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**RATIONALIZING CHARLES BEITZ'S NOTION OF GLOBAL JUSTICE: LESSONS FOR  
CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

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**Abstract**

The current global order perpetuates systemic injustices, including economic disparities, human rights violations, and environmental degradation, which compromise human dignity and well-being. This paper endeavours to substantiate Charles Beitz's concept of global justice. The study is a qualitative research. Data were obtained from books, scholarly journals, and online sources. This study employed expository and critical methodologies. The expository method conveyed the notion of global justice in Charles Beitz's philosophy, whilst the critical method evaluated same. The paper identified several concerns of global injustices, including pervasive poverty, forced migration and refugee crises, and inequitable access to healthcare, education, and technology. Moreover, challenges such as global pandemics, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation present substantial risks to international security and stability. Charles Beitz contended that the ideals of justice ought to be implemented on a worldwide scale, rather than restricted to geographical boundaries. He advocated for a cosmopolitan framework of global justice, highlighting the moral equality of all individuals globally and asserting that human rights and distributive justice ought to be universally enforced. He also championed reforms to international institutions, like the United Nations, to enhance their efficacy in advancing global justice and safeguarding human rights. Although he is critiqued that his global justice approach is not only impractical but also violates the rights of individuals to their own property and resources. Regardless, the study concluded that his work has significantly influenced the field of global justice and modern society by challenging the conventional division between domestic and international justice.

**Keywords:** Economic Inequalities, Cosmopolitanism, Distributive Justice, Global Justice

## **Introduction**

The 21st century has undeniably been beset by global issues including poverty, human rights violations, and environmental degradation which are the results of injustices. It becomes essential to contemplate a philosophy that tackles challenges stemming from injustice and Charles Beitz's concept of global justice, which provides valuable insights into tackling global inequalities, is useful here. Beitz's notion of global justice is founded on a cosmopolitan framework that underscores the moral parity of all humans globally. In his *Political Theory and International Relations*, he asserts that global justice necessitates the consideration of the interests and wants of all individuals, irrespective of their nationality, culture, or socio-economic status (127). He contends that the conventional differentiation between domestic and international justice is ethically arbitrary, asserting that concepts of justice ought to be applied internationally rather than only inside national boundaries. His notion of global justice revolves around the principle of distributive justice, which underscores the equitable allocation of resources, advantages, and responsibilities among all individuals.

Beitz's theory of global justice underscores the significance of human rights, international law, and global institutions in advancing justice and safeguarding human dignity. He contends that human rights ought to be regarded as universal entitlements rooted in the moral dignity of every individual, rather than as privileges conferred by states. He underscores the necessity for global organisations, like the United Nations, to enhance their efficacy in advancing global justice and safeguarding human rights. His notion of global justice provides a thorough and sophisticated framework for comprehending the many difficulties related to advancing justice and human dignity in a globalised context.

## **Understanding the Notion of Global Justice**

Global justice is a topic in political philosophy stemming from concerns regarding inequalities. It is occasionally perceived as a manifestation of internationalism. Norwegian philosopher Henrik Syse asserts that global ethics and international justice within the Western tradition are integral to the natural law tradition, having been structured and imparted in Western culture since the Latin era of the Middle Stoa and Cicero, as well as by early Christian philosophers such as Ambrose and Augustine. Syse asserts, "This initial natural-law theorising focused on the concept of *ius naturale*, a system of rights that is inherent and universally applicable to all individuals, serving as a standard for discerning right from wrong" (Syse 229-237). Global justice is a theoretical perspective that examines the "equitable distribution of benefits and burdens globally" and evaluates the feasibility of the institutions necessary to "ensure such equitable distribution" (Kukathas 1). The foundation of cosmopolitan global justice rests on the recognition of individual human beings as the principal focus of attention, wherein jurisdictional boundaries do not impose limitations on the administration of justice. Global justice is founded on essential intuitions and insights derived from the traditional exploration of justice within local and national societies. It is the quest for justice on a global scale, encompassing all of humanity.

Consequently, global justice encompasses a minimum of four interconnected defining characteristics: (a) this designates human beings, irrespective of their identity or location, as the principal bearers of rights; (b) it pertains to topics that, by their nature and breadth, must be substantially addressed at the global level, such as climate change and the global political economy; (c) addressing aspects 'a' and 'b' necessitates a collective global conscience, comprised of shared

values and wise considerations, which include the projection of values by influential nations, negotiations within international agreements, and the imperative for cooperation; (d) addressing aspects a, b, and c necessitates the conceptualisation and establishment of global public goods, ensuring their complementarity with the pursuit of public good at national and regional levels (Sujian 515). These four characteristics predominantly serve as the standards of global justice and given the disparities between domestic justice and international justice, universal values pertaining to human rights, democracy, equality, and freedom function as a shared framework for inter-nation interactions. The notion of global justice, akin to the notion of justice within a national framework, acknowledges various types of rights and their significance in the assessment of justice. Similar to justice in general, fundamental rights at the global level pertain to the equitable treatment of all individuals, as well as physical, economic, and health security, and access to education, among other aspects. The quest for the recognition of these rights occurs primarily within the framework of public goods development, as delineated between national and global spheres. For example, due to the increasing economic interdependence of nations (globalisation), the quest for economic and environmental justice necessitates the establishment of a complementarity of rights, responsibilities, and public goods at both national and global levels.

### **Background to Charles Beitz's Concept of Global Justice**

Charles Beitz's concept of global justice was shaped by several philosophical and academic inspirations. A key influence on his philosophy was the cosmopolitan tradition, which underscores the moral equality of all humans globally. He was notably influenced by Immanuel Kant's philosophy, which posits that moral principles ought to be universally applicable, transcending national or cultural confines. He asserts in his work, *Political Theory and International Relations*, that Kant's concept of the "kingdom of ends," which posits that individuals should be regarded as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end, serves as a significant impetus for cosmopolitan thought (Beitz 67). Beitz also referenced the work of John Rawls, who formulated a theory of justice that underscored the significance of fairness and equality. He criticised Rawls' theory for its excessive emphasis on domestic justice, contending that concepts of justice need to be applied universally. He contends in *Cosmopolitan Ideals and National Sentiment* that Rawls' theory of justice as fairness "fails to furnish a satisfactory account of the moral relations between nations" (123). His concept of global justice was shaped by the realities of global inequalities and injustice. He was profoundly troubled by the significant inequalities in income, power, and resource accessibility among various countries and areas.

Beitz contended that these disparities were morally unjustifiable and that affluent nations bore a moral responsibility to aid impoverished states. In *Cosmopolitan Ideals and National Sentiment*, he asserts, "the existence of extreme poverty and inequality in a world of unprecedented prosperity is a scandal" (145). He was influenced by the rise of new global institutions and international law, which he perceived as establishing a foundation for advancing global justice. He contended that these institutions and regulations need to be structured to advance the common good, rather than only catering to the interests of dominant states. He contends in *Political Theory and International Relations* that "the evolution of international law and institutions establishes a framework for the pursuit of global justice" (151). Alongside these philosophical and theoretical influences, His concept of global justice was also shaped by his own experiences and observations. As an American philosopher with extensive international experience,

he possessed a profound understanding of the intricacies and issues associated with global justice. He was also influenced by the contemporary social and political movements, notably the civil rights and anti-war movements. Beitz observes in *Cosmopolitan Ideals and National Sentiment* that his experiences as a philosopher and activist illuminated the need for adopting a global perspective on matters of justice and morality (12).

Beitz's concept of global justice was also shaped by his critique of realism and the view that nations are the exclusive actors in international affairs. In *Political Theory and International Connections*, he contends that realism "fails to provide a satisfactory account of the moral relations between nations" (67). He maintains that individuals and non-state actors possess moral agency and must be incorporated into our considerations of global justice. Moreover, his concept of global justice was shaped by his interpretation of "cosmopolitanism," which underscores the moral equality of all humans globally. In *Cosmopolitan Ideals and National Sentiment*, he asserts that cosmopolitanism "is a moral and political philosophy that underscores the unity and interdependence of humanity" (123). Beitz's concept of global justice was further influenced by his critique of nationalism and the belief that national borders should only dictate our moral responsibilities. In *Political Theory and International Connections*, he states that nationalism "fails to provide a satisfactory account of the moral relations between nations" (151). He contends that our ethical responsibilities ought to be grounded on a cosmopolitan principle of humanity, rather than in national identity. His concept of global justice was shaped by various philosophical and theoretical traditions, including cosmopolitanism, liberalism, and critical theory. His work remains a significant contribution to the domain of global justice, with his concepts of cosmopolitanism, human rights, and global government retaining substantial influence.

### **An Exposition of Charles Beitz's Notion of Global Justice**

Charles Beitz contends that confining discussions of justice to the national sphere in the contemporary global context is ethically indefensible, as global organisations now possess the capacity to undertake fundamental state functions, including tax collection and lawmaking. Building upon John Rawls' contractarian notion of "justice", he has sought to investigate the moral responsibilities individuals have to aid the vulnerable members of the global community—the disadvantaged in other nations (*Political Theory and International Relations* 79). In this framework, "justice" does not pertain to common law, laws, or, in the realm of international law, to practices recognised as law and broad principles acknowledged by relevant national legal systems. For the sake of this analysis, "justice" refers to the optimal global allocation of rights, including property rights, derived from the endorsement and implementation of specific a priori principles. Beitz posits the existence of five fundamental moral principles that underpin all substantive international law: self-determination, nonintervention, the integrity of treaty obligations, the right to self-defence, and constraints on the use of force in armed conflict. However, these five notions are not inherently "principles" of the international legal order; they exist at significantly various levels of generality and are employed with varying degrees of efficacy as explanations for actions (Rubint 407). Furthermore, extensive segments of international law, particularly the majority of regulations commonly implemented in reality, such as those governing diplomatic immunity, do not originate from these purported principles in any manner. They originate from societal needs, which governments rationalise as "just" through public statements and diplomatic correspondence. Beitz references the General Assembly Declaration on the "Establishment of a New International

Economic Order” yet subsequently asserts that the redistribution measures he advocates cannot be effectively enforced without “coercive global institutions” (174). He and others seem to presume that documents like the “New International Economic Order Declaration” are useless as legislation due to their absence of coercive enforcement measures. However, they were never meant to constitute legislation; such legislation exceeds the legislative jurisdiction of the General Assembly (Brierly 110).

Notably, Charles Beitz’s concept of global justice is fundamentally grounded in a cosmopolitan perspective that underscores the moral equality of all humans globally. He asserts that global justice necessitates the consideration of the interests and needs of all individuals, irrespective of their nationality, culture, or socio-economic status. He contends that the conventional differentiation between domestic and international justice is ethically arbitrary, asserting that concepts of justice ought to be applied internationally, rather than exclusively inside national boundaries (Beitz 67). Beitz’s cosmopolitan perspective emphasises that all individuals possess equal moral value and need to be treated with dignity and respect. His concept of global justice underscores the significance of human rights and distributive justice. He asserts that human rights are universal entitlements rooted in the moral dignity of all individuals, rather than advantages conferred by nations (123). He underscores the necessity for a more equitable allocation of resources and advantages both among states and within nations. He states that the significant inequalities in income, power, and resource accessibility among various countries and areas are ethically unjustifiable, and that affluent nations bear a moral responsibility to aid less prosperous states (151).

His concept of global justice influences global governance and institutional reform. He contends that global institutions, like the United Nations, ought to be structured to advance the common good, rather than only catering to the interests of dominant nations (145). Beitz underscores the necessity for enhanced transparency, accountability, and engagement in global decision-making processes. He contends that global justice necessitates that all individuals and nations possess a role in the formulation of global policies and institutions that influence their lives (175). Charles Beitz’s concept of global justice provides a thorough framework for comprehending the many challenges associated with advancing justice and human dignity in a globalised context. His work has profoundly influenced the domain of global justice and persists in shaping current discussions regarding human rights, distributive justice, and global governance. His concept of global justice is distinguished by its focus on the significance of non-state actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs), in advancing global justice. He contends that these actors exert considerable influence on global outcomes and must be held accountable for their activities (155). He underscores the necessity for enhanced transparency and accountability in global decision-making, especially with international institutions like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

### **A Critique of Charles Beitz’s Concept of Global Justice**

Numerous philosophers have contested Charles Beitz’s concept of global justice. In his book *The Law of Peoples*, Thomas Nagel challenges his concept of global justice, contending that it neglects the significance of national sovereignty and the differentiation between domestic and international justice. Nagel argues that his cosmopolitan perspective, which highlights the moral equality of all individuals globally, is excessively expansive and neglects the importance of national boundaries

and the function of states in safeguarding the interests of their inhabitants (Nagel 118). Nagel contends that Beitz's concept of global justice overlooks the distinct commitment states have towards their own inhabitants, which cannot merely be simplified to a moral duty to aid those in need. Nagel contends that his concept of global justice is excessively dependent on a worldwide distributive principle, necessitating affluent states to allocate resources to impoverished nations to mitigate global injustice. Nagel argues that this method is both unrealistic and dismissive of the significance of national self-determination and the impact of economic progress on enhancing human well-being (132). Nagel contends that a more pragmatic and efficacious strategy for global justice should prioritise the advancement of human rights and the rule of law, rather than endeavouring to redistribute resources globally.

In his book, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Michael Walzer challenges Charles Beitz's concept of global justice, asserting that it is excessively broad and neglects the intricacies of international relations and the significance of national interests. Walzer argues that Beitz's cosmopolitan perspective, which highlights the moral equality of all humans globally, overlooks the reality that nations own distinct cultures, histories, and beliefs that influence their interpretations of justice and morality (213). In *The Law of Peoples*, John Rawls challenges Charles Beitz's concept of global justice, claiming that it is excessively expansive and neglects the significance of national sovereignty and the differentiation between domestic and international justice. Rawls argues that Beitz's cosmopolitan perspective, which prioritises the moral equality of all individuals globally, overlooks the diverse cultures, histories, and beliefs of nations that influence their interpretations of justice and morality (119). In his work, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Robert Nozick challenges Charles Beitz's concept of global justice, contending that it rests on the erroneous premise that individuals possess a moral duty to aid others in need, irrespective of nationality or context. Nozick argues that his cosmopolitan perspective, which prioritises the moral equality of all humans globally, overlooks the significance of individual rights and liberties (233). Nozick contends that Beitz's concept of global justice neglects the diversity of human beliefs, objectives, and interests, asserting that it is not the responsibility of the state or international bodies to enforce a homogeneous interpretation of justice upon all individuals. Nozick argues that his strategy is both impracticable and infringes upon individuals' rights to their property and resources (240).

### **Charles Beitz's Notion of Global Justice: Lessons for Contemporary Political Discourse**

Charles Beitz's concept of global justice, articulated in his influential work *Political Theory and International Relations* (1979), possesses significant implications for contemporary political discourse. He contends that the norms of justice applicable inside nations ought to be extended globally, asserting that the global allocation of resources and benefits should be assessed based on fairness and equality (15). This concept opposes the conventional perspective of international relations, which asserts that states are the principal actors and that their interests should take precedence over global justice. His concept of global justice underscores the acknowledgement of global poverty and inequality as a moral and political concern. He contends that the global allocation of resources and advantages is markedly inequitable, asserting that this disparity is morally arbitrary and wrong (30). This concept has considerable lessons for modern society, when challenges such as global poverty, climate change, and economic disparity are predominant issues. By seeing global poverty and inequality as a moral and political concern, his concept of global



justice compels us to reevaluate our beliefs regarding the global allocation of resources and advantages.

Another important implication of his concept of global justice is the focus on the obligation of wealthy nations to tackle global poverty and injustice. He contends that wealthy nations possess a moral duty to aid impoverished nations and to advance global justice (50). This concept has considerable implications for the contemporary society, when matters like as international assistance, global governance, and economic advancement are vital issues. By underscoring the obligation of wealthy nations to combat global poverty and inequality, his concept of global justice compels us to reevaluate our beliefs regarding the role of states in advancing global justice. Beitz's concept of global justice implies a reevaluation of our presuppositions on the worldwide allocation of resources and advantages. Instead of prioritising state interests, we should emphasise global justice and the welfare of all persons (75). This necessitates a profound transformation in our comprehension of global politics and economics, together with the acknowledgement of the moral and political obligation to advance global justice.

Moreover, his concept of global justice influences our comprehension of human rights and international government. He contends that human rights ought to be acknowledged as universal and inalienable, and that global governance should be structured to advance and safeguard these rights (100). This is important for the modern society, where matters such as human rights, global governance, and international law are key issues. His concept of global justice, by underscoring the significance of human rights and global governance, compels us to reconsider our beliefs regarding the function of global institutions in advancing global justice. Furthermore, his concept of global justice advances the need of international collaboration and joint efforts in tackling global issues. Beitz avers that global justice necessitates collaboration and coordination among states and other international entities to tackle challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change (125). This demonstrates that matters such as global governance, international collaboration, and collective action are vital challenges. Most of all, his concept of global justice provides a robust framework for analysing global politics and economics.

## **Conclusion**

Charles Beitz aimed to address the conventional statist perspective in international relations, which favoured state interests over individual welfare, in his idea of global justice. He maintained that this approach was ethically deficient, as it overlooked the global aspects of justice and morality. He was especially apprehensive over the huge disparities in wealth, power, and opportunity that prevailed among states and individuals globally. He aimed to formulate a theory of global justice that would tackle these disparities and establish a fairer and just global framework. His idea of global justice offers a substantial addition to international relations and the discourse on global justice. He postulated that the tenets of justice need to be universally implemented, and that individuals have ethical responsibilities to confront global injustices, irrespective of their nationality or geographical position. His focus on the significance of global distributive justice, human rights, and the safeguarding of vulnerable populations is a notable achievement in international political discourse.

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