WISE INTERNATIONAL DECISIONS: THE BIGGER, THE WISER?

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When he makes strategic choices, the Prince favors *prudence*. This is one of the basic conclusions of the realist school of international relations. Although this is highly debatable, classical realists consider that state leaders are prudent to the extent that they do not inadvertently attack bigger states likely to defeat them (i.e. they maximize their interest). Realists are also normative at least implicitly: states *ought* not to be imprudent.

This line of thought has its origins in Thucydides, who also quotes Pericles saying "*we love wisdom without becoming soft"*. Wisdom is therefore not only positively associated to prudence, it is also negatively associated to the dangers of passivity. Yet, who is prudent or imprudent, wise or unwise? Wisdom appears to be a matter of scale. Realists show a great tolerance vis-à-vis autocratic or dictatorial regimes, precisely because they consider that individual decisions are more reliable, i.e. they are more prudent than collective ones. The Prince tries to maximize his interest and is therefore rational, predictable and wise (prudent without being soft), whereas democracy is the realm of passions leading to imprudent behavior. Of course, idealism or liberalism share a different approach (see also the debate about unilateralism vs. multilateralism). This paper discusses the different models of wise international behavior, depending on the size of the agent, the paradigm its members use when making their decision and the analytical framework that prevails in the assessment of their policy.

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WISE INTERNATIONAL DECISIONS: THE BIGGER, THE WISER?[1]

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In what way does the wisdom of international decisions differ from the wisdom of other types of decision, whether they be local, business or domestic? There is one striking difference that first comes to mind: it is a matter of scale. International decisions are taken either by nation states that are embedded in relationships that can include the whole international system, or by international organizations that are, along other few supranational entities such as the Catholic Church, among the biggest in the world, in terms of members and workforce and the number of people these delegates represent. A priori, a decision taken by the UN is a collective decision on a greater scale than a decision taken by the Yankees baseball team; it affects or at least should affect more people. A foreign policy decision taken by the US is not only a big scale decision because of the size of the United States as a state and the US government itself and the numerous politicians, bureaucrats and offices and councils that compose it. It is a large scale decision because it is directed at other big scale organizations (other states or international organizations) and can have ample international repercussions.

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[1] I benefited from the comments, suggestions and critiques of Robert Jervis, Tony Lang, Gloria Origgi and Patrick Pharo, who read an earlier version of this draft and whom I wish to thank.

Wise international decisions have several characteristics, that sometimes might differ from the properties of other types of wise collective decisions. The *correctness* of the decision and its outcome is one of them. Yet, wisdom is not mere intelligence, it is also about *making normative judgments*. There is another aspect more specific to international relations. International decisions are signals, *images*, indexes directed at the other players of the international system[2]. International decisions – state decisions or decisions elaborated in an international organization such as the UN – frequently mirror a cultural, intellectual or analytical *tradition* deemed wise or unwise. Collective wisdom is an *ethos* that characterizes the behavior of states or other supranational or international entities. Finally, because of the large size of states and international organizations, time is one essential variable that needs to be thoroughly analyzed when discussing the wisdom of their decisions. I'll argue in the paper that different temporalities that depend in part of the scale of the organization affect the nature of the wisdom of the decision. Collective wisdom is a *process* that has its own rhythm.

When analyzing wisdom in international affairs, there is a specificity of IR as such that needs to be underlined. "International relations" has two meanings. The same word designates a field of practice and a body of scholarship and there is a constant overlapping between the two. There is a need to take this duality into account. The rightness of political decisions – the efficiency of the decision and its normative value[3] - is a crucial issue for practitioners; it is also an analytical challenge for the various IR theories or models. Depending on the outcome of his decisions as well as on his personal characteristics, his values and the tradition to which he belongs, a political leader might be perceived as right or wrong, then also possibly wise or unwise. Theories of international relations also have a prescriptive function, deemed as appropriate or not, wise or unwise.

This paper tracks the idea of wisdom in international decisions and in IR visions and theoretical models. It provides with some definitions, typologies and suggestions. It highlights the nexus between ideas of individual wisdom and frameworks and processes of collective wisdom showing that international politics – its practice and the discipline of international relations – is a terrain where wisdom and collective wisdom are implicit ideas that need to be unveiled and thoroughly examined.

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[2] Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, Princeton University Press, 1970 . Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976.

[3] "Rightness" has two meanings. The decision is correct in that it produces the effects expected, the decision is morally right.

A discussion of collective wisdom actually mirrors one of the most salient issues of IR theory. What actors take the best decisions on the international scene? Does the quality of the decision depend on the size of these units? What is the most appropriate scale of analysis for international relations[4]? Could the bigger be the wiser? This question will be the thread of the paper that follows a three steps process.

I first examine the meaning of wisdom in two major analytical frameworks and traditions that both influence the practice of international relations, *realism* and *liberalism*. These explanatory models have normative connotations and implications. Based on their theoretical knowledge, those who subscribe to these visions express their preferences on what should be the most appropriate behavior in international affairs. I analyze why realism and liberalism favor actors that differ one from the other in terms of scale and how this is correlated to different visions (implicit or explicit) of collective wisdom. I will use these definitions and models of collective wisdom in the following part.

The paper will then focus on the practice of international affairs. I will discuss the use of coercion and make a comparison between two scales of analysis and practice: unilateralism and multilateralism. I will also analyze the emergence of a norm where the scale of decision and the choice between these two options is one of the most significant and controversial variables: the norm that authorizes the preventive use of force. I will bring the realist and the liberal models into this discussion. There is no direct equation between realism and unilateralism, or between idealism and multilateralism, yet realism favors unilateralism whereas liberalism favors multilateralism. Based on the description of sanctions and the preventive use of force, I will identify what are the wisest liberal and realist answers to major international threats and will discuss their preferences when confronted to the dilemma between unilateralism and multilateralism.

In the last section of the paper, I will go beyond the unilateralism multilateralism and the realist liberal divides. I will elaborate a global scenario of an ideal path leading to a wise aggregation of collectives at the global level.

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[4] Should states be the sole players to be included in an IR analytical framework, are there the only players that matter in international politics? To what extent do international organizations matter when explaining shifts in the balance of power?

Wise realism?

"We love wisdom without becoming soft".
Pericles[5]

Thucydides is a crucial author when discussing international relations, their history and therefore the way Princes and warriors were and are supposed to fight. He also occupies a central role in international relations' epistemological debates. Thucydides is considered by many as one of the pillars of international relations theory if not its founding father. Willingly or not, he is supposed to have laid the foundations of scholarship in this discipline and is most often affiliated to the realist tradition[6].

Thucydides has narrated the confrontation between two collective entities, Athens and Sparta, a democracy and an authoritarian state. The Peloponnesian war may well be the first account of a bi-polar world and an analysis of the rivalry between two hegemonic powers. Thucydides also appears to be central for any reflection on wisdom. He is the advocate of a public and collective ethics where wisdom is a preference and one essential political[7] *value*. He proclaims the importance of wisdom, 'philosophein'[8]. He further criticizes Athens for her irrational behavior, her lack of prudence and her hubris, what he considers the cause of her unfortunate expedition to Sicily[9].

The nexus between an ethics of *prudence*, and an appropriate political decision is brought to light. There are different ways to interpret this relation between ethics and politics.

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[5] As quoted in Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War,* Book II, 40.1.

[6] Michael Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, New York, Norton, 1997. See "Chapter 1 Complex Realism: Thucydides", p.49. Realist most often refer the well-know Melians' dialogue, when Thucydides show that it is irrational for the weak to oppose resistance to the strong. Thucydides brings the example of the confrontation of Athens and the small island of Melos. However, this poses serious methodological problems. The affiliation to realism is based on the inference based on one example (or a few of them), while there are others in text that would not validate this idea. Thucydides would also be considered a realist in the absence of any realist theory. Realism did not exist in ancient Greece.

[7] When collective ethics is public, its message becomes a political value.

[8] See C. C. W. Taylor, *From the Beginning to Plato*, London, Routledge, 2003, p.9.

[9] When the young, passionate and adventurous Alcibiades wins over the wise and prudent old Nicias. Book VI, 16-18.

Thucydides' praise for political wisdom lies on an *anthropomorphism*[10]: a human and moral quality is a label used to characterize the political behavior of a large group of individuals, in this case a city state. International relations traditionally face this methodological problem. It is also more specifically one of realism's Achilles' heel, for this inference lacks empirical justification. Classical realism considers that a state is a "rational" actor seeking to maximize his interests as an individual would try to do. At the origins of realism also lies a confusion between the state as a collective actor and the figure of the Prince who rules over the state. The Leviathan's frontispiece pictures vividly this duality: the Prince as a collection of the citizens' bodies, the Prince as an individual who rules with a sword on the one hand and uses theological power on the other.

As individuals should do, collective entities should be wary of *passions*[11] that obscure their capacity to master their destiny. Thucydides' eulogy of wisdom is a critique of democracies where passions are likely to prevail over reason[12]. According to such a view, the few, the rulers of an autocratic state or a dictator, may be wiser than the many who assemble in a large collective where passions are aggregated. Thucydides seems to favor Sparta over Athens. Sparta's decisions appear to be more rational because they are aimed at maximizing her national interests, more so than Athens' decisions seem to be. They are also more predictable than Athens; this predictability benefits the international society of states as a whole.

This is a classical realist account of decision. Realist theorists consider that the state is the primary unit of analysis of international relations and that instrumental rationality prevails. The commerce between reasonable states creates an atmosphere of prudence, therefore a climate of wisdom. On the practitioners side, there are many examples of state leaders who are fierce advocates of Realpolitik and consider that states are and should be the primary if not the only players of international affair[13]. States are the architects of a system whose goal is stability.

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[10]The literature on collective decision refers to 'personifiable' entities. I'll come back to this question in the last part of the paper.

[11] On the dangers and merits of passion in world politics, see: Pierre Hassner, "La revanche des passions", *Commentaire,* n. 110, été 2005, p.299-312.

[12] This can be inferred from Thucydides' text, this is also the interpretation of Leo Strauss.

[13] Kissinger was well-known for his appraisal of authoritarian leaders, considered to be more predicable than democracies where clashes between diverging views, according to Kissinger, are detrimental to the rationality of

Realism is often depicted as an amoral theory that rationalizes and legitimizes the policy of 'Cold Monsters', states that maximize their interests using whatever means to achieve their ends. This traditional picture of international affairs as a zero sum game is misleading. As the texts of its founding fathers reveal, classical realism is more ethical than not[14]. There are also some versions of realism showing that states do sometimes cooperate[15]. All the more misleading, some commentators consider that conquest is a realist vision of international politics[16]. The ethics of classical realism is on the contrary primarily rooted in a principle of reality and in a Weberian ethic of responsibility. In the aftermath of the second world war, Hans Morgenthau, the leading realist theorist, clearly advocated in favor of an ethics of public service; leaders should be selected on the basis of their rationality, their skills and their sense of responsibility. This classical conception of politics also goes back to the Greeks and reflects Morgenthau's or more generally German scholars' classical education and their admiration for Western classics[17].

Realism is ambitious. It aims at being a wise theory, a theory that analyzes and advocates wisdom. Wisdom is a measure of a *balanced approach* to politics and to decision making[18]. This is a classical theme of Greek classical thinking on the art of government that also goes back to Plato when he argues in favor of a *middle away from the extremes*[19]. Wisdom is defined negatively in realism. State leaders should not act impulsively and use force inconsiderably. They should also avoid seeming soft. Using force inconsiderably creates turbulence and disorder. Other powers might then be inclined to bandwagon and rally against

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the final decision. Democracies are less predictable than highly centralized governments where presidential or autocratic prevail, the international system becomes all the more unstable, and uncertainty prevails.

[14] Joel Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists, Responsible Power, and American Culture in the Nuclear Age,* Baton Rouge, Louisiana University Press, 1991. Tony Lang, op. cit.

[15] Charles Glaser, "Realists as Optimists", *International Security*, vol. 19 n.3, winter 1994-1995, p.55-90.

[16] See the reactions about the Iraqi war where the state of war that prevailed after September was said to be rooted in realism. Before the invasion, see among other references: Mansour Farhang, A Triangle of Realpolitik: Iran, Iraq and the United States, *The Nation*, March 17, 2003 issue, http://www.thenation.com/doc/20030317/farhang. Some of George W. Bush's advisers indeed were part of Ronald Reagan's staff, and it is arguable that Reagan's policy was oriented along the line of realism, however the Bush team abandoned realism for adventurous revolutionism.

[17] As a German expatriate, Morgenthau was also close to Arendt. Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of World Politics – Ethics, Interests and Orders*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.307.

[18] This echoes an Aristotelian vision of temperance. *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.6. On Aristotle and classical realism see: Anthony Lang (ed.), *Political theory and international affairs: Hans J. Morgenthau on Aristotle's The politics*, Wesport, Praeger, 2004.

[19] *Politics* (Politikos), 284e.

the "fauteur de troubles", a revolutionary power that jeopardizes international order[20]. State leaders should also avoid the other extreme. International relations are a game of perceptions[21], where *softness* and *passivity* are considered dangerous images. This belief is shared by many, among whom many realists. Such a vision appears to be culturally rooted. The source of collective wisdom is an individual image originating in gender. Pericles argues in favor of erastai, the active role of the penetrating partner[22], when he tells the Athenians to assume their masculine role. If not, other states might be tempted to conquer a passive state that shows its weaknesses. This last trait reveals another aspect of international collective wisdom. A society and a state are responsible for their own *image*[23]. This responsibility is both individual – state leaders have to act responsibility and share this value, citizens make choices – and collective, the cultural image of the group is a matter of utmost importance. Collective wisdom is therefore the *process* through which these images are elaborated.

Collective wisdom is also its final outcome: the image that reflects the values, the style and the *ethos* of the state. Competent and responsible leaders should be able to orchestrate the interests, the desires, the aspirations and the passions of the members of their society. According to realism, a rational approach that favors the pursue of national interest and the maximization of power is at the core of a prudent and therefore wise foreign policy. Theoretically, within the realist tradition and in the field of practice, in the world of Realpolitik, there are two antagonist and predominant approaches. Morgenthau is considered to be an offensive realist[24]. The second generation of realists who followed Kenneth Waltz's approach[25] is more prudent, these authors are considered "defensive realists". According to them, a state should pursue his national security and survival. For both offensive and defensive realists state leaders that exacerbate passions in their own society, as in the case of nationalism, act inconsiderably. The "cult of the offensive"[26] is dangerous, it may sometimes be suicidal. It exposes states to other states that would feel threatened and would rally against

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[20] The classical case is the reaction of the quadruple alliance against Napoleon.

[21] See the work of Robert Jervis.

[22] Thucydides, II, 43.1. Richard Ned Lebow, *op. cit.,* p.278-279.

[23] This echoes a Sartrian ontology, "mon choix c'est mon image".

[24] One of the most well-know advocate of this tradition is nowadays John Mearsheimer (*The Tragic Vision of Great Power Politics*, New York, Norton, 2001).

[25] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1979.

[26] Jack Snyder, *The Cult of the Offensive*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1984.

them, it creates turbulence in the international system. Nationalistic foreign policies are sending dangerous signals, other states might be tempted to act preemptively in order to anticipate an attack of its enemy. Israel said it acted preemptively during the 1967 war, after and because Nasser had expressed its feelings of hatred vis-à-vis Israel, closed the strait of Tiran[27], massed his troops along the borders with Israel[28].

In order to be wise and elaborate a *wise collective image* of their society and their state, political leaders have to be well aware of their national history and of the driving forces that prevail in their society. Wisdom is therefore past and present oriented. It is also *future oriented*, that is one of its prevailing aspects. Wisdom is an attribute that can be put to the test of *prediction*, this is one of its most fundamental aspects. What are the means that enable wise men to predict the future of international politics? Is there a *science* of international relations? This issue lies at the origins of realism[29]. Classical realism shows some ambiguities. Its emergence and development mirrors the rationalization of Western societies and their emphasis on rationality and prediction. Realism aims at precision and neutrality, both traits that characterize science. However, Morgenthau states it very clearly, there is no such thing as a "science of international politics". Skillful leaders master the *art of politics*[30], the knowledge of scholars of international politics also differs from science as it is understood in natural sciences. Wisdom is a trait of this art.

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[27] In this case, this would be more an index than a signal according to Jervis' typology. Signals are "statements or actions the meanings of which are established by tacit or explicit understanding among actors. signals are issued to influence the receiver's image of the sender". Indices are "statements or actions that carry some inherent evidence that the image projected is correct because they are believed to be inextricably linked to the actor's capabilities or intentions". Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images*, op. cit., p.19 and 26.

[28] However, some historians nowadays put into question the common belief and the scholarly analysis that so far prevailed according to which had Egypt not been stopped it would have attacked Israel. Roland Popp, "Stumbling Decidedly into the Six Days War", *Middle East Journal*, Spring 2006, vol. 60, n. 2, p.281-310.

[29] Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1946.

[30] Tony Lang makes this point convincingly, he considers that Morgenthau's interpretation of political wisdom as an art of politics is nurtured by Aristotle. Tony Lang, "Morgenthau, Agency and Aristotle", in Michael Williams (ed.), *Realism Reconsidered,* Oxford, Oxford University Press p.29.

Realist wisdom:

- According to classical realism, wisdom is an individual and collective behavior. Its traits are temperance (ethically) and prudence (politically and militarily).
- Wisdom is an art, it is a crucial aspect of international politics, there is no science of international relations and there is no scientific reasoning in foreign policy decision making.
- The statesman and the state are the appropriate scale for decision making in international politics, pursuing the state's national interest is their goal.
- Collective wisdom is a style and an image of force tempered by reason. Leaders ought to avoid sending extreme images: being aggressive, being passive.

Wise liberalism and the politics of cooperation

"The political scientist can contribute by continually recalling that the national policies of the United States are relative to the world policies of the United Nations, that these policies may at times appear to be conflicting, and that compromises must be made, if a world is to develop that is at the same time sufficiently varied to be progressive and sufficiently stable to be peaceful".

Quincy Wright[31]

Leaders and moral authorities often express publicly their views over what constitutes wisdom, they try to gather their group around one project. Pericles is speaking at the funerals of the soldiers who died in the first phase of the Peloponnesian war. We (at this conference, as a collective) can suppose that the meeting of the *American Political Science Association* is much less an intense forum of deliberation than the agora in times of war no matter how brilliant Quincy Wright might have been. Yet, there is a parallel to be drawn between these two appearances. Political and moral authority one the one hand, epistemic wisdom on the other, both voices want to have a resonance and be performative.

[31] Quincy Wright was one of the leading American theorist of international relations in the post-war era, he is delivering the Presidential address at the American Political Science Association in New York, in Dec. 1949. Quincy Wright, "Political Science and World Stabilization", *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. XLIV, March 1950, n.1, p.10.

Wright's views are theoretically rather consensual, however in some of the passages of the speech they are tainted by a strong liberal influence. Liberalism is a long standing philosophical tradition that has inspired several explanatory and normative models in the field of international relations. Kant is the most well known and most often quoted liberal reference for international political thought. The impact of such a short text as *The Project on Perpetual Peace* is indeed most remarkable[32].

What would be the traits of a "liberal wisdom"? There is a need to differentiate liberalism from realism. A liberal worldview – a view of what an appropriate international order should be according to liberal principles – lies on a definition of individual and collective wisdom that differ from the nature of realist wisdom. Liberal wisdom lies on an *optimistic* view of human nature and an enlightened and optimistic theory of cooperation. It also develops a teleology: mankind is on the path to progress[33], cosmopolitanism leads to a more humane world. Individuals are bound to be sociable and international organizations that include states' delegates and representatives are a primary locus of social regulation and integration. The contrast with realism, its ontology and its theory of politics, is sharp. Liberalism has an optimistic view of the nature of man whereas realist authors have a negative view of man, at best they are skeptics. Liberal authors share a common belief on the possibility of man's advancement, they are perfectionists. They believe in persuading members of other cultures of their need to reform, as in the case of John Stuart Mill this argument can also be used as a justification of colonization.

Liberal wisdom reflects an optimistic attitude vis-à-vis the world that is an inducement to cooperation. Man can be reformed, as well as societies can be changed for the better, for the sake of mankind (a 'common good') and for their own sake. Wilson's motto "make the world safe for democracy" is one of the most famous examples of such an optimistic, enthusiast and revolutionary approach to the world. Liberal authors have a certain degree of faith in the ability of man to cooperate, as a consequence collective units, especially bigger ones such as international organizations, are seen with less suspicion than they are by their

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[32] Kant has written elsewhere on international issues, mostly on international law. Yet these other works are seldom quoted in the field of international relations. See Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, "The Theory of Right", II, II and III, &53-62.

[33] Kant says it explicitly, "various evidence suggests that in our age, as compared with all previous ages, the human race has made considerable progress, and short term hindrance prove nothing to the contrary". Kant, *Political Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.89.

realist counterparts who fear optimism on the ground that it leads to unrealistic expectations, and, even worse, predisposes people toward schemes of utopian transformation[34].

Liberalism values the role of morality for it has regulative functions. Political communities, democracies or international organizations, have a *moral authority*[35] that sustains the international order. International organizations such as the UN strengthen the power of states (and of certain non governmental bodies) and legitimize their action[36].

Liberal authors such as Kant have directly inspired liberal theories applied to international relations, liberal internationalism more particularly[37]. Individuals belong to a community that transcends national boundaries. Cosmopolitanism becomes the moral horizon of the advancement of mankind, it is a constitutive moral and political dimension of humanity. Kant as well as liberal theorists of international relations have put an emphasis on the absence of wars between democracies (in Kant's words, 'republics'). Political scientists have validated empirically and normatively this theory[38]. When confronted with peers, democracies are wiser than non democracies, a world where democracy would prevail would be more peaceful, therefore wiser.

In the liberal tradition, wisdom is mostly rooted in morality, whereas for realism it is both a political capacity and a moral value. There is another important difference to be made between the two schools. Their authors differ when they discuss the role of the *law*. As for morality, the law and more generally norms play a more significant role in liberal theories than in the various realist models. Liberal optimism encourages its authors and human rights activists or UN bureaucrats to trust in the binding role of norms and in cooperation. The world becomes an arena for cooperation that lies on economic and social ties. The world is

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[34] Stalin, Pol Pot, and Bush would fit in that category, without implying that they are equally evil. They would be part of a "revolutionist tradition". On revolutionism, see: Martin Wight, Martin Wight, *International Theory the Three Traditions in International Politics*, Leicester University Press, 1991 (new ed.), p.47 and f.

[35] Rodney Bruce Hall, "Moral Authority as a Power Resource", *International Organization*, 2003, vol. 51, n. 4, p.591-622.

[36] Inis Claude, "Collective Legitimization as a Political Function of the UN", *International Organization*, 1966, 20, p.267-279.

[37] This tradition stands in favor of human rights and international law; it is a universalist vision of world politics.

[38] Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 12, no. 3 Summer, 1983, p. 205-235. Part II: *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 12, no. 4 Fall 1983, p.323-353. The debate is however controversial. Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, Steven Miller (eds.), *Debating the Democratic Peace,* Cambridge, the MIT Press, 1996.

interdependent[39], the spread of multinational companies and the globalization of capitalism is one of its key features. This interdependence is also grounded on social ties and a common sphere of socialization. Lawyers make what international law is. Jurists in intergovernmental bodies[40] or human rights lawyers are a constitutive part of this social and cultural interdependence. Law brings wisdom to the world because it brings peace. In liberal thought the focus is rather on *peace* than on prudence.

Norms are ties that bind and their power is differentiated. Law is based on a set of procedures that aim at creating stability and regularity in the relations between states. International law should bring stability and regulate violence, such is the goal of those who dedicate themselves to the laws of war[41]. The law should dissuade states to make war, the use of force being the last resort in the settlement of disputes. When waging war, states would be forced to use *restrain*. Wise decisions – individual and collective – are well-matured in opposition to hasty declarations of war. Wise human beings are sociable and they are able to gather in enlightened groups and organizations. Unlike in realism, collective bodies have a function of *temperance*. They serve as shield against hasty decisions. These structures temper hawkish boiling spirits. They are obstacles to the irruption of passions. In a liberal multilateral world, *procedures* slow down the irruption of the conflict. Having to formally declare a war delays its start[42]. Wisdom is also a matter a *pace*, a *momentum* in international politics. An adept of liberal internationalism such as Wilson shared this idea. Wilson and his Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan strongly favored "cooling off" treaties that, while not prohibiting warfare, would require that states agree to a period of discussion and negotiation before they fought. According to this view, war is only possible if people act quickly, presumably on irrational emotions.

Softness is another trait of a liberal approach to wisdom. Yet, legal procedures are cold and impersonal[43]: "vae victis". This is well acknowledged by the founding fathers of international law such as Grotius. A liberal approach to war also includes a moral vision of

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[39] Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye, *Power and interdependence : world politics in transition*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1977 (new ed. 2001).

[40] Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order*, Princeton Princeton University Press, 2004.

[41] Several lawyers have expressed their critique of this view and blend legalism with realism. As lawyers they consider that it can be misleading to obey to international law. Among others, see: Eric Posner, "Do States Have a Moral Obligation to Obey International Law?", *Stanford Law Review*, May 2003, vol. 51, p.1901-1919.

[42] The rule of declaring wars has become obsolete. The last war declared by the US was against Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania in 1942.

[43] This critique is commonly addressed to liberalism by its opponents.

the relation to the former enemy and to the new partner. Morality should serve as a more humane counterpart to the harshness of the strict application of the law[44]. Morality should encourage the winner not to take advantage of his position even if international law gives him the right to impose his will. The former enemy should not be humiliated[45].

Liberal wisdom:

- Wisdom is grounded on optimism.
- Members of wise collectives speak a common language (human rights).
- Wisdom brings advancement to the world.
- The appropriate scale for wise decision is the international community. Among their main protagonists: international organizations.
- Collective wisdom is the outcome of a series of ties – social, cultural, economic, political – that bind together the different elements of the international community.
- Wisdom is a soft approach to dispute settlements. Peace is the goal to be pursued in international politics. "Soft power" is an essential component of power[46].
- Wisdom is matter of pace. Hasty brutal decisions are being delayed in large size organizations decisions[47].

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[44] Grotius, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis,* Book III, Chapt. XIII, IV, 1-4.

[45] Is there any sound empirical evidence of the negative functional effects of humiliating one's former enemies? Liberal collective wisdom also appears as conventional wisdom, in the eyes of his skeptical critics its major flaw is naïveté.

[46] Joseph Nye, "Soft Power", *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1990, 80, p.153-171.

[47] There is a democratic critique of liberal internationalism. Large size units are likely to produce a democratic deficit. Robert Dahl, 'Can International Organizations Be Democratic? A Skeptic's View', in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon (eds), *Democracy's Edges*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.19–36. Andrew Moravsik claims that such is not the case of the European Union. Andrew Moravcsik, "Is there a 'Democratic Deficit' in World Politics? A Framework for Analysis », *Government and Opposition*, 2004, p.336-363.

The Use of Coercion

These theoretical models and these traditions reveal the rationales that sometimes guide international decisions. I now move to the study of core policy issues and will use the definitions and ideal-types of collective wisdom elaborated in the first section of the paper. Coercion is one of the most fundamental aspects of international politics. I will explore two different areas: the use of economic sanctions and military interventions. In each of these two domains, there is an intense debate about the nature and the size of the organization that rules over the decision to enforce an embargo or to go to war. Ex-ante and ex-post these decisions are put under scrutiny. Using wisdom as a criterion, I will compare unilateral decisions to multilateral decisions and will highlight the role of the size of the organization and its differentiated impact on the nature of the decision.

Economic sanctions

After the Cold War and as a consequence to the transition to a unipolar world, the number of unilateral or multilateral embargoes considerably increased[48]. In the US the Congress passed new bills that either targeted states that had not been so far sanctioned by America or reinforced existing sanctions. The end of bipolarity changed the UN which entered in a new phase when the Security Council had a wider ranger of maneuver in its decisions and embargoes were seen as a humane alternative to war.

Unilateral sanctions: the Cuban embargo

The US embargo against Cuba has a long history which dates to 1960. The end of the Cold War should have been the start of a new phase in US – Cuba relations. Paradoxically, in 1992 and in 1996, the coercive measures taken against Cuba have been reinforced. What are the main factors that explain this policy, especially since the "threat" of communism had disappeared?

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[48] Ariel Colonomos, *Moralizing International Relations: Called to Account,* New York, Palgrave, 2008. See "Chapter 4 What Justice for Economic Sanctions?", p.79-103.

The very nature of American democracy and its different players are the main variables that help explain this policy. The decision to enforce an embargo is precisely a multi-level game where groups and organizations of different sizes converge. At the international level, other States than the US started investing in Cuba in the early 90s. The Castro regime welcomed European and Canadian investors because it was at the verge of collapse after the Soviet Union had ceased to subsidize its economy. In the US, several of its political leaders and experts also expressed the idea that this measure was not justified any more. As a reaction Cuban American conservative groups and lobbies decided to intensify their pressure on Congress, they wanted to pass a stricter legislation. Ultimately they achieved their goals.

To say the least, this decision was heavily criticized by many commentators outside the Cuban American community. The embargo was not to have a significant impact on the regime. Some even argue that embargoes have a rally around the flag effect[49]. This remains to be proven in the case of Cuba, yet it is a plausible hypothesis. It impeded American companies to invest in a market which otherwise would have been extremely accessible. Legal claims were also brought to US courts, Cuban American families sued European companies for trading with Cuba and taking advantage of what they considered their property (confiscated by the Castro regime after the revolution). This was an unnecessary source of tension for US trade relations with the European Union. Despite the fact that the health system in Cuba is one of the best in the world since there is no discrimination to the access at a high quality range of therapies and well trained doctors, some medical issues were raised. Experts pointed out that some American spare parts of medical machines used in the detection of cancer were missing, Cuban hospitals were deprived of them because of the US embargo. Finally, the Congress dispossessed the executive branch of its power to rule over foreign policy. President Clinton captured this moment and reacted vividly when he declared that the US had gone "*sanctions crazy*".

The US embargo is an unwise collective decision, unwise means irrational. It reveals a major problem that lies at the heart of democracy. Even if the people as a whole favor the right policy, the way preferences are aggregated depends on government structures and electoral rules. And under almost any scheme, those who are well organized and have intense preferences will

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[49] Johan Galtung, « On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions with Examples from the Case of Rhodesia », *World Politics*, vol. 19 n. 3 April 1967 : p.378-416.

have great influence. America, its Congress, rules over a decision that is not in the best interests of the country in various domains, politically and strategically, economically, diplomatically. America as a nation state includes a government, a civil society, companies and citizens. The decision to sanction Cuba reflects the interests and desires of a small portion of its population. Unilateral sanctions are overall a rather costly policy that can be estimated counterfactually. As the International Institute for Economics has shown[50], the various unilateral embargoes had a substantial cost for the US economy of 15 to 19 billion dollars yearly (as in 1995)[51]. The loss of jobs was between 200,000 and 260,000 positions[52].

The decision to sanction Cuba was driven by the *regressive passions* of a minority of the US population. This decision shows that in multilevel complex organizations composed by various units, a small group can defeat numerous organizations that are bigger in size. This validate the realist distrust of democracies where decisions are unpredictable and irrational because they are dictated by passions rather than reason. The Cuban American National Foundation's efforts to sanction Cuba can also be challenged on grounds of instrumental rationality. It was predictable that the strengthening of the embargo against the regime would not have hurt its leaders (this was documented by experts and theorists of sanctions). This policy was advocated for political reasons that are morally and psychologically grounded, the desire to express publicly *hatred*. Younger Cuban American leaders who did not have to flee the revolution and therefore felt less or no resentment against Castro had publicly expressed other views on the embargo, some of them were rather inclined to restore economic and social relations with the Cubans on the island.

This example shows the limits of democracy and the failure to produce wise collective decisions. What are the reasons for that failure? Democratic institutions have been incapable of seeking compromise between diverging interests and contradictory choices. The local and communitarian level (the CANF has power because of its influence on the elections of several states such as Florida or New Jersey) has prevailed over the national level. Second range priorities have prevailed over national priorities. This decision is *past oriented*, it is the

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[50] It was commissioned by the business lobby association USA Engage and the National Association of Manufacturers.

[51] Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Kimberly Ann Elliott, Tess Cyrus, Elizabeth Winston, « US Economic Sanctions : Their Impact on Trade, Jobs and Wages », *Institute for International Economics*, Working Paper 1997. http://www.petersoninstitute.org/publications/wp/wp.cfm?ResearchID=149

[52] Id.

remanence of a long due bitter hostility. It is grounded on pessimism rather than on optimism and instead of seeking advancement its motivation is the desire to punish and revenge. The *image* and the signal it sends are rather extreme. Its pace is neither rapid nor slow. The CANF has a long experience of lobbying in favor of the embargo, it has been able to influence US policy making for decades. It also reacted rapidly to the changing conditions of the end of Cold War.

What does this example tell us about the use of realism and liberalism in the pursuit of collective wisdom? Realism does not consider that economic sanctions are the best tool for foreign policy making and it does not really have a voice in the debate on unilateral sanctions. Liberals are more concerned. The liberal vision of economic sanctions favors multilateralism, multilateral decisions are more effective (they can favor a change of behavior of the target in terms of human rights). They are not costly for the sanctioning state, the decision is more thoroughly examined, they do not necessarily send a negative message on the international scene. However democracy is an impediment in the elaboration of a wise policy of economic sanctions, multilateralism has not been an option (cooperation rather than sanctions), the US did go unilateral instead of engaging a multilateral debate on Cuba.

Multilateral sanctions: the UN embargo vs. Iraq

The Iraqi embargo enforced by the UN from 1991 until the fall of Saddam Hussein after the second Gulf War is one of the most striking and dramatic episodes in the history of economic sanctions. Size mattered in two ways. First, to be effective, most if not all countries had to join and, second, although the target was Saddam and his government, the people who were hurt was the general population. This embargo was approved by the Security Council and had been considered a better alternative to war, i.e. a new intervention against S. Hussein. At least this was one of the attempts to justify it. The failure of the embargo to provoke the fall of the dictator had also been used by the new Bush administration in 2001 as a justification for the war against Iraq.

Unlike in the case of unilateral sanctions, power as moral authority is one fundamental aspect of the debate. The legitimacy of the UN lies on its capacity to act with fairness without making any discrimination between one country and another. The United Nations acts in the interests of its members that have accepted its covenant. A priori, this would make multilateralism a wiser approach to international affairs than unilateralism. It is also essential

for the survival of the UN to convince its members that multilateralism is the best approach when pursuing such ambitious goals.

Some facts must be underlined. The 90s have been a neo-Wilsonian decade, an era where faith in the ability of international law to bring peace and stability to the world were shared by many. Economic sanctions, a tool praised by Woodrow Wilson himself[53], were considered the best solution the law had to offer in order for legitimate institutions to cope with deviance. Economic sanctions were not only legal, there were also considered moral. But states have not been wary enough. Cultural traditions, values, ideology prevailed over knowledge. Experts had showed the limited impact of sanctions, according to some estimates they are efficient in only thirty percent of the cases[54].

In the case of Iraq, moral beliefs (crusading) were not only one of the causes of the decision, morality was also the problem. One year after its implementation, the UN office in Baghdad warned the New York headquarters of the humanitarian effects the embargo was about to have. Rapidly, the UN initiated some negotiations with Saddam Hussein. If Hussein had accepted certain conditions that restrained his power, the embargo would have been alleviated. Yet the dictator refused the agreement until 1996, the "oil for food" program was implemented a year after. This was too late, the embargo had caused substantial disaster and harm to the civilian population. From 1991 until the mid-90s, several research teams that included doctors and epidemiologists conducted research in Iraq and came up with dramatic counterfactual findings. One of the them, the well-know Garfield report, indicated that had the embargo not been implemented, 227,000 children under of five would not have died.

Such a failure of the embargo – the humanitarian disaster it provoked combined to its lack of impact on the regime of Saddam Hussein[55] - is due to several factors. Although substantial information was available about the consequences of the embargo, the UN failed to react and adapt its policy. There are mainly three causes that explain this inaction. The first is the inertia of a large size organization. The second is the pressure of some of its members – including the US – to maintain a strong pressure on Saddam Hussein. Yet, these member

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[53] These are Wilson's words: "Apply this economic, peaceful, silent, deadly remedy and there will be no need for force" (1919).

[54] The International Institute on Economics conducted extensive research on embargoes, this was one of its findings.

[55] According to humanitarian workers who resided in Iraq during the time of the embargo, there is evidence that the embargo provoked a rally around the flag effect within the Iraqi population.

states were acting in accordance with the mindset and values of the coercive Wilsonian liberal internationalism that prevailed at the UN in the early 90s. The third – which is correlated to the second – is that Saddam Hussein used his own people in order to defeat the UN strategically, politically and morally.

The UN failed to take into account the report of its own experts, it privileged legality over morality. It had failed to adapt its policy to the nature of its target. Collective decision should be reactive to the environment where the decision takes place, a good policy would also have taken into account the advice of experts of the region and trust in their ability to understand the nature of the regime and its strategy. The failure of the sanctions is not so much imputable to a problem of cognition, it was rather a matter of rules that should have guided the behavior of the UN indicating what would be the best appropriate decision when dealing with a dictator who uses his population to stay in power.

Multilateral sanctions are not wiser per se than unilateral sanctions, no structure is better than the other. Unilateralism and multilateralism are two different settings. Therefore, they offer different opportunities for individuals and organizations that want to make changes in the decision making process. The market (the business community and its lobbies) has responded to the "crazy" sanctions initiatives and its entrepreneurs have been able to engage a debate on the justification of embargoes. However, there has not been any radical shift in US policy. At the multilateral level, the reform of the doctrine of sanctions has been more substantial. Institutions sometimes adapt their decision making processes once they have evidence about their own failures, "learning by doing" is the best case scenario. International organizations can adapt themselves and modify their institutional design. The outcome of multilateral initiatives strongly depend of the various kinds of formal or informal voting rules[56].

Following the Iraqi experience, there has been no institutional reform at the UN. Yet, a new doctrine of multilateral sanctions emerged, the "*smart sanctions*" doctrine[57]. Sanctions are designed to be precise. They are mostly financial sanctions, they target individuals

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[56] These deeply influence the impact of increases and decreases in the size of the decision unit. Most obviously, if everyone has a veto, then the more units that are involved the harder it is to get anything done, and the more likely it is that - for better or for worse - what emerges will be a lowest common denominator compromise. Size has less of an impact if decisions are reached through a majority vote, with qualified majority systems falling somewhere in between (which explains why they have been adopted in the EU).

[57] They are the outcome of the Interlaken talks that took place under the auspices of Switzerland in 1998 and 1999. http://www.seco.admin.ch/themen/00513/00620/00639/index.html?lang=en

(members of a regime, of a government), they are not to be prolonged over a long period of time.

Is this collective wisdom? Although the legality of comprehensive multilateral sanctions has not been questioned, the new doctrine that emerges from a collective mobilization and deliberation will render a large scale program of sanctions that deeply affects the civilian population of the target more difficult to implement. The Iraqi embargo and its failure have led to the emergence of a doctrine, the smart sanctions model. Collective wisdom – the interaction between different entities where experts gathers and where improving the morality of international decisions is one of their goals – is the process through which this doctrine has been elaborated.

As the reputation of the UN has been affected, this doctrine is also aimed at sending new signals on the international scene. This process testifies to the ability of leaders of collective entities, states, international organizations, non state actors, to rule over the members of their groups and work within their organization and with other organizations. Building norms – political doctrine, moral visions, laws – is one fundamental aspect of a wise collective mobilization.

Is there a best solution? Realism does not consider that multilateralism sanctions are a good answer when facing threats, essentially because of its distrust vis-à-vis international law. Liberalism favors multilateral initiatives, multilateral embargoes are the outcome of the liberal tradition and reflect its vision of collective wisdom. They are efficient, they send a unified message on the international scene (the universal respect for the law), deliberation prevails when the decision is made. Liberalism – liberal internationalism – is more the problem than the solution. Because of the incapacity of the UN to react to an alarming situation, to say the least the multilateral embargo on Iraq has been an unwise collective decision. It has caused more harm than good, it has sent a message of hatred to the Arab world, the big size of the organization has had a negative effect in the decision making process.

Ruling over the use of force: prevention and the unilateral multilateral debate

States and international organizations have been recently confronted to a major political, legal and moral issue. Diplomats, statesmen, military personnel, lawyers have amply debated whether the preemptive and preventive use of force was a legitimate means to fight

new threats, so-called "rogue" states or terrorist organizations. This new norm[58] – either a political or military doctrine or a potential legal framework – has been the source of major tensions between individuals and between collectives; contrasting views have been expressed in the US and in continental Europe where statesmen have amply criticized the preventive use of force when the US declared its war against Iraq.

Prevention is an interesting case where the size of the organization that decides to go to war is an important variable. There is a need to take into account different variables, for the purpose of this article I will examine four different cases. There are at least two types of wars of anticipation. A war is considered to be *preemptive* when a state strikes his potential enemy that is about to invade his country or launch an attack against his country. A war is *preventive* when state A decides to strike against state B that is considered to be a threat for his security. State B has expressed hostile intentions vis-à-vis A, it has augmented its military capacity and developed weaponry that would enable him to strike against A, his strike against A would change the balance of power in disfavor of A. The preventer usually targets the military installations and capacities that his potential enemy would use against him in the future (nukes for example).

Normatively, there is an ample debate focusing on the appropriate size of the organization that engages in a preventive policy. Recent developments in international affairs – in the field of security and in the area of environment – have shown an opposition between two antagonist approaches. The precautionary principle – its uses and abuses – is at the root of prevention policies[59]. Using the precautionary principle in the domain of the environment is most favored by the European Union, whereas the US refused to ratify the Kyoto act. The US applies the precautionary principle in another area in a different mode. The precautionary principles also lies at the heart of preventive war making, the US considers that it has the right to fight these wars unilaterally, although the UN and the European Union are not favorable to unilateral preventive wars. There is a double opposition in the US EU divide. It is a matter of

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[58] There are different aspects of a norm. As Gibbs points out, a norm is a rule that lies on a collective expectation, a rule that can or cannot transform itself into a law which strength in this case depends on its ability to resist to legal criticism and an idea that nurtures itself from the ethical traditions whether religious or secular. I refer to these three different aspects in the paper, whether a norm is a doctrine, a quasi law, an ethical worldview. Jack Gibbs, "Norms The Problem of Definition and Classification", *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 70 n. 5, March 1965, p.586-594.

[59] Olivier Godard, "Revisiting the Precautionary Principle under the Light of 2002-3 French and International Events", *Ecole Polytechnique*, Cahier n. 2003 – 05.

domain: environment (soft) vs. security (hard). It is a matter of size and structure: multilateral (interstate, collective) vs. unilateral (state, individual unit).

There are two types of preemptive and preventive wars whether they are fought unilaterally or multilaterally. Strictly speaking (if one follows the most traditional interpretations of international law), preemptive wars are not legal although the argument is disputed in the circles of international lawyers. Yet, preemptive wars are usually tolerated. They are also rather difficult to criticize politically or morally. This is valid for unilateral preemptive wars as well as a fortiori for multilateral preemptive wars. In contemporary international law, unilateral preventive wars are not legal. They are much more difficult to justify politically or morally than preemptive wars as sometimes it is not easy to differentiate them from mere wars of conquest. When approved by the Security Council, multilateral preventive interventions are legal[60].

When facing a major threat, realists would consider the unilateral use of force a wise response[61]. State leaders should have the capacity to think what is the best solution to their problems, states also have the capacity to act. Using force preventively is a much more complex problem. It is not necessarily wise for realists to do so, there is too much uncertainty, although intuition – classical realism considers foreign policy as an art – can inspire good decisions. The unilateral use of force is not a wise decision for liberals, among other reasons it is not a valid alternative because it violates international law. The preventive use of force is not a wise response to possible threats for similar reasons. The multilateral preventive of force could be a wise solution, it could send a positive message on the international scene, international organizations would have to initiate procedural and productive reforms[62], there would be a multilateral response to the violations of human rights.

The cases of sanctions and of preventive interventions reveal that neither realism nor liberalism are per se a wise solution to international problems. There is no optimal unilateral solution to international problems and multilateralism is not the key to all dilemmas. I have discussed combinations of realism and unilateralism, liberalism and multilateralism that are wise or unwise. There is a need to explore this question from a different angle that goes

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[60] That does not mean that they are moral. For an attempt to elaborate a moral framework for multilateral preventive wars: Allen Buchanan, Robert Keohane, "The Preventive Use of Force : a Cosmopolitan Institutional Proposal", *Ethics and International Affairs*, 2004, vol.18, n.1, p.1-22.

[61] See part 1.

[62] See Buchanan and Keohane's liberal proposal.

beyond these two divides realism versus liberalism and unilateralism vs. multilateralism. An ideal solution would need to be elaborated elsewhere in a more global framework.

Bridging together multiple scales

My approach is both *explanatory* and *normative*. I imagine a bottom up path of development for ideas that would grow and could help building collective wisdom in the international arena. I borrow empirical evidence from actual cases that illustrate the steps of this general process. This process is a *possible scenario,* a normative future world[63].

Different *types* of decision can be considered wise or unwise. The first one is a decision on a single case basis when an answer is given to a specific question. The person is rather concerned by the short term consequences of this action. He may decide he is not concerned by the impact on rules and norms his decision could have in the future. In other instances, actions and norms are tied together. A decision – the ratification of a treaty – has an impact on the formation of rules, norms, laws. Violating international law can also have an impact on norms and laws, it is likely to jeopardize the existing legal framework. There is finally a third type of decision. When 'norms entrepreneurs' and 'moral entrepreneurs' put their efforts and energies in the development of new rules, norms, laws, their action is directly and primarily normative. When NGOs gathered their resources to ban landmines, interacted with governments and contributed to the signature of a treaty[64].

I will focus on this last type of decision because of its collective dimension and because of its predominant *normative* aspect. According to the definitions I have given so far wisdom is a more prevailing dimension than in the other two cases. Such decisions have long term consequences. The organization that has been at the forefront of a positive transformation of a normative system will send a positive signal and will benefit from a wise international image which contributes improving its reputation. Such is the case of NGOs

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[63] Or a normative forecast. Nazli Choucri, Thomas Robinson (eds.), *Forecasting in International Relations, Theory, Methods, Problems, Prospects*, San Francisco, Freeman and Co., 1978, p.100 and f.

[64] Richard Price, "Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines", *International Organization*, 52 (3) 1998, p.613-644. Leo Segal, *Negotiating Minefields*, London, Routledge, 2006.

when they anticipate what will seem unacceptable in the near future and try to elaborate a norm that would proscribe acts that today are tolerated. A good example of this phenomenon is the ongoing mobilization to ban cluster bombs[65].

The *fabric of norms* is the most elaborated system of collective wisdom. It is a collective process that affects a great number of people; when the norm is universal its ambition is actually to reach the greatest number of people. This collective process is a multi-steps dynamic. Different types of collectives in terms of size and status are involved, they also originate in different layers of the international system (the state-centric world as opposed to the multi-centric world[66]). Some ideas have a *cascading effect*, a growing number of people and collectives gather around them, the number of these groups and sometimes even their size expand. Rules or doctrines emerge out of this aggregative normative process, sometimes even laws. The prevailing view is that ideas spread more rapidly if a small number of units is involved, but there are exceptions, when ideas cascade in dense communication systems where a large number of units of different size gather.

What could be the ideal path these ideas could follow? Ideas have a long *history*, they emerge abruptly but most often belong to a longstanding tradition that is being revived or reinvented. Ideas that aggregate into the laws of war often come from the just war tradition, 17th century codes[67] and rules are being worked through into 20th century laws. They have a strong cultural legitimacy because of their history and because they are deeply rooted in Christianity, historically in the Western world one of the central reference if not the central reference in the genealogy of legality and morality. History and cultural legitimacy are major assets.

Ideas and norms do not "*float freely*"[68], certain modes of interaction favor their emergence, their spread and ultimately their success when adopted by major actors. State society relations in powerful states are a crucial element in the process that leads to the

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[65] This has been a priority for NGOs for some time. The use of cluster bombs is legal, unless it violates other existing laws such as the distinction or proportionality rule. It seems likely that a ban of this weapons will be accepted, there will be a social demand in favor of their interdiction. NGOs gathered last year, a treaty should soon be drafted.

[66] James Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990.

[67] The just war tradition can even be traced back to the times of Augustine and Thomas. However the 17th century models are more compatible politically with 20th century Westphalian politics.

[68] Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Ideas do not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures and the End of the Cold War", *International Organization*, vol. 48, n. 2, spring 1994, p.185-214.

acceptance of an idea that aims at reverberating internationally. The 'corporate social responsibility' norm has gathered a considerable number of companies, lawyers and NGOs over the last years. It is rooted in the history of capitalism[69], it comes from a century old tradition well established in the mainline American Protestant churches that for decades have been familiar with the politics of disinvestment. It also had a strong resonance in America in the early 90s; American non state actors as well as America as a state – when President Clinton backed some initiatives in this area following the creation of the 'Global Compact' at the UN – were supportive of the transnationalization of this norm.

In order to accrue the number of their supporters, ideas need *interlocking members* who operate in different groups, in different social areas and in various countries. Knowledge is an essential component in the universalization of wisdom. Epistemic communities have this function, they operate at the crossroads of the world of states and of societies. Members of these communities of experts serve as bridges between different segments of international life, they serve as promoters and exporters of ideas. Nuclear politics is a classical example of their role in the elaboration of rules and norms[70]. Experts also have a moral function given the authority they are granted in their field and their symbolic role in society. They then belong to "*moral epistemic networks*"[71]. Lawyers in NGOs provide with legal counseling, anticipate and suggest legal changes; they combine highly specialized knowledge and training (mostly law and medicine) with moral authority. Over the last years, Human Rights Watch has done substantial work in the domain of jus in bello. With the International Committee of the Red Cross that initiated this process in the 19th century, it has been at the forefront in the transformation of the laws of war and has worked as a surveillance mechanism for their enforcement, it has operated as a bridge between states and societies. Epistemic communities form within NGOs and coalesce across the different organizations. They reach a wide audience that is now relatively well aware of the level of pain occasioned by conflicts, of the lethality of certain types of weaponry and the unnecessary suffering they are likely to cause[72].

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[69] See special issue on "Moralizing Capitalism", *International Review of Social Sciences*, n. 185, September 2005.

[70] Peter Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination", *International Organization*, vol. 46 n. 1, hiver 1992, p. 1-36.

[71] Ariel Colonomos, *Called to Account,* op. cit.

[72] After it had initiated its production, the US abandoned the use of laser blinding devices. The International Committee of the Red Cross was preparing a campaign which focused on the need to minimize unnecessary suffering. Medical experts – surgeons particularly – were key players in this campaign.

The *ripe moment* is an essential variable that helps understanding moral and epistemic mobilizations. The end of the Cold War opened the way for a great number of moral claims built on the aggregation of several types of non state actors and networks that interacted with the state, most often 'calling governments to account'[73]. When favorable conditions are met, ideas spread in two different directions. They are *transnationalized*, non state actors gather around a single issue and try to expand their audience across borders (from bellow). These ideas are also part of a process of *transgovernmentalization* (from bottom). This dualism has prevailed in the formation of the International Criminal Court. Lawyers and academics have been deeply involved in the elaboration of the idea of a universal jurisdiction. Governments have also networked and finally coalesced in the signature of a treaty[74].

This bottom up approach has *three layers*: it starts with a transnational mobilization, it consolidates in a transgovernmental process and then has a resonance in interstate politics and international law. The protagonists of this wise world are two types of 'personifiable' entities: *judgment poolers* (experts) and *value reasoners* (governments)[75]. Governments should be open to cosmopolitan initiatives. They should therefore include non national members within their governments. Their decisions would be more fair, they would also be perceived as such; adapting international law to face new challenges would be easier. Government bureaucracies would interact more easily with epistemic communities that are also potentially cosmopolitan. This new structure would favor a public *space of deliberation* beyond the borders of the nation state[76]. It would also favor the sharing of common values and intersubjective norms[77].

This communication process is future oriented and is based on the capacity for collectives to elaborate *predictions*. If they reveal to be correct or at least compatible with the factual developments that follow, they will be seen as wise, correlatively the predictive group

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[73] Ariel Colonomos, op. cit. See Introduction and Chapter 1.

[74] Anne-Marie Slaughter argues that a new world order emerges when a growing number of bureaucrats and lawyers network. Anne-Marie Slaughter, op. cit.

[75] On these categories see: L.A. Kornhauser, L.G. Sager, "The Many as One: Integrity and Group Choice in Paradoxical Cases", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 32, 3, 2004, p.249-276. Christian List, Philip Petit, "On the Many as One", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 33, 4, p.377-390.

[76] Jürgen Habermas, *L'intégration républicaine essai de théorie politique,* Paris, Fayard, 1998, p.173-4.

[77] Jürgen Habermas, *Après l'Etat-nation une nouvelle constellation politique*, Paris, Fayard, 2000, p.81

will be wise. This public space is in great need of predictors, the contemporary version of "*oracles*"[78].

Conclusion: the bigger, the wiser as a goal?

I have stressed the importance of the realism liberalism opposition, that as a consequence helped shaping the borders of the unilateralism multilateralism divide. I have highlighted the role of ideas in the framing of competing visions and interpretations of collective wisdom. Size matters for each one of these models that favor the role of different political units.

"The bigger can be the wiser", more probably "the smaller is not the wiser". That is the conclusion I reach in the discussion of different case studies. Actors use ideas they inherit from different traditions (in the paper, realism and liberalism). Yet, ideas and frameworks (unilateralism, multilateralism) are not pre-established solutions that would solve the different dilemmas states and other units face on the international scene. The elaboration of collective wisdom is a contingent process.

Yet, hypothetically and ideally, "could" the bigger be the wiser? This issue lies at the heart of the notion of "international community". *International community* is a very much debated and controversial theoretical and practical idea. Several liberal lawyers use it frequently and sometimes inconsiderably. It certainly lacks a clear definition. As for now the current view is that states are assembled in a "society" of states and to some extent would belong to a "community" notably because of the binding role of supranational ties and international organizations[79]. If international organizations were to be given this role and if there were fulfilling it, the problem of the democratic deficit would be prevailing. I have argued along a different line. The international community is not a given per se reality and no

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[78] This is a major issue for international relations. During World War Two, the US air force had commissioned a predictive report on the evolution of war, afterward the RAND developed the Delphi method of prediction. There is nowadays an international epistemic community of predictors, gathered in congresses, journals etc…

[79] For a much more illuminating analysis that includes institutional analysis see: Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era*, Cambridge, Polity, 1998.

international organization can functionally embody the community of mankind. Yet, it is not a fiction as many social constructivist would argue on the basis that it is a social construction of reality. The international community is a contingent social construction of reality that can be instrumental in the elaboration of international progress. The international community is a moment, which can be wise or not. The interaction between units of different status and sizes is the prevailing driving force in the elaboration of this process. Periods of regression – as we have been witnessing in the years that have followed 9/11 - can follow periods of progress when the 90s decade was fueled by optimism. In the years to come, new visions of wisdom will emerge and contribute to the reorganization of the international system.