights for individuals,” while Haas defines it similarly as “*directional change for the better*” and, more specifically, “healthy, wealthy, and relatively peaceful life.”³⁰ Both works also advance similar arguments for the process by which progress is achieved, namely through a process of cognitive evolution that is driven by elites’ disappointment in outcomes and reinforced by interdependence. For Adler, actually borrowing from Haas’s earlier works, cognitive evolution is a neofunctionalist learning process by which actors accept a “collective descriptive and normative set of understandings of what it takes to advance the nation’s power, influence, and wealth,” and it is “progressive when an awareness of interdependence engenders a further awareness of limits and obligations.”³¹ Similarly, while he does not use the term cognitive evolution, Haas also employs a neofunctionalist learning process by which actors, in the face of rising complexity, develop bases of consensual knowledge that allow for mutual interest formation and cooperation.³²

While the works differ in their substantive focus, they both view progress as an emergent process, the causal forces of which emanate from the changing beliefs and interests of domestic elites as they construct consensual knowledge. Haas addresses the fluidity of nationalism and specifically liberal nationalism, emphasizing the role of scientific knowledge and Western rationality in creating a common framework for producing shared meanings, which lay the foundations for constructing collective interests. Adler and Crawford’s edited volume constructs a less historically focused and culturally contingent narrative, with various authors assessing progress in various contemporary issues, including international conflict and trade, nuclear proliferation, human rights, and environmental protection. Nonetheless, they both share a common causal framework for progress: in an international environment characterized by increasing complexity and interdependence on issues of security, trade, and human rights, states (or, more specifically, domestic elites) realize disappointment in the conflicts and sub-optimal outcomes resulting from their pursuit of national interests in traditional ways, catalyzing a learning process that encourages elites to reshape national interests in ways that conform to collective ones. This learning process, in turn, leads to instrumental progress in the construction of international regimes and institutions that formalize interdependences, encourage cooperation and deliberative conflict resolution, and, ultimately, contribute to the substantive well-being of the world’s population. While this greatly simplifies each work’s argument and does not convey the pragmatism with which they address contemporary problems of international conflict and cooperation, it does faithfully capture the causal frameworks they present.

Taken together, these works brought progress back onto the IR radar and made important contributions to our understanding of the concept. At the same time, they shed light on hitherto unexplored aspects of progress that I take up in this study. We can distill the following from a review of these works in order to draw contrasts with my argument. First, both define progress in substantive terms. Second, both focus on cognitive evolution as the process by which progress is achieved. Third, both theorize the effect changes in elite beliefs have on international cooperation and, in particular, international institutions. The theory I propose here, in contrast, defines progress as processual change, frames the process of progress in terms of collective identity formation, and reverses the causal arrow, focusing on the causal effects liberal

³⁰ Adler, et al (1991:2) and Haas (1997:9, 10, emphasis in the original), respectively.

³¹ Adler, et al (1991:28, 29)

³² (1997:5-9)

international institutions exert on collective identification. Nevertheless, my analysis ultimately seeks to compliment these prior works, rather than reject, criticize, or amend them.

I define the normative aspect of progress processually, focusing on significant changes in the social configuration of international interaction over time rather than changes in substantive outcome. While substantive goals such as health, wealth, and peace,³³ or security, welfare, and human rights,³⁴ are probably ones that most would intuitively agree with, their achievement does not necessitate an underlying shift in international interaction. For example, Haas's definition could be accomplished through imperialism, under which subjects' material requirements are met at the price of political rights; and Adler et al's definition could be accomplished under traditional hegemony, which might provide the substantive requirements of progress but is, ultimately, only a temporary period of order in a cyclical pattern of conflict and peace. Actually, I would argue that cognitive evolution, when resulting in collective identifications, is a better measure and normative focus of progress more generally, but the authors choose to limit themselves to a substantive definition. This appears to reflect back on the division of labor between normative and analytical theory that has characterized IR theory since WWII, and I would venture to guess that Haas and Adler et al's substantive focus is, in part, an attempt to quickly establish consensus on a normative definition of progress in order to focus on the analytical aspect of their theories, which is their primary concern. Regardless, the cosmopolitan view of progress that I adopt reflects changes in the social relationship between actors, which result in structural changes in international politics that, while in many ways implying the substantive goals presented in these other works, goes beyond outcomes to lay out a process-oriented framework for durable change for the better, reestablishing the link between the normative and analytical in IR in greater parity.

Toward this end, I focus on collective identity formation instead of cognitive evolution. This is not a departure from Haas and Adler et al, but rather a further specification of the process of progress. Collective identity formation is a particular cognitive process by which pre-existing distinctions between Self and Other become blurred, expanding the domain of Self to include prior Others and reconfiguring interests according to these new collective identifications.³⁵ Interests come to reflect the well being of the group, resulting in the adoption of social roles that seek to advance the collective interest.³⁶ Defined in this way, collective identity formation represents a *particular direction* in cognitive evolution, which does not formally imply specific directionality or desirability on its own. While both Haas and Adler et al draw on cognitive evolution as a generic catalyst for changing beliefs and interests, more specifically it is processes of collective identification that catalyze their notions of *progressive* change. This shift, or update, in vocabulary accomplishes two things. First, it more clearly specifies the process by which progress occurs as a particular direction in cognitive learning. Learning processes can result in a wide variety of outcomes, but it is only those outcomes that lead to collective identifications – rather than those that, say, lead to greater egoism or belligerence – that I (and Haas and Adler et al) would deem progressive. Second, it more closely links these works with

³³ Haas (1997a:10)

³⁴ Adler et al (1991:2)

³⁵ Wendt (1999:229)

³⁶ Collective identity should be thought of as neither overly idealistic nor aggressively assimilative. Collective identifications constitute many of the most important actors in international politics, including nations, religious organizations, and terrorist groups. Additionally, as Alexander Wendt points out, "Identification is usually issue-specific and rarely total" (1999:229), varying according to context and intensity.

the growing literature on collective identity in IR and related fields, as well as with normative literatures on cosmopolitanism.

It is in causal direction that I most visibly depart from these prior works on progress. Haas and Adler et al are concerned with how interaction between elites under conditions of interdependence catalyzes learning processes that may lead to collective identifications, manifest in international regimes and institutions for cooperation. This is certainly a critical, and possibly the principal, causal mechanism by which collective identity is formed. It is no accident that the most significant shifts in political interaction and institutional practices are usually the product of devastating conflicts. The Napoleonic Wars led to the Concert of Europe, WWI to the League of Nations, and WWII to the United Nations, illustrating how conflicts often represent punctuated equilibria, rapidly upsetting existing orders and revealing the need for new ones. Such scarring conflicts, as well as less intense forms of disappointment, force state elites to not only rethink their strategic behaviors but also reconfigure their interests in light of changing realities. Building from the insights provided in these works, here I reverse the sights by focusing on the effects a particular type of international institution has on the promotion of collective identifications among elites and others. Specifically, I theorize that institutions grounded in the liberal principles of equality and universality exert socializing influences of their own, encouraging participants to adopt social roles that advance the collective interests of the group and creating pressures for more inclusive notions of group membership, which can (when successful) result in higher orders of collective identification. In contrast to the notion that institutions are the product of collective interests, or even that institutional effects are largely those that result from the substantive policy prescriptions they advocate and/or adopt, this draws attention to how *the rules and norms of liberal international institutions condition processes of interaction* in a way that is conducive to the construction of collective identifications.³⁷ The recurring practices of treating other participants on equal terms and recognizing the rights of other actors to legitimately participate have a socializing effect that encourages participants to view their interests within the context of the group, placing restraints on egoistic impulses and drawing attention to collective interests. This does not discount other processes of collective identity formation, but rather extends their logic by focusing on and emphasizing the independent role liberal international institutions play in promoting it.

A Theory of Progress in International Politics

International history exhibits momentous changes over the last two centuries, readily apparent in the liberalization of international politics and emerging collective identifications beyond the nation-state. These trends represent an underlying shift in traditional patterns of international interaction toward the cosmopolitan ideal of global community, which, I contend, constitutes progress in international politics. Further, these trends are not merely coincidental; their unfolding has been in many ways mutually reinforcing – collective identifications have spurred liberal patterns of social interaction and the construction of liberal international institutions that, in turn, have served as social arenas in which collective identifications are deepened and widened. As the first half of this relationship has been explored both theoretically

³⁷ It is not liberal international institutions as international actors so much as liberal international institutions as social arenas whose principles and rules encourage learning processes that promote collective identifications. See Johnston (2000) and Checkel (2005) on treating international institutions as socializing arenas.

and empirically by Adler and Crawford's edited volume, Haas, and others, I train attention on the second half, specifying the processes through which liberal international institutions promote collective identity formation. My theory proceeds in two steps: first establishing a procedurally liberal normative framework with which to gauge the desirability of international political change, then presenting an analytical argument that elucidates the causal connection between procedural liberalism and global collective identity.

The Normative Component of Progress

My normative argument unfolds in three steps. First, I propose the cosmopolitan ideal of global collective identity, or community, as a desirable end-goal (the 'ought') for which international politics should strive. I then lay out particular obstacles constructing global consensus must overcome, not least of which is the fractured nature of international politics today (the 'is'). Third, I identify procedural liberalism (the 'bridge') as a normatively acceptable, incremental approach to achieving global collective identity.

The 'Ought': Global Collective Identity

Global collective identity represents the highest order of collective identity in human interaction, in which distinctions between Self and Other are blurred to a point where individuals come to adopt social roles that advance the interests of the collective on issues of global importance. In other words, it is a shared sense of identification between individuals that shifts the center of gravity of political identification from the national to the global. This would imply the eventual development of global governance structures that reflect such a shift in identification, but it is not my purpose here to guess as to the specific composition of such structures or their relationship to 'lower order' structures of the state, province, city, etc. Rather, by bracketing for a moment the process by which global collective identity is achieved, I am simply positing that the realization of such a social configuration of global interaction would represent a progressive shift in international politics.

This is a decidedly cosmopolitan vision of progress, though my processual approach distinguishes it from those cosmopolitan works that focus on substantive outcomes. Thomas Pogge distills three core elements of cosmopolitan belief: individualism, universality, and generality. This entails a commitment to the human being as "the ultimate units of concern" (individualism) that, regardless of their particular social identities, should be applied equally to all individuals (universality) and recognized by all individuals (generality).³⁸ Cosmopolitanism, in other words, is a commitment to global collective identity, seeking to de-emphasize other sub-global collective identities (especially nationalism) that serve to divide populations in order to realize global community. Additionally, within cosmopolitanism there is a popular concern for distributive justice that pushes beyond these basic principles to advance particular substantive requirements for global justice, or progress.³⁹ However, I stop short of these arguments, training attention only on the benefits of global collective identity as a social configuration premised on

³⁸ 1992:48-9

³⁹ For an overview of these works, see Pogge, ed (2001), Follesdal and Pogge, eds (2005), and Caney and Lehning, eds (2010)

the equality of rights and obligations among individuals in addressing global issues.⁴⁰ The substantive normative content and outcomes of global community should emerge from the process of identity formation rather than by assumption, thereby offering a more sustainable and consensual approach to norm development and policy adoption, as well as greater flexibility in accounting for present and future social contingencies that will help shape the normative contours and substantive outcomes of global collective identity. So while my normative goal is broadly liberal cosmopolitan, it is more specifically relational and processual, rather than distributional and substantive.

So why should global collective identity be deemed progressive? There are numerous moral and ethical arguments for global collective identity, not least of which are the need to ameliorate poverty and suffering around the world and realize a sense of global justice that many scholars argue is an inherent moral good. Given, however, that many cosmopolitan scholars have already constructed excellent arguments in favor of global community and justice,⁴¹ and that much of my intended audience is more familiar with analytical IR theory than normative political theory, here I focus on the normative value of global collective identity for three significant issues of concern to IR theory: collective action problems, distributional conflict, and social instability. I first show how, generically, collective identity reconfigures social roles in a way that diminishes or resolves these issues among actors within the collective. I then note how *global* collective identity, by definition, avoids the negative externalities sub-global collective identities are known to produce. I hope these arguments can stand alongside the more immediately moral and ethical arguments for global justice to form a robust defense of global collective identity as the primary objective for political progress.

Collective identity encourages collective action by bringing actors' interests into alignment, reducing the incentives to free ride, and minimizing the fear that others will defect. This is accomplished by reconfiguring actors' interests away from the traditional, egoistic Self and toward the collective.⁴² As collective identifications gain salience, actors adopt social roles that seek to accomplish collectively defined interests; it is no longer the case that their self-interests are merely aligned and thus providing an opportunity for cooperation, but that their self-interests actually become synonymous with the interests and well being of the collective. Under these circumstances, the traditional incentives to free ride or take advantage of other actors within the cooperative framework are reduced to the degree to which the collective identity holds salience for actors. This goes beyond the conventional notion of altruism, in which an individual sacrifices her own interests for those of the group. Within the context of a highly salient collective identity altruism itself is nonsensical, since the self-interests of the individual *are* the interests of the group. The presence of collective identity and its degree of salience for a particular situation is, ultimately, an empirical matter. However, what is important from a normative standpoint is that collective identity offers a durable response to the collective action problem, which undoubtedly represents a desirable outcome for those who constitute the collective. Indeed, when we consider the disparity between the immense amount of collective action at the domestic level and the meager level of cooperation at the international level, the tremendous opportunity costs due to a lack of international cooperation are readily apparent.

⁴⁰ What Gillian Brock terms 'relational cosmopolitanism,' as opposed to 'distributional cosmopolitanism' (2009:317).

⁴¹ Brock and Moellendorf, eds (2005)

⁴² See Wendt (1994) for a more detailed analysis of collective identity's effect on collective action problems.

Collective identity ameliorates distributional conflict in much the same way – reorienting actors’ interests toward the collective so as to diminish the intensity of distributional concerns. As with collective action, the extent to which distributional conflicts are reduced by the effects of collective identity is a matter of the identity’s relative salience. While collective identity is rarely totalizing and thus distributional conflict will rarely be eliminated, collectively shared interests present checks on the extent to which actors will press their claims. This may mean that, excepting the most extreme circumstances, the disputing actors will be governed by shared norms of nonviolent conflict resolution, and possibly follow a pre-defined course of negotiation or arbitration to resolve distributional concerns. When actors share a perception of common fate and interests, they are much less likely to engage in the destructive behavior that has made distributional conflict a primary catalyst of war in international politics,⁴³ and more likely to resolve the distributional concerns that can hinder collective action.

While we can easily imagine the benefits of reducing the more direct form of distributional conflict – those over existing social and material goods – collective identity has similarly pacifying effects on disputes over the allocation of potential costs and benefits of collective action. Existing distributional conflicts are certainly more apparent and overtly destructive, especially when they concern indivisible goods,⁴⁴ but the costs of distributional conflict over potential collective action are, though less visible, possibly more significant, especially when we take into account James Fearon’s conclusion that, perversely, reaching cooperative agreements become more difficult as the potential benefits from cooperation increase.⁴⁵ This implies that the normative desirability of collective identity with respect to distributional conflict goes deeper than merely pre-existing conflicts.

Collective identity also represents an efficient and effective response to social instability by encouraging actors to engage in diffuse reciprocity and practice self-restraint when attempting to revise the existing social order. Within the social boundaries of a shared identity, uncertainty about the intentions of other actors is reduced, diminishing the trust concerns that are traditionally thought to limit the opportunity for cooperation and circumscribe successful cooperative agreements to ones of specific reciprocity. Those who identify with a highly salient collective are more likely to practice diffuse reciprocity when interacting with other in-group members, which is to say they are more likely to share a “widespread sense of obligation” that leads them to behave “in the interests of continuing satisfactory overall results for the group of which one is a part, as a whole.”⁴⁶ This obligation to ensure the well being of the collective through cooperation extends to how actors approach social change as well. The social and material circumstances of any population change over time, exerting pressure on the existing social order. Those orders whose actors are subsumed under a shared collective identity, however, are more likely to experience change in a stable, consensual manner than those orders that lack social solidarity. Given the incentives to engage in diffuse reciprocity and practice self-restraint in pursuing social change, the probability and intensity of social instability should be reduced to the extent to which the relevant population shares a sense of collective identity.

As this discussion makes clear, collective identity has a desirable effect on social interactions between those who share in it. Collective identities reshape actors’ interests, weakening attachments to egoistically defined interests and strengthening collective ones. In

⁴³ See Baldwin, ed (1993) for a thorough treatment of the distributional challenges to cooperation.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Vasquez (1993), Fearon (1995), and Gilady and Russett (2002).

⁴⁵ 1998

⁴⁶ Keohane (1986:20)

turn, this simplifies social interactions by reducing barriers of uncertainty and distrust, allowing actors to engage more readily in cooperative agreements that benefit the group and its members. However, its normative desirability is dampened by the negative externalities most collective identities create. For example, closely-aligned businesses that decide to act collectively, or collude, in order to manipulate the market in their favor harm other actors in the economy; strong religious affiliations that draw millions together in solidarity might result in discrimination against nonbelievers; and the nationalistic loyalty that unites a country can become outwardly chauvinistic.⁴⁷ All collective identities defined by concrete, human in-groups and out-groups will have this double-edged nature. It is for this reason that I qualify my normative ideal point as *global* collective identity. Fully inclusive of the world's population, global collective identity distinguishes itself from the many other collective identities we usually encounter in international politics by the fact that it defines no concrete human Other.⁴⁸ This removes the negative externalities associated with sub-global collective identities while still offering the social and material benefits addressed above. Taken together, the above indicates that the solidification of global collective identity would represent a progressive shift in the norms and practices of international politics.

For some, though, the idea of global collective identity might conjure Orwellian images of groupthink and mindless automatons, so I should be clear as to what is meant by it. For one, collective identities are rarely totalizing, and as they are 'scaled up' the social roles they imply tend to become more generalized and context-specific.⁴⁹ Just as national identity does not necessitate social isomorphism or the destruction of cultural pluralism, and is usually limited in salience to issues of national importance, global collective identity does not necessarily suggest domination over every facet of life. Rather, its salience and effects would primarily be confined to addressing issues of global importance, such as climate change, resource scarcity, overpopulation, nuclear proliferation, large-scale civil or ethnic conflict, natural disasters, etc., as well as providing an overarching body of rules and norms for managing localized disputes. It would represent a significant shift in the institutions and operation of national and global politics, but there is no reason to think global collective identity would be more dominating or totalizing than existing political identities.

Additionally, the fact that collective identity implies a commitment to the well being of the group does not directly translate to a similar commitment to all of the individuals or sub-groups that form it. For example, the British and French citizenry can maintain their traditional animosity toward one another, and I can harbor an intense hatred for the neighbor who refuses to pick up after his dog, but this does not immediately challenge the British or French commitment to maintaining the existing international order or my particular nationalistic loyalties. In other words, global collective identity is not about forging naïve friendships between all the peoples of

⁴⁷ See Hewstone and Cairns (2001) for an introduction to various social-psychological theories of intergroup conflict, and Hardin (1995) on the negative externalities of collective action.

⁴⁸ This does not, however, necessarily propose a Self in the absence of an Other. Though it is not my purpose here to propose a specific Other, at least three potential ones come to mind: the historical Other [see Eyerman (2001) and Alexander, et al (2004) on the unifying effects of past cultural traumas, also Wendt (2003)]; the future, or counterfactual Other [see Deudney (2007) on how the threat of nuclear holocaust has already begun to galvanize collective identifications]; and the non-human, or environmental Other, in the form of climate change, large-scale pollution, deforestation, and even extra-planetary threats (see UN COPUOUS Document A/62/20:19 on the threat posed by near-Earth objects and proposed collective responses). Though whether Self must presuppose an Other is still debated as well [see Neumann (1996), Abizadeh (2005), and Greenhill (2008)].

⁴⁹ Brewer (1991)

the world, but rather about constructing interests and adopting social roles that sustain and reinforce the rules and norms of a global order. This suggests that political conflict, particularly at the local and regional levels, will continue to exist as before, but will be in some ways confined by global collective identity as to the forms (e.g. the degree of violence or coercion) it can take.

Finally, in order to gain salience global collective identity does require challenging existing notions of political identity, especially at the national level where political identity salience and power are currently concentrated. However, the threat global community represents to existing cultural pluralism is no different from that which all collective identities pose at their genesis, as each requires the adoption of particular social roles that may conflict with preexisting ones. The fact that political identity currently tends to be most salient at the national level does not in itself speak to its normative superiority. The status quo bias we observe in such arguments is not so much about the inherent normative superiority of a particular collective identity, but about the dangers destabilizing pre-existing identifications might pose and the unforeseen problems new forms of identification might cause. It is for this reason that much of the concern over global collective identity stems from the social transformation it requires, rather than global community itself. This shifts our attention from the normative benefits of collective identity to the normative desirability of the *process* by which it is constructed, which speaks directly to its feasibility and composition.

The 'Is': A Fractured Polity

The ideal of global collective identity is immediately confronted with obstacles that seem to cast doubt on its feasibility and desirability. Two specific obstacles emerge from the fractured nature of international politics today, manifest in the state-centrism of global politics and the salience of nationalism in global affairs. Two others speak more generally to the 'artificial' nature of collective identities, which require continual reproduction and are prone to solidifying into in/out-group distinctions that can become resistant to change. None of them is insurmountable; otherwise the political evolution that has resulted in the current international state system could never have taken place. But by highlighting particular challenges to global collective identity, they do suggest important realities that such a process must take into account.

First, states must be active participants in laying the foundations for global collective identity. No other class of political actor possesses the power and influence of the state, whose primacy literally defines the international state system. Research on epistemic communities, advocacy networks, transnational civil society, and other non-state actors has clearly shown the ability of non-state actors to effect change in international politics,⁵⁰ but only in so far as they are able to influence states' beliefs and interests. Exercising monopolistic control over governance structures and the use of force, only states (and, more specifically, their elites) possess the power to substantively transform international politics to reflect changes in political identification.

Second, nationalistic sentiments must be either transformed into global sentiment or weakened relative to global sentiment. While both political identities can (and do) exist simultaneously, meaningful change toward global community requires a significant shift in their relative salience from the particular to the universal. This might mean expanding current notions

⁵⁰ For examples of each, see *International Organization's* special issue on epistemic communities (1992, 46:1), Keck and Sikkink (1998) and Price (2003), and Florini, ed (2000) and Price (2003), respectively.

of (civic or liberal) national identifications toward a global domain⁵¹ or actively undermining more ‘primordial,’ ethnocentric national identifications that cannot be cognitively widened. In either case, loosening the grip of traditional, nationally defined political identities is a necessary step in realizing global collective identity.

Third, constructing global collective identity must overcome a more general impediment to collective identity that I term the ‘default to individualism.’ Collective identities are accomplishments of practice that must be constructed and actively reproduced in order to remain salient. Though socialization processes can be extremely powerful and robust in shaping actors’ interests, identities, and even their psychological development,⁵² certain biological realities exist that challenge the importance of collective identification and make their consistent reproduction necessary. The closed nature of our biological feedback loops continually reproduce basic incentives toward individuation that exert downward pressure on the domain of identification. For example, while I may empathize with your hunger pangs, I can only biologically feel the contractions of my own stomach, and while we may be able to communicate our thoughts and feelings quite effectively through language, our mental consciousnesses remain distinct. There are plenty of examples of individuals sacrificing their lives for others, as well as less spectacular but more common actions taken for the benefit of the group, but these collective identifications are products of socially constructed incentives that must be reproduced through social interaction, as opposed to our more ‘native’ biological incentives. This ‘default to individualism’ presents a recurring obstacle to constructing and maintaining collective identifications, especially in terms of global identification, in which the level of abstraction from the individual is greatest. Further, it suggests that the success of such a process will partially depend on its ability to account for, harness, and respect these individuating pressures.

Fourth, successful identity change requires confronting the ‘stickiness’ of prior in-group affiliations. When actors are engaged in negotiating an overarching normative framework for collective action, each one tends to perceive her existing normative principles as superior to others’ alternatives.⁵³ This presents a major hurdle to achieving consensus on political norms and values, and suggests why the coerciveness of hegemony has traditionally been thought necessary to achieve collective action and political integration.⁵⁴ While general to all forms of identity change, this obstacle specifically relates back to the issue of nationalism in modern international relations. In order for a process of global collective identity formation to be successful, then, it must provide incentives for actors to bridge the gap between nations by explicating a framework for arbitration between various norms and values that is perceived as beneficial, legitimate, and enforceable.

The ‘Bridge’: Procedural Liberalism

Given the realities of modern international politics and the general resistances to constructing ‘higher order’ collectives, how can global collective identity be achieved in a way that is both effective *and* normatively desirable? It is, after all, the potential to actually achieve

⁵¹ See Haas (1997a) for how this takes places. Also, the second volume of his study (1997b:1-45) provides an excellent typology of nationalism.

⁵² Fiske, et al (1998)

⁵³ Hewstone and Cairns (2001); see Mercer (1995) on how in-group biases help reproduce the logic of anarchy that underpins neorealism.

⁵⁴ Olson (1965), Kindleberger (1973), Gilpin (1981)

normative goals that distinguishes social scientific normative theory from utopian musings.⁵⁵ At the same time, potential avenues for their achievement are constrained by normative considerations about process. Global collective identity is multiply realizable, but certain approaches – for example, large-scale liquidation of the out-group, which unfortunately is still all too common – are not, to say the least, normatively desirable. It is at this juncture that normative theory is at its messiest, since any process toward a social ideal must, in order to be realized, face tradeoffs and advance pragmatically. At the very least, achieving global collective identity requires de-emphasizing and/or redefining nationalist sentiments in favor of global identification, and eventually requires shifting state-based sovereignty toward a model of ‘shared sovereignty’⁵⁶ under robust global governance institutions. Though global collective identity can coexist with cultural and political pluralism, just as nationalism currently coexists with pluralism at the domestic level, it must attain salience in institutional structures in order to meaningfully reshape global politics.

There are numerous pathways to global collective identity and an exhaustive list of options is beyond the scope and space constraints of this study, but it is useful to briefly consider a few simple ideal types to identify a pathway that is both effective and normatively acceptable. For this we can consider two questions pertinent to moving toward global identification: to what extent do conceptions of global collective identity challenge or reconfigure existing (largely national) political identities, and how are institutional mechanisms employed to achieve it?

An extremely minimalist approach to global identification would be to promote the recognition and respect of cultural pluralism without significantly altering the international institutional order. This might be termed the communitarian approach. While often cast as a counterweight to cosmopolitanism, communitarianism’s defense of existing notions of pluralistic political community against the isomorphic pressures of global community nevertheless implies a very weak notion of global identification defined by a commitment to respecting and according particular rights to differing cultures.⁵⁷ This certainly appears normatively acceptable, but it immediately raises the question of feasibility. How can this ideal gain the salience necessary for its realization without institutional structures that reproduce and reinforce rules and norms of pluralistic respect?

This problem is exacerbated when we consider revolutionary approaches that advocate a thorough reconfiguration of social identity in the absence of pre-existing institutional scaffolding. Communism provides an illustrative example in that it (in its simplest form) calls for a global social order established on the recognition and mobilization of collective identity forged along class lines. Besides the normative challenges communism faces in the reformation or annihilation of the capitalist class in order to achieve global collective identity, it lacks an institutional framework that can reproduce and reinforce the salience of proletarian class identity while simultaneously challenging and replacing those institutions that underpin existing social identities. One can surmise that this is at least in part why the communist revolutions in Russia and China quickly were quickly co-opted by state elites in pursuit of traditionally nationalistic

⁵⁵ Prozorov (2009:243)

⁵⁶ Krasner (2004)

⁵⁷ For example, Connolly (1991/2002) rejects the assimilative pressures of cosmopolitanism, but nevertheless presents his defense of cultural pluralism and agonistic respect as a normatively valued code of conduct with seemingly universal applicability.

interests.⁵⁸ Without addressing the stickiness of prior social identities and the default to individualism that results in the absence of institutions that reinforce identity salience, revolutionary approaches to global collective identity are unable to credibly challenge the strength and durability of the state-centrism and nationalism of modern international politics. While very basic in their formulation, these examples illustrate that a credible institutional framework is a necessary condition for global collective identity, and implies that incremental change may often be more feasible than revolutionary change.

Conversely, a hegemonic approach provides an institutional framework, but is limited in its ability to dictate the character of global collective identity in a way that is both effective and normatively desirable. Hegemonic powers by definition possess the power to construct and/or impose institutional frameworks that form the basis of international order, but their ability to define the social configuration of international politics rests in part on the perceived legitimacy of the international order. Failed attempts at hegemony by states advocating a particularistic or exclusionary conception of progress (e.g. Nazi Germany) represent an extreme case, in which the normative repugnance of the potential international order itself blunts its feasibility by mobilizing other states in coordinated resistance.⁵⁹ Though universal in its communist ideology, the Soviet Union's attempt at forging regional collective identity in the Eastern Bloc similarly incited resistance due to its efforts to unilaterally define and represent the collective from Moscow. The U.S. is the most powerful global hegemon in history, yet it too suffers the same basic limitation in that it cannot unilaterally impose global collective identity. While, as I will argue in a moment, it has constructed an international order conducive to encouraging global collective identity in a way that is both feasible and normatively desirable, the U.S. must nevertheless gradually yield its privileged position in defining the social configuration of international politics if global collective identity is to be pursued. This suggests that, in addition to a credible institutional framework from which to advance, the construction of global collective identity requires a basic level of consent, and therefore must proceed in a manner that is collaborative and, at least initially, minimal in its content.

Toward this end, I propose what I deem to be a normatively acceptable bridge between the 'is' and the 'ought' – procedural liberalism. As the term implies, this defines liberalism in very minimalistic, procedural terms. It is an ideal of governance that, borrowing from Haas, “employs decision-making procedures that provide for the representation of all major social and economic interests and ideologies and allow almost unrestricted discussion” with “voting procedures that prevent the tyranny of majorities and minorities,” and is premised on the idea that “[t]he evolution of contested values into shared values cannot begin with the unilateral assertion of the superiority of a single one.”⁶⁰ Following from this, I distill procedural liberalism to two primary principles, equality and universality – equality among participants in the decision-making process and inclusiveness in defining who constitutes a legitimate participant. Procedural liberalism represents an ideal type for decision-making, but at the same time is not black-and-white; a decision-making body, or institution, is not either procedurally liberal or not. Rather, institutions can be gauged by the extent to which they embrace equality and universality.

⁵⁸ Benedict Anderson notes the stickiness of nationalism in these two cases, stating that, in studying socialist revolutions, we should “not be much surprised if revolutionary *leaderships*, consciously or unconsciously, come to play lord of the manor” (1983/2006:160, emphasis in the original).

⁵⁹ It is in the idea of legitimacy that we see the necessities of effectiveness and normative desirability in promoting global collective identity most closely bound.

⁶⁰ Haas (1997a:20)

This is important because going from ‘here’ to ‘there,’ from the ‘is’ to the ‘ought,’ requires a process of change that can only come about gradually. One only has to imagine the chaos and instability of allowing the full cacophony of individual and collective voices to immediately sound off in global affairs to understand why this is so. In the next section I lay out the causal mechanisms by which procedural liberalism incrementally promotes global collective identity formation. Here I present an argument for the normative desirability of procedural liberalism, in that it provides a minimalistic, collaborative, and, ultimately, pragmatic approach to global collective identity formation.

In what might be deemed an under-socialized international community, procedural liberalism offers an institutional framework that minimizes the initial requirements for, and impediments to, participation. Recognizing the existing pluralism in international politics, it intentionally avoids *ex ante* assumptions about the substantive normative content of potential collective identification, focusing instead on establishing processual norms governing decision-making processes. This accomplishes three goals. First, the substantively neutral position of procedurally liberal institutions promotes inclusiveness by reducing cultural barriers to participation. Second, substantive neutrality expands the horizon of potential outcomes, allowing procedural liberalism to maintain institutional flexibility in the face of social contingency and encouraging institutional participation by offering members the opportunity to shape and decide norms, policy, and outcomes. Third, procedural liberalism’s substantive ambiguity calls attention to its processual characteristics as a basis for collective identity formation. Just as a commitment to democratic governance forms the core of American national identity, the egalitarian principles of procedural liberalism offer the initial building blocks of collective identity among a pluralistic global population.

Procedural liberalism’s minimalism also avoids the hazards of a distributive approach. Though one might hope that a solidified global collective identity would one day allow the international community to address existing distributive inequalities, attempting to immediately implement redistributive policies could very well erode consensus and prove counterproductive.⁶¹ Procedural liberalism offers a more basic, incremental approach by generically encouraging cooperation and collective action while leaving decisions about distributive issues to the deliberative outcome of procedurally liberal international institutions.⁶² Research in social psychology appears to support a procedural approach as well, finding that both individuals and groups tend to be more sensitive to differences based on treatment than on outcome.⁶³ While outcome inequality is a source of social discontent, structural inequalities of status and position tend to possess much greater salience, implying that actors place greater importance on achieving procedural, rather than distributive, justice.⁶⁴ This suggests that a procedural approach to community building at the global level may be more successful, at least in the formative stages of collective identity formation, than those that advance an agenda for international distributive justice.

⁶¹ See Walzer (1983), Miller (1999), Rawls (1999), and Van Parijs (2007) on the obstacles to realizing distributive justice at the global level. By arguing that some degree of collective identity is necessary for principles of distributive justice to take hold, they underscore my assertion that a procedural approach should prove more effective than a distributive one in constructing the foundations of global collective identity.

⁶² Habermas 1992/96

⁶³ See Walker and Smith, eds (2002) on the concept of relative deprivation in social identity theory.

⁶⁴ Ibid:47

Further, the multilateral⁶⁵ character of procedurally liberal institutions incentivizes a deliberative and collaborative approach to decision-making that can encourage collective identifications. The decentralized nature of decision-making in a multilateral setting reduces the direct role of power in determining outcomes. Rather, actors must rely on the deliberative process, in which they are impelled to resort to precedent, persuasion, and reasoned argumentation in order to win support for their positions.⁶⁶ This erodes normative barriers between actors by encouraging them to, one, appeal to rational arguments detached (as much as possible) from culturally relative assumptions that often cloud communicative efforts and, two, recognize and appreciate common ground that can promote collective action. Additionally, the traditional majority or unanimity requirement in multilateral institutions provides an incentive for actors to collaborate in order to advance positions on particular issue-areas. Such collaborative efforts can result in subjective perceptions of ‘ownership’ over collectively constructed positions, contributing to the actors’ commitment to both the position and to the group involved in constructing it.⁶⁷ Though the role of power, threats, and temporary logrolling in the processes of contemporary multilateral institutions reminds us of its practical limitations, procedural liberalism nevertheless proves normatively desirable in its promotion of identity formation by offering a collective, consensual approach to constructing rules and norms.

Finally, there is also normative value in the pragmatism – both internal and external to the approach – of a procedurally liberal process of global collective identity formation. Internally, procedural liberalism does not demand an all-or-nothing process for institution building and identity construction. Rather, it represents an ideal that can be achieved over time with the incremental expansion of its defining principles of equality and universality. This allows procedurally liberal ideals to be incorporated into institutions that only imperfectly capture its principles, planting themselves in an international environment that might otherwise exhibit few identity building influences. Externally, liberalism quite simply represents the hegemonic ideology of our time,⁶⁸ implying that procedural liberalism should prove to be both feasible and effective as a process for global collective identity formation. Though radiating primarily from Western culture and history, the domestic and international landscape is saturated in liberalism, underpinning democratic governance, international regimes, capitalist economics, free trade, and the social values of human rights. The dominance of liberalism in global political discourses effectively limits and shapes the normative possibilities in world politics⁶⁹ or, in other words, defines the horizon of history from which we construct our empirical knowledge and normative imaginations. While the normative value of procedural liberalism should not be advanced simply on its status as the hegemonic ideology in contemporary political thought, the ideal does appear to be, in some fashion, the manifestation of existing intersubjectively desired goals.

⁶⁵ This specifically refers to the qualitative aspect of multilateralism as “an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of ‘generalized’ principles of conduct – that is, principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions, without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence” (Ruggie 1992:571).

⁶⁶ Habermas 1983/90, 1992/96; Cohen 1989; Held 1995; Risse 2000

⁶⁷ There is an enormous literature on the importance of ownership in social psychology that confirms its positive effects on the legitimacy, cohesion, and collective morale of groups and organizations. See Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) for both a theoretical literature review and empirical test of perceived ownership.

⁶⁸ Fukuyama 1992

⁶⁹ Price 2008

This is not to say that procedural liberalism is an ideal form of global collective identity formation in both its normative desirability and effectiveness, but rather that it seems to provide the most desirable and feasible pathway *available* in the context of current international politics. Though it leaves the content of global collective identity to be determined through the decision-making processes of its institutions, procedural liberalism nevertheless represents a culturally specific process for political interaction. And though, as I attempt to show in the next section, procedurally liberal institutions may socialize states to adopt global identifications, their existence and continued operation requires an element of self-restraint particularly on the part of powerful states, which must forego short-term incentives to work outside its institutional framework in pursuit of national interests. These limits to procedural liberalism point to its normative imperfections and underscore the contingent nature of its realization. However, the liberalization of international politics and the steady emergence of international community over the last two centuries that have brought positive changes in the processes of international governance suggest that, despite its warts and the obstacles confronting it, procedural liberalism does offer a relatively practical pathway to progress.

The Analytical Component of Progress

Having elucidated the normative desirability of global collective identity and of procedural liberalism in achieving it, in this section I turn to the causal mechanisms through which procedural liberalism incrementally promotes global identifications. My argument initially proceeds from an appreciation of G. John Ikenberry's work on U.S. hegemony and the current liberal international order. Ikenberry has argued that the durability of the international order constructed after WWII and reinforced with the thaw of the Cold War rests on the U.S.'s decision to institutionalize, rather than dominate or abandon, the postwar order in a way that reflected its own domestic institutions.⁷⁰ By constructing an institutional framework based on liberal principles of governance, the U.S. credibly committed itself to restraining the use of its considerable power advantage and created incentives for other states to bandwagon with rather than balance against it. Moreover, the order "exhibit[s] constitutional characteristics" that serve to influence the strategic behaviors states adopt in competition with one another, implying that its 'lock in' effects may continue even after the decline of U.S. hegemony.⁷¹ In this way, the institutional framework of the current liberal order not only contributes to the durability of U.S. hegemony, but also domesticates the international in important ways by tempering the logic of anarchy and constraining the strategies by which states pursue power.

This in itself underscores the influence of international institutions in shaping political outcomes, but the socialization literature suggests that institutional effects go deeper. Beyond their role in stabilizing and ordering political interaction, institutions are socializing arenas where communication and interaction can lead to changes in the behaviors and interests of participants.⁷² According to Jeffrey Checkel there are two distinct ways we can understand institutional socialization:⁷³ either as promoters of socialization in their ability (akin to epistemic

⁷⁰ Ikenberry (2000:6-7)

⁷¹ Ikenberry (2000:6, also see 50-79). See Ikenberry (2008) for the liberal international order's influence on the strategic behavior of emerging powers.

⁷² Ruggie (1998), Risse (2000), Johnston (2001), *International Organization* (2005, issue 4)

⁷³ Checkel (2005:805-8)

communities)⁷⁴ to shape domestic discourses that affect leaders' interests and beliefs, or as sites of socialization, where the intensity and/or repetition of interaction encourages elites to adopt new social roles that lead to changing interests and beliefs. Here I focus on institutions as sites of socialization, but go further in drawing attention to the socializing effects that institutional rules and principles exert in governing interaction among participants. This is an important distinction. Institutions are not merely passive forums for political interaction where the intensity and/or repetition of interaction may lead to socialization; institutional arenas can actually channel socialization processes toward particular outcomes by structuring participant interaction according to particular rules and principles. More specifically, I argue that procedurally liberal institutions actually channel socialization processes in a direction conducive to collective identification.

In support of this claim, I present two hypotheses for how procedural liberalism, manifest in liberal institutions, spurs global collective identity formation. First, I hypothesize that liberalism's principle of equality governs participant interactions in a way that promotes norms of collaborative decision-making and encourages them to forge collective identifications. By formally dispersing decision-making authority among participants, institutional equality forces actors to resort to collaboration and consensus-building in order to achieve desired outcomes, exposing them to processes of social influence and persuasion that can alter both their behavior and interests. Second, I hypothesize that liberalism's principle of universality continually challenges the boundaries of existing institutional frameworks by lending force to accusations of hypocrisy that demand successively larger, more inclusive domains of institutional participation. When liberal institutions achieve outcomes that directly affect populations that do not have institutional representation, they open themselves to attack from actors within the institution itself and/or from disenfranchised populations who can employ liberalism's commitment to universality as a weapon against exclusion. Taken together, these liberal principles establish a two-step process toward global collective identity formation – institutional equality promotes collective identification among participants within institutions, while pressures for inclusion encourage the 'scaling up' of institutional frameworks toward greater universality, such as from the regional to the international, and toward the global.

These mechanisms through which procedural liberalism encourages the formation and scaling up of collective identifications can work at any level of political interaction, from the local to the global. Given the state-centrism of modern international politics, however, a focus on liberal international institutions as salient proxies for procedural liberalism makes sense, though it does introduce some inevitable slippage between theory and practice. Procedural liberalism's principles of equality and universality represent ideals to which all international institutions, more or less, fall short. Yet deviations in institutional equality do not completely erase the socializing effects equality has on participants; and pressures toward universality are, short of its global ideal, always present to some extent. More importantly, though, liberal international institutions' role as proxy should be understood as historically contingent. If and when the state's privileged status in global politics falls into question due to strengthening global identifications, nuclear holocaust, or other circumstances, international institutions as proxy may give way to new local and/or global configurations of representation and decision-making. Additionally, a focus on international institutions delimits the process of collective identity formation to state elites, which empirically conforms to the emergence of international (rather

⁷⁴ See Haas (1992) and the rest of *International Organization* (1992, issue 1) for an introduction to epistemic communities.

than global) community exhibited over the last two centuries. The socializing influence of liberal institutions is most effective on those who determine interests and are immediately represented within the institution, and is attenuated as degrees of separation are introduced. The ‘international’ nature of global politics today draws attention to the fact that state governments serve as an intervening barrier between individuals and international decision-making. While collective identifications that result from interaction within international institutions may very well penetrate domestic society, especially societies with representative forms of government, as long as the primary institutions of global governance continue to represent states rather than individuals, my analytical argument is restricted in application to collective identifications among those more immediately represented in the decision-making process – state elites.

Equality and Collective Identity Formation

In this section I unpack my hypothesis that institutional equality promotes norms of deliberative and collaborative decision-making that encourage state elites to forge collective identifications. This would mean that international institutions are not just manifestations of collective identifications between state elites, but that their rules and norms exert a socializing influence of their own that serves to strengthen existing collective identifications and promote new ones. This argument requires three steps. First, I define what constitutes institutional equality. Second, given the abstract and difficult-to-measure nature of collective identifications, I establish indicators by which to approximate it. Third, I elucidate the causal pathway from institutional equality to collective identification.

Institutional equality is simply a measure of those rules of institutional procedure, usually formalized in charters and/or treaties, that generalize membership rights and obligations with equal application to all participants.⁷⁵ While the primary focus of my argument rests on equality in voting procedures, it is worthwhile to note that institutional equality also extends to the rights of agenda setting and the purview of enforcement mechanisms. As an ideal type, institutional equality stipulates equality in vote-weighting, agenda setting power, the application of enforcement mechanisms, and burden-sharing of institutional obligations and costs. In practice, institutions can be measured against this ideal to determine the extent of equality in the institution,⁷⁶ with special attention paid to equality in voting procedure in its promotion of collective identification.

Operationalizing collective identity is not so clear-cut, inevitably introducing slippage between concept and measurement. This is due to the fact that, though constituted as a shared sense of attachment, collective identities exist only in the minds of those who share in them. That is to say, the salience of collective identifications will vary between actors and contexts, and could only be directly observed and measured by ‘getting into’ actors’ heads. Alternatively, observing the social roles actors adopt in consequence of collective identifications would provide an indirect measure; however, this often requires conjectures about actors’ intentions, which become especially messy when particular social roles could potentially reflect any number of interests, or when it is unclear whether the assumed role is due to identification or

⁷⁵ Akin to Ruggie’s (1992:571) qualitative definition of multilateralism footnoted above (fn 65).

⁷⁶ I chose not to stipulate a hard and fast cut-off between ‘liberal/equal’ and ‘illiberal/unequal.’ Given the sometimes contortionist-like skills of those who write institutional charters, any particular cut-off would be met with exceptions. And given that I am not coding, quantifying, counting, or aggregating data based on these benchmarks, there is little reason to provide what would ultimately be an arbitrary cut-off.

consequentialist logic. While the operationalization I employ does not completely avoid issues of intentionality, it does include objective indicators to strengthen the measurement. Namely, I adopt Alexander Wendt's four 'master variables' for collective identity formation as measures of identification: interdependence, common fate, homogeneity, and self-restraint.⁷⁷ The first three are efficient causes of collective identification, understood as objective conditions that induce actors to perceive them subjectively in ways that encourage identification. The fourth is a permissive cause and necessary condition for collective identification, by which actors practice restraint in pursuit of their interests in order to build trust and convey a commitment to achieving collective ends. Of course Wendt presents these as independent variables, rather than direct evidence, of collective identity. However, when the objective conditions of interdependence, common fate, and homogeneity are intensified, and self-restraining behaviors are encouraged, collective identifications become likely. So while ultimately collective identification is dependent on its reciprocal acknowledgement among actors, if institutional equality can be shown to intensify these objective conditions and promote self-restraint, then we can infer that it heightens the probability of collective identity formation.

Institutional equality creates a social arena in which states are compelled to deliberate and collaborate in the decision-making process. Regardless of the specific requirements for decision-making (e.g. majority, supermajority, unanimity), when no state has more say than any other, they are forced to continually work with other states in order to realize their goals. If we stop here, we are left with the traditional rationalist argument that egoistic actors will strategically seek consensus on issues where interests converge, engage in logrolling to mutually realize divergent interests, or act unilaterally outside the institution if agreement cannot be reached. However, once engaged in processes of institutional decision-making, state elites also become enmeshed in social environments that create new incentive structures that can alter state interests and identities. This suggests that over time states will come to shape and adopt a normative framework for interaction within the institution that is strongly influenced by the institutional rules in place. In the case of institutional equality, this can mean developing norms of deliberation and collaboration that are conducive to collective identification.

More precisely, institutional equality affects the construction of collective identifications through two micro-processes of socialization, persuasion and social influence.⁷⁸ Akin to traditional understandings of socialization, complex learning, and internalization, persuasion is a process that "involves changing minds, opinions, and attitudes about causality and affect (identity) in the absence of overtly material or mental coercion."⁷⁹ Social influence, on the other hand, constitutes a 'thinner' process of socialization, by which actors adopt behaviors in response to social rewards and punishments. Entailing a consequentialist logic of norm adoption similar to that of Frank Schimmelfennig's rational actor model of socialization,⁸⁰ pro-norm behaviors are not reflections of internalized beliefs, but rather motivated by a desire to accrue social status or avoid criticism – or what Johnston terms 'backpatting and opprobrium.' Yet, when operating under the conditions of institutional equality, both processes can lead to the intensification of interdependence, common fate, and homogeneity, and encourage states to practice self-restraint.

⁷⁷ Wendt (1999:343-63)

⁷⁸ Though these processes have appeared in various works on socialization, I adopt the definitions and framework laid out by Alastair Johnston (2001).

⁷⁹ Johnston (2001:496)

⁸⁰ (2006)

Through the processes of social influence, institutional equality creates incentives for state elites to adopt behaviors that conform to norms of deliberation and collaboration in order to attain their goals. Not only can non-conforming behavior lead to sub-optimal outcomes in terms of a state's original interests (the materialist logic of pro-social behaviors), but such behavior is also likely to elicit forms of social approbation that harm its status and social power in the institution.⁸¹ If regarded as 'selfish' or not a 'team player,' other elites may negotiate agreements and shape policy without the uncooperative elites' input, label them 'obstructionist,' or socially isolate them from the decision-making process. In adopting behaviors that conform to institutional incentives, however, elites not only realize the material benefits of shaping policy and logrolling in pursuit of their interests, but can also achieve status within the institution as a player that can be counted on as a power broker, middleman, or swing vote. By accruing a positive status position through policy deliberation and collaboration, elites maximize their maneuverability and can forge closer relationships with other elites. Additionally, the reputational costs of hypocrisy help prevent 'backsliding' into non-conforming behavior or policy defection, thereby strengthening trust between members and catalyzing a 'virtuous circle' of pro-norm behavior.

As elites become socialized to practice norms of deliberation and collaboration through the process of social influence, the intensity of interdependence, common fate, and homogeneity is likely to rise. Pro-norm behavior should result in elites reaching cooperative agreements on policy that require coordination and trust more frequently, which can deepen interdependence between participants; as cooperation advances and member states position themselves more closely in terms of policy, they should increasingly be bound by common fate in that third parties will more likely view them as aligned; and the alignment of policies and adopted social roles in response to cooperative agreements should contribute to heightened homogeneity between member states. While the specific implications of particular patterns of cooperation will certainly vary, when aggregated a general trend toward objectively greater interdependence, common fate, and homogeneity is very likely over time. Additionally, processes of social influence can also incentivize the practice of self-restraint. Though self-restraint in this manner would ultimately be self-serving, it may still convey a level of trust and familiarity that encourages reciprocation. Even as these practices initially reflect self-interested purposes, they can create social conditions conducive to identification. What we can draw from the processes of social influence is that, even under socializing conditions that do not *directly* alter the basic interests and identities of institutional participants, institutional equality can still promote conditions *favorable* to collective identity formation.

The process of persuasion is both more powerful in its ability to effect interest and identity change and more elusive empirically. Though the latter ultimately tempers my operationalization of collective identity, persuasion nevertheless elucidates a clearer pathway between institutional equality and collective identification. Johnston explicates three general conditions under which persuasion is likely: intense deliberation, especially when environmental cues promote critical reflection; close affective attachments to the persuader; and characteristics internal to the persuadee.⁸² Of these three, the influence of institutional equality is obviously greatest in the first, only indirect in the second, and only minimally present⁸³ in the third. By

⁸¹ See Gilpin (1981) on the importance of status in international politics.

⁸² 2000:496-7

⁸³ When actors internalize priorly expressed beliefs in order to avoid the affective discomfort of hypocrisy (Johnston:2001:497), even when these beliefs were only expressed to advance strategic interests (i.e. social

providing strong incentives for deliberation in decision-making processes, institutions that operate according to principles of equality should be more likely to produce persuasive socialization than other institutional forms. More specifically, given that states are encouraged to generalize their interests and policy positions by resorting to rational argumentation in order to gain support and agreement (especially under rules that require consensus), persuasive socialization should be channeled toward the construction of collective interests and identifications under conditions of institutional equality. Additionally, in a less direct form of persuasion, collaboration initially undertaken for strategic purposes can, through repetition, become internalized over time – through more intimate deliberations between cooperative partners who have formed bonds of trust, a sense of ownership in collaborative outcomes that may lead coincident interests to become collective ones, or simply through habit. While rationalists would label persuasive efforts as mere rhetoric or cheap talk, the very fact that states employ such tactics implies their usefulness in genuinely altering the interests and beliefs of other participants.

When channeled through the incentive structure of institutional equality, persuasion intensifies objective conditions of interdependence, common fate, and homogeneity and encourages self-restraint by directly producing collective identifications. In a setting of deliberation, processes of persuasion become focused on reaching consensus. Successful persuasion in liberal international institutions should thus most often result in the redefinition of interests and identity toward collective ones. This, in turn, should have a similar – and much stronger – effect on the objective conditions for collective identity to that of social influence, since adopted pro-norm behaviors will be the result of internalized beliefs rather than strategic ones and therefore more thorough and durable. This is much the same for self-restraint. Persuasion that results in collective attachments between elites should encourage them to redefine priorly held self-interests in terms of new collective ones, leading to practices that constitute self-restraint in relation to priorly held beliefs. Ultimately, successful persuasion – specifically when channeled through the incentive structure presented by institutional equality – goes beyond promoting the conditions necessary for collective identification by directly constituting it.

This ‘deeper’ effect of institutional equality on collective identity formation is more powerful and enduring than social influence, but its value is tempered by its rarity. Persuasion appears to be a relatively infrequent outcome of institutional interaction compared to the prevalence of egoism and other behaviors adopted through social influence in institutional settings. Additionally, such successes will often be confined to particular issues or only affect a subset of institutional members. Nevertheless, processes of persuasion that are pursued under conditions of institutional equality that incentivize deliberation and consensus should be, when successful, highly effective in constructing durable collective identifications.

Universality, Hypocrisy, and the ‘Scaling Up’ of Decision-Making

I now take up my second hypothesis that liberalism’s principle of universality continually challenges the boundaries of existing institutional frameworks by lending force to accusations of hypocrisy that demand successively larger, more inclusive domains of institutional participation. Whereas the prior discussion hypothesized the role of procedural liberalism in promoting

influence). However, this could just as easily be viewed as a barrier to persuasion, since it might increase actors’ resistance to belief updating.

collective identification *within* liberal institutions, this section turns to how procedural liberalism promotes the ‘scaling up’ of liberal institutions from the regional to the international, and potentially the global. This proceeds in three steps. First, pressures to either reform existing institutions toward greater inclusion or create more inclusive, overarching institutional frameworks are often the result of the intensification of political interactions that subsume existing institutions. In other words, the ongoing process of globalization represents a necessary condition for attaining global governance structures and collective identity. Second, I introduce accusations of hypocrisy as a discursive weapon that can be directed toward challenging the legitimacy of existing institutions. However, these accusations represent a generic mechanism through which political change is achieved, and cannot in themselves explain the direction or character of change. Therefore, I then elucidate how liberalism’s commitment to universality forms the basis for and lends support to particular accusations of hypocrisy, which can catalyze change toward greater enfranchisement and, thus, the ‘scaling up’ of liberal institutional structures.

Globalization⁸⁴ is a necessary condition for international and global governance structures, and for global collective identity formation. It is not a coincidence that the proliferation of international institutions dovetailed with the advance of technology through the 19th and 20th centuries, and it is no secret that the locomotive, automobile, and airplane, as well as the telegraph, radio, television, and the Internet have all greatly contributed to ‘shrinking’ the world we live in and exponentially increasing the density of global interaction. No globalization means little social interaction across borders, which means no opportunity to form the social relationships necessary for governance or collective identity formation at the international or global levels. At the same time, globalization also results in destabilizing pressures on existing political orders. Once established, institutional structures tend to become ‘sticky’ and resist significant revision. As globalization advances, institutional frameworks became successively more outdated and ill suited – in both scope and domain – to address social needs, resulting in pressures for change. This might mean the internal reform and expansion of existing institutions or, given institutional resistances to change, more likely the construction of new, overarching institutions better equipped to handle the increasing complexity and density of social interaction.

Though globalization is a catalyst for social change, it tells us little about why successive responses to its pressures have been increasingly liberal in character. A diverse range of research programs seem to agree that this has been due to the most powerful countries over the last two centuries – Britain and the U.S. – internationalizing their domestic, liberal political culture.⁸⁵ Yet it appears that one potential explanation – change driven by accusations of hypocrisy premised on liberalism’s principle of universality – has largely been neglected in the IR literature.⁸⁶ This is not to say that accusations of hypocrisy offer a competing mechanism to the internationalization of liberal domestic structures by powerful states, but rather offer an additional mechanism for change that lends further strength and specification to the causal narrative.

⁸⁴ Which I minimally define as the exponential rise in interaction density at the international level since the early 19th century catalyzed by the precipitous advance of technology in such fields as communications and transportation.

⁸⁵ Though they disagree over how and why this took place. See, for example, hegemonic stability theory (Gilpin 1981, Ikenberry 2000), neoliberalism (Keohane and Nye 1977/89, Russett and Oneal 2001), neo-Marxism (Gramsci 1971, Cox 1987), and constructivism (Finnemore 1996, Hall 1999, Bukovansky 2002).

⁸⁶ Though Neta Crawford (2002) appears to indirectly address it, elucidating how ethical argumentation was employed to draw attention to the discrepancies between Western ethics and the practices of slavery and colonization, leading to greater enfranchisement at both the individual and corporate levels.

Hypocrisy is an inconsistency between one's professed beliefs and actions. For example, when states decry the protectionist policies of others while maintaining similar policies of their own, they are guilty of hypocrisy. It exists at all levels of social action, especially international politics, and is not a new concept for IR theory. Hypocrisy has been employed in order to characterize modern international politics, identify institutional weaknesses, and understand its role in sustaining collective action.⁸⁷ Additionally, Mlada Bukovansky and Martha Finnemore have recently highlighted the damaging effects of hypocrisy on the legitimacy of institutions and states.⁸⁸ Yet to date there has not been direct attention paid to accusations of hypocrisy as a mechanism for change. If hypocrisy can weaken state and institutional legitimacy and stymie policy effectiveness, it is important to understand how accusations of hypocrisy gain the traction necessary to effect institutional change.

I define accusations of hypocrisy as discursive weapons that draw attention to the legal and moral inconsistencies of actors and/or institutions in an attempt to instigate change. They are not idle observations of hypocrisy, but rather intentional efforts to cast light on perceived injustices. Specifically, they rely on rational argumentation in order to trigger social mobilization, seeking to inform or influence others' understandings or opinions about particular actors or institutions. Accusations of hypocrisy can take many forms, such as whisper campaigns, public challenges, formal requests for reform, etc.; they can seek a variety of outcomes, such as changes in behavior or beliefs, policy changes, institutional reforms, disempowerment of rivals, etc.; they can vary in their approach, from gentle persuasion to belligerent charges; and they result in varying levels of success. Importantly, accusations of hypocrisy represent a generic mechanism for change, rather than a cause. I hypothesize that it is through this mechanism for change that liberalism's principle of universality has contributed to the scaling up of liberal international institutions toward successively greater levels of enfranchisement.

This is due to the fact that the principle of universality consistently exposes liberal institutions to accusations of hypocrisy, and will continue to do so as long as global affairs are not managed globally. Liberalism's ideal of universality⁸⁹ creates a benchmark that most governance structures fail to achieve in practice. As globalization intensifies and expands patterns of interaction to include new issue areas and new actors, the gap between ideals and practices widen. Consequently, this introduces inconsistencies between espoused ideals and practices that consistently leave liberal institutions open to accusations of hypocrisy. Further, when accusations are premised on the liberal ideal of universality, if they successfully result in institutional expansion or new, overarching institutional frameworks, it increases the likelihood that new participants will advocate other liberal principles as well, including rules of institutional equality. In this way, accusations of hypocrisy capitalizing on liberalism's principle of universality should, when successful, lead to the scaling up of institutions with liberal characteristics.

So what are the conditions under which accusations of hypocrisy, and particularly those mobilized by liberal universality, most likely to succeed to institutional reform or the creation of new overarching institutional frameworks? Though the contextual factors of a given case will introduce considerable variation, we can identify at least a few variables that should help predict the probability of success, such as:

⁸⁷ See Krasner (1999), Weaver (2008), and Lipson (2007), respectively.

⁸⁸ Bukovansky (conference paper, 2005), Finnemore (2009)

⁸⁹ See Tan (2000:194-202) for a discussion on liberalism's universality.

- The extent to which the accusation's rationale is readily accessible to others. In other words, do others (within or outside the institution) interpret the indicted institutional practices to be hypocritical?
- The relative salience of the accusation. To what extent are the hypocritical practices perceived to be in violation of the principles and norms of the institution?
- The credibility of the accusers. Are they leveling legitimate grievances or grasping for straws?
- The perceived standing of the purportedly disenfranchised. Is it conceivable to think of them as legitimate participants in the institution?
- The relative degree of reform necessary to address the grievance. Do the costs and uncertainty of institutional reform outweigh the desire to bring ideals and practices into greater alignment, or avoid the social costs of perceived hypocrisy?

While this list is far from exhaustive, it provides scope conditions for when accusations will most likely be successful. Intuitively, we can predict that the probability for success will be high when the accusation is readily acknowledged, interpreted as a significant transgression of institutional principles, leveled by a credible individual or group that speaks for a population with a legitimate case for inclusion, and can be addressed with reforms that do not significantly alter institutional practices and procedures; and that probabilities will lessen as these vary.

If my hypothesis is borne out, it will confirm the independent role procedural liberalism plays in promoting the scaling up of international institutions from regional and exclusionary to more international and universal. However, one more step is necessary in the move from liberal international institutions and international collective identity to global governance and identifications. While the empirical record over the last two centuries draws our attention to the proliferation and solidification of liberal international institutions, international politics engenders a two-level game that complicates an analysis of liberal universality while simultaneously providing a potential link between the international and the global. At the domestic level, the principle of universality applies to the individual's right to participation or direct representation in national decision-making bodies. At the international level, states are often viewed and treated as collective individuals that deserve the recognition and rights implied by universality. While this is most often thought of as a simplifying analogy,⁹⁰ it has been reified in the language and practices of international politics, sparking tension over the incongruence between sovereign equality among states vs. sovereign equality among individuals.⁹¹ In international politics the former has traditionally overshadowed the latter. However, as sovereign equality among states has become more prevalent in the formal rules and principles of liberal international institutions, the issue of sovereign equality among individuals has gained greater attention and increasingly incited accusations of hypocrisy against the state-centrism of global politics. This is most evident in the UN's concern for individual rights in its charter and follow-on declarations, and in the increasingly visible human security movement.⁹² While treating individuals as subjects of international law is a far cry from recognizing them as direct participants in core international institutions, this indicates that, as the idea of sovereign equality among states gains greater currency in international politics, the issue of sovereign equality among individuals should become more salient over time.

⁹⁰ Cf. Wendt (2004)

⁹¹ Klein (1974:1-9)

⁹² See Paris (2001) for an introduction and overview.

The specific process by which this might occur is open to speculation. One could imagine the gradual adoption of a federal model of representation in global governance structures, catalyzed by accusations of hypocrisy against the state-centric nature of global governance as they gain salience. This might entail providing membership in institutions to newly elected officials who directly represent the global population (by district or a proportional system), independent from national boundaries – initially as observers but eventually as voting members. Or possibly, akin to Congress in American politics, directly electing such officials to a decision-making bodies that parallel those already representing states, though at least initially one with little institutional power. These are only musings about what might occur, but they do represent new potentialities in the social and institutional configuration of international politics. While my empirical focus remains on the shifts that have taken place over the last two centuries, which have largely concerned issues over state-based participation in institutional bodies, the logic of liberalism’s principle of universality nevertheless implies continued pressure toward global, as opposed to international, governance structures.

Equality, Universality, and Global Collective Identity

Taken together, this discussion indicates that procedural liberalism plays an important, independent role in promoting global collective identity formation. The first analytical step elucidates how liberal institutions encourage collective identity formation among institutional participants. Institutional equality compels states to engage in deliberation and collaboration in order to achieve their interests, channeling socialization processes in ways that intensify interdependence, common fate, and homogeneity and encourage self-restraint. The second step explicates how liberalism’s commitment to universality promotes liberal institutional expansion toward successively greater domains of inclusiveness. Given the gap between liberal institutional ideals and practice, liberalism spurs accusations of hypocrisy that advocate greater enfranchisement. In short, institutional equality promotes collective identity, while universality introduces pressures to expand it through greater institutional participation.

Conclusion

The premise of my argument is quite simple – international politics is progressing. Over the last two centuries, political change has exhibited directionality through the sustained liberalization of international politics and the gradual emergence of international identifications, altering the logic of anarchy in significant ways. Slavery, colonization, and a host of other now-abhorrent state practices once deemed prerogatives of the powerful are now prohibited under an increasingly robust body of international law, multilateralism has replaced war as the predominant language of diplomacy, and states have increasingly come to define their interests within the context of international stability and community. This gradual domestication of international politics stands in stark contrast with the static and/or cyclical logics of anarchy underpinning rationalist IR theory, and suggests an underlying coherence to the tumultuous changes of the last two centuries. Moreover, these shifts in the fundamental processes of international governance possess normative value. While the domestication of international politics is not in itself necessarily desirable (e.g. imperialism), the increasingly liberal character of international governance offers a relatively attractive approach to global identity formation

and governance. The evolution of steadily thicker global governance structures grounded in procedural liberalism will inevitably fall short of a perfectly just global community, but it is hard to argue that it is not more appealing than 18th century European power politics or even the more constrained liberal order of today, which still too often defers to material power balances.

Offering a theory of progress, however, is not to imply that the ideal has been reached, or even that it is imminent. Nationalism has long been the most salient form of political identification in international politics and, in all probability, will be for some time to come. Nor does my theory predict an end to international conflict or the end of history. Such a rosy view of the future would be as great a fallacy as assuming progress to be impossible. Rather, my theory couples a normative ideal with an analytical theory for its *incremental* accomplishment – one whose process will in all likelihood be excruciatingly slow and non-linear. It is at root a structural theory of progressive political change that advocates the adoption of a roughly liberal internationalist foreign policy. On one hand, procedurally liberal international institutions create incentives for collective identity formation and catalyze pressures for inclusive participation, accomplished through a socializing process that is unique to procedural liberalism in its promotion of collective identification. On the other hand, the incentive structure created by procedurally liberal institutions is not deterministic. States must choose to participate, and state elites must be at least minimally receptive to new ideas and patterns of behavior. Unfortunately, politics is all too often a reactionary process, requiring shocking disappointments in the form of war or other calamities to catalyze the learning process necessary for new identifications to take shape. However, if my above hypotheses are borne out, the international collective identifications forged over the last two centuries have resulted not only from the disappointments of war, but also greater participation in increasingly liberal institutions, indicating that a more peaceful approach to collective identifications and global governance is at least possible. In other words, my theory offers a progressive way forward in international politics that avoids the destructiveness of prior eras, but ultimately requires the normative acceptance and active participation of state elites for its accomplishment.

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