Thesis Philosophy, Politics & Economics

HEGEMONY, SOVEREIGNTY AND GLOBAL ORDER

An Argument on the Possibility of a Centralised Global Order on the Basis of Mouffe's Realist Agonism

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, the idea of cosmopolitanism has been articulated in many different forms. The most famous modern version was formulated by Kant. He was concerned with which moral, legal and political conditions would be required to establish a condition of cosmopolitan justice (Brown & Held 2010, 8). He envisaged a League of Nations in which sovereign states commit themselves to universal human rights and preserving peace. Modern day philosophers like David Held emphasise that cosmopolitan institutions are necessary to address the global challenges of the future. Issues like climate change, the world food problem and global inequality urge humanity to cooperate rather than be divided. The cosmopolitan project has evoked critical responses from a number of fields. Chantal Mouffe criticises cosmopolitanism from a realist agonistic perspective. Her critique is particularly interesting because it targets the underlying assumptions of cosmopolitanism. Many critiques of cosmopolitanism are about feasibility or aimed at a specific version of cosmopolitan institutions, such as a world state or global democracy. Mouffe however provides a principled argument against the cosmopolitan project in its totality. She objects that cosmopolitanism postulates the availability of a world beyond hegemony and beyond sovereignty, thereby negating the dimension of the political (Mouffe 2013, 19).

Mouffe brings forth two arguments why cosmopolitanism negates the political. First, cosmopolitans aim to fit all of humanity under a single framework of and norms and rules. This framework is legitimised by an appeal to universal moral values and presented as fully inclusive, neutral and acceptable for all humans. For Mouffe, this is unacceptable. Mouffe's political ontology comprises value pluralism: the nature of values is such that they are plural and incommensurable. This implies that any order is always an hegemonic order. The problem of cosmopolitanism is not so much that is hegemonic, but rather that it presents itself as neutral and objective. The pretention of going beyond hegemony negates the possibility of legitimate contestation of that hegemony. Second, cosmopolitanism leaves no room for democratic self-expression of sovereign peoples. For Mouffe, sovereignty is located in a people. Their collective right to self-government is threatened by the establishment of a cosmopolitan law (Mouffe 2005, 101). In short, cosmopolitanism eliminates the chances for legitimate expression of difference (Mouffe and Martin 2013, 20). As a consequence, those who do not agree with the

current order are forced to voice their criticism via other channels. According to Mouffe, this leads to a return to antagonistic forms of conflict which threaten the stability of the established order. For these reasons Mouffe opposes the idea of a global order based on cosmopolitan principles.

The validity of these arguments can of course be questioned. Nonetheless, I think that Mouffe's arguments offer an interesting perspective on thinking about a global order. For the sake of the argument, I will take Mouffe's arguments and ontological commitments as a starting point. The question that arises is: what kind of global order would Mouffe have good reasons to accept, given her own ontological commitments? Such a global order would have to accommodate the political. This means that it must meet two criteria:

A) It has to set standards for legitimate contestation of the dominant order. This is a response against the claim that a centralised global order aims to go beyond hegemony.

B) It has to accommodate the democratic self-expression of sovereign peoples. This is a response against the claim that a centralised global order goes beyond sovereignty.

It is my thesis that, in contrast with what Mouffe beliefs herself, a centralised global order can be legitimised on the basis of Mouffe's realist agonistic principles. In order to defend this thesis, I will make the following argumentative steps.

First, I set out the debate between cosmopolitans and Mouffe's realist agonism. The focus of this discussion is on how the ontological commitments of both fields lead them to approach the question of a legitimate global order in different ways. Cosmopolitans are rooted in a broad tradition of liberal egalitarian philosophy. Their moral ontology leads them to belief that a rational consensus is a possibility and that some values can be universally endorsed. For cosmopolitans, political authority is legitimate if it reflects consent or universally valid moral values (Peter 2017). For Mouffe, the question of legitimacy is political. That means that any legitimate global order has to consider value pluralism, conflict and power. By the end of the chapter, we have a clear view of how Mouffe's ontological commitments inform the criteria for a global order that is acceptable from a realist agonistic perspective.

Second, I discuss Mouffe's proposal for a global order based on a plurality of power centres. According to her, a stable and legitimate global order does not need a shared commitment to

a number of rules and norms. I argue that this claim is at odds with her own ideas about the transformation from antagonism into agonism. A stable global order does presuppose rules and norms that set out the terms of legitimate cooperation.

Third, I set out to develop my own alternative to Mouffe's proposal. Mouffe's description of a multipolar world offers a starting point for thinking how a centralised global order can be established. For this argument, I discuss how Mouffe relates to the schools of realism in political philosophy and international relations. I argue that they share some relevant standpoints which makes the realist conceptual tools acceptable for Mouffe. I contend that a balance of power offers the correct background for the formation of a shared symbolic space. On the basis of a realist account of legitimacy, I argue that this shared symbolic space is a possible source for the legitimation of a global legal order. A centralised global order can thus be founded and legitimised on principles that are acceptable for Mouffe. Such a global order is able to fulfil the two criteria for accommodating the political. I support this claim in the subsequent two chapters.

Fourth, I argue that a global order does not pretend to go beyond hegemony (addressing criterion A). I deal with two topics. To start, it is important to recognise that any global order will always be hegemonic. This means that although a global order is universal in its scope, it is always particular in its content. The point is not to eradicate hegemony as a principle, but to find ways that can challenge the absolutist nature that hegemonies can take. The hegemony of the US was difficult to challenge, since it was backup up by a unipolar distribution of real force. However, under a multipolar distribution of power no party can force its own interpretation of the global order onto others. The global order has to provide means that allow for contestation. Subsequently, I argue that a centralised global order does not necessarily presuppose a common identity such as the cosmopolitans suggest. According to Mouffe, political communities are inherently built on an us/them distinction (2013). In the case of a global order, there seems to be no 'them' that can function as constitutive of the 'us'. However, the global order that I propose is not an expression of a pre-established common identity. It is the result of a balance of power between the dominant states.

Fifth, I discuss the argument that a global order should not go beyond sovereignty (addressing criterion B). I argue that sovereignty is never an unilateral expression, but always a reciprocal

recognition of the other as an equal. By forming a global order, the constituents do re-negotiate the terms of sovereignty. As Meckstroth formulates it: "No assertion of 'sovereignty' can ever justify disregarding the legal order, since sovereignty is the creature of that order, rather than the other way around." (Meckstroth n.d.). Also, I understand sovereignty as the power to constitute new forms of order. Subjecting oneself to an order that one has constituted oneself is not a negation, but an expression of sovereignty.

Lastly, I conclude that a centralised global order can be legitimised on the basis of realist agonistic principles. Mouffe has good reasons to accept an order based on a balance of power, considering her ontological commitments. Her objections against cosmopolitanism do not hold for this order. Also, a centralised order is better suited to provide stability and contain conflict than Mouffe's proposal of a decentralised order. The goal of my thesis is not to defend cosmopolitanism as it will be presented in the next chapter. The reason I start by discussing cosmopolitanism is because I think that they have a better grasp of what kind of order the world needs to effectively address the challenges of the 21th century. In the face of these challenges, cooperation is preferable over division. Therefore, I set out to investigate the possibilities of legitimising a global order on the basis of realist and agonistic principles.

2. Cosmopolitanism versus Mouffe's Realist Agonism

This chapter explores the debate between cosmopolitanism and Mouffe. The central question is how the ontological starting points of both approaches lead them to think differently about politics and global order. Understanding this is important because it makes clear what kind of global order is acceptable from a realist agonistic perspective. I start by introducing cosmopolitanism as a branch of liberal egalitarian theory. Cosmopolitans approach the question of global order from the perspective of the demands of morality. Second, I elaborate on Mouffe's realist agonistic critique of this approach. According to her, the focus on the moral aspects of politics leads cosmopolitans to negate the dimension of power and conflict in politics. For her, the first question of politics is about creating order and containing antagonistic conflict. Lastly, I stipulate the two criteria that a global order must meet to be acceptable for Mouffe.

2.1   Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism is a term that catches a range of approaches to thinking about global order. Central to all these approaches is a form of moral cosmopolitanism: the idea that all human beings belong to the same moral community and are of equal moral worth (Kleingeld and Brown, 2013). This idea has been defended on both utilitarian and Kantian grounds and has led to various conclusions on the strength of moral obligations. For utilitarians like Singer and Unger, moral obligations arise from the imperative to maximise utility. They argue that territorial borders do not stand in the way of this consideration. All humans count equally in the utilitarian calculus (Bernstein 2011, 857-858). Most cosmopolitans however depart from a Kantian perspective.[1] According to Held, justifications of cosmopolitanism ultimately derive from two principles that can be traced back to Kant's moral ontology. First, cosmopolitans subscribe to the metaphysical position that human beings are autonomous and rational. This idea informs the political concept of free and equal citizens. Second, they employ the principle of impartial reasoning. This is expressed in for example Rawls' original position or Habermas' ideal speech situation. In these examples, humans can distil universally generalisable, impartial moral principles through rational discourse (Held 2010, 236-237). Impartial reasoning allows persons with differing views to reach an overlapping consensus that articulates shared interests. These two principles have informed much of 20th century liberal egalitarianism and democratic theory. The same principles underlie much of the cosmopolitan justification, without the proviso that they are only valid on a domestic level (Held 2010, 240).

Brown and Held distinguish five interrelated topics that most cosmopolitans seek to address: *global justice, cultural cosmopolitanism, legal cosmopolitanism, political cosmopolitanism* and *civic cosmopolitanism* (2010, 9). The first question of cosmopolitan theories is often: what are our moral obligations towards our fellow human beings? Cosmopolitans think that the demands of justice pertain on a global scale. [2] Many cosmopolitans start from the viewpoint of distributive justice and investigate how international political institutions ought to be

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[1] Kant's own defence of cosmopolitanism revolves around three elements. First, individuals are the ultimate unit of moral concern. Second, universal justice requires the broader cultivation of a cosmopolitan civil society. Third, the normative principles of universal justice have to be consolidated in cosmopolitan law (Brown 2010, 45-46).

[2] An exception here are the utilitarian cosmopolitans, since they do not define moral obligations in terms of justice but in terms of maximising utility (Beitz 1975, 360-361).

structured according to the demands of global justice (Brown & Held 2010, 9-10). *Cultural cosmopolitanism* is the field of enquiry into matters of global cultural identity. Cultural cosmopolitans generally assert two points. First, they recognise that all human beings have multiple cultural identities and affiliations and that their self-image is not tied to one specific culture.[3] This opens up the possibility of layered cultural obligations to local, national and global identities. Second, cultural cosmopolitans seek to specify a number of universal human or cultural traits, such as reason or a requirement for basic needs. They argue that all human beings share an essential human culture on the basis of those universal traits (Brown & Held 2010, 10-11). *Legal cosmopolitanism* concerns the argument that the international legal order should be based on the principles of moral cosmopolitanism. *Political cosmopolitanism* studies how international political institutions can and should reflect cosmopolitan principles. Those who advocate global political institutions are divided on a number of topics, such as the degree of centralisation or the scope and focus of global institutions. *Civic cosmopolitanism* asks what political and civic rights citizens should have under cosmopolitan political institutions and how a sense of cosmopolitan citizenship can be cultivated (Brown & Held 2010, 12).

Each of these interrelated approaches emphasises different aspects of what is required to establish a cosmopolitan global order. Despite their differences, they are each motivated by a commitment to cosmopolitan moral principles. However, cosmopolitans do not only refer to moral arguments to defend their position. Some cosmopolitans provide empirical arguments in support of the view that cosmopolitan political institutions are necessary to tackle the challenges of globalisation. Beck argues that we have entered a 'world risk society' in which individual states are unfit to control the various unintended consequences of radicalised modernisation. Global problems urge increased international cooperation and a sense of global citizenship (Beck 2010, 228). Likewise, Held defends his proposal for global democracy by emphasising the practical need for increased cooperation. Global challenges like global warming, the spread of diseases and nuclear weapons and increasing inequality call for collective and collaborative action (Held 2010b). He argues that globalisation and the interconnectedness of economies have undermined the idea of national self-governing

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[3] On this topic, cosmopolitans find themselves in disagreement with communitarians (Taylor 1992), liberal-nationalists (Miller 2010) and defenders of minority rights (Kymlicka 1995). These authors, each in their own manner, argue that a person's identity is strongly embedded into a single culture. They oppose the idea of multiple or layered cultural affiliations.

communities. National governments are not any longer the effective locus of political power. Instead, the world consists of overlapping communities of fate. Therefore, the nature and prospects of democratic polity need re-examination (Held 1998, 23). The establishment of a global democracy is the only legitimate way of setting up political institutions that will be fit to deal with global challenges.

In short, cosmopolitans are motivated by either the demands of justice or pragmatic considerations. They approach questions about global order in terms of justice. A just global order is based on equal respect for human autonomy and impartial laws and norms. These laws and norms have to be consolidated in a global legal or political framework. The goal of these institutions is to protect peace and enable humanity to collectively address its common challenges.

2.2   Mouffe's Realist Agonism

Chantal Mouffe articulates a critique of the cosmopolitan project from a realist agonistic perspective. I will first briefly discuss Mouffe's political ontology. Second, I set out her critique of cosmopolitanism. Lastly, I reflect on the criteria that Mouffe sets out for a global order that is acceptable from a realist agonistic perspective.

At the basis of Mouffe's theory of politics stand three concepts: *value pluralism*, *conflict* and *power*. *Value pluralism* means that people have incommensurable values and interests (Mouffe 2013, 3). For Mouffe, this is not merely an empirical but also an ontological condition. This means that the nature of values is such that they are incommensurable. Any ranking of values is underdetermined by reason. Competing values cannot be united in a consensus without favouring one value over the other. Therefore, all human societies are characterised by a dimension of *conflict*. Mouffe calls this dimension 'the political'. The antagonism of the political is ineradicable and is constitutive of any society (Mouffe 2005, 8). Mouffe argues that conflict or difference is constitutive of identity.[4] This is true both at the level of individual and collective identities. The formation of political identities builds on the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. This distinction takes place on multiple levels. First, on an international level political societies require a collective identity that is formulated in terms of opposition to an

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[4] Mouffe is indebted here to the work of Schmitt and Derrida. This topic will be discussed in more detail in section 5.2.

outside. In this case, the us/them distinction takes the form of compatriot/foreigner. Second, on a domestic level political identities and interests are also formulated in opposition to a 'them' (Mouffe 2005, 13). On this level, these differences are expressed by allegiance to various religious, political or cultural affiliations. Because of the incommensurable nature of values, this us/them distinction and the conflict it involves is ineradicable. Mouffe criticises liberal theories for suggesting that the conflict of values can be settled in a rational consensus that equally reflects the interests of all. What liberals present as consensus is actually a choice between values. This choice is not based on rational arbitration, but reflects the *power* relations in society. This means that every order is always a hegemonic order (Mouffe 2013, 14). An order always reflects the dominance of one value and the exclusion of others.

According to Mouffe, the primary task of politics is the transformation of antagonism into agonism (Mouffe 2013, 2-3). In agonistic relations, the us/them distinction takes the form of limited competition rather than conflict between enemies. She defines politics as the set of institutions and practices that create order and organise coexistence (Mouffe 2005, 9).[5] The main challenge for politics is to accommodate a plurality of values and offer procedures for limited conflict. This accommodation requires a shared commitment to a number of ethico-political principles, such as liberty and equality. However, the interpretation of these regulative principles should be open for contestation. Mouffe does not propose that all forms of contestation have to be accepted and all forms of exclusion can be overcome. Any political order presupposes recognition of the symbolic ground of adversarial competition (Thaler 2010, 790). This is the starting point of transforming antagonistic into agonistic relations. However, Mouffe emphasises that agonistic relations can always regress into antagonistic relations. This risk is especially present if there are insufficient legitimate channels to challenge the status quo. The suppression of difference or conflict can lead to a resurgence of antagonistic relations and spur violence. Therefore, any political order has to allow for difference and provide channels for contestation. This claim occupies a central place in Mouffe's critique of cosmopolitanism, to which I shall now turn.

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[5] Mouffe shares an emphasis on the creation of order and preservation of stability with the school of political realism. I will return to this topic in chapter four.

Mouffe formulates a twofold critique of cosmopolitanism in the following way:

> "My main objection to the cosmopolitan approach is that, whatever its formulation, it postulates the availability of a world beyond hegemony and beyond sovereignty, therefore negating the dimension of the political." (2013, 19).

I will discuss both claims subsequently. Hegemony denotes the crystallisation of some norms and values into a social order (Mouffe 2005, 17). Since values are plural and incommensurable, the choice for some values over others is always underdetermined by reason. This implies that every order is contingent and particular. Often however, the dominant group in the hegemonic order often presents its own interest as universal interests. These presentations are masked behind claims of impartiality, rationality, humanity or neutrality. According to Mouffe, this is exactly what the cosmopolitan projects amounts to. Mouffe discusses the example of George W. Bush who declared the 'War on Terror', supposedly in the name of humanity (2005, 79, 81). By qualifying his own project as a defence of humanity, he disqualified his opponents as inhuman. Cosmopolitan theory is built on a Western understanding of human rights and rationality. Competing and incommensurable views are disqualified as irrational. If cosmopolitan global institutions were ever realised, this would be the result of the imposition of a specific worldview on all others (Mouffe 2005, 107).

For Mouffe, sovereignty amounts to popular sovereignty. This refers to the democratic right to self-government that citizens of a country possess (Mouffe 2005, 101). This includes that there is no higher authority in a state than the will of the people. According to Mouffe, cosmopolitanism threatens this sovereignty by proclaiming the universal validity of a number of laws or rights. She states that: "the cosmopolitan approach ends up sacrificing the old rights of sovereignty." (Mouffe 2005, 101). Therefore, cosmopolitanism violates the basic principles of democracy. The argument that cosmopolitan laws are an expression of global sovereignty does not offer a way out for Mouffe. The identification of a group of people as a sovereign unity presupposes the existence of an 'other'.[6] This us/them distinction cannot take place on a global level however, because cosmopolitanism claims to encompass all of humanity. A global shared identity can never take hold, because there is no constitutive outside (Mouffe 2013, 23).

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[6] I elaborate on this claim in section 5.2.

Therefore, there can be no global demos. In sum, Mouffe's political ontology differs substantially from that of cosmopolitans. She argues that the cosmopolitan project fails to grasp the key components of the political: pluralism, conflict and power.

This failure on behalf of cosmopolitanism has two related negative effects. First, hegemonic orders are prone to evoke violent challenges to the status quo if they do not create possibilities for legitimate dissent (Mouffe 2013, 20). Mouffe points towards the increasing extremism, fundamentalism and ethnic conflict of the past decades to invigorate this argument (Wenman 2013, 181). This is a threat to the stability of the political order. This is problematic, since the goal of politics is to contain antagonistic conflict. Stability and peace are preferred to instability and violence. In order to contain antagonism, any order needs to provide channels for legitimate contestation of the status quo. This relates directly to the second problem: cosmopolitan institutions cannot accommodate a legitimate expression of plurality. Cosmopolitanism asserts the universal validity of a number values and human rights. These values and rights are presented as a neutral platform on which differences can be played out. This immediately qualifies forms of contestation that do not fit in the Western framework as illegitimate (Mouffe 2005, 126). Mouffe iterates that cosmopolitans are unwarranted to present their values as the universal standard for legitimacy. She argues that "… drawing the frontier between the legitimate and the illegitimate is always political, and should therefore always be open for contestation." (Mouffe 2005, 121). In the cosmopolitan ideal of a world order beyond hegemony and beyond sovereignty, this contestation is muted. A stable and legitimate global order would thus have to take into account these two pitfalls of hegemony. It is important to note that Mouffe does not argue that hegemony itself is necessarily problematic. According to her, every order is inherently hegemonic (2013, 14). Hegemony becomes problematic when it presents itself as universal and definite rather than particular and contingent. The claim of universality disqualifies every contestation to that order as illegitimate. This forces contestation outside of the agonistic dimension of the political and back into antagonism.

From the above we can conclude that a global order has to meet two criteria in order to be acceptable from a realist agonistic perspective:

A) It has to set standards for legitimate contestation of the dominant order. This is a response to the objection that a centralised global order goes beyond hegemony.

B) It has to accommodate the democratic self-expression of sovereign peoples. This is a response to the objection that a centralised global order goes beyond sovereignty.

Any order that does not meet these criteria for accommodating a legitimate expression of difference is likely to result in conflict rather than stability, according to Mouffe. She assumes that a stable and less conflictual order is preferable to a conflictual and unstable order.[7] However, this does not mean that her worries about hegemony and sovereignty are merely instrumental to securing order and stability. According to Mouffe, securing order and stability are in turn necessary for the establishment of a, as she puts it: "vibrant 'agonistic' public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted" (2005, 3). According to Wenman the first question of politics for Mouffe is about preserving security and stability and containing the conflict that is likely to arise between political actors (Wenman 2013, 215). He argues that Mouffe has moved away from the focus on emancipation that characterised her earlier work (Wenman 2013, 201). In my view, the demands of stability and legitimacy go hand in hand. Order is a necessary precondition for the creation of legitimacy. A legitimate functioning of politics implies that it can accommodate difference and allows for the democratic self-expression of a sovereign people. This, in turn, diminishes the chances of antagonistic conflict. In the next chapter, I will discuss Mouffe's proposal for a global order that can meet both demands. I argue that her proposal is not able to secure stability.

3. Mouffe's Proposal for a Multipolar Order

This chapter discusses Mouffe's proposal for a global order. First, I introduce Mouffe's proposal for a global order organised around multiple autonomous blocks. I explain why she holds that a multipolar order is more stable than a cosmopolitan order. Second, I argue that a multipolar order as she proposes is not likely to be less conflictual than a cosmopolitan order. According to her own principles, antagonism can only be limited if the interaction between the competing blocks is based on a number of regulative principles. Therefore, even a global order based on multipolar distribution of power is in need of shared norms and rules if it is to provide stability.

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[7] It is important to note here that Mouffe takes a normative standpoint towards the proper end of politics. The argument that the task of politics is to transform antagonism into agonism is in itself a moral judgement (Thaler 2010, 795).

3.1 A Multipolar Order for a Multipolar world

Mouffe rejects the cosmopolitan idea of understanding the world as a single political community. She objects to instituting a single legal or political framework that encompasses all of humanity. As an alternative, she proposes a multipolar global order consisting of a number of regional blocks (Mouffe 2013, 22). Such an order can be based on a multipolar distribution of power. In the past decades, the military and economic supremacy of the United States of America provided it with an hegemonic position. However, the rise of the BRICS countries and the unification of the European continent have changed the relative power position of the United States. The world is moving towards a multipolar distribution of power (Cooper and Flemes 2013).[8] Rising powers like South Africa and Brazil increasingly take up the role of regional hegemons. This trend is combined with the strengthening of regional organisations like ASEAN and Mercosur (Mouffe 2005, 118). In Mouffe's multipolar order, each pole consists of a regional block united around a shared culture and identity. The multipolar order consists of multiple spheres of in- and exclusion, without an overarching authority. In this 'pluralisation of hegemonies', each block is sovereign. The blocks can each choose their own political and economic model. Such a global order provides room for a plurality of understandings of human rights and self-rule (Mouffe 2013, 32). According to Mouffe, cultures can deal with matters of human dignity and a just social order in different ways. The tradition of human rights is merely one specific expression of asserting the dignity of a person (Mouffe 2013, 31). Western democracy and the corresponding political rights and institutions are merely one specific expression of 'rule by the people' (Mouffe 2013, 30). Not all of the blocks have to be embrace the Western and secular form of democracy and human rights. Each region can have its culturally and historically specific interpretation of these principles.[9]

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[8] This claim is not fully undisputed within the field of International Relations. Some scholars argue that a bipolar distribution of power is more likely to take hold than a multipolar (Cooper and Flemes 2013, 949). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage in this debate. For the sake of the argument, I will assume that a multipolar distribution of power is more likely to occur than a bipolar distribution.
[9] Mouffe remains unclear what the minimal standard for an acceptable interpretation of these principles is. Not all of these interpretations are equally pluralistic. One could object that Mouffe applies a double standard. The emphasis on a plurality of regional spheres on the global level seems to underplay the tolerance for difference within each of the regional blocks.

According to Mouffe, her order does not aim to beyond hegemony and beyond sovereignty. A multipolar order respects pluralism and sovereignty. It allows for multiple expressions of legitimacy. In multipolarity,none of the blocks can impose its political or economic model on the others. . Therefore, a multipolar order is less likely to foster the emergence of extreme forms of antagonism (Mouffe 2013, 29). Mouffe does not claim that all conflict will be eradicated in this agonistic global order. However, organising global order around a multi polarity of power blocks is the best way of preventing conflicts from becoming antagonistic. It is important to note that Mouffe does not strictly seek to transpose her theory of agonistic democracy to the international domain. The crucial difference is that, according to Mouffe, there is no conflictual consensus on a number of ethico-political principles on the global level (2013, 23). This would require the existence of a global political community. As discussed in the previous chapter, Mouffe argues that a shared identity is not available at the global level. Shared identity is always based on a process of inclusion and exclusion. It needs a constitutive outside. Since a global identity would encompass all of humanity, such a constitutive outside is absent. Therefore, the domain of international relations can only count on prudential agreements (Mouffe 2013, 23). Any attempt to try to unite the various blocks under a single framework or authority implies a return to hegemony.

In short, a multipolar global order does not convergence on a single system of norms and values. At the same time, the sovereignty of each regional block is maintained. According to Mouffe, this model has the best chance of containing antagonism. In the next section, I attack this claim.

3.2   Beyond Mouffe

I argue that a global multipolar order requires a shared symbolic space for legitimate contestation if it is to contain antagonism. For this argument, I rely on Mouffe's own theory of the transformation of antagonism into agonism. First, I will elaborate a bit more on the establishment and function shared symbolic space.

On the domestic level, agonistic relations are established through a conflictual consensus on ethico-political principles (Mouffe 2005, 20). In this consensus, two distinctions are made. First, the establishment of agonism is enabled by the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. This sets apart those who can legitimately participate in the agon, namely the 'us'. Those who are

included view each other as legitimate contenders, even though they might disagree with the other on many political standpoints (Mouffe 2005, 20). Each contender views the other as equally entitled to influencing public decision making in the shared political community. The 'them' are excluded from the agon and cannot, in any way, legitimately participate. This means that the central authority can legitimately exclude the latter category from the shared decision making procedures in its jurisdiction. The second distinction is between legitimate and illegitimate forms of sovereign self-expression. In liberal democracies, legitimate forms of contestation are for example, voting, protesting or civil disobedience. Rioting, terrorism and bribing on the other hand are considered illegitimate. For the latter category, the central authority reserves the right to prosecute the perpetrators. These two distinctions together shape a shared symbolic space of legitimate contestation. The boundaries of this shared symbolic space have to be open for contestation according to Mouffe. The setting of the boundaries of legitimate contestation is itself political. The only condition is that the boundaries do not violate the ethico-political principles of liberty and equality that underlie the concept of democracy. This configuration establishes the stability of agonistic conflict.

Without the shared symbolic space, there would be no standard to tell legitimate from illegitimate forms of sovereign self-expression. This means that society would fall back into a state of nature. The danger of antagonistic conflict could never be averted permanently. According to Mouffe, this is the case in the international domain (Mouffe 2013, 23). Admittedly, there does not seem to be a global conflictual consensus on the principles underlying democracy. Liberty and equality are interpreted very differently over the world. These interpretations are too disparate to count as a conflictual consensus. Many states claim to be democratic and respect human rights. Unfortunately, even the most oppressive regimes assert that they rule in the name of the people.[10] I will not claim that this lip-service to democracy and human rights counts as a conflictual consensus on ethico-political principles. So can antagonism be averted without a conflictual consensus on principles of liberty and equality?

I argue that conflict can be contained if there is a shared symbolic space of contestation. This shared symbolic space consists of a common understanding of the boundaries of legitimate

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[10] Think for example about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

contestation. First, it sets out who can participate in the global agon. In the current global order, sovereign states are regarded as the main legitimate actors in global politics. States have the authority to sign treaties, set up international law or wage war. Increasingly, non-state actors are playing an important role as well. Nonetheless, non-governmental organisations or transnational corporations do not have the power to perform either of the above actions. States and none state actors enjoy different degrees legitimacy to contest the global order. In the international domain, states view each other as symbolic equals. They regard the other states as legitimate contenders to setting the rules and norms of the global order. Second, the shared symbolic space delineates what counts as legitimate forms of contestation. For example, the current international order establishes which forms of violent conflict are legitimate and which are not. It sets out what the appropriate forms of sovereign self-expression are under various conditions. Mostly, states have agreed that violence is unacceptable. However, under some circumstances states have a right to use violence to achieve their ends. These standards allow states to make claims of legitimacy. Without a common adherence to these standards, the international community has no means to condemn those who disturb the order. In this case, there would not be an argument against viewing violence and aggression as legitimate forms of self-expression (Thaler 2010, 794). This is a threat to the stability of that order. There would be no formal limitation to antagonistic conflict.

A multipolar global order without a shared symbolic space of contestation cannot be agonistic. Agonism requires that actors regard the other as symbolic equals and legitimate contenders. This contains the exclusion of some actors and some actions. Just like on the domestic level, a shared symbolic space that situates the terms of interaction is necessary to create a stable order. This leaves us with a new question: how can a shared symbolic space be created, if not by a conflictual consensus on ethico-political principles? In the next chapter, I argue that a balance of power can create a shared symbolic space on the global level.

4. Realism, Balance of Power and Legitimacy

In this chapter, I start to set out my own alternative for a global order based on realist agonistic principles. First, I will argue that a shared symbolic space can be established through a balance of power. Under a balance of power, the competing actors view each other as equals. The rough equality in terms of power translates into a symbolic equality. This creates a shared

symbolic space in which the competing actors come together to set the rules of interaction. The second question is what legitimates the rules that states set jointly. Without a legitimation, the rules would amount to sheer domination by the major global powers. The question of legitimacy cannot be answered in terms of the ethico-political principles that underlie liberal democracy. As argued in the previous chapter, not all of the major powers endorse the principles of liberty and equality. Therefore, another narrative has to be provided. For answers to both issues, I will draw on the school of political realism. Mouffe shares a number of relevant ontological premises with political realism and there are no critical differences that divide them. Therefore, political realism can provide helpful insights for how a global order can be constituted that is acceptable for Mouffe. I will start by briefly discussing the main claims of political realism. Also, I explain the dynamics of the balance of power as conceived by IR-realists. This helps us to understand how a balance of power can establish a shared symbolic space.

4.1   Political Realism

Political realism is a school in political philosophy that asserts that the study of politics should not be reduced to moral questions. They take issue with what they call 'political or liberal moralism' (Horton 2010, 432; Sleat 2016, 173; Williams 2005, 2). According to political realists, liberals such as Dworkin, Rawls and Habermas fail to acknowledge the true nature of politics. Like Mouffe, political realists argue that the dynamics of politics are determined by conflict, interest and power (Sleat 2016, 173). Many also share the ontological standpoint of value pluralism (Horton 2010, 436). According to realists, political moralists do not consider these factors to be essential to politics. Instead, they approach political questions in terms of morality. In the case of cosmopolitanism, we have seen that cosmopolitans are predominantly interested in the question which global order meets the demands of justice. Cosmopolitans pay less attention to the real world obstacles and attitudes that might stand in the way of realising such a global order. Because political moralists do not grasp the full essence of politics, they ask the wrong kind of questions according to political realists. This makes their theories descriptively deficient and largely practically irrelevant (Horton 2010, 433). One could argue that this critique misses the point, since political moralism is a normative and not so much a descriptive approach. However, it is central to the realist position that the normative

and descriptive dimensions of political theory cannot be seen independently from each other.[11] Any theory of politics, descriptive or normative, should take the constitutive features of politics as a starting point (Horton 2010, 435).

The school of political realism in political philosophy is related to the school of realism in the study of international relations. Both schools are 'realist' because they focus on the real world circumstances when studying (international) politics. These real world circumstances are made up of struggles of power and conflicts of interests. Although the schools agree on what constitutes politics, they have different methodologies and research agendas (Bell 2017, 1-2). Realists in political theory are interested in the normative implications of their political ontology. For example, they ask themselves what concepts such as legitimacy, justice or rights amount to in a realist context. Most IR-realists on the other hand are solely concerned with the empirical analyses of politics.[12] They study international relations broadly based on five assumptions (Grieco, Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2015, 72-74). First, states are the central unit of analysis, since they are the main actors in the international domain. Other types of organisation play only a secondary role. Second, these states exist in a world without a higher authority. In an anarchic international domain, power is the coin of the realm and states are fully dependent on self-help. Power is not merely the military or economic force of a state. It refers to the ability of states to change the behaviour of other states (Morgenthau and Thompson 1985, 32). Third, realists assume that states are reasonably rational actors. Realist rational actor models are based on cost-benefit calculations and include strategic models such as the prisoners dilemma. Fourth, states are first and foremost concerned with their own security. The bare essentials of politics are about power and survival. Lastly, realists argue that conflict is inherent in relations amongst states. States always seek to secure their position relative to others. This leads to competition and possibly, conflict.

These five assumptions provide realists with a number of conceptual tools to analyse international politics. One core propositions is that the dynamic between states is governed by the balance of power (Grieco, Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2015, 74). In order to secure their

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[11] For a critical discussion of this claim, see (Erman & Möller, forthcoming).

[12] An exception are classical realists like Morgenthau. He argues that good foreign policy is rational policy based on the self-interest of states (Morgenthau and Thompson 1985, 10). Later, neo-realist scholars mostly refrained from conflating their empirical research with advocating *Realpolitik*.

own position, states will seek to increase their power *vis à vis* possible rivals. They can do so by increasing their own economic, military or diplomatic power. Another option is to form alliances with other states. An example of this dynamic is the formation of the Triple Entente and the Axis Powers prior to World War I. If all actors pursue these tactics, this can lead to a balance of power. Some realists defend the thesis that a balance of power has considerable benefits for security and stability and that it is a condition for peace.[13] Containing possible rivals through a balance of power is often less costly and risky than trying to overpower them. Other realists however argue that hegemony, the dominance of a single state over others, allows for more sustainable peace (Grieco, Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2015, 177).[14]

A second analytical tool is the concept of the security dilemma (Grieco, Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2015, 74-75). The conditions of anarchy and insecurity lead states to mistrust the intentions of other states. The build-up of military forces for defensive purposes of one state can trigger an arms race, increase tensions and eventually escalate into violent conflict. Communication and cooperation between states can dampen the insecurity over the intentions of other states and prevent a spiral of violence. These insights from IR-realism help us to understand why a balance of power can lead to stability on the international domain. It also shows us that balances are fragile because of the lack of trust between states. A global order based on realist principles will have to consider these dynamics.

Despite their differences, both versions of realism can help us to think about establishing and legitimising a global order based on realist agonistic principles. As mentioned above, Mouffe shares a number of relevant premises with realism. Both Mouffe and realists argue that politics revolves around struggles for power and conflicts of interests. As I will discuss in the last section of this chapter, they also agree that the first task of politics is about limiting conflict and imposing order and stability (Mouffe 2013, 8-9; Williams 2005, 3). Because of these similarities, I hold that I can use the realist tools to support my thesis. In the subsequent two

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[13] Kenneth Waltz famously defended the position that Iran should be allowed to develop nuclear weapons in order to counter the military might of Israel in the Middle East. Such a balance of power would provide more stability than a situation in which only one state possesses nuclear weapons (Waltz 2012).

[14] Note that, although the concepts are related, hegemony in the context of IR means something different than Mouffe's concept of hegemony.

sections I will discuss how an international order can be respectively founded and legitimised based on realist principles.

4.2   Balance of Power and the Constitution of a Global Order

We concluded the previous chapter with the claim that a balance of power can establish a shared symbolic space on which contestation takes place. In the section above, I introduced the concept of a balance of power. In this section, I argue that a rough equality of real power can translate into a symbolic equality. This is the starting point for the constitution of a shared symbolic space of contestation.

In a balance of power between states, none of the states has the capacity to overpower the others. At the same time, states face the threat that other states might form alliances against them. Under a balance of power, all parties are confronted with constant insecurity and the threat of conflict. In this situation, the states have prudential reasons to retain stability. Any attempt to overpower the others would only inflict harm on oneself, without leading to any gains. Rather than seeking security by overpowering the other, states have to come to terms with each other. [15] It is important to note here that a balance of power consists of an intersubjective interpretation of rough equal power. This means that there does not have to be an exact *de facto* equality of power. Rather, a balance of power arises if two or multiple parties regard the others as rough equals. All parties recognise that they have to accept the other as a contender for influence in the international domain. This creates a symbolic equality. It is symbolic, because the relative identities of the competing actors are changed. In a balance of power, the other is not someone who has to be surmounted. It is someone who has to be accommodated. This changes the identity of the other from enemy to adversary. In Mouffe, this transformation is guided by a common adherence to ethico-political principles. In a balance of power, the transformation is imbedded by the recognition that the other cannot be

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[15] Horton argues that actors can have a range of motivations to come to terms with others. Cultural, moral or pragmatic reasons might motivate states to institute a *modus vivendi* (Horton 2010, 440). I agree with this position. I do not contend here that states are solely motivated by a narrow definition of self-interest. Strictly, I do not argue that a balance of power provides states with the only correct motivation for constituting a global order. Rather, a balance of power provides the correct background conditions against which a stable political settlement can take hold. This is because under a balance of power, the question of how to organise international relations needs to be answered by an intersubjective agreement.

overcome. It is important to note that the transformation is not permanent. An adversary is friend nor enemy.[16] The identity of enemy still underlies the identity of adversary and may become salient. Mouffe emphasises this as well when she states that agonistic relations can regress into antagonistic relations (2005, 21). An adversarial relation between states can still harbour mistrust. The other still represents a threat to ones interests. There is a relevant difference however between enemies and adversaries. Between enemies, the survival of the one implies the defeat of the other. Between adversaries on the other hand, survival is not a zero-sum game. Adversaries are committed to finding a common solution to the difficulties of cooperation. This is the situation state are in under a balance of power.

The first question that arises is: who are accepted as contenders for influence in the global domain and who are not? Answering this question is the first step in setting the boundaries of the shared symbolic space of contestation. The question who is allowed to enter the shared common ground cannot be answered in terms of pre-established authority or universal right. Our assumption is that there is no consensus between the competing states on these matters. The new order is constituted *ex nihilo.* Rather, who has access to the global agon depends on the intersubjective interpretation of the distribution of power. As Meckstroth puts it: "Those who write the law of the world do so not by right but because they are strong enough to stop anyone from writing it without them." (Meckstroth n.d., 9). Those that make up the balance of power decide amongst themselves who they accept as contenders in the global agon. In the first place, that includes all those who can compete on the highest level and can make themselves indispensable for a stable order. In the second place, the great powers can decide to include lesser powers. Meckstroth provides the example of the Treaty of Westphalia, which was struck between the major powers of Europe in 1648. The great powers made sure to include minor powers in the new legal order as well. The great powers can do so for a variety of reasons. It is important however to remark that the status of the lesser powers depends on the voluntary inclusion of the great powers (Meckstroth n.d., 10). In short, there is no single actor or authority that decides the boundaries of the shared symbolic space.

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[16] Mouffe draws on the work of Carl Schmitt for concept of agonistic relations. For him, politics can only be understood in terms of friend/enemy groupings (Schmitt 1976, 35). Mouffe disagrees with Schmitt and argues that not all others are necessarily enemies.

These actors subsequently constitute a new order, including the terms of legitimate interaction. By 'subsequently', I do not simply mean to imply a temporal sequence of events. Although the constitution of a new order will often take place over a stretch of time, the whole process is best understood as a single act. The consecution in which I present the steps of the process indicates the relation between the different layers of the new order. I identify three layers: the real order, the symbolic order and the legal order.[17] The real order is the real balance of power that provides the background conditions against which the symbolic order is formed. The symbolic order is the shared symbolic space, in which the competing actors recognise each other as legitimate contenders in the global agon. The legal order is the set of agreed upon rules that regulate the interaction between the contenders. This order can only be effective if it is backed up by the real order. Ultimately, the legal has to be able to be enforced by real power. This does not mean that the threat of violence needs to be ever present. Just like in the domestic legal order, the day to day routine functions without this threat. However, the state ultimately needs to sustain the credible image that it can back up its laws with real force if necessary. The same holds for the international domain. This implies two things. First, the constituents of the global order need to uphold the idea that they are willing to resort to force to protect the legal order. They can do so by adopting an agreement in the legal order that each of the constituents has an obligation to protect it.[18] Another option is that the constituents appoint an external authority as guardian of the order. A second consequence is that a redistribution of power in the real order can lead to a renegotiation of the legal order (Meckstroth n.d., 15). The transformation from enemy to adversary is not necessarily permanent. If the balance of power shifts, new actors with different interests might demand access to the negotiation table. This implies that the legal order is never set in stone.

For Mouffe, it is a shortcoming of the international domain that it can only count on conditional agreements. According to her, "All attempts, through the establishment of a global covenant, to definitively overcome the 'state of nature' between states runs into insurmountable difficulties." (Mouffe 2013, 23). However, the global agonistic order I propose does not aim to definitively overcome the state of nature. I recognise that the stability of the

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[17] Meckstroth calls these respectively the real power, the constituting power and the constituted power (n.d.).

[18] Agreements like this can be found in the charter of the NATO (article five) and the United Nations (article 51).

order is never unconditional. The boundaries of the shared symbolic space can be challenged and renegotiated. I will elaborate on this point in the next chapter. Before doing so, I will discuss the objection that this order implies a simple 'might makes right'. In the next section, I set out what legitimacy means from a realist perspective and how this applies to the founding of a global order.

4.3   A Realist Account of Legitimacy for a Global Order

I have discussed how a global order can be established on the basis of realist agonistic principles. However, the goal of my thesis is to show that a global order can also be legitimised on the basis of these principles. Without an account of legitimacy, the global order amounts to sheer dominance of the great powers. First, I will introduce a political realist approach to legitimacy. Second, I discuss how this account of legitimacy applies to the case of a global order found on a balance of power. A balance of power provides the right background conditions against which a global legal order can be legitimised.

Political realists formulate their theory of legitimate authority in contrast to, what they call, moralistic approaches. Although there is some variance between different political realists, two themes are central to a realist account of legitimacy. First, they argue that the demand for legitimacy is political rather than moral. Second, they hold that the threshold of legitimacy is context dependent. I discuss both claims consecutively. What distinguishes political rule from sheer dominance is that political rule can offer an account of legitimacy (Sleat 2016, 176). This means that those in power need to be able to justify to those who are coerced why they have to accept this. So far, realists and moralists are on common ground. However, they disagree over why this legitimation needs to be provided. For moralists, the legitimation demand derives from moral principles. Illegitimate coercion is impermissible because it does not meet normative standards such as respecting the liberty and equality of individuals (Larmore 1999, 607). Realists argue that the demand for legitimacy comes from within politics itself. An account of legitimacy is necessary, simply because power does not justify itself (Sleat 2014, 322). One could retort that this leaves out the question why legitimate rule is preferable over sheer dominance. Morgenthau offers an instrumental answer; one that is similar to Mouffe's approach. He argues that legitimate rule is more stable than illegitimate rule, since decreases the chances of revolt against the authority (Morgenthau and Thompson 1985). Another answer

might be that we can reasonably expect those who are coerced to demand a justification (Williams 2005, 6). It is likely that those who are coerced will not bluntly accept this without explanation. However, this is not the central point of the realist account of legitimacy (or this thesis). What matters is that coercion without legitimacy is simply not political rule. Therefore, if we want political rule (for whatever reasons), we need an account of legitimacy. Still, it is important to acknowledge that the demand for legitimacy is not dictated by morality. This opens up the possibility of a plurality of accounts of legitimacy.

Political realists contend that the terms in which political rule is legitimised are affected by historic circumstances (Williams 2005, 3). For Williams, the basic condition for legitimacy is that an authority can answer the first question of politics: the authority needs to "secure the terms of order, protection, safety, trust and the conditions of cooperation." (Williams 2005, 3).[19] Without answering this question, there is no platform on which further political issues can be addressed. Williams calls this the Basic Legitimation Demand (2005, 4). Meeting this demand is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for legitimacy. A further condition is that the way that the authority answers the BLD must be acceptable for those that are coerced. What is acceptable however, is historically affected. Williams argues that the liberal justification of authority is a contingent product of modernity (2005, 9). Under different historic circumstances, other legitimations make sense to people. Those legitimations can draw on moral, religious, economic or other sources. Sleat argues: "The search for universal grounds of legitimate rule that will be true for all people in all places and times will necessarily be a misguided endeavour." (2016, 176). Because Sleat subscribes to value pluralism, he thinks that there is no single answer that can be expected to be universally acceptable. What counts is that a given account of legitimacy is congruent with the beliefs of the people that it is offered to. Contrary to many liberal theories, not the *de facto* agreement, but the acceptability matters (Sleat 2014, 325-326). The threshold is set at rough equal acceptability to each subject (Williams 2005, 7). As a consequence, the legitimation of authority is a continuous project. An order will never be considered fully legitimate, since it is impossible to provide an account that is equally acceptable to all. The BLD cannot be provided a final answer. This resonates with Mouffe's claim that the discussion on the boundaries of legitimacy will always be political (Mouffe 2005,

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[19] This standpoint is similar to Mouffe's argument that politics consists of instituting the terms under which antagonistic conflict can be transformed into ordered and contained agonism.

121). This point is emphasised in the next chapter. I will now turn to how this account of legitimacy applies to a global order based on a balance of power.

A global order also faces the Basic Legitimation Demand. The constitutive powers can demand a justification for the legal order from each other. As we have seen, realists argue that this justification is context dependent. I have also shown that the constitution of a global order based on a balance of power creates a new context. The constitutive powers cannot revert to pre-established authority or universal right. This means that the legitimation of a global order will have to find its sources in its own constitutive process. A legitimation of the global order will have to do two things. First, it needs to justify why those coerced by the legal order should accept its authority. Second, it needs to set limits to the shared symbolic space of contestation. As discussed in section 3.2, this means that it should provide an account of which forms of contestation of the legal order are legitimate or illegitimate. The symbolic order in which states recognise each other as equals can form a fruitful ground for a legitimation. In this context, the condition of rough equal acceptability is not a moral demand, but a practical one. Under a balance of power, none of the constitutive powers can deny any of the other constituents the position to challenge the legal order. This provides an effective barrier against any attempt to close off the discussion on the boundaries of the shared symbolic space. This clearly differs from a legal order that is based on a hegemonic real order. In such a situation, the power to set the standards of legitimacy is reserved by a single actor. Therefore, the hegemonic real power has little incentive to provide a roughly equally acceptable answer to a BLD. In the case of a balance of power, none of the constituents can unilaterally reserve the right to set the limits of legitimate contestation. Because an account of legitimacy is dependent on the rough acceptability for all, the value of equal voice could be newly created in this context. This can be a powerful value in the legitimation of a global legal order.

One could object that this merely considers the great powers that constitute the legal order. Those who do not have the real power to make an effective BLD could simply be denied access to the symbolic order and the right to challenge the legitimacy of the legal order. However, the lesser powers might team up to have greater leverage to enforce their demand to be answered. As discussed in section 4.1, states often form alliances to restore imbalances of

power.[20] Together, they can demand that each of them has a formal right to a voice in the legal order. However, there might be all sorts of practical obstacles to the formation of such an alliance. Another option is that the great powers will demand the recognition of the lesser powers that they regard as their allies. As Mouffe remarks, the great powers often act as regional powers with their own sphere of influence (2005, 118). In historic examples, greater powers have made a point of including lesser powers in constituting legal orders for matters of stability (Meckstroth n.d., 8). Still, just like the greater powers, the smaller powers depend for their rights on the recognition of others. I elaborate on this in the remainder of this thesis.

I have argued that a balance of power provides the right background conditions for coming up with a legitimation that is roughly acceptable for all. So far, I have said little about the content of such a legitimation. For the defence of my thesis, I do not need to provide a precise content of the account of legitimacy. My argument is that a global order can be legitimised, based on principles that are acceptable to the constituents. What these principles are, is strictly not relevant. However, in the context of a balance of power some degree of equal voice and contestability of the legal order are indispensable to answer the first question of politics. Also, the limits of the shared symbolic space can never be closed off permanently. The boundaries of legitimate contestation are themselves subject to the intersubjective agreement of those that make up the symbolic order.

This is an account of how a global order can be legitimised based on realist principles. I want to highlight two important features of the order: that it is an *order* and that it is *centralised*. It is an *order* in the most literal sense. It provides a ranking to values that are in essence incommensurable. As Mouffe argues, an order is a crystallisation of power relations and social practices (2003, 17). In practice, this means that it establishes rules and sets limits. The global order organises a domain that is in itself unorganised. It is also *centralised*. In Mouffe's proposal, the multipolar distribution of power in the real order is congruent with multiple independent legal orders that exist next to each other. Although the regional blocks can make prudential agreements, the order remains decentralised. I have argued that an agreement on shared norms and rules is both possible and necessary for containing conflict. I contend that

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[20] A real world example of such an alliance is the Group of 77. This is a group of 77 developing countries that have joined diplomatic forces to increase their leverage in the United Nations.

states can decide to instantiate centralised, supranational authorities. Such an authority is centralised in two senses. First, it facilitates the shared decision making of the legal order. It is essential to my proposal that none of the major powers can unilaterally set the terms of interaction. This makes that decisions can only be made by an intersubjective agreement. Second, it can function as an institution that enforces the legal order. The constituents can either create an independent supranational force to back up the legal order or agree that the supranational authority can call on the constituents' military forces. This makes the order centralised rather than decentralised.

Now, I need to show that such an order is also acceptable from the perspective of Mouffe's realist agonism. In the coming two chapters I argue that the global order can accommodate Mouffe's objections. First, I contend that the global order I propose does not pretend to go beyond hegemony (A). Second, I argue it does not go beyond sovereignty (B).

5. On Hegemony

Mouffe argues that a centralised global order falsely presents the possibility of a world beyond hegemony. According to her, cosmopolitanism claims to be universally valid and fully inclusive. This negates the chances for legitimate contestation of the status quo. I defend the claim that a centralised global order does not necessarily aim to go beyond hegemony. Rather, my proposal for a global order is constructed around the idea that it is particular and contingent. To support this claim, I provide answers to the two pillars of Mouffe's objection A. First, I argue that a centralised global order can provide channels for legitimate contestation. Second, I contend that a global order does not presuppose a shared global identity such as the cosmopolitans suggest.

5.1   Hegemony and Contestability

A centralised global order does not necessarily aim to go beyond hegemony. To understand this, we need to take a closer look at the purport of Mouffe's objection against hegemony. The problem lies not with the hegemonic character of a global order as such. According to Mouffe, every form of order is hegemonic (2013, 14). Because values are incommensurable, any order is always underdetermined by reason. The choice of one value over another therefore always reflects relations of power. Mouffe states: "Things could always be otherwise, and therefore

order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities." (2005, 19). As mentioned in chapter two, hegemony becomes problematic when it presents itself as universal and definite rather than particular and contingent. An order that presents its own norms and rules as unquestionable condemns challenges to that order as illegitimate. This is unacceptable for Mouffe, since this increases the chances of antagonism. What would be acceptable for Mouffe, is a hegemonic order that allows for contestation of its norms and rules. The global order I propose meets this standard.

I will consider two categories: contestation by those who are considered legitimate contenders and by those who are considered illegitimate contenders. In both categories, I discuss actors that are not regarded as rough equals in the symbolic order. This means that their way of entrance into shared decision making depends on the recognition by the established order. I have already provided an upshot for the possibility of contestation by the first group in the previous chapter. Legitimate contenders are all those who are regarded as such by the others. This is expressed in the symbolic and/or the legal order. In first instance, the great powers consider each other as legitimate in the symbolic order. This rough equality will be reflected in the legal order. Here, the constituents can also decide to record the legitimacy of other actors who cannot make a case for themselves. The legal order does not only circumscribe who can legitimately contest, but also which forms of contestation are accepted. A balance of power ensures that no single actor has the power to enforce its view of legitimacy on the others. This de facto contestability can translate into a legal provision for the contestability of the order. Each of the contenders will demand a fair and equal chance to influence the legal order. This can lead to the acceptance of norms such as equal voice. The actors might not accept these values in their domestic policy. However, on the global level they have reasons to adopt such procedural norms since an account of legitimacy must be roughly acceptable for all. Thus, those who are considered legitimate have means to legitimately challenge the terms of the legal order.

But what about those who are not regarded as legitimate contenders on the global level? How can those who are excluded from the shared decision making find ways to contest the global order? In first instance, an excluded actor can ask a justification for why it is not allowed to take part in shared decision making procedures. In other words, it can make a BLD to the legal order. It can invigorate its demand by appealing to principles that are accepted by the legal

order. If the legal order has placed the boundary of legitimacy based on certain criteria, the actor can try to prove that it meets those criteria. We can imagine a region that wants to secede and form an independent state. This aspiring state can argue that is has all the characteristics of a state and should therefore be granted the same rights that are given to other states by the legal order. This is a process that occurs in the negotiations about the status of for example Kosovo or South Sudan. It might also seek to argue that the criteria are unjustified. However, this method does not guarantee success. Even if an actor would be able to provide a perfectly coherent argument why it should be included, the established order could decide to ignore it. Another option is that the actor does not wish to appeal to the standards of legitimacy of the established order. Some actors might radically disagree with these standards. In such cases, the actor can only resort to means of contestation that are deemed illegitimate by the legal order. However, this will probably only create distance between that actor and the established order. The actor is likely to remain excluded.

One could object that this defeats my argument. Since some actors are excluded, the global order is not able to accommodate contestation of its own principles. However, this is not the case. To iterate, every order is hegemonic (Mouffe 2013, 14). That means that there will always be boundaries that exclude some actors. What matters is that these boundaries are contestable. This is the case for the order I propose. Moreover, the barrier for legitimate contestation is quite low in an order based on a balance of power. This has two reasons. First, the stability of the underlying real order is fragile. As discussed in section 4.1, a lack of knowledge about the intentions of the other creates distrust among actors. To maintain stability, the order has to minimise the risk of contestation becoming antagonistic. Even less powerful actors can disrupt a fragile balance of power. Because of the forming of alliances, greater powers can be dragged into conflicts amongst each other. For this reason, the established order has reasons to try and accommodate outsiders rather than to render them illegitimate. Second, the legal order is not presented as universal. Because the legal order is based on conflicting interests, it can never claim to be universal. Every legal order has to recognise its particularity. Claiming universality would antagonise some of the great powers. As discussed in section 4.2, none of the great powers can be denied the position to challenge the legal order. For Mouffe, a claim to universality forecloses the possibility of legitimate challenges to the legal order. Because the

particularity of the order is acknowledged, it is also inherently contestable. These two factors lower the barrier for legitimate contestation.

If these provisions are met, a global order does not aim to go beyond hegemony. Like Mouffe, I do not contend that a global order can overcome exclusion or prevent all violence. A global order will be hegemonic. This also means that alterations of the legal order are more likely to be incremental than radical. Unless the balance of power in the real order shifts rapidly, radical changes of the legal order are not likely to occur. Nonetheless, the boundaries of legitimacy are contestable.

5.2 Global Identity

We have already encountered Mouffe's argument against the formation of a global order based on the lack of a global identity. According to Mouffe, a political or agonistic order can only be constructed around a shared identity. Collective identities are always formulated as a "we" in opposition to a "them". In the case of a global order, there seems to be no 'them' that can function as constitutive of the 'us'. Therefore, a global order based on a "we" that truly encompasses all of humanity can never be established. In her own words:

> "What is important to acknowledge is that the very condition of possibility of the formation of political identities is at the same time the condition of impossibility of a society from which antagonism can be eliminated." (Mouffe 2013, 5).

The critique by Mouffe makes sense in the light of cosmopolitan claims to a common human identity, as discussed in section 2.1. For example, cultural cosmopolitans state that there are common, universal human traits that can justify the establishment of a global order. Such a claim to universality is indeed objectionable from Mouffe's perspective. A claim to universal validity negates that all orders are particular. However, I seek to construct a world order on the basis of different grounds than the cosmopolitans. I argue that a centralised global political order is not conditional on a shared political identity based on universal traits of humanity. The constitution of the global order is not an expression of a pre-established common identity, but a result of the recognition of a balance of power. This does not aim to overcome the

difference in identities of the constituents. First, I highlight that a collective identity does not negate underlying differences.

For Mouffe, the possibility of creating collective political identities is based on the encounter with others (Mouffe 2013, 7-8). An encounter with an other always results in the classification of the other as either similar or different. In which category the other is placed depends on the forms of identification that become salient through the encounter. In some circumstances, an other is part of a larger "we" in contrast to an external "them". That same other might be a "them" under different circumstances. According to this logic, the encounter with an other can lead to an identification as similar in one specific regard, without negating the differences in other aspects. This is important to point out, because it implies that a global order that is based on one specific form of identification does not rule out difference in many other respects. The identification of rough equality of actors in the symbolic order is only a specific kind of identification. Under the circumstances of the international domain, some traits become salient for a shared identity and others not. Still, Mouffe could respond that the circumstances do not allow for an identification of similarity, since there is no external other against which these traits can become salient. However, this argument depends on a false analogy between individual and collective identity (Abizadeh 2005).

For Mouffe, the logic of identity formation is similar in individuals and collectives. For both, what Abizadeh calls the 'particularity thesis' obtains. This thesis implies that the formation of an identity requires an external other against which it can take shape (Abizadeh 2005, 47). Abizadeh takes issue with the particularity thesis for the formation of collective identities. He argues that the "other" that is required for the formation of collective identities does not necessarily need to be external. He states:

> "But the recognition required by a *collective* identity *can* come solely from the (other) individuals who make up that collectivity— an option that would not analogously be available for the development of individual identity itself."(Abizadeh 2005, 48).

According to Abizadeh, there is no reason to assume that "other" must necessarily imply "outsider". The recognition of similarities can take shape between those that share a trait. For example, imagine we have a group of people who all like to listen to The Beatles. According

to Mouffe's particularity thesis, these people would not collectively identify as Beatles fans unless they would encounter a group of Rolling Stones fans. However, internal recognition of the fact that each of the group members likes to listen to The Beatles is a sufficient condition for them to collectively identify as Beatles fans. This similarity can become salient independently of the presence of an external other. It does require the conceptual availability of not being a Beatles fan. However, this conceptual availability can also be established in contrast to a previous self at a time when one was not yet a Beatles fan. The presence of an external other is not necessary for this self or collective identification.

This implies that states can identify with each other as rough equals in the symbolic order. The intersubjective estimation of rough equal power forms a kind of collective identity. This collective identity is not prior the encounter between the actors. The identification of similarity between major powers takes place in the encounter between them. This creates a sense of "us" that can function as a starting point for collectively founding a global order and the containment of antagonism. This "us" is not based on supposedly universal human traits. In this respect it differs from the cosmopolitan formulation of a global collective identity. The identification of similarity is not accompanied by any claim on universal validity. Rather, it is a contingent expression of rough equality in a balance of power. This counters Mouffe's objection that a global order cannot be formed without negating difference. As I have argued, the formation of a global identity does not negate difference. Similarities in one respect allow for difference in many others.

I have argued that a global order does not necessarily aim to go beyond hegemony. Rather, a global order based on a balance of powers recognises that all orders are hegemonic. It does not aim to overcome difference by appealing to the universal validity of the legal order. The boundaries of legitimacy are always contestable. Also, the sense of "we" that Mouffe argues is necessary for the containment of antagonism does not rest on a universal global identity. It is the recognition of similarity through the encounter between rough equals. My proposal for a global order is constructed around the idea that it's content is contingent and particular rather than universal and definite. In the next chapter, I discuss the objection about sovereignty.

6. On Sovereignty

Mouffe's second objection against cosmopolitanism (B) is that it aims to go beyond sovereignty. A centralised global order would undermine the democratic right to self-government. She writes: "By justifying the right for international institutions to undermine sovereignty in order to uphold cosmopolitan law, it denies the democratic rights of self-government for the citizens of many countries" (Mouffe 2005, 101). I argue that the right to self-government is dependent on the existence of an order that grants these rights. To grasp the purport of this argument, I start by discussing the various aspects of sovereignty. I contrast internal and external sovereignty and show how they are related. Second, I discuss the consequences of this view of sovereignty for Mouffe's argument. I contend that popular sovereignty can only exist if the people also enjoy external recognition of their sovereignty. This counters Mouffe's objection B. A centralised global order does not go beyond sovereignty, but is a necessary condition for its existence. Also, sovereignty is located in the constituent power of those that co-author the global legal order.

6.1   Internal and External Sovereignty

The concept of sovereignty is usually unpacked in internal and external sovereignty. Although they are distinct, they cannot be seen apart from each other. I will elaborate on both and discuss how they are related. Internal sovereignty denotes the supreme authority within a given territory (Bull 1977, 8). It can be given shape in different ways. Bodin equalled internal sovereignty to "the highest power in command" (Bodin 1992). For him, the sovereign is the one who can coerce and subject others. Like Hobbes, he thought that this power ought to reside in a single agent. The agent could be an individual or a body of individuals. This form of internal sovereignty can be contrasted with popular sovereignty. This means that the ultimate power to constitute new rules of political organisation is in the hands of the people. Rousseau described this as living under the law that one has created oneself. In short, popular sovereignty is a form of internal sovereignty. Rule by the people, or the right to self-government as Mouffe calls it, means that the people are the highest authority in the given territory. This can only be the case if there is no supreme external authority in the first place. Thus, popular sovereignty can only exist when there is internal sovereignty.

The concept of popular sovereignty is often linked with constituent power. The constituent power is the actor who "determines the constitutional form, the juridical and political identity, and the governmental structure of a community in its entirety." (Kalyvas 2005, 226). In other words, the constituent power refers to the power to create new forms of political organisation such as a state or a global order. This highlights an important aspect of sovereignty. Although the people subject themselves to the authority of the law, the constituent sovereign power remains prior and outside of the constituted order (Kalyvas 2005, 227). For Hobbes and Rousseau, the constituent power resides only in the state of nature. Through the establishment of a social contract the constituent power is lifted to a constituted power. For them, this is a transition that occurs only one time. In contrast, I argue that the constituent power is not subdued once an order is established. The constituted order can be renegotiated and new forms of cooperation can be established. In this sense, the constituent power is sovereign. The power to constitute an order does not depend on any prior contract or legal status. This means that constituent power can also not be denied to any group on the basis of a previous agreement. This important for the argument I develop in the next section.

External sovereignty is defined as independence from external authorities (Bull 1977, 8). Krasner subdivides external sovereignty in two aspects: international legal sovereignty and Westphalian sovereignty (Krasner 1999, 3-4). Westphalian sovereignty indicates the exclusion of external actors from the authority structures of a territory. This means that the government of a state is the sole arbiter of legitimate behaviour within its territory (Krasner 1999, 20). It is also known as the principle of non-intervention.[21] According to Krasner, this is related but not identical to international legal sovereignty (2005, 4). This refers to the practice of mutual recognition of juridical independence between states. The recognition of juridical independence is the entrance ticket to international law and diplomacy. It denotes that this actor has the authority to sign treaties and take part in international organisations. The aspect of mutual recognition is central to the modern understanding of sovereignty. Moreover, I argue that mutual recognition is a necessary condition for the practice of exercising ultimate authority in a territory under conditions of multi polarity.

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[21] Although the principle of non-intervention is often linked to the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, it was only first explicated by Wolff and Vattel in the 18th century (Krasner 1999, 20-21).

Internal sovereignty can only be exercised if the sovereignty of that political community is respected by external factors. That means that they refrain from interfering with the internal affairs of others. Sovereignty is not a natural right, but a concept that requires recognition in a legal order. As Meckstroth puts it: "'Sovereignty' is a legal term and sovereignty in a state of nature, or in the midst of a world war, is a contradiction in terms." (n.d., 14). An unilateral proclamation of sovereignty signifies little if it is not respected by other actors. A claim to supreme authority in a given territory (internal sovereignty) can only be effective if external actors refrain from uninvited interfering in that authority structure (Westphalian sovereignty). This implies that the others have to recognise that state as sovereign.[22] So which of the two is prior? This relates directly to the way in which an order is constituted, as discussed in chapter four. Both internal and external sovereignty are constituted in the same act. The sovereignty of the constitutive powers is affirmed through the recognition of each other as such (Meckstroth n.d., 10). As discussed in section 4.2, the founding of a global order does not depend on a pre-established authority or universal right. The symbolic equality between roughly equal powers lies at the bottom of the constitution of a global order. The different degrees of sovereignty that states will enjoy are part of the legal order that they constitute. Thus, internal sovereignty depends on external sovereignty.

Abizadeh objects to this that internal sovereignty does not necessarily presuppose an external other. He argues that the combination of internal and external sovereignty is a historical contingency (Abizadeh 2005, 49). There is no conceptual constraint on the formation of a global sovereign. A global sovereign could exist as an unilateral expression, since there is no other that has to respect that sovereignty. Mouffe objects to the conceptual possibility of a global sovereign for familiar reasons that have been explored in the previous chapter. My argument takes a different turn. I do not think that internal sovereignty conceptually presupposes an external other. However, in the case of multiple actors, such as in the situation of multi polarity, sovereignty can only exist by the grace of mutual recognition. I do not defend the cosmopolitan ideal of a global democracy of humanity that expresses a unified sovereign will. My arguments develops under circumstances in which there are multiple competing actors.

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[22] Another option is that the external actor has no wish to interfere in that state. However, this is not sufficient for internal sovereignty. Internal sovereignty does not simply mean the absence of arbitrary interference. It implies that a state has a certain degree of guarantee against the arbitrary interference of others. This guarantee is provided by the recognition of a state as sovereign.

In these conditions, internal sovereignty presupposes mutual recognition. In this sense, I agree with Abizadeh that the concept of sovereignty is historically contingent. Under different circumstances, sovereignty might get another meaning. I will now turn to the purport of this view of sovereignty for Mouffe's objection B.

6.2   Mouffe's Objection B Reconsidered

As discussed in the previous section, sovereignty depends on the embeddedness in an order. Therefore, a centralised global order does not go beyond sovereignty. Rather, it is a pre-condition for the very existence of sovereignty in a multipolar world. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to point out that Mouffe is concerned especially with popular sovereignty. As discussed previously, not all of the states that make up the global order are democracies. As Mouffe recognises, a number of the prominent rising powers have authoritarian political structures (2013, 28). In these states, the concept of popular sovereignty is expressed in a different way than in Western secular democracies. As discussed in section 3.1, Mouffe thinks that "rule by the people" can take many different legitimate forms (2013, 30). Popular sovereignty is thus not identical to Western democracy. Unfortunately, Mouffe does not make entirely clear what counts as "rule by the people". Therefore, when I refer to "the people" I make no assumption on how this political association is internally organised. In the previous section, I have discussed that internal sovereignty can take popular or authoritarian forms. Either form of internal sovereignty presupposes external sovereignty. Therefore, a global centralised order does not negate sovereignty.

One could object that a people cannot be sovereign once it transfers authority to a supranational institution or a global legal order. Indeed, this transfer implies a loss of traditional Westphalian sovereignty. An external power is allowed to enter the authority structure of the state. The people or government of that state are no longer the sole supreme authority on legitimate behaviour. We have already seen that what counts as legitimate behaviour between states is based on an intersubjective agreement. This agreement might also include rules on what counts as legitimate behaviour within states. This is the case in for example the European Union or the SALT treaties on nuclear proliferation. However, it does not imply a loss of sovereignty in the constitutive sense. The formation of an order affirms the constitutive power of its founders and therefore their sovereignty. The constitutive powers

subject themselves to a law that they instituted themselves. This does imply a loss of strict Westphalian sovereignty. However, I contend that sovereignty does not mean full independence from external actors. Especially in the interconnected world of the 21th century, such a view of sovereignty is untenable. Bodin's conception of sovereignty as top-down coercion is not fit for the current historical circumstances. In my view, sovereignty denotes a relation between various structures of authority. This relation comprises the mutual recognition of the other's legitimate role as co-author of the common legal order. The various degrees of Westphalian sovereignty or independence of the constituents will depend on their agreement in the legal order.[23] Even if this aspect of sovereignty is partly transferred, the constituent aspect of sovereignty is not infringed upon. Moreover, the formation of a global order is an expression of that constituent power. The power to create new forms of order remains at the level of the constituents.

This approach gives rise to two related questions: do all peoples have constituent power and what about new claims on sovereignty, such as in the case of a secession? To start with the latter, claims to sovereignty are not guaranteed to be successful. As in the case with legitimacy, the recognition depends on the intersubjective estimation of power or the willingness of the established order. As discussed in chapter four, the constitution of the global order is a constant interplay between the real, the symbolic and the legal order. Whether the great powers will recognise the sovereignty of an other people depends in the first place on their intersubjective interpretation of the balance of power. Even if this does not provide sufficient grounds for recognition, a people can be regarded as sovereign if the established order wishes to do so. This relates to the first question. Not all peoples enjoy constitutive power in the international domain. Every political association depends on the recognition by others for their right to self-government. Some claims to sovereignty can fail or be subject to discussion.[24] Not all peoples who wish to be sovereign will actually enjoy that the right to self-government.

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[23] The EU is a prominent example of this logic. We have seen that the constituents can remain sovereign, even though they have subjected themselves to some supranational institutions. The case of the Brexit shows that it is even possible to leave (a part of) the legal order. This can be seen as an expression of the constituent power of the United Kingdom. However, as the negotiations over the new EU-UK relation develops, it becomes clear that regaining sovereignty does not imply regaining full independence. The sovereignty of the UK is expressed in its ability to reconstitute the terms of the relation with the EU.

[24] We can think of current day examples such as Kosovo or Catalonia to illustrate this phenomenon.

Mouffe could object that this proves the point that a global order goes beyond sovereignty. However, the non-recognition of claims to sovereignty does not only occur in a centralised global order. It is inherent in the concept of sovereignty that I defend.

Now we can see how a global legal order does not aim to go beyond sovereignty. The existence of sovereign states depends on an international legal order in a multipolar world. Such an international order consists of the mutual recognition of the sovereignty of its constituents. Even though a global order might interfere with the authority structure of its constituents, it does not go beyond sovereignty. The constituents remain sovereign, because they are the ones that harbour the power to constitute new forms of political association. Sovereignty as "the right to self-government" is not damaged. In this way, a centralised global order is not subject to objection B.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I will summarise the main argumentative steps of this thesis and briefly present some remarks on its conclusions. I have argued that, in contrast with what Mouffe beliefs herself, a centralised global order can be legitimised on the basis of Mouffe's realist agonistic principles. As a start, I enquired what kind of global order would be acceptable for Mouffe, given her own ontological commitments. Mouffe makes clear what kind of order is unacceptable for her in her critique of cosmopolitanism. She refutes cosmopolitan proposals for a centralised global order because they aim to go beyond hegemony and beyond sovereignty. I have shown that the core of the disagreement between Mouffe and the cosmopolitans lies in the fact that they have different political ontologies. According to Mouffe, the cosmopolitans fail to acknowledge the central aspects of the political: power, value pluralism and conflict. This leads them to believe that a non-exclusionary, peaceful global order based on universal human traits is possible and desirable. Mouffe argues that truly grasping the essence of the political shows that a centralised global order is inherently exclusionary and therefore prone to evoke violent antagonisms. A cosmopolitan order is not able to accommodate value pluralism because it presents itself as universal and does not offer tools for contesting its legitimacy. This is captured in the critique that cosmopolitanism aims to go beyond hegemony (A). Also, a centralised global order would negate the democratic right of self-expression of sovereign peoples. In other words, cosmopolitanism tries to go

beyond sovereignty (B). For these reasons, Mouffe refutes the idea of a centralised global order. Instead, she proposes a decentralised multipolar order. According to her, such an order is able to accommodate difference and therefore less likely to lead to violent conflicts. I objected that this is at odds with her own view on the transformation from antagonistic to agonistic relations. To retain stability and contain conflict in a situation of balance of power, the international domain needs a shared commitment to certain norms and rules in the form of a centralised global order.

To defend my thesis, I needed to show that such a global order could be founded and legitimised on the basis of principles that are acceptable to Mouffe. This means that it has to be able to accommodate the political. In other words, it has to build on Mouffe's political ontology and accommodate objection A and B. For the former, I turned to the schools of realism in political theory and the study of international relations. These schools share relevant aspects of Mouffe's political ontology. From IR theory I drew the concept of the balance of power. A balance of power provides the correct background conditions for the formation of a shared symbolic space. The intersubjective estimation of rough equal power lies at the basis of a transformation of identities from enemies to competitors. This provides the necessary common ground to constitute a global legal order. This shows how a global order can be founded on the basis realist agonistic principles. For an account of legitimacy, I referred to the school of political realism in political philosophy. They argue that the demands of legitimacy are context specific. The legitimation of the authority of the global order does not have to take the form of an appeal to universal moral values. What matters is that the legitimation resonates with the beliefs of those that it is offered to. In the context of a global balance of power, the legal order can be legitimised by an appeal to the symbolic order. This shows how a global order can be legitimised in line with realist agonistic principles.

Lastly, I needed to show that this centralised global order can accommodate objection A and B. The centralised global order does not necessarily go beyond hegemony. Hegemony becomes problematic when it presents itself as universal. This forecloses the contestation of its legitimacy and disqualifies dissidents. The balance of power makes sure that claims to universality are met with resistance. The major powers cannot risk to antagonise each other by denying them the right to contest the terms of the shared legal order. I also refuted Mouffe's objection that there is no shared identity that binds the global actors together. I argued that a

global order does not presuppose a shared global identity. Instead, it is based on the mutual recognition that one has to come to terms with the other if one wishes to preserve stability. In sum, a centralised global order allows for a legitimate expression of difference and contestation of its legitimacy. In response to objection B, I argued that the internal sovereignty of a people is dependent on external recognition. Also, sovereignty as constitutive power is not negated by the establishment of a global legal framework. The establishment of a global order is both an expression and precondition of sovereignty. In this sense, a global centralised order does not go beyond sovereignty.

These argumentative steps warrant the conclusion that a centralised global order can be legitimised on the basis of Mouffe's realist agonistic principles. I need to make a few remarks on this conclusion. My argument partly builds on the historical circumstances of multi polarity in the international domain. The dynamics of the balance of power play a pivotal role in overcoming the universalising tendency of hegemony. My conclusions only obtain under these circumstances. It is also important to mention that my argument describes the *possibility* of establishing and legitimising a centralised order based on realist agonistic principles. I do not claim that a balance of power necessarily leads to the establishment of a global legal order. As I have mentioned, a stable balance of power might fall apart due to the dynamics of the security dilemma. I have argued that a balance of power forms the correct background condition under which a stable global order can develop. The outset of this thesis is not to forecast what will happen, but to criticise Mouffe's argument that a global centralised order is impossible or undesirable. In my view, Mouffe has no fundamental reasons to reject the kind of centralised global order I have proposed.

However, I do not consider it an deficit of my argument that it deals only with specific historic circumstances. Rather, it neatly fits the twofold goal of my thesis. On the one hand, it is an internal theoretical argument against Mouffe. She argues that under circumstances of multi polarity a global order should be decentralised. I have objected that, on the basis of her own principles and under that same circumstances, a centralised global order can be legitimised. Therefore, it is not problematic that my argument is confined to the historic specific circumstances of multi polarity. On the other hand, my argument responds to a practical demand for thinking about the possibilities of international cooperation. I started this thesis by introducing cosmopolitanism as a theory that is partly motivated by the increased need for

international cooperation to address the common challenges of the 21th century. It has not been my goal to defend moral or political cosmopolitanism. My proposal for a centralised global order is not the same as Held's global democracy. Nonetheless, it shares the feature with cosmopolitanism that it envisages a single global legal framework that can accommodate peaceful relations and enable states to collectively address common challenges. These challenges present themselves against the backdrop of a shifting geopolitical landscape. A condition of multi polarity is likely to take hold in the course of the 21th century. Therefore, I view it as a strength rather than a deficit that my argument investigates the possibility of a legitimate and stable global order under circumstances of multi polarity.

In my thesis, I have touched on the debate between descriptive and prescriptive branches of political theory. I aimed to connect the two branches rather than to set them apart as distinct fields of enquiry. It is my view that normative questions always emerge in specific circumstances. Throughout my argument, I have tried to show how questions on legitimacy or sovereignty present themselves in the context of a balance of power in the international domain. Nonetheless, I have not failed to notice that both political realists and Mouffe sometimes remain unclear about how and which normative conclusions are warranted by their political ontology.[25] I think it is one of the main challenges for political philosophy to enquire how to approach normative questions under the fast changing circumstances. In my view, this enquiry should include meta theoretical questions on the nature of the relation between descriptive and normative theory as well as consider how globalisation affects the context under which normative questions emerge.

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[25] See supra note 8, 11 and 12.

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