

# The Social Construction of Globality<sup>1</sup>

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Today the concept of globality is widely used to describe a condition characterized by the presence a single sociopolitical space on a planetary scale. Yet international relations theory has been either unwilling or unable to understand the global realm in *sui generis* terms. This paper argues that if we want to make coherent sense of the global realm and its relationship to the international system, we must account for how globality has been constructed as a social fact. The paper then tries to provide some of the foundations of such an account by analyzing how a distinctively global space was forged out of changing cosmological beliefs about the makeup of the terrestrial surface during the Renaissance, and how these new beliefs in turned conditioned the possibility of modern practices of territorial demarcation and national identity construction. If valid, this interpretation implies that the order of analytical priority between the international system of states and the global realm ought to be reversed, and hence also that a *sui generis* account of globality must be built on the recognition that the world was global well before it became international in any recognizably modern sense of this latter term.

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Today the concept of the global and its cognates are commonly used to describe a condition characterized by the presence of a single sociopolitical space on a planetary scale. But although there is a broad agreement that many phenomena are global in scope, the nature of the global realm itself has largely remained unexplored. What makes it possible to speak of the global as a distinct realm, and what makes this realm different from the international system of states? Unless questions like these can be answered in a satisfactory way, the concept of globality risks becoming but another tool in the hands of those who wish to relocate political authority to institutions beyond the purview of popular sovereignty.

Yet many theorists of international relations (IR) have found it difficult to make coherent sense of the global realm and its relationship to the world of states. While some are unwilling to posit a global level of analysis over and above the international system for reasons of parsimony, others have found it unnecessary to account for the existence of the global realm in *sui generis* terms. In those relatively rare cases in which such account is provided, the global realm is believed to have emerged out of intensified interaction and increased interdependence between states. Hence, rather than standing on its own feet ontologically, the global realm appears to be epiphenomenal in relation to the international system of states.

In this article, I shall dispute this view, arguing that the construction of such a single space on a planetary scale both antedated and conditioned the emergence

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of the modern international system, by providing the conceptual resources necessary for both territorial demarcation and national identity construction. From this it follows that we ought to reverse the order of analytical priority between the global realm and the international system. This is not to say that the global realm as we have come to know it is somehow identical with its historical antecedents, but a way of arguing that our current difficulties in coming to terms with the global realm owe a lot to its prehistory. Recovering that prehistory might help us to re-conceptualize the relationship between the global realm and the international in a way that restores analytical primacy to the former. Such is the task of the present article.

If we want to understand how the global realm came into being, we should explore how the global once emerged as a distinct concept within political discourse. Since the sociopolitical world is accessible to knowledge and intervention only by means of concepts, the historical emergence of sociopolitical concepts provides important clues to our understanding how this world has been constituted (Koselleck 2002). Hence the question: How did it become possible to conceptualize the world as one single and homogeneous sociopolitical space, and how does this space relate to those of the sovereign state and the international system?

In the following, I shall suggest that the relevant context for answering these questions is to be found in Renaissance beliefs about the shape of the earth, and the makeup of its terrestrial surface. Such cosmological beliefs and conceptions of human community have been mutually implicating in the history of political thought. The construction of the globe as a geometrical object and its division into distinct territorial portions were closely related to the idea that mankind is naturally divided and dispersed. Taken together, these beliefs provided the raw material for the subsequent construction of an international system of territorial states. If valid, this interpretation would imply that any *sui generis* account of the global realm must be based on the recognition that politics was global well before it became “international” in any recognizably modern sense of this term.

I shall pursue this argument in three steps. In the next section, I shall dwell briefly on the reasons why contemporary IR theory and sociology have been unable to account for the global realm in *sui generis* terms. I shall then go on to sketch a conceptual history of the global by relating this concept to the context of cosmological beliefs within which it was articulated. In the final section, I shall offer a brief account of how the notion of the global once conditioned the emergence of early-modern states and empires in Europe by furnishing some of the basic rhetorical resources by means of which territorial demarcation and national homogenization later were carried out and justified.

### Coming to Terms with the Global

One reason why many students of IR have found it hard to make sense of the global is that many of their theories still assume that the field of inquiry is limited to the interaction between states in a system devoid of overarching authority. Thus any talk of globality easily becomes perceived as a threat to disciplinary identity, since it would imply that there might exist something beyond the international system to which students of IR ought to pay attention. As Beck (2004:148) has remarked, “the cosmopolitanization of reality appears as the enemy of international theory, for it seems to undermine the authority of the theory of the state, to abolish the political monopoly of the national state and international relations.” Therefore, to many scholars of IR, it does not seem necessary to posit the existence of a distinctively global realm. As seemingly global phenomena can be explained with reference to what goes on between states, there is no need to introduce a new level of analysis above the international and transnational ones.

But many theorists have taken the notion of globality seriously, by pointing to the newness and distinctness of the present predicament. To them, transnational flows of people, goods, information and capital across borders have brought about a qualitative shift from what once was a system of states to a new world that knows little or nothing of the modern master distinction between the domestic and international spheres (Gill 1991; Luke 1993; Ferguson and Mansbach 1996, 2004; Sassen 1996). In order to make sense of what goes on in this new world, state-centric theories of IR must be abandoned in favor of accounts that take global phenomena into consideration without trying to reduce them to what goes on within or between states. From this it follows that world politics only can be properly understood only by positing a new level of analysis above that of the international system, and, by implication, by assuming the existence of a larger social whole beyond the territorially differentiated system of states (Albert 2007).

Although scholars who have responded to this challenge agree that the global realm is analytically distinct from the international system, many of them still assume or imply that this realm is epiphenomenal in relation to that system, insofar as the global realm is but a by-product of processes which ultimately originate at the state level. Thus, according to Scholte, the dynamics of globalization override the limitations of the international system, bringing de-territorialized communities and decentralized forms of political authority. The emergence of supra-territoriality means that “place” is not territorially fixed... and territorial boundaries present no particular impediment” (Scholte 2000:48). Thus understood, globalization will bring a gradual dissolution of the territorially differentiated world of states, and giving way to “single space where territorial distance and borders are (at least in certain respects) irrelevant.” As Scholte (2000:54) has concluded, “globality... describes circumstances where territorial space is substantially transcended.”

To others, globalization is more likely to bring a situation in which states will continue to coexist with global forms of authority. Thus, according to Ruggie (2004:519), we have witnessed the emergence of a new global public domain that is no longer co-terminus with the system of states, but which exists “in transnational non-territorial spatial formations, and is anchored in norms and expectations as well as institutional networks and circuits within, across, and beyond states.” While theories of the international system still account for a fair share of what goes on in the global political sector, this system must be understood as fundamentally embedded within a broader institutional arena concerned with the production of global public goods. Some of the authority previously located in states now has been relocated to global governance institutions. In a similar vein, Sassen (2006:21) has argued that the “current phase of globalization consists at least partly of global systems evolving out of the capabilities that constituted territorial sovereign states and the interstate system... the territorial sovereign state... represents a set of capabilities that eventually enable the formation revolution of particular global systems... that require neither territoriality nor exclusivity.”

At first glance, sociologists would seem better equipped to conceptualize the global in *sui generis* terms. Sociological concepts have been less burdened with nationalist baggage than those of IR theory, and hence easier to stretch to fit a condition in which social and political life is believed to be increasingly unbounded (Wagner 2000; Inglis and Robertson 2008). But although many sociologists have a lot to say about processes of globalization, they have had little to say about the very realm in which those processes supposedly takes place. One possible reason why sociologists have found it difficult to conceptualize the global realm is because this realm lacks some of the conventional characteristics of societies, such as a division of labor, a common culture or a common

historical memory. Some attempts to apply basic categories of sociological analysis to the global realm have avoided this difficulty, and made the concept of society redundant in the process (Urry 2000). Others who have conceptualized the global in societal terms have done so by extending the range of reference of the concept of society far beyond its modern connotations (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, and Ramirez 1997; Shaw 2000). But to the extent that sociologists have been able to speak of a society on a world scale, some have done so while assuming that this world society is the outcome of intercourse between existing and territorially bounded societies (Rosenberg 2006).

To sum up: what is being disputed by the above theorists are the causes of the transition from the international system to a global polity, and the extent to which global constellations of authority and community will replace that system, or will continue to coexist with it for a foreseeable future. But beyond these sticking points, there is an underlying agreement that transnational processes and increased interdependence between nation-states have given rise to a distinct global realm with a life of its own. But as Rosenberg (2005:17) has asked in his critique of globalization theory, “how could the very thing which supposedly is to be contradicted by transnational relations actually be their precondition?” This is another way of stating that international theory currently lacks an account of the global as a *sui generis* category, referring to a larger social whole being something more than the sum total of its constituent parts, be they states or individuals, or both. Although the above efforts to make sense of globality assume that the global realm is distinct from the international system, the former is nevertheless believed to be epiphenomenal in relation to the latter, insofar it is also assumed the international system have enabled its emergence. Yet there is something curious about this line of reasoning, since it is tantamount to assuming that the pie was baked out its slices. Thus, if we want to make sense of globality in independent terms, we should start by asking questions about when and how it became possible to view the world as a single sociopolitical space, and what this worldview has implied for the ways in which political order have been conceptualized and justified since.

### Constructing the Globe

But how did the global realm come into being? In this section, I shall suggest that the proper way of answering this question is by means of a conceptual history of globality. As Shaw (2000:19) has argued, globality is constituted by “a common consciousness of human society on a world scale: an increasing awareness of the totality of human relations social relations as the largest constitutive framework of all relations.” But this definition merely begs the question of how such a world scale was constructed in the first place. As Axelos (2006) has pointed out, the existence of a singular framework of human existence cannot simply be taken for granted, but must be understood as the outcome of a process that preceded the emergence and spread of those practices commonly thought to be constitutive of global realm today.

In this section, I shall suggest that this process was conditioned by the emergence of new representations of space that made it possible to conceive of the world as a spherical geometrical object, a globe. As Lefebvre (1991:42) has argued, “representations of space must... have a substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space.” Thus, in order to understand how the global realm has been constructed socially, we must first understand how this representation of space as distinctively global emerged, and how such this representation subsequently was translated into social practices until it came to constitute a social fact in its own right. As conceptions of space always have evolved in close conjunction with beliefs about the nature and purpose of

human community, it might make good sense to take beliefs about the makeup of the terrestrial surface into account when explaining the emergence of the state and the international system. Although both Ruggie (1993) and Spruyt (1994:59–77) have taken important steps in this direction, their accounts of the genesis of the modern international system have not situated this process in the context of contemporary cosmological beliefs. Others have taken spatial conceptions into more careful consideration, but have tended to regard the emergence of the global realm as intimately related to the rise of territorialized states and the hierarchic relations between Europe and the rest of the world that followed from the imposition of binary geographies upon the world (Agnew 2003:23–31). By the same token, Elden (2005) has argued that our present understanding of the global has emerged as a result of those spatial conceptions once foundational to the modern territorial state being projected on to the globe.

But we are certainly not the first to view the world as a single sociopolitical space. As Sloterdijk (2009:33) has argued, the foundations of globalization were laid already during antiquity: “as soon as the form of the sphere could be constructed in geometrical abstraction and gazed upon in cosmological contemplation, there arose forcefully the question of who should rule over the represented and produced sphere.” When such metaphysical constructions later were superimposed upon the world, so was the quest for mastery of the resulting global space. While practices of territorial demarcation date at least back to the thirteenth century, the construction of a global space implied that those practices could be justified and carried out with reference to objective principles of geometry rather than with reference to natural but contestable lines of demarcation provided by rivers and mountains. Rather than being the outcome of territorial claims themselves, the drawing of such lines of demarcation was made possible by a prior re-conceptualization of political space (compare Schmitt 2003:86–100). This would imply that one important foundation of the modern international system was in place well before the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 (compare Osiander 2001).

Conceptualizing the world as a spherical object was a precondition of the subsequent division of that globe into distinct portions by means of geometrical methods, but also for the subjection of these to exclusive sovereignty claims. Conceiving mankind as being naturally divided into distinct peoples made it possible to boost such sovereignty claims with reference to narratives that emphasized the uniqueness of each particular people. This is not to say that the modern nation-state was created at this point in time, but a way of pointing out that the idea of a divided mankind made it possible to turn the congruence between political authority and community into a regulative ideal. This implies that another important foundation of the modern international system was in place well before the French Revolution in 1789 (compare Hall 1999).

As it is clearly beyond the scope of the present article to analyze the connections between cosmological beliefs and beliefs about human community in any detail, I shall limit my account to a few episodes which I take to be crucial to understanding how representations of global space paved the way for the emergence of the international system. Let us therefore start with a brief description of how the world looked *before* space was represented as distinctively global.

Medieval cosmology was based on a variety of sources, most of which distinguished between a celestial and a terrestrial region. While the former embraced everything from the moon to the limits of the universe, the latter included everything below the moon to the centre of the earth (Grant 1994:11–45). According to Genesis I, 9, the terrestrial region was in turn divided into two different zones, those of earth and water respectively. These zones were mutually exclusive, so where there was water, there could be no earth, and conversely. From a biblical perspective, the ocean literally marked the end of the known and inhabitable

world. The Latin and Greek terms most frequently used to describe this world was *orbis terrarum* or *oikoumene*. The former referred to the three interconnected continents—Europe, Asia, and Africa—which were surrounded by an impenetrable ocean beyond which life was thought to be unlikely or even impossible. At the center of the *orbis terrarum* was Jerusalem to be found, The Holy City. Ideally, the borders of the *orbis terrarum* ought to coincide with those of the *oikoumene*, even though primarily a geographical concept, the *oikoumene*, “in its most essential meaning, can be defined as a region made coherent by the intercommunication of its inhabitants, such that... no tribe or race is completely cut off from the people beyond it” (Romm 1992:37). But beyond the *oikoumene* no human life was to be found. Both concepts thus restricted the habitat of humanity to the northern hemisphere, since the southern hemisphere consisted of a torrid zone, at the end of which the quasi-mythological Antipodes were to be found (Goldstein 1965). The question whether the latter really existed and were inhabited, and if inhabited, whether by men or by monstrous races, was subject to considerable debate during the Middle Ages (Friedman 1981:35–58). But as Cosgrove has noted, “despite constituting different nations—some yet to be redeemed—the population of the *oikoumene* constituted *humanitas*” (Cosgrove 2001:24, 63).

In this context it has been argued that the affirmation of a common human descent simply required that the existence of the Antipodes should be denied, or that the existence of monsters was required in order to distinguish humanity from its others (Flint 1984:65–80). This problem was further complicated by the fact that it was formulated with reference to pre-Newtonian notions of up and down. Given these notions, belief in life at Antipodes was refutable with recourse to a simple *reductio*, since whether inhabited by men or monsters, this life must be hard indeed, and for physical reasons alone. Is there anyone silly enough, asked Lactantius, “to believe that there are men whose feet are higher than their heads? Or that things which lie on earth with us hang downwards with them, and trees and fruits grow the wrong way up, and rain and snow and hail fall upwards onto the ground?” (quoted in Flint 1984:68).

But this worldview was soon to be replaced by our modern heliocentric one. As Headley has argued,

The awareness of the accumulated new lands and peoples on a transformed and enlarged terraqueous globe reinforces the cognitive impact of the accomplishment whereby the formerly preconceived yet formidable barriers preventing access to other continents and peoples have been dissolved by a rare combination of reason and experience. The machine of discovery... had not only produced an immense perceptual challenge and epistemological problem but also the realization of an almost totally accessible and inhabitable global arena in which to contend with this problem. (Headley 1997a:24)

But as I intend to show in this section, the cosmological changes that effectively turned the world into one place conditioned the emergence of the new conceptions of mankind. The notion of a mankind united by common descent is gradually replaced by assumptions about human diversity, and is accompanied by attempts to understand this diversity as a consequence of the prior dispersion of the species into different corners of the earth (Cosgrove 2001:1–28). Here Aristotle provided much of the initial impetus. The translation of his *De Caelo* stimulated new cosmological speculations among scholars. By the late thirteenth century, Aristotelian cosmology and its geographical implications had become integrated within Christian doctrine (Kuhn 1957:108; Grant 1994:50–56). According to this theory, the earth was fixed at the centre of the sublunary sphere, and was composed of the four elements that made up all matter in this region of the universe. Reflecting their different densities, the four elements were neatly

arranged in distinct and concentric spheres. In the absence of external disturbances, these elements could be expected to settle into four stable concentric spheres, with the element earth naturally at the geometric centre of the globe (Aristotle 1939:II.13.iii; Kuhn 1957:81–82; Grant 1994:630–635).

This theory could not explain why not all land was covered with water, and turned any observation to the contrary into an anomaly. Provided that the Aristotelian laws of motion were correct, and the movements of the heavenly bodies sufficiently regular, the world should rather be completely submerged in water. Even more puzzling was the question why dry land was found where it was found, and what the existence of a continuous landmass in turn implied for the problems of habitability and navigation (Goldstein 1972:19–51).

But this problem could not be resolved within an Aristotelian framework, since the assumption that earth and water were divided into two distinct spheres was intimately related to the idea that the center of the terrestrial globe coincided with the centre of the universe. This implied that any revision of astronomical beliefs about the place of the earth within the universe would necessitate a corresponding revision of geographical assumptions about the composition of the planetary surface, as well as conversely (Kuhn 1957:99–132). And since the latter were closely related to assumptions about the essential unity of mankind and the Biblical causes of its geographical dispersion, any revision of this framework of cosmological beliefs would also call for a corresponding redefinition of human community and its place within this cosmological framework (Glacken 1967:176–253; Harrison 1998).

Perhaps the most important step in this direction was taken when the notion of two distinct spheres of earth and water was abandoned in favor of the idea that these elements together form a single sphere with one common centre of gravity (Grant 1984a,b). Once this was done, there was no longer any reason to believe that the human species was confined to one single landmass, or that the ocean constituted an impenetrable limit beyond which no human life was to be found. Thus chapter three of Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (1543) is entitled "How Earth Together With Water Form One Globe." Here Copernicus sets forth some of the prerequisites for conceiving of the earth as one planet among others, being a solid sphere capable of both rotation and revolution. The assumption of an *orbis terrarum*, a single and continuous protrusion of land is incorrect, writes Copernicus:

[t]his can be established by the fact that from the ocean inward the curvature of the land does not mount steadily in a continuous rise. If it did, it would keep the sea water out completely and in no way permit the inland seas and such vast gulfs to intrude. Furthermore, the depth of the abyss would never stop increasing from the shore of the ocean outward, so that no island or reef or any form of land would be encountered by sailors on the longer voyages. (Copernicus 1992:III)

This meant that the planet as a whole best was represented as a solid geological mass whose chasms are filled with water, the totality being one perfectly shaped sphere, a rotunditate absoluta. Copernicus had thereby managed to refute view of the earth as consisting of two spheres, being located in a fixed position at the centre of the universe (Goldstein 1972:40). According to the view set forth in *De Revolutionibus*, the ocean is no longer a limit, but rather a trans-continental waterway, connecting different and discontinuous land formations to each other. The cosmological changes effected by Copernicus also brought a shift of vantage point from which questions of political community could be formulated and answered. When the earth no longer constituted the given centre of the universe, these could now be formulated with reference to an imagined

point of view situated above the terraqueous globe, and answered with reference to the possible or actual intercourse between different peoples from what now were interconnected continents. As Juan Vives noted in 1531, “[t]he whole globe is opened up to the human race, so that no one is so ignorant of events as to think that the wanderings of the ancients... are to be compared with the journeys of these travelers” (quoted in Gibson 1989:49–50).

But the concept of an *orbis terrarum* had been abandoned in practice well before it was formally refuted by Copernicus, the impetus coming from cartographical research during the fifteenth century. While being greatly facilitated by the new conceptions of space that emerged at this point in time, cartographical research was to a large extent motivated by the search for safer and cheaper trade routes to the East Indies (Edgerton 1975; Goldstein 1976; Cosgrove 1992). Almost at the same moment as the Lopo Gonçalves first crossed the equator in 1473, Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli had written a letter to Fernão Martins, canon of the Lisbon cathedral, on the subject of possible circumnavigation: “You must not be surprised... if I call the parts where the spices are west, when they usually call them east, because to those sailing west, those parts are found by navigation on the underside of the earth. But if by land on the upper side, they will always be found to the east” (quoted in Goldstein 1965:13–14). Written in order to be comprehensible to the layman, the childish simplicity of these instructions contrasts nicely with the complexity of the task at hand. This task consisted of convincing the Portuguese elite of the validity of a new worldview which was clearly at odds with the educated lore of the day, and prompting them to act urgently upon this new knowledge. But when both Martins and Alfonso V failed to respond, a copy of the same letter was sent to the young Christopher Columbus in Genoa.

There was a short step from claiming that the ocean was navigable and foreign lands inhabitable in principle, to arguing that the whole world was inhabited in fact. This was done by invoking observations which earlier had been dismissed as false or absurd when interpreted within the framework of the *orbis terrarum*. As Copernicus scornfully remarked, there was now “little reason to marvel at the existence of antipodes” (Copernicus 1992:III). Previously discounted geographical observations were supplemented by the enormous amount of new observations generated by the discoveries, and gradually assimilated into one and the same pool of geographical knowledge. Thus, in the very same year as *De Revolutionibus* was published, the Venetian humanist Giovanni Battista Ramusio had taken upon himself the no less heroic task of bringing together all existing geographical knowledge into one organized body. This resulted in what was to become a landmark achievement of Renaissance geography, the *Navigazioni e Viaggi* (1550–9). In this work, Ramusio presented a series of arguments to the effect that the entire world indeed was inhabited by human beings:

[t]he sun makes its course with such order that the inhabitants [at the north pole] live not as moles buried under the earth but as other creatures who are upon this terrestrial globe, illuminated so that they are able most profitably to maintain and provide for their livelihood.... Now, by the matter stated above I think there can be no longer any doubt that beneath the equator and below both poles there is the same multitude of inhabitants that there are in all the other parts of the world. (quoted in Headley 1997a:3)

When later prefacing the first volume, the printer Giunti summarized the upshot of its argument: “it is clearly able to be understood that this entire earthly globe is marvelously inhabited, nor is there any part of it empty, neither by heat nor by cold deprived of inhabitants” (quoted in Headley 1997a:3). In 1570, this new knowledge was synthesized and presented by Abraham Ortelius in

the shape of an atlas which “offered the synoptic vision that disengages one from local prejudice and promotes a cosmopolitanism based on the moral wisdom that comes from self-knowledge” (Cosgrove 2003:866). Another influential attempt to articulate a framework for understanding geopolitical relations in universalistic and potentially terms during this period was made by Giovanni Botero, whose *Relationi Universali* (1591–6) provided a detailed account of the geographical distribution of political authorities and peoples across the planetary surface in a way that made it mandatory reading for scholars and statesmen of the day (Headley 2000).

That parts of the world previously thought to be inhabitable indeed were inhabited led to an expansion of the *oikoumene*. In the *orbis terrarum*, the world known by men had coincided nicely with the world inhabited by the same men. But the construction of a *rotunditate absoluta* and its gradual empirical corroboration by cartographical explorations brought an expansion of the *oikoumene* far beyond its ancient limits, and into a single planetary space. The invention of that space went hand in hand with a re-conceptualization of mankind as a single species dispersed relatively evenly across the dry parts of the planetary surface (Magalhães Godinho 1991). Simultaneously, the very unfamiliarity of newly discovered peoples and places had a destabilizing impact upon the foundations of medieval knowledge. Most crucially, the Biblical notion of a common human descent made it difficult to account for the dispersion of peoples across the dry surfaces of the globe. If this dispersion were to remain consistent with the idea of a common origin, it was necessary to explain how different people had ended up in different places, as well as why the existence of these peoples and places had been forgotten (Rubiés 1991). As Headley has noted in this context, “the growing recognition of the earth’s universal habitability could only make more acute the problem of squaring the Adamic origin of all mankind with the swelling contours and complexity of its membership” (Headley 1997a:10). Hence the encounter with new peoples on new continents led to efforts to broaden the definition of political community in terms increasingly independent of scriptural authority (Headley 2002). But apart from giving rise to different cosmopolitan visions of a unified mankind, these conceptions could also easily be twisted into justifications of universal monarchy and the boundless expansion of empires. As we shall notice in the next section, such twisting was largely accomplished by grafting the inherited symbols and values of universal community onto the new and increasingly territorially defined contexts of early-modern states and empires.

### Dividing the Globe

While the construction of a global space made it possible to divide that space into portions by simple geometrical methods, the translation of universalistic and boundless visions of community into justifications of states and empires made it possible to reinforce claims to territorial sovereignty with stories of nationhood. This blend of cosmological and communitarian beliefs provided crucial justifications for further global expansion by European states (Pagden 1995; Armitage 2000:1–28, 2004). As Yates has argued, “[t]he symbolism of the empire of Charles V, which seemed able to include the whole world as then known and to hold out the promise of a return to spiritual unity through a revival of the cementing power of the Christianized imperial virtues, was a comforting phantom in the chaotic world of the sixteenth century” (Yates 1975:27).

Those who tried to justify the creation of states and empires faced the formidable task of reinterpreting and re-contextualizing the rich world of signs, symbols and metaphors that had been handed down to them from the ancients and medieval Christianity, and which had been filtered through Renaissance

attempts to appropriate the same sources in support of city-states. Since these symbols and metaphors originally had been tailored to fit boundless forms of political community, the task at hand was how to restrict their range of applicability in such a way that they could be used to reinforce those particularistic forms of political identity needed to sustain emergent territorial states and their claims to imperial authority over other parts of the world. In order to achieve this, certain things had to be remembered in order to bestow the emergent territorial order with intelligibility and legitimacy. Other things had to be forgotten, and for much the same reasons. This was commonly done by making crucial symbols and metaphors appear to be new and exclusive attributes of particular peoples, while carefully concealing the fact they constituted parts of a cultural heritage common to the entire West, and sometimes even to a much wider world than that.

As I (Bartelson 1995:93–101) have argued in a different context, similar moves had already been undertaken during the Renaissance, and then notably in the political context of city-states and their quest for survival in an increasingly hostile environment. Thanks to the peculiarities of Renaissance modes of knowing and writing, ancient sources could be re-appropriated and important political insights distilled from them by means of the use of the esoteric doctrines of resemblance and exempla. Provided that the underlying conception of time was cyclical, history was bound to repeat itself infinitely. Against the backdrop of such a cosmology, it was possible to argue by means of examples derived from ancient sources when legitimating different forms of rule or different lines of action against one's opponents. What once applied in Athens or Sparta now apparently applied in quattrocento Firenze or Milan, without the slightest degree of anachronism being felt as long as certain rules had been obeyed in the selection of and sampling from classical texts. In other words, there was no firm divide separating past and present, simply because the concept of secular and linear time (*tempus*) could not claim to be the sole legitimate foundation of historiography. Perhaps the best example of the resulting propensity for time traveling is found in Petrarch's letters in support of Cola di Rienzo's effort to reestablish the Roman Republic in 1344, in which Petrarch seems to assume that the past millennium merely had been a short interlude, having done nothing to change the identity of the Roman people and its capacity to endow the emperor with legitimacy (Cosenza 1996:10–36; Boholm 1997).

But toward the end of the sixteenth century, similar strategies were redeployed in order to justify a new kind of entity. This new entity was premised on the actual or desired coincidence between a people and a territory, and was most frequently legitimized through the assimilation of ancient myth. Efforts to justify the congruence between peoples and territories in mythical terms represent the first steps toward the nationalization of political community, a process that would reach its completion not until after the French Revolution. Not surprisingly, however, the first authors to tell stories that purported to explain the rise of their states and empires in such terms were from that corner of Europe that had the strongest reasons to do so, given their recent experiences of discovery and conquest (Pimentel 2000).

This took place against the backdrop of the recent revolutions in cosmology and cartography. Already during the late fifteenth century, the Portuguese were capitalizing on the cartographical revolution, using sophisticated maps and instruments to assist navigation and further imperial their ambitions. In 1478, Abraham Zacuto had circulated his *Almanach perpetuum*, which made it possible to calculate latitude on the basis of the position of the sun. Other solar tables were published by Valentim Fernandes in his *Reportório dos Tempos* (1518) in order to further facilitate maritime explorations (Brotton 1997:54).

The gradual accumulation of knowledge in these areas led to the establishment of a hydrographical repository within the *Armazem da Guine e Indias* in 1508 in order to keep this knowledge from falling into the hands of competitors (Harley 2001:93). Maps and globes also became “prized possessions, not only keeping their owners informed of the latest discoveries and commercial ventures, but also providing them with a sense of security as to their own identity within such an ever-changing world” (Brotton 1997:75). In the larger context of maritime exploration, this meant that the ocean, “previously seen as an impassable barrier, by the last third of the fifteenth century had... become an intercontinental highway for those impious ships” (Headley 1997a:9).

In Portugal and elsewhere, dreams of unlimited territorial power “found the beginnings of its realization in the map or sphere that was dedicated to the monarch, framed by his arms and traversed by his ships, and that opened up to his dreams of empire a space of intervention stretching to the limits of the terraqueous globe” (Lestringant 1994:23; Turnbull 1996; Neocleous 2003). In the process of expansion, the Portuguese empire had to swallow and digest all new information it encountered during its expansion, since it was perceived to be indispensable to its success and consolidation. Hence the appropriation of space on a global scale was as much a source of knowledge as it was perceived as a source of sovereignty (Brotton 1997:83). In this world, the new discipline of cosmography “could reign as an absolute sovereign over the terraqueous globe.... It manipulated at will the natural frontiers of rivers and mountains; determined the future of peoples by fixing their migrations and boundaries” (Lestringant 1994:3).

Thus, when Luís Vaz de Camões wrote his poem *Os Lusíadas* (1952 [1572]), it was not only to celebrate the discoveries of Vasco da Gama, but also to instill a sense of identity to the ancient races of Lusitania. In *Os Lusíadas*, the triumph of the Portuguese discoveries is intimately connected not only to the glory and bravery of those who achieved it, but also, and more importantly, to the formation of the Portuguese people, their independence from the Castilian Crown, their expulsion of the Moors, and the dynastic legitimacy of their Crown. Connecting all of the above in one single epic, Camões assimilates and compares the Portuguese experience to that of other glorious empires in the past. Skillfully redrawing the line between fact and fiction, the gods of those empires are now on the side of Portugal, the legitimate heir to their greatness. This task also required a shift in vantage point from the global perspective earlier conveyed by Copernicus and the Venetian cartographers. Instead of viewing the whole world from a hypothetical point above it, Camões views this new world from a point within it:

Proud Europe lies between the tropic of Cancer and the Arctic zone, where cold is as intense as the heat is here on the equator. To the north and west it is bounded by the ocean, to the south by the Mediterranean Sea. And if Spain is the Head of Europe, Portugal, set at its western extremity, where land ends and sea begins, is as it were the crown on the head. (Camões 1952:78–80)

Camões succeeded in mobilizing a wide range of mythological sources in celebration of Portuguese achievements. Everything that is foreign to the Portuguese in time and space is gradually swallowed up in the course of their providential march toward unity and grandeur. Memory traces of earlier empires and their gods are rendered visible and intelligible only to the extent that they condition the formation of the Portuguese people, and can be used to justify its achievements. Camões thereby succeeded in creating a veritable poetic vortex that sucked up what was of value in both Roman and Christian symbolic heritage, and twisted all those memory fragments into a poetic defense of Portuguese statehood and imperial ambition (Quint 1993:113–25).

But the Portuguese were not to be left alone in their quest for mastery over this new global space. Similar attempts to create a nation in order to justify political authority on the basis of ancient myths produced similar results in England and Spain during the same period. Although this quest for identity in part was motivated by the need for domestic legitimacy, it also fuelled overseas expansion and dreams of global mastery. Again the geographical and cartographical revolutions provided these ambitions with the necessary momentum. As Hakluyt claims in his *Principal Navigations* (Hakluyt 1589; dedicatory epistle), he was the first “that produced and shewed both the olde imperfectly composed, and the new lately reformed Mappes, Globes, Spheares, and other instruments of this Art for demonstration in the common schooles, to the singular pleasure, and generall contentment of my auditory... I meddle in this worke with the Nauigations onely of our owne nation.” The conceptual resources with which to build this nation were drawn from a variety of ancient and medieval sources, making Tudor imperialism “a blend of nascent nationalism and surviving medieval universalism” (Yates 1975:87). In order to achieve this precious blend, authors like Davenant and Drayton transferred symbols and images from the Roman Empire and Christianity to the new context of the territorial state (Springborg 1997). True to this ambition, Drayton warns against staying local in the quest for national identity and statehood in his *Poly-Olbion* (1613). Those who remain content to do this are, “[p]ossest with such stupidity and dulnesse, that rather then thou wilt take pains to search into ancient and noble things, chooset to remaine in the thicke fogges and mistes of ignorance, as neere the common Lay-stall of a Citie; refusing to walker forth into the Tempe and Feelds of the Muses” (quoted in Springborg 1997:29).

To manifest the kind of identity that this poem so eloquently celebrates, nascent nationalism had to be disseminated to the populace in order to stir the right patriotic sentiments in them. To this end, Davenant speculated about how to turn his own proto-nationalist poetry into popular entertainment. In his *Proposition for the Advancement of Moralities* (1651), this was to be done through a spectacle, “[i]n which shall be presented severall ingenious Arts, as Motion and transposition of Lights; to make a more naturall resemblance of the great and virtuous actions of such as are eminent in Story; and chiefly of those whose famous Battails and Land and Sea by which this Nation is renown’d” (quoted in Springborg 1997:30). Ultimately, the purpose of this re-appropriation and assimilation of the Roman and Christian heritage was not only to create a sense of common identity, but also to reinforce the legitimacy of their monarchy by wrapping the English Crown in mythical splendor (Yates 1975:59–87).

In the Spanish context, Campanella provides us with another example of the ease with which empire and monarchy could be justified in the fluid context of early-modern political thought. Written within a cosmological framework similar to that of Copernicus, his *Monarchia di Spagna* (c.1600) contains a plan for the creation of a world community, if only in order to sustain the successful global expansion of Spanish imperial power. Thus, the best way to secure lasting domination over foreign lands is through the gradual hispanization of all peoples, by forcing everyone within the empire to adopt Spanish laws, language, and customs (Yates 1964:360–397; Pagden 1990:37–64; Headley 1997b:197–245).

These claims to global sovereignty were bound to clash, as evidenced by the rivalry between Portugal and Spain during the sixteenth century, as well as between Britain and Holland in the next. Rivaling claims to sovereignty over the Americas pressed forward the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 and the Treaty of Zaragoza in 1529 between the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, specifying lines of demarcation that limited the scope of their claims to dominion in the New World. As these lines of demarcation were drawn along meridians, they presupposed the existence of a single planetary space that indeed could be divided according to such

geometrical principles. As Elden (2005:13) has observed, what was important about the Treaty of Tordesillas is that “it suggests a model which actual techniques only later caught up with,” furnishing a method by which “so-called natural boundaries are avoided for the conceptual elegance of the straight line or arc.” Similarly, the competition between the Dutch and the British for the control over world trade generated much legal debate as to whether sovereignty claims legitimately could be raised over the oceans, as evidenced by the treatise *Mare Liberum* (1609) by Grotius, and by subsequent efforts to vindicate such claims in *Mare Clausum* (1635) by Selden. Yet this controversy would hardly have been possible without the kind of cosmological change that had turned the oceans into intercontinental waterways a century earlier. Thus the making of the bone antedates the contention: in order for the imperial competition to take on global proportions, a single global space had first to be constructed, and knowledge of its existence duly disseminated, its dry surfaces believed to inhabitable and its oceans perceived to be navigable. And in order for the conflicts over that global space that followed upon the dissemination of that knowledge to be settled, that space had to be divided according to geometrical principles applicable to a spherical object, rather than with reference to natural barriers, or to the functionally differentiated jurisdictions of medieval Europe.

Thus, when we reach end of the seventeenth century, the territorialized substratum of the modern international system had been carved out by means of new practices of geometrical demarcation, the peoples living within those spatial portions now gradually being subjected to homogenization and domestication by their sovereigns. If my historical account is correct, this had little to do with what happened in 1648, but much more with the change in cosmological beliefs that had occurred in the beginning of the same century, when new geographical and cartographical knowledge was harnessed in order to legitimize early-modern states and their imperial pursuits. Particularistic forms of political community were then justified with reference to universalistic conceptions of mankind that had accompanied the construction of a single planetary space. Those who sought to legitimize states and empires were then left with the challenging task of explaining how and why mankind had been dispersed across the surface of the earth, and, by implication, how claims to territorial sovereignty could be boosted with reference to the uniqueness and grandeur of this or that people. These processes of territorialization and nationalization were greatly facilitated by the notion that the world constituted a single spherical whole that could be subdivided into distinct portions of space through the application of simple geometrical methods. The vantage point from which human affairs could be contemplated was thereby relocated to a series of discrete points on the planetary surface, each corresponding to a distinct claim to sovereignty over each territorial portion thus constituted.

### Conclusion

As I have tried to show in this article, globality is neither a timeless condition nor a recent invention, but rather a social fact whose basic structure, genesis, dissemination and subsequent functions can be opened to historical and sociological inquiry. As I have suggested, the proper way of doing this is by means of a history of the concept of the globe as a spherical object and its various functions in political discourse from its emergence onward. The point of this analysis has been to demonstrate not only that the construction of a global sociopolitical space antedated the emergence of both sovereign states and the international system, but also that the prior existence of such a global political space enabled the emergence of the international system of states, insofar as the creation of early-modern states took place by means of conceptual resources that

had been distilled from Renaissance conceptions of single planetary space as the stage on which human affairs unfold. The notions of statehood and empire that were derived from this worldview not only tried to bring political authority and communal identity to coincide within fixed portions of space in the interest of smooth ruling, but also made it possible to settle rivaling claims to sovereignty by means of geometrical methods of demarcation, a practice made possible by the very same cosmological changes that made it necessary.

The historical and analytical priority traditionally accorded to the international system of states has made it difficult to understand the global realm in independent terms, and so tempting to regard it as a relatively recent outcome of processes of globalization. But if the above account is valid, all that the discourse on globalization has done is to reset our social ontology to default. The global realm has been there all the time since its creation, providing the backdrop against which the emergence of the international system took place. The above analysis should lead us to question the conventional chronology according to which the international system emerged as a consequence of the peace of Westphalia, allegedly replacing the competing universalisms of pope and emperor with an order of territorialized states. It follows that if world politics was global before it became international in any recognizable sense of this latter term, any analysis of rise of territorial states and the emergence of the modern international system ought to take the prior existence of a global context into more careful consideration. More attention needs to be given to early-modern imperial projects, and how the processes of global expansion created a profound separation between the "IR" conducted between emergent sovereign states in Europe on the one hand, and between those states and the still stateless parts of the world outside Europe on the other. This sense of geographical separation fuelled the expansion of European international society into other continents, while simultaneously providing justifications for the discrimination, domination and exploitation of peoples outside Europe (Anghie 2005).

Finally, this account should sensitize us to the extent to which the concept of globality and its cognates have been used, and still are used, to justify relocations of authority between different agents. Today it appears that the relocation of authority to territorialized states described above is in the process of being reversed, in favor of global governance institutions. The concept of globality fulfils important justificatory functions in this process, by implying that the legitimacy of claims to global authority ought to be judged with reference to the existence of problems of a genuinely planetary scope. Yet few of these attempts to justify global governance have yet tried to do this in terms of the rights of those concerned, since the pluralistic structure of the international system and the absence of a common historical memory are believed to have conspired against the formation of a world community in which such rights could be effectively upheld. Herein lies one of the main challenges of international theory today, since any coherent justification of the exercise of global political authority must presuppose the possibility of a corresponding re-creation of political community at the global level.

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