Republicanism: Midway to Achieve Global Justice?

(Binfan Wang, University of Toronto)

(Paper presented to CPSA Annual Conference 2016)

Abstract

In his recent studies, Philip Pettit develops his theory of republicanism to articulate a concept of global justice, stating it as the midway between cosmopolitanism and statism. If that is true, it solves the tension between these two mainstems, and offers a new approach for global justice. However, by checking his theory and doing a comparison with typical theories from both approaches, his theory fails to stand midway validly. Literally, his theory does combine core features from both cosmopolitanism and statism, but at the same time such a theory is internally incoherent, and needs further revision.

Introduction

Globalization has made our world very different from several decades ago. As a result, global justice becomes an appealing topic of political theory. Among theories of global justice, there are clearly two leading approaches: cosmopolitanism and nationalism (statism). Cosmopolitan theories come from the liberal tradition, and have been used in many different ways with different meanings. In the discussion of global justice, cosmopolitanism represents a group of theories, which articulate the need for a new global order to reform the current system of states. On the contrary, theories of statism accept current system of states as the basis for global justice. As two mainstreams, cosmopolitanism and statism mostly make up the basic category of theories of global justice, which means that any single theory could always be identified as either of them.

Republicanism has a long tradition throughout history, and its latest development is popular for social justice. A leading representative of current republican theory is Philip Pettit, whose latest discussion also offers a republican theory of global justice. In one of his papers, Pettit (2010) argues that “this republican ideal stands midway between a utopian ideal of cosmopolitan justice and a sceptical ideal of non-intervention” (p.70), which is very interesting and worth checking. If this suggestion is true, it means that republicanism offers a new approach to global justice, which is different from current two mainstreams.

However, considering the different core features of cosmopolitanism and statism, as well as the tension between them, it is not easy, if not impossible, for a theory to stand midway between them. As Thomas Pogge (2008) suggests, “three elements are shared by all cosmopolitan positions. First, individualism… Second, universality… Third, generality” (p.175). For cosmopolitan theories, global justice is to some extent a broader version of social justice, and the basic moral concern for discussion is still individual goods. To articulate a cosmopolitan theory of global justice is to find out several
universal principles as guidance to construct a new global order. This does not mean cosmonopolitan theories all support a world government, but at least they do not regard current states as basic agents for global justice. Theories of statism are very different. As David Miller (2007) argues, it is false to suppose in advance that “global justice is simply social justice with a wider scope” (p.13), because the understanding of justice should be determined by specific contexts, and every theory of justice can only be justified in a limited scope. That is to say, the discussion of social justice may be different in various societies (or states), while the discussion of global justice is one and only. For global justice, theories of statism all accept the basic framework of the Westphalian system, even though they may hold disagreement about specific principles of this old system; the global order is constructed by the interaction (cooperation or conflict) of states, whose decisions should not be intervened by others. Because of the differences of core features, cosmopolitanism and statism are usually understood as opposites, with sharp tension between them. On the one hand, cosmopolitan theories treat individuals as the basic agents for global justice, while theories of statism only accept states with sovereignty as the basic atoms. As a result, for cosmopolitanism, a theory of social justice should be coherent with a theory of global justice raised by the same theorist, because both theories are based on same principles of individual goods. But for statism, a theory of social justice is about the just relationship among individuals, while a theory of global justice is about the just relationship among states, and they should remain independent from each other. On the other hand, to articulate the global order, cosmopolitan theories usually regards non-state actors as same (if not more) significant as states, while theories of statism only admit states with sovereignty as basic agents. For cosmopolitanism, states are not the only participants in the global order, and many other non-state actors also with some sort of political authority (such as international institutions, non-governmental organizations and so on) will interact with states and states’ behaviour might be regulated by these actors. But for statism, the global order is still based on the relationship among states, and even though there are non-state actors, they are not be able to legally regulate the behaviour of states, which makes their influences limited. To be more explicit, sovereignty is not important for cosmopolitan theories, because states and non-state actors could be similar tools to contribute to individual goods in the global order; but for theories of statism, global justice is a discussion of global order made up by states, because they are the only political communities with sovereignty, and also represent different social contexts, which determines the diversity of social justice.

If any theory could be regarded as a valid midway of two opposite approaches, it has to fulfill two requirements, one literal and one logical. Literally, it should share some similarities with both approaches, which means that it may combine core features from both approaches. Logically, it should successfully solve the tension between two approaches, which means that it offers new solutions to problems caused by the tension. A theory could not be regarded as midway if it ignores or fails to solve the tension between two opposite approaches, even though it fulfills the literal requirement, because otherwise there is (potential) internal incoherence in the theory as it combines something logically opposite without any reconciliation. So if Pettit’s suggestion is true, and his republican concept of global justice stands midway validly, it needs to fulfill these two requirements above. That is to say, it should not only combine core features from both cosmopolitanism and statism, but also deal with the sharp tension between them. If
Pettit’s theory successfully fulfills both requirements, it changes the basic category of theories of global justice, and provides us new inspirations to study global justice; otherwise there are two possibilities, (1) Pettit wrongly identifies his theory, because his theory is either a theory of cosmopolitanism or a theory of statism; (2) Pettit’s theory is a literal combination of both approaches, but it is logically incoherent and needs further revision.

The rest of this paper will be divided into four parts. I will begin with Pettit’s theory of freedom and democracy, because that is the foundation of a republican theory. Then I will go through his theory of global justice. The third part is a comparison between Pettit’s theory and two typical theories from both approaches to check if his theory fulfills the requirements for being a valid midway, and following the comparison is a brief conclusion in the end. There are various cosmopolitan theories of global justice, sharing the core features but have different level of radicalization and idealization. To make the comparison relatively focused, in this paper I will choose Thomas Pogge’s theory of institutional cosmopolitanism as an example. Theories of statism have a very solid foundation in the field of international relations, and David Miller’s theory of national responsibility is relatively typical as an example for comparison. Through a comparison with both Pogge’s and Miller’s theories, I am going to argue that Pettit’s theory fails to stand midway. Literally, his theory does combine core features from both approaches; but logically, because of the burden from both approaches, he fails to deal with the sharp tension between cosmopolitanism and statism, thus his theory may encounter internal incoherence and need further revision.

Freedom as non-domination and Contestatory Democracy

Before stating his theory of global justice, it is necessary to go through Pettit’s republican theory of social justice, because some core concepts in social justice are also the basis for global justice. As Skinner (2010) claims, there are two ideas which should be treated as the core for republican political theory—the understanding of individual freedom and the necessity of a free state to protect such individual freedom institutionally. To be more explicit, republican freedom is understood as non-domination, and in relation to the constitutional and institutional guarantee of a free state.

In political theory, there is usually a distinction between negative liberty and positive liberty. Negative liberty refers to freedom from interference, or “to the extent that I enjoy unimpeded and uncoerced choice” (Pettit, 1997, p.17), while positive liberty refers to the mastery of oneself, or to “take charge of the lesser or more partial selves that lurk within every individual” (Pettit, 1997, p.17). This distinction is deeply embedded in the tradition of liberalism, but the republican understanding of liberty or freedom is a little bit different. From the republican tradition, for which anti-monarchism is always the core feature, “freedom is a negative concept, and essentially consists in not being dominated by any other person or group” (Skinner, 2010, p.96). This leads to the differences between domination and interference. Both interference and domination refers to the influences towards choices or options individuals have, but unlike interference which refers to all kinds of external influences towards choices, domination is a more complex concept. As Pettit (1997) claims, domination means that “(1) they
have the capacity to interfere; (2) on an arbitrary basis; (3) in certain choices that the other is in a position to make” (p.52). Accordingly, there can be interference without domination and domination without interference as well. Sometimes interference occurs without harm to freedom because it is “not arbitrary and does not represent a form of domination” (Pettit, 1997, p.35); and sometimes domination occurs without real interference, because the object can influence the potential choices the subject has and may cause the change of the subject’s decision. The republican understanding of freedom does not require the absolute disappearance of interference, but freedom can only be achieved when there is no domination. In his latest book, Pettit (2014) understands non-domination as that “(1) you have the room and the resources to enact the option you prefer, (2) whatever you own preference over those options, and (3) whatever the preference of any other as to how you should choose” (p.30). It is clear that freedom as non-domination is also a negative understanding of freedom or liberty, but compared to the concept of negative freedom in the liberal tradition, it is more flexible and focuses on the real influences on the consequences of choices.

Another core difference between republican freedom as non-domination and traditional liberal freedom as non-interference is that republicanism understands freedom as a status that exists under social circumstances, while liberalism understands freedom in terms of individual belonging. So to protect individual freedom as non-domination, a suitable legal regime is needed especially in contemporary, pluralistic societies. As Pettit (1997) argues, a society which embraces the republican tradition should “adopt a consequentialist orientation with a value like non-domination” (p.102). Pettit emphasizes that for republicanism, the starting point is always to prevent the evil of domination. Accordingly, the intensity of constitutional protection is more significant than the extent of institutional protection. A full understanding of freedom as non-domination should fulfill the requirement of both depth and breadth, which means that it is constitutionally guaranteed that as an individual, your choices will not be influenced by arbitrary interferences. The breadth of freedom means that “you must enjoy a freedom secured by public laws and norms in the range of the fundamental or basic liberties. And in that sense, you must count as equal with the best” (Pettit, 2014, p.60). This usually refers to specific social norms shared by all members of society, such that no specific change of leaders or institutions could violate them. Anyone in such a society is prevented from domination because they are always counted as equal as others.

To achieve freedom as non-domination, Pettit discusses constitutionalism in more detail. Because of the significance of constitutional protection, republicanism treats current states as inevitable and inescapable, as they are the only agents in reality which could achieve legitimacy and provide the necessary constitutional guarantees. Later this leads to the acceptance of the current system of states in global justice. The necessity of states also entails the inevitability of interference, simply because no one could live in a society without any external influence, especially from the regime. So interference itself will not undermine the legitimacy of states, as long as it is based on citizens’ terms, instead of arbitrary will or specific pleasure. Such a state would be regarded as legitimate, because it would be suitably controlled and would not exercise domination over its citizens. The requirement of legitimacy connects with a strong senses of constitutionalism, which means that a state should “legally established ways of
constraining the will of the powerful, even if the constraints are not recorded in a formal constitution” (Pettit, 1997, p.173). To be more explicit, there are three conditions that the republican state must fulfill: the empire-of-law condition, the dispersion-of-power condition, and the counter-majoritarian condition (Pettit, 1997, pp.174-183). From these conditions, we could observe a strong tendency to articulate a legal regime which could prevent the harm of absolute authorities and especially protect minorities from the potential domination of majority. That leads to the necessity of popular control over government, and the democratic design for decision-making, which for republicanism, is also different from liberal democracy.

To guarantee the equality of every individual in decision-making and popular control over government, republicanism espouses democracy. Like liberalism, republicanism also embraces democracy in relation to an institutional setting, but it understands democracy as “primarily contestatory, rather than consensual” (Pettit, 1997, p.185). Understanding democracy as the will of the majority is solid and popular in the liberal tradition, and procedurally it could also guarantee the equality of every individual, mainly the equality of opportunity. However, republicanism is very cautious towards this because of the possibility of the tyranny of the majority. Even when the equality in voting is protected procedurally, “those in the minority are more or less permanently locked out of the possibility of being amongst the winners” (Pettit, 2012, p.212). So instead of equality in voting, it is more crucial to achieve the access of equal influence. Even though in reality sometimes we have to follow the decisions made by the majority through the voting system, the minority should be able to “contest the appropriateness of majority voting in a referendum or via a legislature for determining such issues” (Pettit, 2012, p.214). Such a standard for democracy is higher than simply obeying the majority, but only with such a possibility of contestation would the majority not be able to legally dominate the minority, and the freedom of every individual may be achieved. To be more explicit, Pettit (1997) argues that the institutional setting for republican freedom should be deliberative democracy, which emphasizes reasoned deliberation as its basis. Deliberative democracy should be both inclusive and responsive, because inclusive democracy provides the access to anyone to complain and appeal, and responsive democracy guarantees a forum to take contestation into serious consideration. Only under such a process of decision-making, is individual freedom as non-domination well-protected, and the legitimacy of states is achieved.

To conclude, as a theory of social justice, republicanism starts with the concept of freedom like liberalism, but emphasizes the understanding of freedom as non-domination. The legitimacy of a republican society is achieved through constitutional guarantees, and this leads to the theory of contestatory democracy which could prevent the tyranny of the majority in decision-making. On the basis of this social theory, Pettit develops a republican theory of global justice, which deals with interactions among states.

A Republican Theory of Global Justice

In its theory of social justice, republicanism emphasizes the need for states to be non-dominating for the realization of individual freedom as non-domination. But in the international arena, if states are externally dominated by other agents, it is not possible
for them to protect individual freedom. So for Pettit, such an ideal leads to an expectation of either globalized sovereignty or international justice, which protects states as “undominated by any other state or by any international or multinational body” (Pettit, 2014, p.151).

Pettit first clarifies why we should not expect a stateless world. As discussed in his theory of social justice, a form of social regime is necessary to protect individual freedom, and in the current world this relates to the forms of states with sovereignty. So we have no other choice, but need states to protect individual freedom constitutionally. Theoretically, forming one state with sovereignty which could manage the whole world would also fulfill the requirement of protecting individual freedom, and Pettit even argues that if it were achievable, it would be a better agent than current system of states; but unfortunately, a world state should be regarded as impossible because of cultural division and the disagreements caused by that. Since a stateless world is harmful to individual freedom, and a world government is not yet possible, Pettit (2014) accepts the current system of states as the starting point of his theory, with the assumption that “each state has special obligations toward its own citizens” (p.158). To be more explicit, each state is obligated to protect its citizens’ freedom as non-domination, and the potential domination may come internally and externally.

Since Pettit accepts the current system of states, here comes the problem of classification. States have different geographical features, regimes, cultures and also geopolitical conditions, and as an analytical category, they are too rough to be treated as simply the same agents. Based on his theory of individual freedom, Pettit categorizes current states via the standards of both effectiveness and oppression. For him, a state will not be able to protect the individual freedom of its citizens unless it is not only non-oppressive, but also effective to act. So he divides states into two categories: representative and non-representative. Representative states refer to those who are both effective and non-oppressive, and states who fail to fulfill either standard would be classified as non-representative. To be clearer, representative states are those who effectively realize a republican value of liberty, while all other states are unrepresentative even if they are organized democratically. Based on such a division, Pettit designs two steps to articulate a republican concept of global justice (or the republican law of the peoples), the first step referring to the relation among all representative states, and the second step developing such an ideal in the actual world with both representative and non-representative states. Even though Pettit regards states as the basic agents for global justice, his ultimate moral concern is still individual freedom as non-domination, which cannot be achieved without just interactions among states. What is more, for him states may also be influenced by other agents like corporations, international organizations or even influential people in the real world.

As in his discussion of individual freedom, Pettit discusses the depth and breadth of freedom for states. Depth means that “states ought to be able to exercise those choices without domination from outside” (Pettit, 2014, p.160), and here it is necessary to reemphasize the differences between domination and interference. The meanings of both domination and interference are not different from the discussion of individual freedom, but when applied to states, the implications are a little bit different. In the current world, states have right to decide their policies and of course, they all have various choices or
options available for decision-making, usually without direct interference from other agents. It is unbelievable if a state’s policies are not made by the government, but by other states, international organizations, or transnational corporations. But as argued in the republican concept of social justice, there can be domination without interference. In the global arena, a state could also dominate another by making specific options more costly, or imposing barriers to make specific options more or less impossible (Pettit, 2014, p.161). In these two situations, there is no overt interference, because for states, the options are still there; but by means of threats or potential penalties, those options have been made more costly, if not totally impossible. For example, by means of changing trade policy or by fixing the agendas in international organizations, barriers are erected for states to freely choose among their options. Even though there are no real interferences, for republicanism here is still domination, because it harms the depth of freedom.

Just like the discussion of individual freedom, the standard of breadth also needs to be fulfilled. Since Pettit’s goal is not to establish a world government, the breadth of freedom should be protected in the system of states, which means that states should cooperate with each other to establish a global order which could represent freedom as non-domination. This means that “each representative state and people should enjoy all and only those sovereign liberties that are consistent with the enjoyment of similar liberties on the part of other representative states and peoples” (Pettit, 2014, p.163). So will the representative states cooperate with each other to articulate such a system of sovereign liberties? For Pettit, it is optimistic to say yes for two reasons. First, the negotiated articulation of such a system “will naturally be supported by the emergence of social norms” (Pettit, 2014, p.166), because those norms exist in societies of representative states to protect individual freedom. Second, as “the community of states is small enough, and the chance of detection is high enough” (Pettit, 2014, p.166), the current global framework with international agencies like United Nations, WTO or International Court of Justice has worked well to prevent free-riders and guarantee freedom for states. What is more, for Pettit (2014), we could even see the role of contestation taken by “international nongovernmental movements in exercising popular contestation and by international review bodies in exercising official contestation” (p.169). Hence for representative states, Pettit will claim that such an ideal of global justice is achievable, because states will enjoy a system of sovereign liberties and it has been actualized to some extent in reality already. The next task is applying such an ideal to the real world, which includes both representative and non-representative states.

Will non-representative states act as barriers to a republican concept of global justice? For Pettit, since non-representative states are either ineffective or oppressive (or both), there is no reason to believe that they will be able to embrace republican liberties, thus in the real world, the agents for realizing the republican ideal still remain representative states. Ineffectiveness or oppression usually leads to problems such as poverty and the violation of human rights, and that is opposite to the moral concern of individual freedom. Since these problems prevent individuals from engaging freedom as non-domination, a republican ideal of global justice has no reason to ignore them, even though they happen in non-representative states. So the principle of non-intervention is not always right, as representative states should extend the ideal of global justice to all
other states via interference. There are three arguments given by Pettit to support the extension. First, ultimately without all representative states, there are no agencies who are both powerful and effective to act on republican obligations, which gives us no other choices. Second, the extension of a republican world order will benefit representative states in return, because with more and more representative states who tend to cooperate with each other, the opportunities for commerce increase and the danger of terrorist networks and the spread global diseases, which more often to occur in non-representative states decreases. Third, since citizens of representative states would always support their governments to cope with suffering in other states caused by natural disasters or the violence of external intervention, there is no reason not to broaden this support to other relevant dangers, because those dangers also violate individual freedom. With these three arguments, Pettit argues that representative states should broaden the system of sovereign liberties established in the first step and deal with poverty and oppression in non-representative states, which eventually leads to an ideal of global justice for the current real world. To justify the second step as interference without domination, it is worth emphasizing that interference should not harm the spirit of democracy in both representative and non-representative states.

Besides non-representative states, there is another core potential threat towards the republican ideal of global justice—the existence of hegemons or states with a lot of power. Compared to normal states, the hegemon may rely less on interactions with other states, so it is reasonable to doubt whether they still embrace republican liberties or not, or whether such an ideal could be applicable to different levels of powers. Pettit’s attitude is that there is no reason to suppose that the hegemon will automatically embrace republican liberty and enjoy an equal relationship with other weaker states, but hegemons should pay attention to two important lessons from recent history. First, the empirical reality reveals that imposing on other states via hard power is very risky and can always be counterproductive. For example, the US as the only hegemon in the current world has suffered from its wars against Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Second, even if strong states would like to violate the freedom of other states, usually weak states will react by establishing a coalition against the strong, as in the example of the Cairns Group of agricultural producers. If we take these two lessons seriously, it seems that strong states should choose to enjoy republican liberties, even though by nature they have a tendency to dominate others. This means such republican ideal could apply in our current world, despite the different levels of powers states have.

To conclude, Pettit’s republican theory of global justice tends to protect the individual freedom as non-domination, but this notion means that “the free individual is protected against the domination of others by the undominating and undominated states” (Pettit, 2010, p.77). Pettit argues that we need an international order which represents republican liberties to secure all states against domination, and such an ideal could be understood as global justice, which will to some extent limit the sovereignty of states, but protect individual freedom all over the world. The republican ideas are based on the current system of states and the division between representative and non-representative states. Representative states will not only protect their citizens against domination, but also take this obligation in a non-dominating way towards other states. That is Pettit’s understanding of republican law of peoples.
Whether Such an Ideal Stands Midway to Achieve Global Justice

Now that we have clarified Pettit’s republican theory of global justice, we can check whether it is a valid midway to achieve global justice. We will firstly briefly introduce Thomas Pogge’s theory as a typical cosmopolitan representative and David Miller’s theory as a representative of statism, then use the two standards (literal and logical) to check if Pettit’s theory could be regarded as a valid midway.

As a cosmopolitan theory, Pogge’s (2008) starting point is human rights, because it is “a complex and internationally acceptable core criterion of basic justice” (p.50). Based on this, all human beings should be understood as participants in the only global institutional order which will universalize the moral principles established in social justice. With such a framework, Pogge focuses on radical inequality and poverty in the real world. For him, citizens from rich states owe negative obligations towards people suffering poverty in poor countries because “it is extremely unlikely that their poverty is due exclusively to local factors and that no feasible reform of the present global order could thus effect either that poverty or these local factors” (Pogge, 2001, p.75). Thus, we should keep an eye on the current international order to check if it is just. For Pogge (2008), the answer is no, because there are two international privileges which have never been challenged: in our current world, most of the time we simply accept a group which is able to effectively control a country as the legitimate government, and then “confer upon it the privileges freely to borrow in the country’s name (international borrowing privilege) and freely to dispose of the country’s natural resources (international resource privilege)” (pp.118-119). Because of these borrowing and resource privileges, in countries like Nigeria, corruption is encouraged in the trade of resources and the central authority maintains power for a long period of time, leaving the citizens in radical poverty; we also observe cases where a democratic government eventually comes to power in poor countries, but suffers from the strong burdens of debt obtained by previous authoritarian regime, and has no reason to ignore it otherwise it may be excluded from international markets. Since rich states represented by their citizens uphold such an international system, Pogge (2001) concludes that “we are causally deeply involved in their misery” (p.61), and of course we should take the responsibility to establish new international principles to help them out of poverty.

For Miller, we should at least respect the self-determination of members in a specific society. Thus, when referring to poor people suffering from radical poverty in the world, we should not automatically treat our responsibilities to be the same as our responsibilities towards fellow citizens, because social justice is different from global justice. With such a clear distinction as premise, we should discuss national responsibilities if we want to articulate a theory of global justice. For Miller (2007), there are mainly two kinds of responsibilities: outcome responsibility which means “the responsibility we bear for our own actions and decisions”, and remedial responsibilities which means “the responsibility we may have to come to the aid of those who need help” (p.81). To identify the role of states in global justice, we should follow this classification to check national responsibility towards specific global problems such as poverty. So even if rich states owe responsibilities towards poor countries, it remains to be seen what kind of responsibility this will be, depending on three different circumstances in which the responsibilities “arise as a result of past injustice that has left its victims in continuing
poverty”, “arise through a failure to implement fair terms of international cooperation”, or “arise from the bare fact of poverty itself, independently of any prior interaction between rich and poor countries” (Miller, 2007, p.249). For Miller, it is wrong for Pogge to ascribe world poverty all towards the fair terms of international cooperation, and only in the first kind of situation, the rich states own responsibilities of justice to help the poor states. Otherwise rich states should not be regarded as unjust if they choose not to help poor states overcome radical poverty, even though it is morally good for them to do so.

Though the debate between Pogge and Miller is mainly about world poverty, the comparison between both theories still represents the tensions between these two approaches. Though not directly related to Pettit’s theory, those tensions need to be solved by any theory treating itself as a valid midway between cosmopolitanism and statism. For Pogge, the basic moral concern for global justice is human rights, and the main focus is the global order which will determine states’ behaviour. To achieve global justice, we need to reform the current global order and establish new institutional settings beyond states to help people who are still suffering from world poverty. For Miller, when concerning about world poverty, a theory of global justice is only based on the clarification of national responsibilities. It is wrong to ascribe world poverty simply to the current global order, because in most of the cases it is the governments of poor states who should take the responsibilities to reform themselves to deal with the problem. Pogge’s theory embraces individualism and universal principles for a just global order, while Miller’s theory accepts the current system of states. They represent different core features of the two mainstreams of global justice.

Following the standards of a valid midway (literal and logical), how should we characterize Pettit’s theory? We may start by checking for similarities between his theory and the two leading approaches, and then use the logical standard to check if Pettit’s theory solves the tension between them or not.

What are the core features of Pettit’s republican concept of global justice, and to what extent is his theory similar with the two leading approaches? Based on the discussion above, we may conclude that the two core features of Pettit’s theory are (1) individualism, mainly the emphasis on individual freedom as non-domination, and (2) the acceptance of current system of states. That is to say, literally Pettit’s theory does combine core features from both cosmopolitanism and statism, making itself stand midway. For Pettit, the basic moral concern for both social justice and global justice is always individual freedom as non-domination, which should be protected not only in a single state, but also in the international arena. So his theory of global justice could be understood as a broader version of social justice, which is a core feature for cosmopolitanism. However, at the same time Pettit (2014) embraces the current system of states, emphasizing that “states are corporate, coercive bodies” (p.184) to protect individual freedom. That is to say, sovereignty is important for Pettit’s theory. As discussed before, most theories of cosmopolitanism do not argue for the collapse of system of states, but their reason to maintain states is not about sovereignty. For some of them, we have to accept the existence of states simply because of a realistic rather than normative reason—since a world government is not possible now, we have to make a compromise; so they always try to reform the system of states and seek for some sort of global agent with political authority to regulate states’ behaviour. For others, states are
still important for global justice because they could still contribute to individual goods, but there are other agents sharing the same function. But for Pettit, the reason to accept the system of states is different. In his theory, representative states are perfect agents to protect individual freedom as non-domination, and thus it is not necessary to set up some sort of global agent with sovereignty, even though a single world state with sovereignty also theoretically sounds like a perfect model (but it is not realistic). The main threat towards individual freedom as non-domination comes from non-representative states, so the core task of global justice is to change non-representative states into representative ones via interference without domination, and then we could expect a perfect global order made up by all representative states. That is to say, Pettit’s theory also has the core feature of statism, because it not only has the normative reason to embrace the current system of states, but also regards states as basic agents to articulate a just global order. By combining individualism and the acceptance of current system of states, Pettit’s theory fulfills the literal requirement to stand midway. The next task is to check whether his theory would be able to overcome the tensions and be coherent internally.

Unfortunately, when referring to the logical standard, Pettit’s theory faces sharp criticisms, mainly because the combination of two approaches causes internal incoherence. Just like tensions between cosmopolitanism and statism, Pettit’s republican concept of global justice has two aspects of internal tensions which influence the coherence of the theory. On the one hand, since Pettit’s theory embrace current system of states as the basic framework of global justice, the contestatory democracy at the global level seems impossible, and that will harm the constitutional protection of individual freedom as non-domination. In the domestic level, a major contribution made by republicanism is that it not only offers a new explanation of freedom, but also emphasizes the significance of constitutional protection, which also changes our understanding of democracy. However, such constitutional protection is not possible without the sovereignty of states. Non-domination is not guaranteed by some sort of cooperation of citizens, or by embracing some moral principles in the society; it is guaranteed by the constitutional setting. That is to say, if we would like to achieve constitutional protection towards states, we still need some sort of global agent acting as the coercive power, rather than the cooperation of representative states in Pettit’s theory. Pettit does admit the influence of international organizations, non-governemental organizations, transnational corporations and even specific individuals in the global area, but he only understands these agents as possible sources of domination, rather than ones with some sort of political authority to regulate states’ behaviour. That is to say, they are not as legitimate as representative states are, and could not provide constitutional protection to the freedom of states. That does not mean the cooperation of representative states could not contribute to a new global order of non-domination, but they could not legally solve the problem of domination, either from non-representative states or global hegemon. Pettit has realized the potential threat from hegemon, but his argument about why the hegemon (also possibly as a representative state) will not harm the republican concept of global justice is very weak. That is to say, without constitutional protection, when the agent of domination is very strong, the so-called federation of representative states could do nothing to help. Even if Pettit slightly revises his theory and tries to seek for some sort of global agent with political authority, it remains unclear about how to define the legitimacy of such an agent, and whether the legitimacy of that agent will conflict with the legitimacy of
representative states, because republicanism always needs states to protect individual freedom as non-domination.

On the other hand, since individual freedom as non-domination is always the only final concern of republican global justice, Pettit’s theory needs to guarantee that it should not be violated at the social level (by home states) as well as at the global level (by other states) at the same time, but the federation of representative states may not fulfill this requirement. And his attitude towards non-representative states only makes this problem worse. On the one hand, it is true that representative states will not violate their citizens’ freedom as non-domination with the help of constitutional protection, but it is not guaranteed that under such protection citizens in representative states will not make decisions to violate the foreigners’ freedom as non-domination. There are so many reasons in reality to make states (both representative and non-representative) compete with each other, therefore it is reasonable that citizens in representative states will sometimes support policies to take advantage of other states, either representative or non-representative, for the sake of maximization of their own freedom. That is to say, the republican concept of social justice is not automatically coherent with its concept of global justice. On the other hand, since Pettit regards non-representative states as the origin of domination, he supports representative states’ just interference without domination; but it is also not guaranteed that such interference will pass the check of contestatory democracy. Unlike many theorists who support cosmopolitanism, Pettit is very cautious about the obligation to foreigners, because it may violate the freedom of them as citizens. But if contestatory democracy is the only way to protect citizens’ freedom, it is highly doubtful that so-called just interference from representative states will not be seen as another form of domination. Pettit’s attitude towards non-representative states seem to be too negative. As Laborde (2010) argues, it seems that “he (Pettit) endorses a form of explanatory nationalism that makes unrepresentative states solely responsible for the problem of ‘abuse, poverty and insecurity’ that their populations may suffer” (p.64), but that is not true in reality. Considering Pogge’s argument about two privileges in current global order, such a judgement is not fair to some non-representative states, especially to those ineffective but non-oppressive ones. Without even the limited participation of non-representative states, it is strongly doubtful whether representative states could be able to achieve interference without domination.

If Pettit’s republican concept of global justice chooses not to stand midway, his theory could be revised to prevent internal incoherence. However, since this theory literally stands midway, it has to take theoretical burden from both approaches, which makes the internal tension very sharp. Because of cosmopolitanism, the republican concept of social justice should be coherent with its concept of global justice, but representative states are highly possible to violate other states’ freedom as non-domination; and because of statism, the republican concept of social justice should embrace the current system of states normatively, which makes the contestatory democracy at global level impossible. Combing the core features from both cosmopolitanism and statism together is necessary for Pettit’s theory to stand midway, but unfortunately such a theory fails to fulfill the logical requirement of internal coherence, and thus his theory of global justice could not be regarded as a valid midway.
Conclusion

To conclude, we can see that Pettit’s theory does combine core features from both cosmopolitanism and statism, but at the same time such a structure causes internal incoherence. It is still an open question whether there are other possibilities to articulate a republican theory of global justice, or whether there will be a theory of global justice standing midway, but at least Pettit’s theory is not a successful one. In fact since his theory contains features from both leading approaches, it has enough potential to be revised to become either a theory of cosmopolitanism or a theory of statism, and that new theory may be better than all current theories of either cosmopolitanism or statism (though it does not stand midway), but that is clearly beyond the task of this paper. As a new theory of global justice, Pettit’s republican position brings new insights to the discussion of global justice, and is worthy of further consideration, but it is too early to claim that it has overcome the tension between two leading approaches, and thus provided better solutions to current problems. It would be very helpful, if Pettit and other republican scholars could develop the republican concept of global justice further, and to reconsider if the midway is the only right position for republican theories of global justice.

Bibliography


