



## International Law and International Relations: Renaissance Humanism as an Antecedent to Realism and Liberalism

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### Abstract

This article posits that Renaissance humanism is a foundational antecedent to both Realist and Liberal traditions in international relations and international law, clarifying the enduring tension between state power and normative obligation. By reorienting political thought around human reason, secular authority, and historical consciousness, humanist thinkers reshaped the epistemic and normative foundations of political and legal order. Realism and Liberalism thus emerge not as purely modern paradigms but as divergent trajectories within a shared humanist genealogy that continues to shape debates on power, sovereignty, rights, and legal duty. Contrary to accounts that situate the origins of modern international law in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially in the Peace of Westphalia, this article argues that earlier intellectual developments had already anticipated tensions between power and normative constraint. Drawing on Thucydides' 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE account of the Peloponnesian War and its reception in Renaissance humanism, it traces themes of moral responsibility, empirical reasoning, civic virtue, and principled judgment alongside reflections on competition, fear, and strategic calculation. These strands prefigure liberal commitments to law, accountability, and human dignity, and realist insights into power, interest, and prudence. The analysis then extends to contemporary power politics. The 2026 United States military intervention in Venezuela illustrates the enduring interplay between ethical reasoning and coercive strategy. Doctrinal analysis identifies violations of the prohibition on the use of force, non-intervention, and sovereign equality, yet cannot fully explain why such breaches occur or how they are justified. Integrating international relations theory with legal analysis highlights the continuing value of humanist philosophy in evaluating state conduct and for illuminating the persistent tension between moral obligation and strategic necessity in international law.

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### 1. Introduction

Thucydides' account of the "*Peloponnesian War*,"<sup>[1]</sup> exemplifies the empirical and objective focus that underpins realism across disciplines.<sup>[2]</sup> Thucydides' methodological innovation lies in his insistence on distinguishing between the proximate causes of war. The immediate incidents and publicly articulated justifications and the underlying or structural causes rooted in longer-term

<sup>1</sup> "The Peloponnesian War, which lasted from 431 to 404 BC, was a conflict between the Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta. It was a confrontation between the leading land power of the time, Sparta, and the leading sea power, Athens. In a wider sense it was also a clash between a cautious, traditional oligarchy and an ambitious, innovative democracy. It is called the Peloponnesian War because Sparta was the head of an alliance of Greek states from the Peloponnese, the southernmost peninsula of mainland Greece." For more read: Philip de Souza "*The Peloponnesian War 431-404 BC*," Essential Histories, OSPREY publishing, (2002), page 7. Available at: <http://dickyricky.com/books/essential%20histories/The%20Peloponnesian%20War%20431-404%20BC%20-%20Philip%20de%20Souza.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> "Thucydides was the first writer who, in explaining the origins of a war, made a clear distinction between the immediate, publicly proclaimed reasons for the conflict and the longer-term, underlying causes of tension between the two sides. This explanatory scheme is still regularly employed by modern historians when they seek to account for the outbreak of more recent wars." *Ibid.*

shifts in power, fear, and interest. <sup>[3]</sup> In his account of the *Peloponnesian War*, he famously argued that while specific disputes provided the pretext for hostilities, the truest cause was the growth of Athenian power and the anxiety this generated in Sparta. <sup>[4]</sup>

This analytical framework has proved enduring because it captures the layered nature of political conflict: wars rarely erupt solely because of isolated events, but rather because such events interact with deeper patterns of rivalry, insecurity, and systemic imbalance. <sup>[5]</sup> Modern historians and international relations scholars continue to employ this Thucydidean explanatory scheme when analyzing contemporary wars, separating official rationales such as: treaty violations, security threats, or humanitarian claims from the broader geopolitical, economic, or ideological tensions that render violence more likely.

In tracing the evolution of realist thought, Machiavelli serves as a key intermediary between classical historical analysis and modern theory, translating Thucydides' insights into a strategic conception of political power. In *"The Prince,"* he emphasized necessity, prudence, and the preservation of order, arguing that rulers must often subordinate moral ideals to survival and stability. <sup>[6]</sup> This focus on power, human nature, and the limits of ethical universalism established an early jurisprudential framework that challenged idealist assumptions and laid the groundwork for subsequent realist

approaches.

Realism in international relations is a theoretical perspective that interprets state behavior through the primacy of power, interest, and structural constraints within an anarchic system, rather than through normative or legal ideals. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, realism emerged as a formal academic theory in response to the perceived failures of Woodrow Wilson's post-World War I idealism. <sup>[7]</sup> Foundational works such as E. H. Carr's *"The Twenty Years' Crisis"* <sup>[8]</sup> and Hans Morgenthau's *"Politics Among Nations;"* <sup>[9]</sup> outlined a framework emphasizing national interest, power dynamics, and the structural conditions that make conflict both intelligible and, at times, inevitable.

By contrast, liberalism, or what early realists often dismissed as idealism, emphasizes the role of institutions, norms, and cooperation in shaping international outcomes. Foundational liberal thinkers, including Immanuel Kant in *"Perpetual Peace (1795)"* <sup>[10]</sup> and later scholars such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, highlight how interdependence, law, and international organizations can mitigate the anarchic tendencies of the global system. <sup>[11]</sup> Where realism centers on power and self-interest, liberalism foregrounds the capacity of rules, diplomacy, and collective action to produce predictable and mutually beneficial outcomes.

Kant grounds liberalism in pure practical reason, transforming freedom and legality into universal moral

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> "Thucydides expressed this in explaining the outbreak of the war: 'the real cause I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable.'" For more read: A Nuri Yurdusev *"International Relations and the Philosophy of History: A Civilization Approach,"* Palgrave Macmillan (2003), page 132. Available at: <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/77256/1/1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> "Initially after it was published in 1532, people focused on some of The Prince's more provocative remarks without considering the bigger picture that Machiavelli presents of moral and political complexity. Machiavelli does indeed say some shocking things. He speaks in several places of the use of cruel punishment, for example, and in one place states that in order to annex land where people speak the same language "it is enough to wipe out the family of the ruler who held sway over them" (1532/1988: 8). [The Prince] was read by most as advocating ruthless and oppressive rule, and thus dismissed by many. It was condemned by a Roman Catholic Cardinal in 1536, and all Machiavelli's books were condemned by the Papacy in 1559. Similarly, in popular culture Machiavelli was portrayed less than sympathetically by such figures as Shakespeare (Harris, 2010)." For more see: Christopher E. Cosans & Christopher S. Reina "The Leadership Ethics of Machiavelli's Prince," *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Volume 28, No. 3, July (2018), page 276.

<sup>7</sup> "Although idealism has remained as far away from science as possible on the way it has set out with ethical values that have made moral values a priority in essence, this attitude of idealism has caused it to be exposed to many criticisms. They cited the "Wilson Principles" as the concrete output of their desire to create an environment that is idealistic, transparent, liberal, democratic, where peoples determine their own destiny. These striking 14 principles, which US President Woodrow Wilson presented to Congress in 1918, have been one of the building blocks of idealist thought. "The "idealistic" Wilson Principles, which can be regarded as the manifesto of idealism at that time, is open to debate, as in the case of the League of Nations." For more read: Abdul Qahar Noor & Tanus Merve Kasap *"The Debate on Idealism and Realism in the History of International Relations,"* *International Journal of Innovative Science, Engineering & Technology*, Volume 9, Issue 6, June (2022), page 228. Available at: [https://ijiset.com/vol9/v9s6/IJISSET\\_V9\\_I06\\_23.pdf](https://ijiset.com/vol9/v9s6/IJISSET_V9_I06_23.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> "[The book contains:] "first 'scientific' treatment of modern world politics." The book also spurred the "great debate" between the "idealist" and the "realist." Carr now occupies a prominent place in the pantheon of realist thinkers alongside Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Hans Morgenthau, and stands as an important influence on numerous latter-day intellectual luminaries... The primary objective of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* is to investigate the "underlying and significant," not "immediate and personal," cause of the Second World War. Carr's basic proposition is that the Great Powers could not come to an agreement at Versailles that reflected both "utopia" and "reality" – a shared sense of justice as well as the erstwhile power relations among members – thereby failing to achieve a sustainable peace during the precarious years from 1919 to 1939. While in the main Carr faults the 'idealists' for the failure, he disavows a pure realism as 'unreal,' for man's behavior is not driven by power considerations alone. For more read: Jaehan Parl *"Realism and Morality: E.H. Carr's The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939,"* *The SAIS Review of International Affairs*, Winter-Spring (2019), page 107-108.

<sup>9</sup> "[Morgenthau] takes towards, a theoretical understanding of international politics is to dismiss a school of thought (idealism, utopianism) which seeks to apply 'universally valid abstract principles' and 'believes that a rational and moral political order, derived from these principles can be achieved here and now.' Against this approach Morgenthau argues the case for 'political realism,' which seeks nature.' Thus, the concern of political realism is 'within human nature as it actually is, and with the historic processes as they actually take place. It is opposed to ethical and legal reasoning which fails to take account of political realities. Here Morgenthau is repeating the view which he had set out earlier, that politics are governed by power against which the abstract principles of 'scientific man' are of no avail." For more see: Jaap W. Nobel *"Morgenthau's Struggle with Power: The Theory of Power Politics and the Cold War,"* *Review of International Studies*, Volume 21, No. 1, January (1991), page 63.

<sup>10</sup> "Kant wrote that the task of establishing a universal and lasting peace 'is not just a part of the theory of right within the limits of pure reason, but its entire ultimate purpose.' We must, he believed, act as if perpetual peace among states 'could really come about (which is perhaps impossible). However, since no one knows that perpetual peace is impossible we have a duty to try to bring it about.'" For more read: Burleigh T. Wilkins *"Kant on International Relations,"* *The Journal of Ethics*, Volume 11, No. 2, June (2007), page 147.

<sup>11</sup> "Beginning with the perceived reality of transnational relations, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye discussed interstate dependence, and they highlighted the trade-offs between the economic benefits and political costs of interdependence. By considering the implications of transnational relations for state autonomy, they linked the study of interdependence to classic issues in political science." For more read: Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane, & Stephen D. Krasner *"International Organization and the Study of World Politics,"* *International Organization*, Volume 52, No. 4, Autumn (1998) page 656. Available at: <https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/5333866.pdf>

imperatives. [12] His rejection of a legal right to revolution reflects a strict commitment to juridical order, privileging lawful authority over revolutionary rupture. [13] In international relations, this yields a form of normative liberalism in which freedom constitutes moral personhood and legitimacy derives from the institutionalization of rational freedom rather than power or popular will. Kant thus furnishes liberal international relations with a universal ethical foundation while revealing a persistent tension between moral authority and political stability.

John Locke is widely regarded as a foundational figure for the liberal tradition in international law and international relations. Locke's political philosophy provides key normative foundations for liberal international relations, particularly through his concepts of natural rights, consent, and limited government. [14] Yet a tension emerges in his international thought: while he affirms rights and legal constraint beyond the state, he also prioritizes collective security when political survival is at stake. [15] This dual logic positions Locke between liberalism and realism, revealing a framework in which legal and moral principles remain authoritative but are conditionally limited by necessity and power.

Nevertheless, like realism, liberalism engages with enduring structural realities, albeit from a different angle. Its analytical focus on institutional design, rule-based order, and normative frameworks has profoundly influenced contemporary

international law and global governance. [16] In this context, liberalism complements rather than contradicts realism, providing a lens to examine how states navigate both the constraints of power and the opportunities for cooperation within the same international system. Tracing back to Renaissance thought, which also shaped early liberalism, then called idealism, [17] classical realists critiqued approaches they deemed wishful, emphasizing prudence, human nature, and national interest grounded in practical realities.

While realism and liberalism are often presented as opposing paradigms in international relations, [18] This paper emphasizes the historical link between realism and liberalism. Realism, with its focus on power and pragmatic calculation, provides a lens for understanding the emergence of liberal ideals. Liberalism, especially in international law and relations, arose in response to medieval abuses of power by monarchs and ecclesiastical authorities, who manipulated law and morality to consolidate control. Renaissance humanism and Enlightenment thought challenged these abuses and promoted rational analysis of authority.

## 2. Renaissance Contributions to International Law and International Relations

Historians generally reject monocausal explanations of the European Renaissance, instead emphasizing a convergence of political, economic, intellectual, and social developments

<sup>12</sup> "In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant posits the *a priori* necessity of an absolutist sovereign agent in the state. This defense of sovereignty gives systematic definition to various statements in his other political writings to the effect that 'man is an animal who needs a master.' Now, the justification for this demand for sovereignty is made from pure practical reason. What this means is that sovereignty is explained as necessary if we follow the logic of *a priori* reasoning that transcends all possible experience. Man needs a 'master' because, in an external world shared by individual agents, there can be no freedom without some absolute will to ensure a legal-political framework for justice." For more read: Antonio Franceschet "*Sovereignty and Freedom: Immanuel Kant's Liberal Internationalist Legacy*," *International Studies*, Volume 27, No. 2, April (2001), page 219.

<sup>13</sup> "[Some] of the problems which arise from Immanuel Kant's commitment to both human rights and the rights of States. Michael Doyle believed it was contradictory for Kant to defend both human rights and non-intervention by states in the affairs of other states, but... for Kant there was no such contradiction... [Kant] claims] that the states is 'a moral personality.'" For more read: Burleigh T. Wilkins "*Kant on International Relations*," *The Journal of Ethics*, Volume 11, No. 2 June (2007), page 147.

<sup>14</sup> "[Locke] thought at some point in the past individuals in the state of nature decided that they could best preserve their paramount interest in property and personal liberty by forming a government to protect these inherent interests. This formation of government, which Locke called the social contract, required that individuals in the states of nature surrender a part of their natural freedom to government in exchange for the government's obligation to protect the natural rights of individuals. Since the government formed by the social contract was by the consent of the governed, it had power to rule only to the extent that it acted within the limits imposed on it by the very reason it was created: to preserve the 'lives, liberties, and estates of individuals.'" For more read: Nicholas L. DiVita "*John Locke's Theory of Government and Fundamental Constitutional Rights: A Proposal for Understanding*," *West Virginia University College of Law*, Volume 84, Issue, 4, June (1982), page 827-828. Available at: <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2541&context=vwlr>

<sup>15</sup> "The business of law is... to provide for the safety and security of the Commonwealth and of every particular man's good and person. This seems to support both individual and collective perspectives. At a basic level, is legislation to counter terrorism not for the public good? Counter-terror law certainly protects the majority, but does it protect the minority? The liberty of the minority (often) sacrificed for the security of the majority, sometimes for only symbolic gain." For more read: Ian Turner "*Resistance to Tyranny versus the Public Good: John Locke and Counter-Terror Law in the United Kingdom*," *Democracy & Security*, Taylor & Francis Group, May (2024), page 11-12. Available at: <https://knowledge.lancashire.ac.uk/id/eprint/51620/1/Resistance%20to%20Tyranny%20versus%20the%20Public%20Good%20%20John%20Locke%20and%20Counter-Terror%20Law%20in%20the%20United%20Kingdom.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> "A liberal theory of law is central to liberal internationalist accounts of international law and of the 'rules-based global order' more generally. It appears in three ways: as an assumption about the ontology of the social world, as a historical device that is used to explain post-WWII global history, and as a normative prescription that is meant to guide government policy toward better outcomes. These variations make it at once pervasive in scholarship on global governance and also somewhat elastic as it morphs in the service of different intellectual or political purposes. For the study of international law and courts it has the unfortunate effect of representing these institutions as standing outside of politics, as being either neutral among political disputes or defending goals that are so universally held that they are not subject to political contestation." For more read: Ian Hurd "*Liberal versus Political Models of Global Governance*," *Sciences Po LIEPP Working Paper*, No. 97, November (2019) page 3. Available at: <https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-03230094v1/document>

<sup>17</sup> [Liberalism] liberalism takes a realistic view of human nature, which means that humans are seen as a mix of rationality and emotion, so they are not guided by reason alone. Individual freedom is the main classical liberal goal and is best preserved by the protection of classical human rights, the rule of law, and reliance on spontaneous ordering processes in society, such as the free market. However, it should be pointed out that classical liberals do not see humans as just individuals by nature. Classical liberal thinkers, such as Adam Smith, agree with John Donne that 'no man is an island'. Mises (1996) writes about social cooperation, while Ashford (2003), a modern classical liberal, writes about civil society being 'all those voluntary organizations that exist between the individual and the state, such as the family, churches, sports and music clubs, and charities. It is a common mistake to suppose that an individual existing alone can be free.' Classical liberals see humans as social beings." For more see: Edwin Van De Haar "*Human Nature & World Affairs: An Introduction to Classical Liberalism and International Relations Theory*," Institute of Economic Affairs ("IEA"), London Publishing Partnership Ltd, (2023) page 13. Available at: <https://iea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Haar-Classical-Liberalism-04-2.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Carroll Quigley "*Thinking Ahead: The Advent of New Paradigms in International Relations Theory*," *Comparative Civilizations Review*, Volume 88, No. 88, Article 7, (2023), page 34-35. Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2259&context=ccr>

between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. [19] Rather than constituting a sharp rupture with the medieval past, the Renaissance emerged through cumulative transformations that reshaped European knowledge production, governance, and interstate interaction. [20] These developments are significant for international relations theory because they supplied early conditions for multiple strands of modern international thought. [21]

Essentially, “*Renaissance Humanism*,” [22] evolving diplomatic practice, and increasingly secular political reasoning encouraged legal rationality oriented toward prudence, interest, and institutional function; anticipating elements later associated with realist approaches. At the same time, humanist emphasis on reason, moral agency, and historical comparison fostered normative reflection on law and authority, prefiguring themes later articulated within liberal and idealist traditions. [23] The economic foundations of Renaissance Europe, particularly in the Italian city-states, were central to these shifts.

Florence, Venice, and Genoa accumulated wealth through extensive trade networks linking Western Europe with

Byzantium, the Levant, and the Islamic world. [24] These commercial circuits generated financial surplus while facilitating the transmission of classical and Islamic knowledge, reinforcing conceptions of rational inquiry, civic virtue, and legal order. Merchant-banking families, most notably the Medici, translated economic power into cultural and institutional patronage. [25] Financial innovations such as ‘*double-entry*’ bookkeeping enhanced administrative rationality, while investment in universities and libraries supported the professionalization of jurists, diplomats, and administrators operating increasingly outside ecclesiastical authority. [26]

These developments encouraged early institutional conceptions of governance resonant with later liberal emphases on legality and bureaucratic order. Urbanization and state consolidation further reinforced these dynamics. Northern Italian cities and emerging territorial monarchies required trained jurists and envoys capable of managing diplomacy, treaties, and jurisdictional conflict, reinforcing international relations relevant concerns related to order, reciprocity, and institutional continuity. [27] The invention of

<sup>19</sup> “The Renaissance (Renaissance) was a profound change in the history of Europe. It rose from the Italian city in the 14th century to the whole of Europe in the 16th century. Its influence ran through many fields such as culture, thought, science, religion and on. The Renaissance marked the transition from the medieval feudal society to the modern society, and was regarded as an important turning point in the development of human history.” For more read: Shi Enze “*The Causes and Influences of the Renaissance in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16th Centuries*,” Lecture Notes on History, Clausius Scientific Press, Canada, Volume 6, No. 2 (2024), page 29. Available at: [https://clausiuspress.com/assets/default/article/2024/12/17/article\\_1734443073.pdf](https://clausiuspress.com/assets/default/article/2024/12/17/article_1734443073.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> “The history of international law is essentially a history of the law governing the members of the international community of states in their relations with one another. Inasmuch as the observance of well-established customs of the law of nations implies the existence of an international community of states based upon a general recognition of the fundamental principles of territorial sovereignty and legal equality of independent states, such a law (in the strict and full sense of this term) could not possibly have been developed prior to the rise of the modern European state system, at the close of the Middle Ages or during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of our era.” For more read: Amos S. Hershey “*The History of International Relations During Antiquity and the Middle Ages*,” The American Journal of International Law, Cambridge University Press, Volume 5, No. 4, (1911), page 901.

<sup>22</sup> “If we go back to the Renaissance, the term ‘humanism’ is not found in the source. It was coined in the early nineteenth century to designate an ideal of education and of scholarship centered on the classics, and was then applied by historians such as Voigt to the Renaissance movement that embodied as similar ideals... Unlike the term humanism, which is relatively modern, the term humanist goes back to the late fifteenth century, and the term humanities has even earlier origins. The term humanist – *humanista* – actually actually appears in university documents towards the end of the fifteenth century, and seems to have originated in the slang of university students; the first document known to me comes from Pisa... and the context in this and other later texts makes it clear beyond any doubt that a humanist is understood to be a teacher of humanities (*umanista, studia humanitatis*), just as *jurista* or *legista* was a teacher of law, and an *artistat* a teacher of the liberal arts. The Renaissance did not understand by a humanist a preacher of human values, but a teacher of the humanities, and thus it remains for us to understand what is meant by the humanities and why they came to be known by their name which after all is derived from ‘human.’ For more read: Paul Oskar Kristeller “*Humanism: Reports and Documents*,” Minerva, Volume 16, No. 4, Winter (1978), page 588.

<sup>23</sup> “Hans Morgenthau is correct in saying that liberal international relations theory is rooted in domestic liberal theory. But that is not necessarily a vice. Humanistic advances have largely occurred within liberal states. Liberal international theory developed as an analogy to conditions within those states. Therefore, a viable liberal international theory must be rooted in a viable domestic theory. This theory must overcome the limitations of interest-oriented instrumental rationality and of deontic ethics that ignore the role played by tragedy and evil in frustrating our best intentions in the formation and implementation of policy. Such a revised liberal theory ought to take into account the empirical research of international behavior to see what patterns have emerged in the two centuries since the rise of the first liberal states.” For more read: Mark D. Gismondi “*Ethics, Liberalism and Realism in International Relations*,” Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York (2008), page 161. Available at: <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/30386/1/196.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> “Banking activities were also concentrated among Florence, Genoa, Milan, and Venice, and the structure of companies changed in response to evolving markets at the end of the fourteenth century.” For more read: Cédric Quertier “The Pisan Economy (10<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries): A Parabolic Trajectory,” Stefano Bruni; Silvia Orvietani Busch; Karen R. Matthews. A Companion to Medieval Pisa, Brill, Chapter 9, page 245-246. Available at: <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03089047/document>

<sup>25</sup> “One of the most distinguishing traits of the Italian Renaissance was the development of a new financial institutions, which helped develop a new capitalist economy. At the center of this trend was Cosimo de Medici, one of the key figures who built his family’s bank into the largest European financial institution of the Quattrocento – and made himself one of the richest men in Europe in the process.” For more read: Benjamin A. Johnson “*Cosimo de Medici, his Rise to Fortune, and the Impact of his Patronage on the City of Florence*,” The Thetean: A Student Journal for Scholarly Historical Writing, Volume 32, Issue 1, Article 7, (2017), page 66. Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1155&context=thetean>

<sup>26</sup> “Venice took the lead in the development of the science of book keeping and set the style for most of Italy and northern Europe. Indeed, bookkeeping by double entry was popularly known in the sixteenth century as ‘bookkeeping according to the method of Venice.’” But the question of the time and place of the origin of double-entry booking in Italy is raised by the fact that the oldest known example of double entry is not Benetian but Genoese- the Genoese stewards’ cartulary of 1340, and the second oldest example is a Florentine ledge of 1390, kept according to the Venetian system, which belonged to the Company of Alvarado de’ Medici, a money-changer. The question may never be answered because so few early accounts have survived.” For more read: “*Research on the Medici Manuscripts*,” Bulletin of the Business Historical Society, The President and Fellows of Harvard College, Volume 4, No. 4, June (1930), page 13.

<sup>27</sup> “The radical break of political philosophy in Italy, which depended on the separation and secularization of legitimization from its religious context, affected the whole of Europe. Thus, religion-based legitimization ceded its place to a legitimization based on the ownership or possession of authority, as distinct from its virtual active meaning. This shift also shows itself in the change of the meaning of ‘*stato*’ (state) in Renaissance Italy. According to this, power or sovereignty must be evaluated not according to its legal and moral or de jure meaning, but to its de facto meaning. So, for political authority, the important thing is not the power designated by law or religion, but the power that is owned actually (realistically)” For more read: Gökhan Erdem “*The Emergence and Expansion of the Permanent Diplomacy*,” The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations, Volume 41 (2010), page 79. Available at: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/844983>

the “*Printing Press*,”<sup>[28]</sup> accelerated these processes by disseminating legal and political texts across Europe, facilitating shared vocabularies and sustained debate on sovereignty, war, and governance.<sup>[29]</sup>

Prior to the invention of the printing press, legal and political knowledge circulated within a tightly constrained intellectual economy defined by material scarcity, institutional censorship, and social hierarchy.<sup>[30]</sup> Manuscripts were laboriously reproduced, prohibitively expensive, and largely confined to clerical and noble audiences.<sup>[31]</sup> Ecclesiastical and monarchical authorities exercised decisive control over what could be read, debated, or preserved. From a contemporary normative standpoint, such restrictions appear morally untenable and deeply ironic, given modern assumptions that legitimate governance, lawful war, and international obligation require transparency and informed participation.

Yet this historical condition is philosophically instructive rather than anomalous. The tension between proclaimed universality and unequal access to legal discourse persists within modern international law, where formal equality among states coexists with enduring asymmetries of power,

expertise, and institutional voice. The “*theory of statutes*” relevant to private international law also developed and circulated during the Renaissance era.<sup>[32]</sup> Particularly as juristic writings of the late medieval commentators continued to be studied, transmitted, and applied within a changing intellectual environment.

Originating in the Italian city states and associated above all with Bartolus de Saxoferrato and his apprentices,<sup>[33]</sup> the theory provided a structured method for addressing conflicts between local laws through the classification of statutes according to their personal or territorial reach. It was the Renaissance that began to unsettle these constraints by reorienting political and legal reasoning toward human agency, rational calculation, and institutional order.<sup>[34]</sup> In doing so, it laid the intellectual and material foundations for the later development of international law and international relations theory.<sup>[35]</sup>

The realist emphasis on sovereignty, power, and strategic calculation, as well as the liberal and idealist commitment to norms, institutions, and moral progress, can be traced to these shifts in thought.<sup>[36]</sup> Although these traditions would crystallize more fully in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, their core

<sup>28</sup> “A group of historians credit the Renaissance in general with all good done in the fifteenth century, and naturally the invention of typography or printing was, according to this school of historians, the fit consummation of the humanistic movement... Yet historians of our time are gradually giving up the sweeping theory of Jacob Burckhardt, who had exaggerated the importance of the Renaissance so as to form it into a separate epoch of world history. Regarding the invention of typography, we have conclusive evidence that the Renaissance movement had nothing to do with the invention of the great art.” For more read: John M. Lenhart “*The Origin of the Invention of Printing: Its Background*,” *The Catholic Historical Review*,” Catholic University of America Press, Volume 25, No. 3 (1939), page 296.

<sup>29</sup> “Printing in multiple copies was a kind of insurance against the loss of knowledge, a loss (especially in the case of the destruction of the library of Alexandria and the fall of the Roman Empire) of which Renaissance scholars were very much aware (in other words, in the sixteenth century, fear of loss, of too few books, coexisted with fear of overload, of too many books). Again, it has often been argued that the ‘scientific revolution’ associated with Galileo, Kepler, Newton and others happened in the seventeenth century, and not before, because it had become possible by that time to build theories on data accumulated earlier. The Scientific Revolution was dependent on an earlier ‘scientific renaissance’ that involved the rediscovery and the publication of classical texts about the world of nature (Boas 1962; Eisenstein 1979, vol. 2, passim).” For more read: Peter Burke “*Three Print Revolutions*,” *The Introduction of Printing in the Asian Context: Wider Perspective on Print and Manuscript Cultures, Tibetan Printing: Comparison, Continuities, and Change*, (2016) page 15.

<sup>30</sup> “[Medieval Society] ... was hierarchical not egalitarian. Rule by princes or lords was regarded as a necessity. Augustine’s argument in the City of God – that government was a necessary evil, a consequence of the Fall and mankind’s sinful nature – continued to be influential in the late Middle Ages. Aristotle argued in the Politics that it is necessary to live in society: one person cannot provide for all of his or her requirements by themselves. This argument was used by medieval theologians and philosophers to justify a governing order or hierarchy.” For more read: Jennifer Hole “*Economic Ethics in Late Medieval England, 1300-1500*,” Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, University of Western Australia, School of Humanities, Discipline of History (2015) page 54. Available at: <https://scispace.com/pdf/economic-ethics-in-late-medieval-england-1300-1500-18474rxzmk.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> “Up until the invention of the movable type printing press in the 1450’s by German inventor Johann Gutenberg, all books were manuscripts, that is, written by hand. From early monastic scriptoria that produced the sacred scriptures that monks and clerics could mediate over, passing through 12<sup>th</sup> century urban workshop laden with academic texts for university students, to courtly literature for the education and amusement of 14<sup>th</sup> century aristocratic bibliophiles, methods, and techniques of manuscript production were perfected throughout a period of about fifteen hundred years, and well into the ear of the printed book.” For more read: Paloma Pucci “*Medieval Book Production: Manufacturing Manuscripts*,” page 1. Available at: [https://www.bnf.fr/sites/default/files/2023-08/medieval\\_book\\_production\\_manufacturing\\_manuscripts.pdf](https://www.bnf.fr/sites/default/files/2023-08/medieval_book_production_manufacturing_manuscripts.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> “The most recent legal study... has the virtue of focus, for it illuminates the links between the Italian Theory of Statutes and the personal law principle of the earlier ages and places the development of modern international law in historical perspective... it is obvious that the personality of law is the focus of much general intuition as well as legal history. Whether we view it from the point of view of its effect on the survival of Roman law or of its influence on the development of private international law, including the doctrine of nationality and territoriality, or consider it in its relation to the origins of feudalism or its links with constitutional development, we are dealing with a vital chapter of European cultural history.” For more read: Simeon L. Guterman “*The Principle of Personality of Law in the Early Middle Ages: A Chapter in the Evolution of Western Legal Institutions and Ideas*,” *University of Miami Law Review*, Volume 21, No. 2, Article 1, Winter (1966), page 254-265. Available at: <https://scispace.com/pdf/the-principle-of-the-personality-of-law-in-the-early-middle-27iujobchw.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> “As public international law accepted its basic tenet of territoriality from feudalism, private international law from the [14<sup>th</sup> century] on increasingly emphasized the role of personality. This it did by distinguishing among personal, real and then mixed statutes. This was the work principally of Bartolus and his French and Italian Students.” *Ibid.* at 346.

<sup>34</sup> “The intellectual conquest by a realistic approach under the special conditions of the Italian Renaissance, and the necessity for the Reformers to restate the relation of religious and secular activities, together developed toward the concepts of modern political life, but only by being slowly forced upon and amalgamated with existing medieval ideas.” For more read: Felix Gilbert “*Political Thought of the Renaissance and Reformation: A Report on Recent Scholarship*,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Volume 4, No. 4 (1941), page 462.

<sup>35</sup> “Whereas few if any scholars would conceive of the history of international law from pre-classical or classical Antiquity as the history of a single evolving system, there is a general recognition that there is continuity for some institutions or principles of international law. Treaties are among those. In case of treaties, it has been established that a tradition runs from the Ancient Near East over the Greeks and the Romans to the Byzantine Empire and the Germanic vanquishers of the Western Roman Empire. Through this and the mediating role of Roman and canon law in the Late Middle Ages, this tradition feeds into the international legal order as it started to develop in late-medieval and Renaissance Europe. For more read: Lesaffer Randall “*Treaties in the History of International Law*,” M J Bowman & D Kritsotis (eds), *Conceptual and contextual perspectives on the modern law of treaties*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, November (2018) page 44. Available at: <https://repository.tilburguniversity.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/4b49e551-d6d6-452b-bda2-8665c352afbe/content>

<sup>36</sup> “The political structure of the Medieval Europe was so different from that of a system of sovereign territorial states that it is difficult to see in it what came to be called ‘international relations. Indeed, far from constituting a system of independent political association, the defining feature of Medieval Europe was the decentralization of political authority. The political map of the thirteenth century Europe revealed not a clearly demarcated set of territorial units, but a tangle of overlapping feudal jurisdictions, plural allegiances and asymmetrical suzerainties. Within this maze no state system ever developed because the division of

assumptions were already taking shape in Renaissance debates over authority and governance.<sup>[37]</sup> In this way, the evolution of international legal order became inseparable from enduring questions about knowledge, morality, and power in global relations.<sup>[38]</sup>

Among the many intellectual achievements of the Renaissance, “*humanist philosophy*” and the emerging emphasis on “*power politics*” proved especially consequential for the development of international law and international relations. Together, these currents shaped the conceptual foundations upon which later doctrines of international law and theories of international relations were constructed, linking moral reasoning with the realities of power in the evolving international system.

### A. Philosophy of Humanism

Humanism may be understood as a broad philosophical, ethical, and cultural orientation that places human beings, human agency, and human rationality at the center of

normative and epistemic inquiry.<sup>[39]</sup> At its core lies a commitment to the intrinsic dignity and worth of the individual, together with confidence in reason, critical inquiry, and education as instruments of moral and social advancement.<sup>[40]</sup> Although modern secular humanism more explicitly rejects reliance on supernatural authority, earlier humanist traditions likewise emphasized ethical self-cultivation, civic responsibility, and the development of intellectual and artistic capacities as essential to a flourishing human life.

These commitments would later resonate within liberal traditions of international thought that foreground individual dignity, moral progress, and the regulative role of reason in political and legal ordering. Humanism does not constitute a single unified doctrine.<sup>[41]</sup> Rather, it encompasses a family of historically contingent yet intellectually connected traditions, including *Renaissance humanism*,<sup>[42]</sup> *Enlightenment humanism*,<sup>[43]</sup> and modern *secular humanism*.<sup>[44]</sup> Despite differences in metaphysical commitments and political

power among multitude of different actors actively prevented it.” For more read: J.L. Holzgrefe “*The Origins of Modern International Relations Theory*,” Review of International Studies, Cambridge University Press, Volume 15, No. 1, January (1989), page 11.

<sup>37</sup> “After the revival of the Latin West in the so-called Renaissance of the Twelfth Century, a new international legal order emerged. On the one hand, this order was marked by the extreme fragmentation of public authority over a great variety of polities ranging from the Empire and the Church over great kingdoms, secular and ecclesiastical principalities, feudal fiefs, city-states to the smallest seigniories. These all stood in some kind of hierarchical relationship to one another but could also hold far-reaching autonomy.” *Ibid* at 50.

<sup>38</sup> “International law and legal history diverge on a number of issues, including subject matter, language, and culture. Whereas international law constitutes a well-established and flourishing area of law that governs international relations, legal history studies the evolution of law and the reasons behind change. What matters to a lawyer can be irrelevant to the historian, and vice versa.” For more read: Valentina Vadi “*International Law and Its Histories: Methodological Risks and Opportunities*,” International Law and Histories, Harvard International Law Journal, Volume 58, No. 2, Spring (2017) page 325. Available at: [https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/wp-content/uploads/sites/84/HLI203\\_crop.pdf](https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/wp-content/uploads/sites/84/HLI203_crop.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> “It might seem unnecessary to remind ourselves once more that the term ‘humanism’ has acquired in contemporary English and French usage a peculiar meaning which is hardly applicable to Renaissance humanism: it tends to designate any kind of philosophical attitude which emphasizes human values. Renaissance scholars the source of the period will not easily be misled into confusing Renaissance humanism with modern humanism, yet they may very well be tempted to utilize the modern concept of humanism for certain overtones in their discussions of Renaissance humanism, and this tendency seems to be justified by the sources themselves. It is not by coincidence that the Renaissance authors speak of ‘*studia humanitatis*’, the humanities, emphasize the human relevance of certain problems, and are included to praise the dignity and excellence of man. Nevertheless, we should resist this temptation as best as we can. If we have understood the meaning of Renaissance humanism in its own historical setting, we can also see why it should involve a certain emphasis on man, and thus be humanistic in the modern sense of the word. However, if we take this emphasis on man as a starting point, we shall never understand the phenomenon of Renaissance Humanism as a whole. In order to achieve that end, we have to look for a different approach and for different criteria.” For more see: Paul Oskar Kristeller “*Renaissance Humanism During the Last Twenty Years*,” *Supra* note 22 at 10.

<sup>40</sup> “The humanists have a common cultural and scholarly ideal, but no common philosophical or theological doctrine. But we must make the exception for their concept of man which is implied in the name they adopted for their educational and scholarly programme. This may explain why the dignity of man was one of their favorite philosophical themes, although even on this issue there was no unanimity; the glorification of man was rejected, not only by the Protestant reformers, as we might expect, but also by Montaigne who is in many other respects a leading and typical representative of Renaissance humanism.” *Ibid* at 589

<sup>41</sup> “It has become increasingly apparent that Renaissance humanism also influenced and transformed those areas of the Renaissance that did not belong to its original domain: philosophy, and especially logic, medicine and mathematics, jurisprudence and theology, the visual arts and even music.” For more see: Paul Oskar Kristeller “*Humanism: Reports and Documents*,” *Supra* note 22 at 586-587

<sup>42</sup> “The story of the West’s recovery of the full scope of the Classical idea of the savage begins with a group of pious Christian scholars and Churchmen who helped to inaugurate the Italian Renaissance in the large trading metropolises of Florence, Venice, Milan, Genoa, Rome and other independent or then warring city-states of the peninsula. Among the most famous and influential of this notable group of Renaissance Humanist scholars are Francesco Petrarca, better known as Petrarch (1304-1374), Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), and Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459). Their extraordinary biographies tell us a good deal about the spirit and temper of the revolutionary movement that begins in Italy in the fourteenth century and that will come to define the intellectual culture of much of Christian Europe for the next several centuries.” For more read: Robert A. Williams “*Savage Anxieties: The Invention of Western Civilization*,” Palgrave Macmillan, New York (2012), page 160.

<sup>43</sup> “[Karl Marx] was the foremost revolutionary critic of Enlightenment humanism in the nineteenth century... the critique of the Enlightenment’s abstract, egoistic Man into so many areas—religion, philosophy, the state, law, political economy, history, anthropology, nature/ecology—nor so thoroughly exposed its brutal hypocrisy. But Marx’s opposition to Enlightenment humanism can also be seen as transcending all other critical accounts down to the present day in its distinctive character as a dialectical and historical critique. His response to bourgeois humanism did not consist of a simple, one-sided negation... Marx’s analysis was thus unique in offering a higher synthesis envisioning the reconciliation of humanism and naturalism, humanity and nature. Rather than stopping with a mere antithesis (as in most contemporary “post” conceptions), the object was the supersession of those material conditions of the capitalist mode of production that had made Enlightenment humanism the paradigmatic form of bourgeois thought. This radical rejection of bourgeois humanism was integrated with the critique of colonialism, where capitalism was seen as walking “naked” abroad, exposing its full barbarism. In this regard, Marx’s revolutionary response to Enlightenment humanism helped inspire the 2 later critiques by such anticolonial thinkers as W. E. B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and Aimé Césaire, all of whom called for the development of a “new humanism.” For more read: John Bellamy Foster “*Marx’s Critique of Enlightenment Humanism: A Revolutionary Ecological Perspective*,” Essay on True Democracy and Capitalism, Sustainable Human Development, February (2023), page 1-2. Available at: <https://jussempor.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/Resources/JBFoster-MarxsCritiqueEnlightenmentHumanism.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> “The philosophy or life stance of secular humanism embraces human reason, ethics, social justice, and philosophical naturalism while specially rejecting religious dogma, supernaturalism, pseudoscience, and superstition as the bases of morality and decision making. Secular humanism posits that human beings are capable of being ethical and moral without religion or a god. It does not, however, assume that humans are either inherently evil or innately good, nor does it present humans as being superior to nature. Rather, the humanist life stance emphasizes the unique responsibility facing humanity and the ethical consequences of human decisions. Fundamental to the concept of secular humanism is the strongly held viewpoint that ideology—be it religious or political—must be thoroughly examined by each individual and not simply accepted or rejected on faith. Along with this, an essential part of secular humanism is a continually adapting search for truth, primarily through science and philosophy. Many secular humanists derive their moral codes from a philosophy of utilitarianism, ethical naturalism, or evolutionary ethics, and some, such as Sam Harris, advocate a science of morality.” For more read: Tirupati Rao V. “*Humanism and Secular*

context, these traditions share a foundational conviction in humanity's capacity for autonomy, self-improvement, and moral responsibility.<sup>[45]</sup>

This shared orientation would prove consequential for legal and political thought, particularly in the gradual shift toward secular conceptions of authority, rights, and governance that underpin both liberal legal universalism and early realist attention to human interests, power, and institutional constraint.<sup>[46]</sup> Although the term humanism is of modern origin, its intellectual roots extend deep into Greek and Roman antiquity.<sup>[47]</sup> Classical philosophers articulated early forms of human centered inquiry that later Renaissance scholars would recover and reinterpret.

Protagoras' claim that man is the measure of all things captured an early relativization of cosmic and divine authority in favor of human judgment,<sup>[48]</sup> an idea that prefigured later realist skepticism toward transcendent moral claims in international affairs. *Socratic* and *Platonic* philosophy foregrounded moral inquiry grounded in rational reflection rather than mythic explanation.<sup>[49]</sup> *Aristotle's* ethical theory centered on 'eudaimonia,' or human flourishing, achieved through the cultivation of virtue within

the polis,<sup>[50]</sup> a conception that would later inform liberal accounts of political community and moral purpose.

Roman thinkers, particularly *Cicero*, further developed these ideas through the concept of *humanitas*, which combined moral virtue, rhetorical education, and civic duty.<sup>[51]</sup> For *Cicero*, education was not merely intellectual training but preparation for public life and responsible participation in collective governance.<sup>[52]</sup> These classical formulations supplied the normative vocabulary and pedagogical ideals that would later anchor humanist educational programs and inform early modern reflections on diplomacy, statecraft, and the conduct of relations among political communities.

Medieval intellectual traditions, though fundamentally theocentric, also contributed to the genealogy of humanism. Scholastic thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas preserved and systematized Aristotelian philosophy, integrating classical "rationalism" with Christian theology and reaffirming the legitimacy of human reason as a means of understanding both natural and moral order. Medieval universities, manuscript culture, and legal scholarship thus served as institutional bridges between antiquity and the Renaissance,<sup>[53]</sup> ensuring the survival and transmission of classical texts and methods

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*Humanism*," Global Journal For Research Analysis ("GJRA"), Volume 6, Issue 9, Special Issue September (2017), page 71. Available at: [https://www.worldwidejournals.com/global-journal-for-research-analysis-GJRA/special\\_issues\\_pdf/September\\_2017\\_1507110710\\_30.pdf](https://www.worldwidejournals.com/global-journal-for-research-analysis-GJRA/special_issues_pdf/September_2017_1507110710_30.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> "Humanism is a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and generally prefers critical thinking and evidence (rationalism, empiricism) over acceptance of dogma or superstition. The meaning of the term humanism has fluctuated according to the successive intellectual movements which have identified with it. The term was coined by theologian Friedrich Niethammer at the beginning of the 19th century. Generally, however, humanism refers to a perspective that affirms some notion of human freedom and progress. In modern times, humanist movements are typically aligned with secularism, and today humanism typically refers to a non-theistic life stance centered on human agency and looking to science rather than revelation from a supernatural source to understand the world." Ibid at 70.

<sup>46</sup> "Separation of Church and State. Because of their commitment to freedom, secular humanists believe in the principle of the separation of church and state. The lessons of history are clear: wherever one religion or ideology is established and given a dominant position in the state, minority opinions are in jeopardy. A pluralistic, open democratic society allows all points of view to be heard. Any effort to impose an exclusive conception of Truth, Piety, Virtue, or Justice upon the whole of society is a violation of free inquiry. Clerical authorities should not be permitted to legislate their own parochial views—whether moral, philosophical, political, educational, or social—for the rest of society." For more read: "A Secular Humanist Declaration," Free Inquiry, Premier Issue, Volume 1, No. 1, Winter (1980/81), page 4. Available at: <https://secularhumanism.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2018/05/Free-Inquiry-Vol-01-No-01.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> "In the West, humanism first came to birth in Greece during the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E., in the age of Plato and Aristotle. It was the Sophists who, as teachers in the fifth century, originated humanism as a cultural-educational program or *paideia* aimed at the many-sided development of man's faculties and the creation of the highest excellence of which he was capable. 'The unexamined life... [is not worth living]' Plato's *Apology* recorded Socrates as saying, 'is not worth living.' Indeed, although the Greek language had no word for humanism, a concern with man and his dignity became the 3rd focus of Greek thought at this period drama, philosophy, and history. And so Sophocles wrote, 'Wonders are many and none is more wonderful than man.' Greek humanism persisted among the successors of Plato and Aristotle, but, although it included lasting values, it was not an offering to all mankind. It was a cultural program designed predominantly for an elite of free men of aristocratic background and independent means who had their leisure for the pursuit of excellence. It was predicated on an idea of inherent superiority of the Greek over the barbarian... The humanism that developed in republican Rome rested on similar values. The Romans of the republic were one of the most predatory peoples in world history... during the final years of the republic, before Julius Caesar's heir Augustus acquired sole power, Cicero, a Roman Consul and member of the republican ruling class, defined humanism in a manner that was to remain influential for centuries. For him, humanism was an educational and cultural program and an ideal expressed in the concept of *humanitas*." For more read: Perez Zagorin "On Humanism Past and Present," The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Volume 132, No. 4, Fall (2003), page 87.

<sup>48</sup> "[The famous] doctrine of Protagoras that 'man is the measure of all things, of the existence of the things that are, of the non-existence of the things that are not.' This is the formula which challenges the validity of the Socratic method of argument, and the first thing to do is to find out exactly what it means. This is done by stages." For more read: P.S. Burrell, M.A. "Man the Measure of All Things: Socrates versus Protagoras (I)," *Philosophy*, Volume 7, No. 25, Cambridge University Press on behalf of Royal Institute of Philosophy, January (1932), page 36.

<sup>49</sup> "The idea that ethical disagreements are to be resolved by appeal to reason is of course dominant in Plato's Socratic Dialogues. Thus, in the *Euthyphro* to settle the dispute between Euthyphro and his parents, whether Euthyphro's prosecuting his own father for murder is pious, a dispute in which there is no disagreements as to the facts of the case, Socrates proposes that they try to discover what piety is: if they succeed, they can settle the dispute by comparing the proposed action with Piety and seeing whether they disagree."

<sup>50</sup> "[*Eudaimonia*] essentially involves not just the activity of the theoretical intellect, but the full range of human life and action, in accordance with the broader excellence of moral virtue and practical wisdom. This view connects *eudaimonia* with the conception of human nature as a composite, i.e., as involving the interaction of reason, emotion, perception, and action in an ensouled body." For more read: Thomas Nagel "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*," *Phronesis*, Volume 17, No. 3 (1972), page 252.

<sup>51</sup> "The meanings of *homo* and *humanitas* reveal Roman interest in man's better aspects. Cicero's interpretation rests largely upon Greek philosophical thought. Gellius set too narrow limits to the meaning of the word *humanitas*. The many-sided Roman concept, dropped after Cicero's death and not revived until the Renaissance and later humanistic periods, contains many of the maxims and disciplines of Erasmus, Vittorino, Marx, and some living twentieth century Humanists." For more read: Oscar E. Nyabakken "XXIX. – *Humanitas Romana*," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Volume 70, (1939), page 396.

<sup>52</sup> "For Cicero, there was no contest; a general education provided not only training for citizenship but also life-long learning and enhancement of the human spirit... As Aubrey Gwynn wrote, the driving force of education for Cicero was pursuit of human excellence: "To be a man in all that is most human, and to be human in one's relations with all other men; that is Cicero's ethical and social ideal, and his educational theory is based on the same principle." For more read: Kate Wintrol "The Intrinsic Value of the Liberal Arts: Cicero's Example," *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, Spring/Summer (2014), page 130. Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1081659.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> "The Middle Ages saw not only economic transformation in Europe but also the establishment of the first universities – first in Bologna in the eleventh century, then 50 more in the following four centuries – and the development of formal legal institutions and state administrative systems." For more read: Davide

that would later be redeployed in more secular, historically grounded analyses of law and power.

Renaissance humanism emerged in 14<sup>th</sup> century Italy as a distinct scholarly and cultural movement organized around the '*studia humanitatis*,' a curriculum encompassing grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy.<sup>[54]</sup> Humanists criticized medieval *scholasticism* for its perceived abstraction, formalism, and linguistic rigidity,<sup>[55]</sup> advocating instead a return "*ad fontes*"<sup>[56]</sup> through rigorous philological engagement with Greek and Latin sources.<sup>[57]</sup> In the realm of arts, Leonardo da Vinci's contribution to Renaissance humanism lay in his systematic fusion of artistic practice with empirical inquiry,<sup>[58]</sup> which transformed representation in art from symbolic abstraction to rational and observational realism.

By grounding artistic creation in anatomy, optics, mathematics, and the study of nature, Leonardo affirmed the humanist conviction that reality is intelligible through human reason and experience rather than solely through theological authority. His works articulate a human centered vision in which the human body, emotion, and intellect become

primary subjects of knowledge, thereby establishing realism as both an aesthetic and epistemological principle.<sup>[59]</sup> Although Leonardo did not articulate political theory,<sup>[60]</sup> his humanist orientation indirectly anticipated liberal thought by affirming rationality, progress, and the moral potential of human beings.

These assumptions later underpinned liberal ideas of cooperation, norms, and institutions. At the same time, his rigorous empiricism bears a methodological affinity with realism, insofar as it seeks to comprehend reality as it exists rather than as it ought to be, positioning Leonardo's humanism as a foundational bridge between artistic realism and modern intellectual approaches to political and social order. Contrastingly, Michelangelo Buonarroti's painting embodies Renaissance humanism in a manner distinct from Leonardo da Vinci's empirically grounded approach.<sup>[61]</sup>

While Leonardo emphasized scientific observation, harmony, and intellectual inquiry, Michelangelo expressed humanism through spiritual struggle, heroic human forms, and moral meaning.<sup>[62]</sup> The human body for Michelangelo was both anatomically studied and idealized to convey

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Cantoni & Noam Yuchtman "Medieval Universities, Legal Institutions, and The Commercial Revolution," Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 129, No. 2, May (2014), page 824. Available at: <https://people.bu.edu/chamley/764-23/Cantoni-universities.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Taking up certain expressions found in Cicero and Gellius, the humanists as early as the fourteenth century began to call their field of learning the humane studies or the studies befitting a human being (*studia humanitatis*, *studia humaniora*). The new name certainly implies a new claim and program, but it covered a content that had existed long before..." For more read: Benjamin G. Kohl "The Changing Concept of the Studia Humanitatis in the Early Renaissance," Renaissance Studies, Volume 6, No. 2, (1992), page 185.

<sup>55</sup> "But to reduce a work of art to the truism that it is physical is to be scholastically narrow. Recognition of scholasticism, and the way it makes current abstract art circular and pedantic, mechanically self-referential and the way it makes current abstract art circular and pedantic, mechanically self-referential and affectedly formal, is the first step... to show its authoritarian style, which I take to be a symptom of decadence of abstraction, its decline into a mannerism." Donald B. Kuspit "Authoritarian Abstraction," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Volume 36, No. 1, Autumn (1977), page 25.

<sup>56</sup> "Consequently, a great deal depended on texts being accurate. This meant that humanist methodology had to develop ways of distinguishing a good, accurate text from a corrupt or forged text. This was indeed a new approach: In earlier centuries, monks cheerfully forged documents on a huge scale for the greater glory of God, particularly charters providing their monastery's claim to lands or privileges. It was this quest that led to the clarion call of '*ad fontes*,' back to the sources, for it was in the original sources, in their original languages, in an accurate text that authenticity would be found. This also meant a new emphasis on translation and the principles of translation." For more read: Richard Turnbull "The Christian Origins of Humanism," The Christian Institute, April (2023), page 14-15. Available at: <https://www.christian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/The-Christian-Origins-of-Humanism.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> "Petrarch, the father of humanism, began the polemics against scholasticism which have remained since then a common place in the writings of his followers: according to him the scholastics wasted their time in subtle and useless disputations without resolving the basic questions of human life's: their unpolished Latin was a consequence of their barbarous thought; they could not be compared with great writers and thinkers of classical antiquity whom they were not able to read or imitate; and even their chief authority, Aristotle, in many respects must be considered inferior to his greater master, Plato... [Nevertheless] Scholastic teaching and tradition were continued not only in European countries where the new humanistic movement arrived much later, but in Italy itself there was a strong scholastic and Aristotelian tradition throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which had its center in the University of Padua." For more read: Paul Oskar Kristeller "Florentine Platonism and Its Relations with Humanism and Scholasticism," Church History, Volume 8, No. 3, September (1939) page 201.

<sup>58</sup> "[Leonardo Da Vinci] gave the word [Sfumato] as new significance both through his writings and by the example of his painting. From his own time onward, Leonardo has been celebrated as the paragon of the intellectual artist: he provided an example of consummate artistic ability working in accordance with an articulated philosophical and theoretical program. If there is one aspect of his painting that has been held to demonstrate this accord, it is the so-called technique of sfumato. Leonard developed the technique in an attempt to perfect traditional modes of pictorial modeling... Leonardo's reasoning was as follows: the main goal of painting is to render the impression of three-dimensional relief. The impression of relief is primarily the result of the effect of shadows on the perception of objects. In his words, 'shadows is the means by which bodies and their forms are displayed.' Shadows, therefore, was for Leonardo a necessary condition of visual perception, and throughout his life he submitted it to relentless scrutiny." For more read: Alexander Nagel "Leonardo and Sfumato," Anthropology and Aesthetics, No. 24, Autumn (1993), page 8.

<sup>59</sup> "In many respects, Renaissance wisdom was synonymous with a study of the nature of things. Leonardo reasoned: 'The river which is to be turned from one place to another must be coaxed and not treated roughly or with violence' (Richter 1970: 351-352). His pessimism about human progress sprang from the observation that 'the necessities of human nature are such that, at the critical moment, promises of good behavior evaporate in the face of natural desire' (Masters 1997: 86-87). There is a brutal realism in this perception, a recognition that evil is ineradicable, and that in some cases, fighting it with mere goodness and kindness is as foolish as it is self-destructive. There was also realism underlying the belief in the necessity to control both human and natural elements." For more read: Nina Witoszek "Leonardo da Vinci Our Contemporary?" Worldviews, Volume 18, No. 2, page 123-124.

<sup>60</sup> "According to Toulmin, the most inspiring facet of the Renaissance Weltanschauung – sprang from a shared belief that Cosmos (the order of the universe) and Polis (the order of society) were interdependent. Leonardo and Machiavelli were never studying nature, culture, and humans separately, but always in conjunction – as elements of cosmopolis... in the process of working together Leonardo influenced Machiavelli's political anthropology which came to define modern society... not only did Machiavelli begin to describe social order that was rational and scientific; the work on the Arno provided him with the central metaphors for 'The Prince.' The book is full of elliptical reference to the 'dikes and dam' that control 'the river of fortune' and civilize social and political process." Ibid at 134.

<sup>61</sup> "As one of the most representative figures of the Renaissance, Michelangelo's research covered many fields, such as natural science and art, and he made a breakthrough in applying anatomy to his artworks. This is reflected in his many masterpieces, such as The Pietà, David, and The Last Judgment. In The Life of an Artists, Vasari writes that Michelangelo was extremely drawn to artistic tasks." For more read: Puyi Deng "Art and Science in Renaissance Works: The Beauty of Human Anatomy in Michelangelo's David," The International Conference on Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies ("ICIHCS"), Part 1, C, December (2022), page 137. Available at: <https://scispace.com/pdf/art-and-science-in-renaissance-works-the-beauty-of-human-3hr7kzmo.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> "The 'Sistine Ceiling' presents an archetypal world distanced from the regular activities of humanity, yet it presents the major concern of the Renaissance man. Besides the redevelopment of two important ideas which had been lost to the world after the decline of Rome; the belief that man should be free to develop his abilities and interests and the belief that man should seek the fullest enjoyment of life, the Renaissance man was still deeply concerned with the human soul and its progression to an identification with the divine. The successive scenes of the Genesis series present this aspiration to the divine. Michelangelo was also

strength, dignity, and creative potential, as exemplified in the “*Sistine Chapel ceiling*,” where theology, anatomy, and artistic innovation converge. His realism synthesizes observation with idealization, emphasizing moral and metaphysical significance alongside perceptual truth, in contrast to Leonardo’s softer, more empirical realism.

Moreover, Michelangelo’s art affirmed human agency, moral capacity, and individual dignity, contributing to an intellectual climate that later shaped liberal thought. His humanist vision emphasized the transformative power of education and the close connection between intellectual cultivation, ethical responsibility, and public life. At the same time, the “*Sistine Chapel ceiling*” articulated a visual theology that reinforced papal primacy,<sup>[63]</sup> presenting sacred history as an ordered narrative that legitimized ecclesiastical authority. Together, these elements linked humanist ideals with political symbolism, anticipating liberal concerns with informed civic participation while simultaneously serving the institutional ambitions of the papacy.

In Renaissance political imagination, architecture was not merely an aesthetic enterprise but a normative technology of order.<sup>[64]</sup> Public beauty was understood as a rational instrument through which civic virtue, stability, and peaceful coexistence could be cultivated.<sup>[65]</sup> By applying mathematical principles of proportion and symmetry to urban

space, architects transformed the city into a visible expression of reason.<sup>[66]</sup> Beauty thus became more than ornament; it was a structural condition of political life, capable of shaping conduct and discouraging disorder.

The underlying assumption was that environments designed according to rational principles could generate forms of attachment and respect that made destruction appear irrational rather than inevitable. This insight resonates strongly with the liberal tradition in political theory. Liberalism rests on the belief that institutions can be designed to channel human freedom toward stable and cooperative outcomes.<sup>[67]</sup> Just as Renaissance architects sought to embed virtue in spatial form,<sup>[68]</sup> liberal theorists seek to embed restraint and reciprocity within legal and constitutional structures.

Institutions are not neutral mechanisms but normative architectures that shape expectations, identities, and patterns of behavior.<sup>[69]</sup> While this paper does not focus specifically on “*Constructivist theory*,”<sup>[70]</sup> this understanding of institutions as normative architectures has significantly influenced international relations; in particular, by highlighting how shared norms and expectations shape identities and guide behavior within social and legal systems.<sup>[71]</sup> When legal and political orders appear coherent, proportional, and just, they acquire a legitimacy that reduces

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encompassed by these deep philosophical and religious thoughts, the ideas of death and judgement, and the struggles of the soul. For Michelangelo his religious service was manifested in his art which reflected the light and shadow of an age.” For more read: Anne A. Ferris “*Michelangelo’s Sistine ceiling: a portrait of the Renaissance*,” Honors Theses 1042, UR Scholarship Repository, December (1985), page 30-31.

<sup>63</sup> “[The] culminating statement of papal propaganda in the Sistine Chapel, which continues the message of papal primacy begun by *Pope Sixtus IV* in the early 1480s. The term propaganda describes Michelangelo’s fresco well; for the image, in concert with the chapel’s earlier decoration, was commissioned to propagate specific ideas about the Second Coming and the Catholic Church’s part in this climatic event. Michelangelo’s fresco completes the chapel’s proclamation of the pope’s unique role as temporal and spiritual ruler who provides the needed conduit to God and salvation.” For more read: Anne Leader “*Michelangelo’s ‘Last Judgement’: The Culmination of Papal Propaganda in the Sistine Chapel*,” *Studies in Iconography*, Volume 27, (2006), page 106.

<sup>64</sup> “[In] his physical construction of *logge*, *Vasari* composed two metaphysical bridges. One links classical architecture principles of permanence, practicality, and visual delight with Renaissance vernacular principles of necessity, functionality, and societal constructs. The second bridge links the application of architectural principles (design, rules, order, proportion) with the canons of beauty, invention, imitation, and judgment for the formation of a Mannerist theory of art, where physical and metaphysical constructs are united for the sake of creating beautiful and practical arts.

<sup>65</sup> “The Renaissance saw remarkable advancements in various fields, including science, literature, and the visual arts. In architecture, this period witnessed a departure from the Gothic style’s verticality and complexity, embracing instead the harmonious proportions, symmetry, and geometry characteristic of classical Roman architecture. This architectural transformation was not merely aesthetic but also symbolic of the broader cultural shift towards a more human centered worldview.” For more read: M. Senthil “*Renaissance Architecture: A Journey Through Revival, Innovation, and its Enduring Influence on Art and Design*,” *International Journal of Architecture* (“*IJA*”), Volume 10, Issue 2, December (2024), page 2. Available at: [https://iaeme.com/MasterAdmin/Journal\\_uploads/IJA/VOLUME\\_10\\_ISSUE\\_2/IJA\\_10\\_02\\_001.pdf](https://iaeme.com/MasterAdmin/Journal_uploads/IJA/VOLUME_10_ISSUE_2/IJA_10_02_001.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> “Renaissance architecture emphasized symmetry, proportion, and geometry, reflecting the era’s humanist ideals. Buildings were designed with a balanced, harmonious layout, often centered around a symmetrical plan. Proportional relationships, derived from classical mathematics and geometry, were meticulously applied to ensure aesthetic harmony and structural integrity. This approach marked a departure from the more irregular forms of medieval architecture, embodying a new sense of order and rationality.” *Ibid* at 4.

<sup>67</sup> “In general, liberalism defends that the individual’s (agent’s) preferences, choices, and behavior define the social institutions (social structure); while institutionalism argues that the social institutions define the individual’s preferences, choices, and behavior. Some authors have attempted to solve the debate by proposing a dual feedback loop between the individual and the social institution, in which both mutually define each other.” For more read: Obregon Carlos “*Institutionalism and Liberalism*,” Munich Personal RePec Archive (“*MPRA*”), March (2023), page 8. Available at: [https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/122455/1/MPRA\\_paper\\_122455.pdf](https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/122455/1/MPRA_paper_122455.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> “Architecture was regarded by them [Renaissance artists] as a mathematical science which worked with spatial units. For the men of the Renaissance, this architecture with its strict geometry, the equipoise of its harmonic order, its formal serenity and above all... Like Barbaro [he] regarded as the particular ‘virtue’ inherent in architecture the possibility of materializing in space the ‘certain truth’ of mathematics...” For more read: Alina A. Payne “*Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism*,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Volume 53, No. 3, September (1994), page 326.

<sup>69</sup> “Yet from a liberal perspective, cooperation is also what Keohane and Nye (1977) term ‘complex interdependence’ and Robert Putnam (1988) calls a ‘two-level game,’ in which national leaders bargain not just with foreign counterparts, but also with domestic social actors at home and abroad. Legal Institutions are, in essence, efforts to establish current arrangements that will appropriately shape not just future interstate interaction, but also future domestic and transnational state-society relations.” For more read: Andrew Moravcsik “*Liberal Theories of International Law*,” *International Perspective on International Law and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, (2013), page 92. Available at: [https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/int\\_law.pdf](https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/int_law.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> “[Constructivism theory] draws selectively from social theory and is characterized more specifically by its ‘idealism’. By idealism Wendt means (1) that structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces; and (2) identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature. It is common now to make a distinction between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ versions of IR constructivism. Hard constructivists like Onuf, Koslowski and Kratochwil believe that social institutions and structures are nothing but ‘artifice of man-made institutions,’ and maintain ‘both the international system and the state in terms of normatively constituted practices. Soft constructivists are an eclectic lot consisting of practically anyone who shows interest in culture, identity, norms and accept the notion that ‘actors’ interests are not fixed but change and arise out of a social context.” For more read: Ronen Palan “*A world of their making: an evaluation of the constructivist critique in International Relations*,” *Review of International Studies*, Volume 26, page 576. Available at: <https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/13213134.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> “Constructivism appears to have taken a place in the literature on international relations (IR) theory in direct opposition to realism... Constructivist theory came into the IR mainstream as a critique of a variant of realism: structural realism (Wendt 1987; Dessler 1989; Onuf and Klink 1989). Self-proclaimed constructivists often have (or at least are seen to have) worldviews that fall within liberalism, broadly defined, and often accept that categorization. Moreover,

the appeal of violence and arbitrary disruption. In this sense, public beauty anticipates the liberal conviction that rational design can civilize power. Realism challenges the liberal optimism that beauty or institutions can overcome power and conflict, insisting that domination and interest remain permanent features of political life. From a realist perspective, neither aesthetic order nor institutional design can eliminate the logic of power. Yet even within realism, the Renaissance insight retains force: orders that appear intelligible and meaningful are more resilient than those perceived as arbitrary or chaotic. Beauty, understood as structured coherence rather than luxury, does not abolish power but stabilizes it by rendering political order visible, legitimate, and defensible.<sup>[72]</sup>

This realist sensibility was not confined to architectural or institutional design but was also articulated in Renaissance political thought. Figures such as Francesco Petrarca exemplified a synthesis of scholarship and public service that reoriented European intellectual culture toward historical contingency, prudence, and political judgment.<sup>[73]</sup> Their emphasis on context and practical reason anticipated later realist approaches to political order, which privilege interest and circumstance over abstract moralism.

The tension between liberalism and realism thus reflects the Renaissance ambition itself: liberalism affirms that rationally

designed institutions and norms can mitigate the propensity for war by structuring cooperation and mutual restraint, while realism exposes the fragility of such projects in the face of power politics. Yet, Renaissance thought suggests that the deliberate construction of order, architectural or institutional, can make preservation more rational than war,<sup>[74]</sup> offering a conceptual bridge between liberal aspirations for peace and realist constraints on political life.

In its broader implications, Renaissance humanism reshaped conceptions of law, politics, and international relations;<sup>[75]</sup> by locating authority within human institutions rather than exclusively within divine or metaphysical orders.<sup>[76]</sup> This reorientation laid critical intellectual groundwork for “*Legal Humanism*,”<sup>[77]</sup> early modern statecraft, and the eventual emergence of the law of nations.<sup>[78]</sup> It also fostered a dual legacy in international thought: a liberal commitment to normative regulation through law and a realist recognition of politics as a human enterprise shaped by power, interest, and historical circumstance.

The humanist emphasis on philology and historical contextualization extended decisively into legal scholarship during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, giving rise to legal humanism.<sup>[79]</sup> Renaissance jurists applied humanist methods to Roman law, seeking to recover its original meaning by stripping away centuries of medieval gloss and scholastic interpolation.<sup>[80]</sup>

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some recent constructivist theorizing argues explicitly that constructivism and realism are logically incompatible (for example, Wendt 1999; Patomaki and Wight 2000) or, at least, antagonistic (Lebow 2001). International relations pedagogy is also increasingly defining realism and constructivism as being categorically distinct, as witnessed by the increasing tendency in IR textbooks, even at the introductory level, to define realism and constructivism as two of three or more distinct paradigms in the field (for example, Hughes 2000; Kegley and Wittkopf 2001; Lieber 2001). For more read: J. Samuel Barkin “*Realist Constructivism*,” *International Studies Review*, Volume 5, No. 3, September (2003), page 325.

<sup>72</sup> “Harmony, perfection, and love for beauty were the key feature of the Renaissance art.” For more see: “*The Rise of Modern West*,” *Renaissance: Humanism, Ideas and Social Science*, page 134. Available at: <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/72250/1/Unit-8.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> “Despite bearing several medieval traits, Petrarca’s *Secretum* displays that natural exchange of opinions that will become a prominent feature of humanist dialogues. Precisely in the invitation to a free, sincere discussion and the plea for a new, more flexible kind of culture (free from the limitations imposed by medieval scholasticism) lies Petrarca’s main teaching in Bruni’s *Dialogues*.” For more read: Stefano U. Baldassarri “*Poggio Bracciolini and Coluccio Salutati: The Epitaph and the 1405-1406*,” *The Epitaph and the 1405-1406*, (2020) page 74. Available at: <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/523f1fa7-0438-491f-a328-bb6445829de6/14332.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> “Wittkower sought to show that these architects... used ancient forms and ‘harmonic’ proportions in order to capture what they believed to be celestial harmonies that governed the cosmos. For them beauty was achieved by the rational integration of proportions and components according to simple ratios...” For more read: Tod Marder “*Renaissance and Baroque Architectural History in the United States*,” *Studies in the History of Art, The Architectural Historian in America*, Symposium Papers XIX, Volume 35, (1990), page 168.

<sup>75</sup> “In ‘The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance,’ Baron [Montesquieu] formulated one of this century’s most influential and articulate arguments for the impact of politics on the intellectual life of the early Quattrocento. Baron identified the territorial aggression of the tyrannical Milanese Visconti as a critical catalyst for the birth of Florentine civic humanism... Florentines were forced into a process of rigorous self-analysis that affirmed the values for which they were fighting: freedom of speech, free access to political office, equality of all citizens before the law, and self-government – in short, fundamental of modern democracy.” For more read: Mark Jurđjević “*Civic Humanism and the Rise of the Medici*,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, Volume 52, No. 4, Winter (1999), page 994-995.

<sup>76</sup> “If we read into terms such as freedom, equality, justice and self-determination, the principles of dignity and human rights, we capture the sense that these values can never be extinguished so long as man is willing to struggle for them. Whatever the difficulties and sufferings in the struggle for human rights and dignity, there is the idea of hope, resurrection, and a refreshed and progressive expectation in the commitment to the struggle. Thus, the focus of this contribution is on the idea of dynamic humanism as an indispensable and complementary component of the human rights process and the imperatives for realizing a global society committed to a global culture of universal respect and dignity... [The Humanism of Basic Rights and Their Central Values] The UN Charter and the UDHR were the global community’s response to the most-bitter war in human memory, distinguished as it was by the concept of total war, which characterized Hitler’s Germany.” For more read: Winston P. Nagan & Aitza M. Haddad “*Individuality, Humanism, & Human Rights*,” *E-Journal of World Academy of Art & Science, Eruditio*, Issue 1, part 2, July (2012) page 62. Available at: [https://www.worldacademy.org/files/iuc\\_sept2015/presentations/Individuality\\_Humanism\\_and\\_Human\\_Rights\\_W.Nagan.pdf](https://www.worldacademy.org/files/iuc_sept2015/presentations/Individuality_Humanism_and_Human_Rights_W.Nagan.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> “The renaissance in legal studies which occurred during the sixteenth century with the advent of legal humanism, particularly at the French universities, revolutionized the methodology of legal scholarship in a number of ways. The French humanists emphasized the importance of the historical study of law. They sought to combine within the ‘*studia humanitatis*’ grammar, rhetoric and dialectic and the ‘good arts’ (history, poetry and philosophy). Using these disciplines and the emerging science of philology, they were able to dissect Justinian’s *Corpus Juris Civilis* and trace the history and sources of Roman law as reflected in the Justinian texts. Philology and the humanists’ sense of style in particular proved a useful mode of access to the history of the classical law.” For more read: C.P. Rodgers “*Legal Humanism and English Law – The contribution of the English Civilian*,” *Irish Jurist*, Volume 19, No. 1, Summer (1984), page 115.

<sup>78</sup> “Humanism is understood as a system of relations between humans. The conception of the four precepts in *Pancasila* places a very strategic human position. The highest value after the Divine Value of all social, economic, legal, political, defense, cultural and even scientific life orders is man himself. Humanism as the message of the precepts in *Pancasila* is nothing but to build a state life in which human relations are based on free cooperation and aim to create a good life together in an independent and sovereign country.” For more read: Andry Wibowo “*Legalistic Humanism Between Conflict and Actualization of Humanity Concept in the History of War and Conflict*,” *Proceedings of the Annual International Conference on Social Science and Humanities (“AICOSH), Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, December (2022) page 14.

<sup>79</sup> C.P. Rodgers “*Legal Humanism and English Law – The contribution of the English Civilian*,” *Supra* note 77 at 115.

<sup>80</sup> “The first step was to remove the outer layers of medieval, scholastic commentary and gloss from the text of the *Corpus Juris* itself. They were then able to identify post-classical interpolations and additions to the text, and to seek out contradictions introduced by Justinian’s compilers. The *Digest* in particular was subjected to critical examination and the work of the classical jurists placed in its true historical perspective.” *Ibid*.

This methodological shift did not merely refine legal interpretation; it reshaped the conceptual vocabulary upon which early modern legal and political theory, including the foundations of international law, would later depend, reinforcing both liberal aspirations toward legal order and realist concerns with institutional coherence and practical applicability.

Central to the legal humanist project was the reconstruction of Roman law concepts crucial to relations among political communities. Jurists reexamined the “*ius gentium*”<sup>[81]</sup> as a historically grounded body of norms governing interactions among peoples rather than a purely abstract expression of natural law. The concept of “*dominium*” was clarified to distinguish private property from public authority and territorial sovereignty,<sup>[82]</sup> while renewed analysis of contracts provided a more precise framework for agreements and obligations,<sup>[83]</sup> including treaties and diplomatic undertakings.

Humanist engagement with “*bellum iustum*,” likewise contributed to systematic reflection on the legal and moral conditions of warfare,<sup>[84]</sup> shaping later debates that straddle

realist necessity and liberal restraint. The leading figures of *legal humanism* illustrate this transformation in juristic method. Andrea Alciato challenged the authority of medieval commentators through direct engagement with classical sources and historical context.<sup>[85]</sup> Jacques Cujas advanced this approach through meticulous philological reconstruction of Roman legal texts,<sup>[86]</sup> while Hugo Donellus emphasized coherence and rational structure over the accumulation of authority.<sup>[87]</sup>

These jurists reoriented legal scholarship toward analytical clarity and historical precision, shaping both realist skepticism and liberal system building in international law. Legal humanism mattered not because it created international law, but because it supplied the conceptual tools for its later formulation, grounded in precision, comparative reasoning, and an understanding of law as a historically situated human institution. Essentially, legal humanists furnished the methodological foundations upon which later theorists, most notably Hugo Grotius,<sup>[88]</sup> would construct systematic accounts of the law of nations that sought to reconcile power politics with normative order.<sup>[89]</sup>

<sup>81</sup> “Greek natural law (later developed by Roman jurists and in Christian thought); Roman *ius gentium*, as the source of inspiration in international relations.” For more read: Rafael Domingo “*The Ius Gentium, A Roman Concept*,” The New Global Law, Cambridge University Press, July (2010), page 4. Available at: [https://assets.cambridge.org/97805211/93870/excerpt/9780521193870\\_excerpt.pdf](https://assets.cambridge.org/97805211/93870/excerpt/9780521193870_excerpt.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> “While sovereignty (imperium) refers to the establishment and exercise of public authority over a given territory, property (dominium) defines the legal relations through which natural or legal persons, or other identified groups, can hold, use, manage and transact valuable assets such as land.” For more read: Lorenzo Cotula “*Land, Property and Sovereignty in International Law*,” Cardozo J. Of Int’L & Comp. Law, Volume 25, (2017), page 224. Available at: <https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/G04309.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> “Thus, the Law of Nature “is that which nature hath taught every living creature, as the care and defense of every creature’s life, desire of liberty, the conjunction of male and female for procreation’s sake.” The Law of Nations, on the other hand, “is that which common reason hath established among men, and is observed alike by all nations, as definitions of men’s rights, building of houses, erecting of cities, Société of life, judgements of controversies, war, peace, captivity, contracts, obligations, succession and such like.” The Civil Law, finally, is that “which every nation frameth for itself.” For more see: C.P. Rodgers “*Legal Humanism and English Law – The contribution of the English Civilians*,” Supra note 77 at 1130

<sup>84</sup> “In general, although holy wars and crusades are declared by the religious power, the execution of war is left to secular Christian powers. These latter must observe reciprocal peace and may legitimately declare war on each other (in what amounts to an internal, inter-Christian war) only in the case of a just war (*bellum iustum*). This doctrine has a long tradition: already present in Cicero, it is then resumed and modified in a more substantive way by Augustine (in *Contra Faustum*) through Thomas Aquinas (in Question 40 of *Summa Theologiae II*, “On War”) up to Francisco de Vitoria (in his 1539 *De iure belli*). The doctrine regulates war between the *nationes* (Christian nations, to be sure, but in perspective, also the entire world). It implies that war is possible only *ex iusta causa* (as self-defense, to restore offended justice, to punish the guilty), but never simply because of religious differences. Besides regulating the *ius ad bellum*, the doctrine also limits the *ius in bello*: the purpose of war is not extermination but peace in justice.” For more read: Carol Galli “*On War and on the Enemy*,” The New Centennial Review, The New Centennial Review, Volume 9, No. 2, Fall (2009), page 200.

<sup>85</sup> “Like Budé, Andrea Alciato was thoroughly imbued with humanist studies. But as a jurist who had studied at Pavia with Jason del Maino (who himself had been exposed as a youth to humanist ideas) and at Bologna, he could hardly disdain legal thought. Having donned both caps, he was deeply committed to demonstrating the superiority of the new humanist methods to those of the glossator and post-glossators, while nevertheless squaring his findings with their opinion. For Alciato, too, the recovery of the past could be of immediate practical exemplary value: but for him this exemplarity lay in the substance of Ulpian’s thought. Unlike Budé he closely identified with Ulpian as an ancient thinker.” For more read: Michael L. Monheit “*Guillaume Budé, Andrea Alciato, Pierre de l’Estolie: Renaissance Interpreters of Roman Law*,” Journal of the History of Ideas, Volume 58, No. 1, January (1997), page 27.

<sup>86</sup> “Of the jurists who followed Alciato and Bude in the new interpretation, no one was more distinguished than Jacques Cujas. Without neglecting historical and linguistic erudition, in which he was capable of surpassing his master, he acquired an extensive knowledge of all juridical sources and of the major glossators. Born at Toulouse in 1522, he began the study of law at the university of that name in 1537. With the departure in 1544 of one of his professors, Arnaud du Ferrier, he ceased to attend the university and devoted himself to solitary study for three years. During this time, he studied the works of all known jurisconsults, perfected himself in the knowledge of ancient languages, and learned history, oratory, poetry, grammar, philology, moral philosophy, and even natural history. At the age of twenty-five, in 1547, he began to give a private course of lectures on the *Institutes*. The most brilliant students at Toulouse, called *hallebardiers*,” were authorized to teach publicly without a doctor’s degree.” For more read: Linton C. Stevens “The Contribution of French Jurists to the Humanism of the Renaissance,” Studies in the Renaissance, Volume 1, (1954), page 98.

<sup>87</sup> “The French humanist jurist Donellus (1527-1591) in his *Commentarii de iure civili* (1589) formulates an early theory of subjective rights one has on his own person, the *suum in persona ipsa*. These “personality rights” are the rights to life, body, liberty and dignity. The remarkable thing about these “personality rights” is their independence from concepts of status or social standing. According to Donellus everyone has these rights regardless of one’s position or role in society. As such, their formulation constitutes a breach with the earlier tradition of subjective rights as rights solely related to social class. Therefore, the catalogue is of major importance for the consecutive development of the notion of subjective rights. Moreover, it appears that Donellus refers to specific Roman legal texts in formulating these “personality rights,” which is not that strange considering that the ‘*Commentarii de iure civili*’ is basically a systematization of (received) Roman law. For instance, violations of these “personality rights” are punished by means of *actiones* derived from the Roman law of tort or delict, primarily the *actio iniuriarum*. For more read: Jacob Giltaij “*Existematio as ‘Human Dignity’ In Late-Classical Roman Law*,” Fundamina, Volume 22, No. 2, (2016), page 234. Available at: <https://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/funda/v22n2/03.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> “Hugo Grotius. In the mid-1600s, at the time that the nation-state was emerging as the fundamental political unit of Europe, Hugo Grotius – theologian, poet, historian, jurist, statesman, diplomat and international lawyer – offered a new concept of international law designed to reflect and progressively develop that new reality... Grotius is often characterized as “the father of international law,” the role played by his great work, *De jure Belli ac Pacis* (‘The Law of War and Peace’) in transforming international law, and why it is appropriate to characterize fundamental changes to the international system and the rapid formation of customary international law that result therefrom as “Grotian Moments.” For more read: Michael P. Scharf “*Hugo Grotius and the Concept of Grotian Moments in International Law*,” 54 Case W. Res. J. Int’l L. 17 (2022), page 17-18. Available: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2624&context=jil>

<sup>89</sup> “[On] the issue of theology and international legal foundations... Grotius is to be credited with liberating natural law, and thus international law from theology... As examples [textbooks indicated] natural law was originally regarded as having a divine origin but Grotius wrote that natural law would still have

The consolidation of *absolutism* as a formal political doctrine in the 16<sup>th</sup> century coincided with the rise of Renaissance humanism, which introduced sustained intellectual pressure on the moral and legal claims of absolute authority. Humanist thinkers emphasized human dignity, rational capacity, and moral agency, thereby questioning assertions that sovereign power was unlimited or immune from ethical scrutiny. Figures such as Desiderius Erasmus criticized arbitrary rule by insisting that political authority be exercised in accordance with justice,<sup>[90]</sup> restraint, and the common good rather than mere prerogative or divine entitlement, themes that resonate with later liberal critiques of unchecked sovereignty.

In the juridical sphere, humanist influenced scholars such as Francisco de Vitoria advanced natural law arguments that placed substantive limits on sovereign power,<sup>[91]</sup> particularly in matters of war, conquest, and relations with foreign peoples. These interventions framed rulers not as unaccountable authorities but as moral agents bound by universal norms governing conduct between political communities, a position that would become central to liberal international legal thought while remaining attentive to the realities of political power.

Although Renaissance humanists did not uniformly reject *absolutism* and often accepted the necessity of strong centralized authority, their emphasis on reason, law, and moral accountability imposed critical constraints on

absolutist claims. In this way, humanism did not dismantle *absolutism* outright but reshaped debates over sovereignty, legitimacy, and the ethical regulation of interstate relations, contributing decisively to the intellectual foundations of both realist and liberal traditions in modern international law and international relations.

## B. Power Politics

Renaissance engagement with power, diplomacy, and statecraft fostered a more pragmatic understanding of political order grounded in sovereignty and strategic interest.<sup>[92]</sup> Power politics, understood as the conduct of political and diplomatic affairs primarily through considerations of power, interest, and strategic advantage rather than moral or theological constraint,<sup>[93]</sup> provides a central analytical lens for examining Renaissance statecraft.<sup>[94]</sup> In an era marked by fragmented authority, fragile political entities, shifting alliances, and near continuous warfare, rulers increasingly relied on pragmatic calculations of security, advantage, and survival to preserve their polities.

What would later be conceptualized as “*Realpolitik*,”<sup>[95]</sup> emerged during the Renaissance not as a formal doctrine but as a pattern of political practice. Although Renaissance thinkers did not articulate a fully developed theory of power politics, their writings and statecraft reflected its underlying

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existed even if God had not existed; instead Grotius considered consequences of the fact that men lived together in society and were capable of understanding that certain rules were necessary for the preservation of society... [Malcom Shaw's] Grotius finally excised theology from international law and emphasized the irrelevance in such study of any conception of a divine law. He remarked that the law of nature would be valid even if there were no God. A statement which, although suitably clothed in religious pretension, was extremely daring. The law of nature now reverted to being founded exclusively on reason.” For more read: William P. George “*Grotius, Theology, and International Law: Overcoming Textbook Bias*,” *Journal of Law and Religion*, Volume 14, No. 2 (1999-2000) page 608-609.

<sup>90</sup> “Erasmus was a Christian humanist, a liberal rationalist, an individualistic cosmopolitan. As the outstanding critic of his age, he often held up the mirror to his contemporaries. He is still remembered as the wise and human scholar who tries to teach the world how it can live in peace... His humanism is not limited in its functions to the field of education but tries to encompass the whole organism of human society, which it seeks to mold into a better and more harmonious shape... While Erasmus was not systematic philosopher and created no system comparable in completeness to Plato's Republic, he must himself have felt his ideas to be interdependent and complementary – to form a whole.” For more read: Fritz Caspari “*Erasmus on the Social Functions of Christian Humanism*,” *Journal of History of Ideas*, Volume 8, No. 1, January (1947), page

<sup>91</sup> “In *De potestate civili* (On Civil Power, 1528) Vitoria outlines a theory of the state predicated on an Aristotelian and Thomistic conception of the origin and nature of power and community. Two corollaries follow from his discussion. First, as with that political power or the power of government is at the service of the community. Its role indeed is one of impelling the social order toward the common good. The common good itself is largely a function of an order of justice within society and of a set of faculties that allow government to exercise both internal sovereignty and sovereign independence. Second, unlike theories upholding the Divine Right of Kings, government power, though in a position of pre-eminence over the community, is entirely and unequivocally subject to the laws enacted by it since power itself is said to belong to and is, indeed, a constitutive part of the community. Unlike Hobbes' Leviathan, the institutionalization of power does not involve a surrendering of rights to the sovereign but rather a transfer of authority that does not furnish power with exceptional or discretionary faculties. A keynote feature, then, of such a social order is the maintenance of fundamental and natural rights among social agents and the limitations placed by natural right (or justice) on the exercise of government power, as well as a natural right to sovereign independence.” For more read: Luis Valenzuela-Vermeheren “*Empire, Sovereignty, and Justice in Francisco De Vitoria's International Thought: A Re-Interpretation of De Indis (1532)*,” *Revista Chilena de Derecho*, Volume 40, No. 1, (2013), page 263-264. Available at: <https://www.scielo.cl/pdf/rchilder/v40n1/art10.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> “The power vacuum created by the absence of higher authority in Renaissance Italy resulted in the growth of several Italian city-states into territorial states that absorbed smaller and weaker neighbors. This Darwinian process of political consolidation by conquest resulted eventually in the creation of a miniature state system in Italy, an enclosed political space with five “great” powers contending among themselves for hegemony and influence over smaller, weaker city-states. By 1450, the five principal territorial states of Florence, Venice, Milan, Naples, and the Papal State (based on Rome) dominated the Italian peninsula. As they maneuvered against one another for power and advantage, making and breaking alliances among themselves, the Italian peninsula came to constitute an enclosed system of interacting states—a state system—that was a microcosm of the European state system to follow.” For more read: Louis J. Nigro, Jr. “*Theory and Practice of Modern Diplomacy: Origins and Development to 1914*,” *Theory of War and Strategy*, Strategic Studies Institute, Us Army War College (2012), page 181.

<sup>93</sup> “Hans J. Morgenthau defines international politics as a struggle of power and uses the theory of realism to explain it. Realist theory holds that politics, like society, is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature and that the national interest, defined in power terms, is the major objective of a nation's foreign policy. One goal of a nation is to maintain and increase its power and to reduce other nations power. Another goal of states is military security according to Keohane and Nye. Military force is a usable and effective instrument in realist theory, it is the means of power. Gilpin agrees with the first goal and believes that a nation will attempt to change the international system if it has a power advantage over other state in terms of power.” For more read: Mazen Faris Rasheed “*The Concept of Power in International Relations*,” *Pakistan Horizon*, Volume 48, No. 1, January (1995), page 95.

<sup>94</sup> “Especially in the second half of the fifteenth century, humanists and intellectuals played an active role in the elaboration of a political theory that could answer to the needs of new rulers, who had to strengthen their authority and find new sources of legitimacy in an age when the ‘universalistic’ institutions of medieval Europe, the Church and the Empire, had partially lost their centrality bestowing sovereignty rights.” For more read: Marta Celati “*Renaissance Italy: Princely Image and Consensus in Political Treaties*,” *Royal Studies Journal*, Volume 8, No 1, (2021), page 35. Available at: <https://rsj.winchester.ac.uk/articles/311/files/submission/proof/311-1-2159-1-10-20210521.pdf>

<sup>95</sup> “By that apodictic verdict A. J. P. Taylor, who soon became one of the greatest British historians of the past century, meant *realpolitik*, which he believed was the true motor of international relations, with moralism serving at best as a pious smokescreen for a battle for power, or, as he put it in the title of one of his best books, for the struggle for mastery in Europe. Since then, *realpolitik* has had its ups and downs, both in Britain and America.” For more read: John Bew “*The Real Origins of Realpolitik*,” *The National Interest*, The GOP's Balancing Act, March/April (2014), page 40.

logic.<sup>[96]</sup> In particular, necessity; “*ragion di stato*,”<sup>[97]</sup> and the prioritization of political stability over abstract moral ideals. These practices did not yet coalesce into a systematic theory, but they established durable modes of political reasoning that would later be formalized within realist traditions of political and international thought.<sup>[98]</sup>

Thucydides, in his “*History of the Peloponnesian War*,” stands as a foundational figure for realist thought in international relations. He emphasizes power, self-interest, and fear as the primary determinants of state behavior.<sup>[99]</sup> As exemplified by Athens’ rise and Sparta’s reactive posture,<sup>[100]</sup> as well as by internal political struggles in which values are subordinated to factional ambition.<sup>[101]</sup> In his depiction, states act in pursuit of survival and dominance, guided by rational calculation yet occasionally swayed by passion, in a

world largely devoid of overarching moral authority.

“*The Melian Dialogue*” provides a striking illustration of this perspective. The neutral island of Melos appeals to Athens on the grounds of divine favor, moral justice, and the hope of Spartan assistance.<sup>[102]</sup> Athens rebuffs these claims with unflinching pragmatism: the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.<sup>[103]</sup> Thucydides’ narrative captures the tension between ethical aspiration and strategic reality, demonstrating the limits of moral argument in the face of power politics.

These insights resonated through the development of modern realism; from Morgenthau’s emphasis on national interest,<sup>[104]</sup> the inevitability of conflict to Waltz’s structural realism,<sup>[105]</sup> and its focus on the constraints of an anarchic system. The lessons of *Peloponnesian* pragmatism continue to

<sup>96</sup> “The politics of realism, or Realpolitik, has a two twofold character. On one hand, it implies a particular conception of the realities of political life, and, on the other, techniques of achieving positive results in view of these realities. Machiavelli was long misunderstood because those who read him dissociated the former from the latter. They judged him on the basis of the political methods which he recommended to the Prince, but ignored his view about the conditions which seemed to make such tactics necessary: namely, the depravity of Renaissance man, the disunity and weakness of Italy under the city-state system, and the desirability creating order out of chaos.” For more read: Otto Pflanze “*Realpolitik*” *The Review of Politics*, Twentieth Anniversary Issue, Volume 20, No. 4, page 493.

<sup>97</sup> “16th century thinkers who used the words ‘*ragione di state*’ believed that conventional terms available in political language were no longer apt? Unless we find a satisfactory answer to these questions concerning the origin of reason of state, our understanding of the subsequent history of the language of reason of state will also be wanting... after the publication of Giovanni ‘Borero’s *De/La Ration di Stato*’ in 1589, a new language inspired by the concept of reason of state spread throughout early 17th century Europe. This new language sustained and justified a new interpretation of the goals and the means of political action. Politics was no longer understood as the art of preserving a political life through justice and the pursuit of virtues - as the conventional definition of politics before the appearance of the concept of reason of state recites - but the art or science of preserving a state - any state - by any means.” For more read: Maurizio Viroli “*The Origin and the Meaning of the Reason of State*,” *Historical Concepts: Comparative Perspective*, Amsterdam university Press (1992), page 67.

<sup>98</sup> “Realpolitik is not, as is often assumed as old as statecraft itself. Nor is it part of seamless creed stretching back to Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Richelieu, though, as Jonathan Haslam point out in ‘*No Virtue Like Necessity; Realist Thought*’ in *International Relations since Machiavelli*, it has a place within it. It is something distinct from *raison d’état*, strategic thought or Machiavellianism – though all played part in its formulation.” For more see: John Bew “*The Real Origins of Realpolitik*,” *Supra* note 95 at 42.

<sup>99</sup> “Keohane claims that Thucydides was among the first to set out these three basic assumptions of classical political realism: (1) states (or city-states) are they key units of action; (2) they seek power, either as an end in itself or as a means to other ends; and (3) they behave in a way that there are, by and large, rational, and therefore comprehensible to outsiders in rational terms. Observations about human nature formed the philosophical basis of classical realism.” For more read: Laurie M. Johnson Bagby “*The Use and Abuse of Thucydides in International Relations*,” *International Organization*, Volume 48, No. 1, Winter (1994), page 132.

<sup>100</sup> “The Archidamian War, which ended with the Peace of Nicias in 492 B.B., is frequently viewed as a classic example of war between a land power and a sea power. When this first phase of the Peloponnesian War began in 431 B.C., the Athenian navy was the largest and finest in the Greek world; for decades it had dominated the waters of the eastern Mediterranean. The Athenian army, however, was no match for the Spartan army, which for more than a century had been recognized as the most efficient fighting force in Greece. The stage was set, then for Athenian victories at sea and Spartan domination on land. At several places in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides assures us that in 431 B.C., the Spartans believed they could force a swift end to the Peloponnesian War by ravaging Athenian territory.” For more read: Thomas Kelly “*Thucydides and Spartan Strategy in the Archidamian War*,” *The American Historical Review*, Volume 87, No. 1, February (1982), page 25.

<sup>101</sup> To begin with, Athens was defeated in its war with Sparta, a fact that realist above all must be impressed with. In fact, Thucydides’ reflections on the causes of this defeat lead him to an important qualification of the realist outlook. Relatively early in his *History* he informs us of his view that Athens essentially defeat herself in the war, through faction and internal disputes motivated by self-interest, that is, by moral breakdown in which the public good was overwhelmed by private interests.” For more read: Steven Forde “*International Realism and the Science of Politics: Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Neorealism*,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 39, No. 2, June (1995), page 154.

<sup>102</sup> “But the Melian Dialogue is significantly different. It presents two sides and two perspectives. The overwhelming tendency in modern times is to see it exclusively from the Athenian side, to look for justification and explanation of the action against Melos. But the dilemma of the Melians is equally compelling, the dilemma of a small state facing insuperable odds and deciding between capitulation and resistance. Thucydides may have agonized over the morality of empire, but he also sympathized deeply with the problems of what has been described as ‘*the Greek Third World*’, the small run-of-the-mill *poleis* which had to chart a perilous course between the great powers of the day. The Dialogue, I shall argue, is more concerned with the Melians than it is with the Athenians. It emphasizes the delusive and destructive effects of patriotic catchwords, and focuses upon the immediate practical choice: either incorporation in the empire on favorable terms or resistance and destruction. The morality of empire is a secondary, almost irrelevant issue. What matters is the Melians’ response to the Athenian threat. Thucydides makes it brutally plain that they must compromise their independence or their existence, and the purpose of the Dialogue is to force them to a decision which minimizes suffering on all sides.” For more read: Brian Bosworth “*The Humanitarian Aspect of the Melian Dialogue*,” *Thucydides*, Oxford University Press, (2009), page 314. Available at: [https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/default/files/documents/The\\_Humanitarian\\_Aspect\\_of\\_the\\_Melian\\_Dialogue.pdf](https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/default/files/documents/The_Humanitarian_Aspect_of_the_Melian_Dialogue.pdf)

<sup>103</sup> “The basic tenet of Thucydides, appear in the point made by the Athenians that the strong rule and the weak obey, which is not presented by the author as an example of bragging ruthlessness. It is rather, as the Athenians most emphatically declared, the natural aspect of relations between countries of unequal power. It is a law recognized by men and gods, valid in the present as it was in the past and will be in the future.” For more read: Felix Martin Wassermann “*The Melian Dialogue*,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, John Hopkins University Press, (1947), page 25.

<sup>104</sup> “[Morgenthau] recognizes the concurrent historical validity of the national interests of non-democratic states. Morgenthau contends that a real distinction must be made between philosophy and politics. Philosophy is concerned with discovering the absolute good which is everywhere the same. A realistic politics is concerned with discovering the relative good “that is good only under particular circumstances.” Philosophy has mainly a contemplative function. Politics must not only understand the relative good but must make use of it in the struggle for survival.” For more read: David N. McCourt “*Second Meetings: Hans J. Morgenthau and the National Interest, January 13, 1954*,” *American Power and International Theory at the Council on Foreign Relations, 1953-54*, University of Michigan Press, (2020), page 84.

<sup>105</sup> “Democracies may live at peace with democracies, but even if all states became democracies, the structure of international politics would remain anarchic. The structure of international politics is not transformed by changes internal to states, however widespread the changes may be. In the absence of an external authority, as state cannot be sure that today’s friend will not be tomorrow’s enemy.” For more read: Kenneth N. Waltz “*Structural Realism after the Cold War*,” *International security*, Volume 25, No. 1, Summer (2000), page 10. Available at: [https://www.guillaumenicaise.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Waltz\\_Structural-Realism.pdf](https://www.guillaumenicaise.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Waltz_Structural-Realism.pdf)

illuminate enduring dynamics of global politics. Early modern political theory refined and extended these Thucydidean insights from interstate relations to the internal mechanics of rule.

Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* articulated a conception of "ragion di stato" in which prudence, adaptability, and the preservation of political authority take precedence over moral absolutism.<sup>[106]</sup> Political judgment in Machiavelli's account is evaluated primarily by effectiveness and stability rather than conformity to ethical ideals. He frequently cites Cesare Borgia as a model of political calculation, often referencing the strategic groundwork laid by his father, Pope Alexander VI, in consolidating familial power.<sup>[107]</sup>

Machiavelli uses the Borgias to illustrate the mechanics of realist statecraft: opportunistic alliances, calculated cruelty, and decisive action in the pursuit of authority. The elder Borgia's example is particularly striking given the incongruities of his office. As pope Alexander VI, ostensibly bound to celibacy and spiritual stewardship, he openly acknowledged his children and advanced them through ecclesiastical and secular channels.<sup>[108]</sup> His indulgences, from nepotistic appointments to territorial campaigns, underscored both political acumen and moral flexibility, producing a papal image defined as much by worldly ambition as by spiritual guidance.<sup>[109]</sup>

Machiavelli's pragmatic admiration highlights the uncomfortable truth that audacity in violating ecclesiastical norms could also serve as a model for secular power, revealing the inseparability of human ambition and institutional authority. Thomas Hobbes further developed

this logic by conceptualizing political life under conditions of insecurity.<sup>[110]</sup> Although Hobbes's primary concern was domestic order, his depiction of fear, power accumulation, and strategic calculation in the absence of a superior authority profoundly influenced later realist conceptions of international relations by offering an early model of politics under anarchy.

Locke rejects Hobbes's *social contract* insofar as it legitimizes absolute sovereign power. He argues that rights to life, liberty, and property are intrinsic and cannot be surrendered or violated by political authority.<sup>[111]</sup> This critique supports a conception of order grounded in reason and natural law rather than fear. In international relations, it implies an anarchy in which conflict is possible but not inevitable, and where cooperation and normative restraint remain plausible. Locke thus offers liberal theory a rights-based constraint on power and a qualified alternative to realist determinism.

Although "*realpolitik*" and "*realism*" are often treated as interchangeable, an important analytical distinction separates them. *Realpolitik* refers primarily to a mode of political practice, whereas realism constitutes a theoretical framework designed to explain recurring patterns of international behavior.<sup>[112]</sup> Their relationship is best understood as one of practice to theory: historical experiences of power politics supplied the empirical material from which realist theory abstracted its core assumptions.

Within international relations theory, realism conceptualizes the international system as characterized by structural anarchy, power asymmetries, and persistent strategic

<sup>106</sup> "In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Machiavelli was denounced as an apostle of the [devil], while some applied his doctrine of *ration di stato* (*raison d'état*, reason of state). The frequent point of contention was his attitude towards conventional moral and religious standards; his teaching adopts the stance of immorality or, at least amorality. Even recently – e.g., Leo Strauss (1957) – he is a 'teacher of evil,' since he counsels leaders to avoid justice, mercy, temperance, wisdom, and love of their people, and instead use cruelty, violence, fear and deception. Machiavelli could be simply a 'realist' or a 'pragmatist' advocating the suspension of commonplace ethics in matters of politics: Machiavelli simply adopts the stance of a scientist – a kind of 'Galileo of Politics,' in distinguishing between the 'facts' of political life and the 'values' of moral judgment. Thus, Machiavelli lays claim to the mantle of the founder of 'modern' political science, vs. Aristotle's classical norm-laden vision of a political science of virtue. Machiavelli prefers conformity to moral virtue *ceteris paribus*. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, long ago, held that the real lesson of *Il Principe* is to teach people the truth about how princes behave and thus expose, rather than celebrate, the immorality at the core of one-man rule." For more read: Georges M. Halpren "*Niccolò and the Birth of Political Philosophy*," page 21. Available at: <https://drgorges.net/wp-content/uploads/4-GMH-NiccoloMachiavelli-nm.pdf>

<sup>107</sup> "Machiavelli's great interest in Cesare and his criticism of this potential hero stem from the historical context of an Italy divided due to the Church. Cesare possessed-yet squandered-an opportunity to rid Italy of the evils plaguing it by killing his father, Pope Alexander, and by eliminating the College of Cardinals. Machiavelli's suggested denouement to the plot of *The Prince* is an assault on the ecclesiastical power. He invites his reader to contemplate the vulnerability of the Church and to act where Cesare and others shrank. Machiavelli ultimately counsels us to break our reliance on God or fortune and thus create the conditions for a reinvigorated civil life." For more read: John T. Scott & Vickie B. Sullivan "*Patricide and the Plot of the Prince: Cesare Borgia and Machiavelli's Italy*," *The American Political Science Review*, Volume 88, No. 4, December (1994), page 887.

<sup>108</sup> "Machiavelli alludes to the circumstances through which Pope Alexander VI formally acquires for his son Cesare a noble title: while granting the French king's request for a marriage annulment, the pope elevates the archbishop of Rouen to cardinal in exchange for a title, Duke of Valentinois, for Cesare." For more read: John P. McCormick "*Prophetic State-building Machiavelli and the Passion of the Duke*," *Representations*, Volume 115, No. 1, Summer (2011), page 2.

<sup>109</sup> "By incorporating the pope's relatives into the Papal States' ecclesiastical and secular administration, the pope was able to maintain his separation from the secular responsibilities of the prince of the Papal States by committing the work to men whose loyalty to him seemed above reproach. Although papal relatives vowed obedience to the Roman Church, their positions and authority derived from the pope, whose patronage privileged family ties and loyalty rather than exclusively virtue and skill. This nepotism annoyed Guicciardini and Machiavelli, whose own advancement hinged on lay political factions that stood outside the ecclesiastical and noble circles inhabited by rapidly advancing papal families. While they understood the demand for and evolution of papal nepotism, rarely did it profit them." For more read: Jennifer Mara Desilva "*Articulating Work and Family: Lay Papal Relatives in the Papal States, 1420-1549*," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Volume 69, No 1, (2016), page 9.

<sup>110</sup> "Scholars have noted that Hobbes's distrust of democracy was influenced by the lessons of Thucydides, while his generally unsentimental view of politics no doubt bears a similar stamp... many of Hobbes's reflections on how human beings behave 'read like generalizations from Thucydides' examples.' The clearest instance is the fact that Hobbes's account of the three major sources of strife in the state of nature – competition, diffidence, and glory – is probably based on the analysis of human motives presented by the Athenians in Book I of Thucydides, who attribute their actions to 'fear, honor, and profit.' For more see: George Klosko & Daryl Rice "*Thucydides and Hobbes's State of Nature*," *History of Political Thought*, Volume 6, No. 3, Winter (1985), page 405.

<sup>111</sup> "Locke believed that men could be both ruled and free. While subject to natural law, men also had natural rights notably rights to life, liberty, and property. These rights were retained when men contracted to form political societies. Instead of surrendering their freedom to a sovereign, as Hobbes suggested, men had merely entrusted power to a ruler. In return for justice and mutual security, they had agreed to obey their rulers, on condition that their natural rights were respected. Natural rights, being derived from natural law, were rooted in something higher than the edicts of princes, namely the edicts of God. They were 'inalienable.' Locke's "right to revolution"-to reject a ruler who failed to respect natural rights- thus derived not only from the social contract but also from the supremacy of God's law to man's." For more read: Maurice Cranston "*Locke and Liberty*," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Volume 10, No. 5, Winter (1986), page 87.

<sup>112</sup> Otto Pflanze "*Realpolitik*" *Supra* note 96 at 493.

competition.<sup>[113]</sup> National interest functions as the primary determinant of state behavior, typically defined in terms of security, economic capacity, and geopolitical position.<sup>[114]</sup> Normative and legal commitments are treated as contingent rather than absolute. Compliance with international law or moral principle is rational insofar as it aligns with strategic advantage, but may be disregarded when it does not.<sup>[115]</sup>

Power thus operates as the central analytical currency of realist reasoning. Military capability, economic leverage, technological capacity, and geographic or demographic advantage are understood as measurable resources shaping international outcomes. States are assumed to be concerned primarily with “relative gains,” evaluating improvements in their own position in light of their effects on competitors, though limited attention to “absolute gains” may arise where mutual benefits do not significantly alter underlying power asymmetries.<sup>[116]</sup>

Alliances appear as instruments of convenience rather than

permanent commitments, while deterrence and “balance of power” emerge as key mechanisms of systemic stability.<sup>[117]</sup> These logics were already visible in Renaissance Europe, particularly within the Italian city state system. “*The Treaty of Lodi of 1454*,” represents a pivotal moment in the early structuring of interstate relations. Concluded between Milan and Venice and extended to other major Italian powers, the treaty ended prolonged conflict on the Italian peninsula and established a durable equilibrium among rival territorial states.<sup>[118]</sup>

From an international legal perspective, the *Treaty of Lodi* presupposed several core attributes of sovereignty,<sup>[119]</sup> including; territorial integrity, jurisdictional competence, and the capacity to enter binding agreements. Although sovereignty had not yet been theorized in fully modern terms, the mutual recognition embedded in the treaty treated Italian politics as juridically distinct actors, bound by consent rather than hierarchical authority.<sup>[120]</sup> The resulting Italian League

<sup>113</sup> “The account of Athenian imperialism that emerges in Thucydides is interesting partly because of the way its treatment of the different human motives for expansion produces a relatively transparent segregation of the structural form the other elements of realism. As such, it makes especially visible some of the differences between a realism that is purely structural and one that draws on an analysis of human nature as well. The most obvious of the differences is that the human impulses of honor and profit make realism much more dynamic, and much more virulent, than structuralism by itself. Whereas structurally motivated fear is relatively circumscribed in the Athenian presentation, honor, and acquisitiveness are obviously unlimited, expansionist motivation. For the same reason, the two different approaches to realist argument result in radically different understanding of what would today be called the ‘national interest.’ Defining the national interest has been perennial problem of twentieth-century” For more read: Steven Forde “*International Realism and the Science of Politics: Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Neo-Realism*,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 39, No. 2, June (1995), page 148.

<sup>114</sup> “National interest proceeds from two perspective. One tends to be policy orient; the other ethically oriented. Though these two perspectives overlap in the blurred double-vision of real choice in real situations, there is purpose in sorting them out. The national interest as it bears on policy represents a rough guide to and a negative restraint on, decision and action. It defines the outermost limits of choice, beyond which responsible statesmanship must not trespass because to do so risk the security, perhaps the survival, of the nation. Exactly where this boundary line runs, and precisely what program are to be pursued within its limits are matters of constant debate among the many surveyors of the nation’s interest. This is because ‘security’ and ‘survival’... are not fixed points on the political terrain... The Second perspective provides the subject for the present study, that is, the national interest as a problem in political ethics. It is the problem of reconciling necessity and principle: the necessity is that of protecting the interest of the group for which one serves as trustee and the principle is that of undifferentiated loyalty to values such as justice and equality. It is the problem of adjusting the moral claims laid upon one by his allegiance to the national community with the claims that derive from his loyalty to communities transcending the national community. It is the problem dealing both realistically and creatively with self-interest, and nowhere is self-interest more stubbornly institutionalized, yet capable of greater concealment, than in the ‘national interest’ of sovereign state.” For more read: Robert C. Good “*The national Interest and Political Realism*,” *The Journal of Politics*, Volume 22, No. 4, (1960), page 598.

<sup>115</sup> “Law may also be used by hegemonies to establish and enforce standards to which weaker States are obliged to conform. But compliance for realists is little more than a calculation of interests in light of the existing distribution of power. Transaction costs and the value of stability are both sufficiently high that States may behave habitually without continuous recalculation of interests, but if a legal commitment is inconsistent with a significant interest of a State and it has the power to act in a manner which better serves its interest, it will usually do so. There is no categorical difference in function between “binding” and “non-binding” international rules, although there may be differences where domestic legal systems are involved, and the discourse of justification and violation may be inconsequentially different.” For more read: Benedict Kingsbury “*The Concept of Compliance as a Function of Competing Conceptions of International Law*,” *Michigan Journal of International Law*, Volume 19, Winter (1998), page 351.

<sup>116</sup> “The problem of absolute and relative gains divides two of the most influential approaches to international relations theory. Neoliberal institutionalism assumes that states focus primarily on their individual absolute gains and are indifferent to the gains of others. Whether cooperation results in a relative gain or loss is not very important to a state in neoliberal institutionalism so long as it brings an absolute gain. In terms of preferences, this focus on absolute gains is usually taken to mean that a state’s utility is solely a function of its absolute gain. In contrast, neorealism, or structural realism assumes that states are largely concerned with relative rather than absolute gains. In the anarchy of international politics, “relative gain is more important than absolute gain” (Waltz 1959, 198). A state’s utility in structural realism is at least partly a function of some relative measure like power.” For more read: Robert Powell “*Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory*,” *The American Political Science Review*,” Volume 85, No. 4, December (1991), page 84.

<sup>117</sup> “Although there are many variations of balance of power theory and interpretations of the concept, all are premised on the minimum of a tendency and the maximum of a law like recurrent equilibrium model. According to this model, imbalances and concentrations in military and material capabilities among the great powers are checked, and the equilibrium is restored in order to ensure the survival of the major powers in the international system. The great powers have several mechanisms to restore the balance, including internal military buildup where economic wealth is converted into military power, the formation of counterbalancing alliances, passing the buck of balancing to another state, partition and compensation in post war peace settlements, and emulation. In contrast, many scholars find that secondary and tertiary states are more likely to bandwagon or join with the more powerful state or coalition of states rather than balance against it.” For more read: Sandra Chinwendu, Ngozi Dorathy, & Ify Evaristus Ojinnaka “*The Relevance of Balance of Power in the Contemporary International System*,” *Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research*, Volume 10, No. 6, (2024), page 38-39. Available at: <https://iiardjournals.org/get/JPSLR/VOL.%2010%20NO.%206%202024/THE%20RELEVANCE%20OF%20BALANCE%2038-52.pdf>

<sup>118</sup> “In 1454, a series of wars to resist Milanese hegemonic aggression resulted in the general Peace of Lodi. In 1455, most of the five powers and other smaller ones signed a mutual security agreement, the Italic League, which guaranteed the existence of signatory states and called for common action against outsiders. These arrangements led to nearly fifty years of peace on the peninsula.” Louis J. Nigro, Jr. “*Theory and Practice of Modern Diplomacy: Origins and Development to 1914*,” *Supra* note 92 at 181.

<sup>119</sup> “Pope Nicholas V and Alfonso of Aragon reached an agreement allowing them to enter the league, which thus, became ‘universal.’ One of the main reasons for this agreement was to prevent French Intervention. The parties formed a league against whoever threatened their safety... the Pope became honorary head of the league as its protector and guarantor... The temporary aspect of this agreement (it was stipulated for twenty-five years) emphasized the character of the league and the fact that it was a compromise, not the ‘perpetual peace’ produced by a unilateral and peremptory pronouncement by the supreme pontifical authority (treaties between sovereigns were usually in theory perpetual).” For more read: Riccardo Fubini “*The Italian League and the Policy of the Balance of Power at the Accession of Lorenzo de’ Medici*,” *The Journal of Modern History*, Volume 67, September (1995), page 184.

<sup>120</sup> “The pope was particularly interested in mediating a compromise among the Italian powers, especially to solve political and dynastic quarrels between the duke of Milan and the King of Naples. Such mediation was necessary to prevent a direct agreement between the two at the expense of the church’s dominions, as had happened in recent times. Furthermore, mediation could prevent the intervention of foreign powers, especially the king of France and the emperor, who might seize the opportunity to descend into Italy under the pretext of establishing peace.” *Ibid* at 176.

demonstrated how treaties could function as instruments of collective order in the absence of supranational enforcement, relying instead on reciprocity and shared interest in stability.<sup>[121]</sup>

From a realist perspective, the treaty reflected *balance of power* politics and strategic restraint among competing states.<sup>[122]</sup> From a liberal perspective, it represented an early form of institutionalized cooperation, revealing how legal agreements and diplomatic practices could mitigate conflict and stabilize political relations. In this sense, the *Treaty of Lodi* anticipated later developments in both realist and liberal theories of international order, as well as the gradual secularization of political authority that would culminate in Westphalian sovereignty.<sup>[123]</sup> Power politics also transformed diplomatic practice.

Renaissance city states pioneered the transition from episodic embassies to permanent diplomatic representation,<sup>[124]</sup> enabling continuous negotiation, political observation, and systematic information gathering.<sup>[125]</sup> “*Venetian relazioni*” exemplified a new mode of empirical political analysis, combining narrative description with assessments of military capacity, economic strength, institutional stability, and leadership character.<sup>[126]</sup> The maintenance of secret archives and early intelligence networks further entrenched diplomacy as a specialized function of state administration, reflecting a humanist commitment to empirical observation and rational

judgment.

Humanist thinkers contributed not only to diplomatic technique but also to its normative framing.<sup>[127]</sup> Figures such as Bernardo Bembo and Marin Sanudo exemplified a mode of diplomatic analysis that blended historical consciousness with pragmatic statecraft.<sup>[128]</sup> At the same time, writers such as Desiderius Erasmus articulated ideals of moderation, restraint, and peace, framing diplomacy as a rational alternative to violence rather than a purely theological aspiration.<sup>[129]</sup> Although these normative commitments often coexisted uneasily with power politics, they nonetheless shaped emerging expectations concerning diplomatic conduct, immunity, and negotiation.

Renaissance diplomacy thus embodied a persistent tension between realist imperatives and liberal aspirations that continues to structure modern international relations. The Renaissance and early modern periods also witnessed a gradual shift from medieval theological jurisprudence toward secularized natural law analysis.<sup>[130]</sup> Early modern jurists reframed questions of war, sovereignty, and political authority in terms of human reason, empirical circumstance, and the moral equality of political communities.

Francisco de Vitoria of the *School of Salamanca* argued that indigenous peoples possessed dominium over their lands, political authority, and legal personality independent of Christian affiliation, rejecting papal and imperial claims to

<sup>121</sup> “From its inception in Renaissance Italy in 1450s’ the resident embassy has remained as the main instrument through which states advance their national interest. Despite the increasing use in the twentieth century, of new instruments in international diplomacy, such as summitry and multilateral diplomacy, and revolutionary advances in information and communication technology, the resident embassy has remained the principal channel by which dialogue is conducted between states.” For more see: page 25. Available at: [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20020100\\_cli\\_paper\\_dip\\_issue78.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20020100_cli_paper_dip_issue78.pdf)

<sup>122</sup> [Political and Diplomatic] links between states and rulers were enormously important for diffusion and development of artistic styles during the Renaissance. And the visual arts did have part – if a modest – one in the diplomatic process, and that in an era which saw balance of power between states of Italy, achieved by the formation of leagues and alliances, become a political priority. This balance, precarious as it often was, was brought about by increasingly sophisticated and systematic forms of diplomacy.” For more read: Caroline Elam “*Art and Diplomacy in Renaissance Florence*,” *RSA Journal*, Volume 136, No. 5387, October (1988), page 813.

<sup>123</sup> “History is littered with peace treaties akin to Westphalia, including the Peace of Lodi (1454) and the Peace of Augsburg (1555), however, the establishment of international norms of commerce and war were most significant. . . While placing limitations on states after great wars has been a reoccurring theme especially in modern times, this new international law required the state for ratification, thus strengthening and legitimizing the state as an international body.” For more read: Andrew MacRae “*Counterpoint: the Westphalia Overtreatment*,” *International Social Science Review*, Volume 80, No. 3/4, (2005), page 161.

<sup>124</sup> “Traditional diplomatic history, looking for precursors to the diplomacy of the 19th and 20th centuries, fastened on the shift to permanent embassies in Italy in the Renaissance.” For more read: Halvard Leira & Benjamin de Carvalho “*The Intercity Origins of Diplomacy: Consuls, Empires, and the Sea*,” *Journal of Diplomacy and Society*, *Diplomatica* 3, (2021), page 150. Available at: [https://www.nupi.no/content/pdf\\_preview/23837/file/Leira&deCarvalhoCityDiplomacy2021.pdf](https://www.nupi.no/content/pdf_preview/23837/file/Leira&deCarvalhoCityDiplomacy2021.pdf)

<sup>125</sup> “Diplomacy has existed since the time when States, empires or other centres of power dealt with each other on an official basis. Numerous diplomatic archives have been found in Egypt dating back to the 13th century BC. Permanent diplomatic missions, that is, representations set up by one country in the territory of another, date back to the Renaissance in the 15th century.” For more see: “*ABC of Diplomacy*,” Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (“FDFA”), page 3. Available at: [https://www.mission-geneve.dfae.admin.ch/dam/en/sd-web/OK3w8v2y048-/ABC-Diplo\\_EN.pdf](https://www.mission-geneve.dfae.admin.ch/dam/en/sd-web/OK3w8v2y048-/ABC-Diplo_EN.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> “Ever since the [13<sup>th</sup> C] Venetian ambassadors coming home at the end of their posting were required to provide end-of mission reports, or *relazioni*. Length and details varied, but most covered three aspects: the country where they had served, the country’s government (mostly description of court and sovereign), and the governments attitude towards other states, including Venice itself. Ambassadors were great observers of high politics, bent on scrutinizing the personality of ministers in order to pick up traits that might guide present and future negotiations. But also provided wider information about geography, military and economic strength, and customs, including religious rites.

<sup>127</sup> “The Venetian relazioni was a comprehensive scholarly reflection and advisory essay on the relation between Venice and other city-states of Venice; yet this was done within the context of the promotion and preservation of the ‘republic of ideas.’ In other words, it was about what we know about others and their ways of doing things but also how that speaks about our way of doing things on the basis of what we know about others.” For more read: Costas M. Constantinou “*Between Statecraft and Humanism: Diplomacy and Its forms of Knowledge*,” *International Studies Review*, Volume 15, No. 2, June (2013), page 153-1534.

<sup>128</sup> Tessa Beverley “*Venetian Ambassadors 1454-94: An Italian Elite*,” University of Warwick Institutional Repository, A thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick, September (1999) page 57. Available at: [https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/36358/1/WRAP\\_THESIS\\_Beverley\\_1999.pdf](https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/36358/1/WRAP_THESIS_Beverley_1999.pdf), See also: Sandra Toffolo “*Constructing a Mainland State in Literature: Perceptions of Venice and its Terraferma in Marin Sanudo’s Geographical Descriptions*,” *Renaissance and Reformation*, European University Institute, Volume 37, No. 1, Winter (2014), page 8-11.

<sup>129</sup> “Erasmus wrote an important humanist work, *De contemptu mundi* (before 1493), in which he displays his humanist erudition as well as his theological and moral views on human existence. In Erasmus’s understanding of humanism, scholarship and good education are forms of Christian edification. In this view, those practices are humanist that form or empower social and rational human nature and help it to evolve – in Aristotelian sense – towards virtue, whereby “virtue” is understood as a quality of human performance and policy.” For more read: Mihai-D. Grigori “*Humanism and its Humanitas: The Transition from Humanitas Christiana to Humanitas Political in the Political Writings of Erasmus*,” *Humanity: A History of the European Concepts in Practice from the Sixteenth Century to the Present*, (2016) page 79. Available at: <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/2b552810-8fd6-4a06-8421-7d3830eb8094/1004710.pdf>

<sup>130</sup> “When textbook accounts of early modern history seek to explain what was modern about the new kind of natural law that emerged in Europe after Grotius, they call it ‘secularization.’ The process starts with the ‘*etiamsi daremus*’ sentence in the Prolegomena to Grotius’s *De jure belli ac pacis*, which was supposed to have announced the search for secular foundations of law that would work „even if there was no God... other natural law theorists looked for other foundations and found it in the geometrical method of reasoning, in which duties and rights were inferred by logical deductions.” For more read: Ivo Cerman “Was early modern natural law secularized? The Current Debates,” *Histography and Methodology*,” page 131. Available at: <https://www.operahistorica.com/pdfs/oph/2023/01/06.pdf>

universal jurisdiction.<sup>[131]</sup> His conception of the “*ius gentium*” emphasized necessity, proportionality, and discrimination in war, articulating substantive constraints on conquest, forced conversion, and exploitation.<sup>[132]</sup> Francisco Suárez extended and systematized these insights by emphasizing the role of human consent in forming political communities as part of a *social contract*.<sup>[133]</sup>

This served by clarifying criteria for just war, articulating limits on sovereign power, and addressing the legitimacy of resistance under tyranny or unlawful rule. Hugo Grotius, building upon Vitoria and Suárez, further secularized international law by developing a systematic framework for the law of nations, the conduct of states, and the regulation of armed conflict.<sup>[134]</sup> Liberalism drew upon the institutionalization of diplomacy, the development of treaty-based order, and the evolution of natural law to articulate the possibility of cooperation, legal constraint, and normative progress in international relations.

Together, these thinkers form a continuous intellectual lineage linking Renaissance political practice, early modern natural law theory, and the emergence of international law as a distinct discipline. The institutionalization of diplomacy and early modern natural law thought produced a pragmatic understanding of state behavior; that informed the later development of both realism in international relations theory and international law. Empirical patterns observed in power driven diplomacy and *balance of power* arrangements provided grounding for realist assumptions about state self-interest, strategic calculation, and the constraints imposed by an anarchic international system.

Simultaneously, the normative innovations of Vitoria, Suárez, and Grotius integrated these empirical realities into

legal frameworks that recognized sovereignty, codified constraints on the use of force, and articulated principles governing lawful interaction between political communities.<sup>[135]</sup> This dual legacy illustrates how power politics not only shaped practical statecraft but also generated the conceptual and institutional foundations of modern international relations and international law. The interaction between realist and liberal logics, first crystallized in Renaissance and early modern Europe, continues to structure contemporary debates over sovereignty, legitimacy, and the limits of law in global politics.

### 3. From Renaissance Humanism to Contemporary Power Politics: The 2026 U.S Military Intervention in Venezuela

Classical realist thinkers such as Thucydides and Machiavelli, writing long before the formalization of international relations theory, articulated a view of politics in which survival, security, and power routinely eclipse moral or legal restraint. Thucydides’ “*History of the Peloponnesian War*”<sup>[136]</sup> exposes the logic of power politics with particular clarity, most famously in the “*Melian Dialogue*,”<sup>[137]</sup> where appeals to justice are dismissed as meaningless in the absence of equal force. Machiavelli similarly argued that the preservation of the state constitutes a higher political necessity, one that may compel rulers to act beyond conventional ethical constraints.

Taken together, their work crystallizes a foundational realist insight: in the anarchic realm of international affairs, the imperatives of power and survival frequently take precedence over abstract ideals of justice or law. The United States military operation in Venezuela in early 2026, culminating in the capture and transfer of President Nicolás Maduro,<sup>[138]</sup>

<sup>131</sup> “The Middle Ages gave way to modernity and new foundations for ‘America Nostra’ were laid. At the center stood Francisco de Vitoria... denouncing the Requirements Act, which until then had legitimized the initial conquest of America. The Act was dialectically dismantled through a slow process of investigation and theological reflection which eventually invalidated the papal theocracy being revived in Pope Alexander’s bulls.” For more read: Luciano Peréna Vicente “*Charter of rights of the Indians according to the School of Salamanca*,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 32, No. 290 (1992), page 468.

<sup>132</sup> “When Vitoria’s just titles’ are considered, it is difficult to consider them apart from the abuse that took place. Nevertheless, he allows the Spanish to use the *ius gentium* rights only under the condition that their use in no way harms the Indian. Likewise, the evangelization is to be guided by Christian charity under no circumstances may the Indians be forced to convert. Vitoria ended the lecture on ‘On the American Indians’ on a pragmatic note by reflecting on the detrimental effects that a Spanish withdrawal would entail.” For more read: Pekka Niemelä “*A Cosmopolitan World? Perspectives on Francisco de Vitoria and the United Nations*,” *Max Planck Yearbook of the United Nations Law*, Volume 12, (2008), page 332. Available at: [https://www.mpil.de/files/pdf3/mpunyb\\_08\\_niemelae\\_12.pdf](https://www.mpil.de/files/pdf3/mpunyb_08_niemelae_12.pdf)

<sup>133</sup> “There is neither a divine civil power preceding the subjects’ consent nor a political right to rule peoples (such as the indigenous communities of the Americas or any other communities subject to a ‘*iurisdictio imperii*’ by force) that do not participate in the formation of the contract. Rather than inaugurating a language of individual rights that will be paramount to modern contractualist theories, Suárez’s doctrine of the contract seems to open a new path to a universal law of peoples – something akin to a pre-Westphalian international public law. And that is already an important factor in his development of the social contract emerging from the framework of the School of Salamanca.” For more read: Andre Santos Campos “*Francisco Suárez’s Conception of the Social Contract*,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, Volume 75, No. 2 (2019), page 1215.

<sup>134</sup> “In effect, much of Grotius’s work is merely a repetitive echo of principles that had already been commonplace for generations in Spain, and which are to be found not only in voluminous incunabula and dusty tomes of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also in manuals, dating from the same centuries, for the troops, such as that of Ayala. In practice, they were also used in the battlefield, and legal, religious and military advisers to the army in Spain consulted them frequently in connection with military operations. The law of nations and the law of war were no mere academic terms but meticulously applied regulations throughout the great Spanish empire. Spanish military operations were conducted in consultation with a “jurist”, often a simple missionary but somebody who was familiar with the principles of war necessary for the restoration of peace, justice and order (when force wielded in the name of the law is victorious, it may impose the law). Ayala, from whose manual Grotius, by his own admission, drew considerable inspiration, was an officer and legal adviser to the army of Philip II in Flanders.” For more read: Sergio Moratiel Villa “*The Philosophy of International Law: Suárez, Grotius, and epigones*,” *International Review of the Red Cross*, No. 320, (1997) page 545. Available at: <https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/S0020860400076865a.pdf>

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* 545-548.

<sup>136</sup> Philip de Souza “*The Peloponnesian War 431-404 BC*,” *Supra* note 1 at 7

<sup>137</sup> Brian Bosworth “*The Humanitarian Aspect of the Melian Dialogue*,” *Supra* note 102 at 314.

<sup>138</sup> “On January 3, 2026, President Trump announced that the U.S. military had launched strikes across Venezuela that culminated in the capture and arrest of President Nicolás Maduro (2013-2026) and his wife, Cilia Flores, in an operation that resulted in few U.S. casualties. Maduro and Flores were transferred to New York to face narco-terrorism, drug trafficking, and weapons charges. Maduro’s ouster came after months of U.S. lethal strikes on vessels allegedly transporting drugs for U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) tied to Maduro, seizures of vessels transporting sanctioned Venezuelan oil, and a drone strike that destroyed a port facility. President Trump said the United States will “run” Venezuela until a transition takes place and subsequently stated that Venezuelan officials would turn over “sanctioned oil,” reportedly worth some \$3 billion, and negotiate an energy deal in which the United States will largely control Venezuela’s oil industry. He asserted that Maduro’s vice president and oil minister Delcy Rodríguez, who is under U.S. sanctions for corruption, appears willing “to do what we think is necessary” as acting president. If not, he warned, she could “pay a very big price.” For more read: Clare Ribando Seelke “*U.S. Capture of Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro: Considerations for Congress*,” *Congressional Research Service, CRS Insights*, Version 6, Updated (2026), page 1. Available at: [https://www.congress.gov/crs\\_external\\_products/IN/PDF/IN12618/IN12618.6.pdf](https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IN/PDF/IN12618/IN12618.6.pdf)

offers a striking contemporary illustration of this enduring logic. Despite the existence of an extensive international legal framework prohibiting the use of force against sovereign states absent United Nations authorization,<sup>[139]</sup> the operation reflects a strategic calculation rooted primarily in national interest rather than legal obligation.

From the standpoint of positive international law, the intervention constitutes a clear violation of foundational norms of the United Nations Charter-based international legal order, including the prohibition on the use of force, respect for state sovereignty, and the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of states. The most fundamental is the prohibition on the use of force enshrined in Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter, which obliges all states to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. This prohibition is widely regarded not merely as treaty law but as a rule of customary international law with near-peremptory status.<sup>[140]</sup> It admits only two narrowly defined exceptions: collective action authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter, and the inherent right of individual or “collective self-defense” under Article 51 in response to an armed attack.<sup>[141]</sup> In the Venezuelan case, neither exception appears *prima facie* applicable. There was no Security Council resolution authorizing military action,<sup>[142]</sup> nor credible evidence of an armed attack by Venezuela against the United States that could trigger the right of self-defense.

International legal experts have therefore argued that the operation constituted a significant violation of Venezuelan sovereignty and of the UN Charter framework governing the use of force.<sup>[143]</sup> The forcible seizure and transfer of a sitting head of state by foreign military forces further implicates the principle of sovereign equality of states, articulated in Article 2(1) of the Charter, and the corollary norm of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of states. Beyond the Charter itself, the intervention also challenges the broader customary principle of non-intervention, which prohibits coercive interference in the political independence of states. Article 2(7) of the UN Charter reinforces this norm by restricting the United Nations, and by implication its member states, from intervening in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.<sup>[144]</sup> Although Chapter VII permits collective enforcement measures in response to threats to international peace and security, that authority is vested exclusively in the Security Council and does not extend to unilateral regime-change operations undertaken by individual states. The United States justification of the operation illustrates the limits of liberal legal reasoning in the face of hegemonic power.

Claims framed in terms of restoring democracy, combating narcotics trafficking, or protecting human rights resonate with liberal internationalist discourse, yet international law provides no general legal basis for unilateral “*democratic intervention*.”<sup>[145]</sup> Chapter VII does not authorize the use of

<sup>139</sup> “Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations at the time of the 2003 Iraq conflict, has written: ‘No principle of the Charter is more important than the principle of the non-use of force as embodied in Article 2, paragraph 4 . . . Secretaries – General confront many challenges in the course of their tenures but the challenge that tests them and defines them inevitably involves the use of force.’ The same might be said of Government leaders and their legal advisers.3 The aim of this article is to give some flavor of the role that the international law on the use of force plays in practice when a Government is contemplating the use of force internationally, or aiding or assisting others to do so, or even just being pressed for a view on what others are about to do or have done.” For more read: Michael Wood “International Law and the Use of Force: What Happens in Practice,” *Indian Journal of International Law*, Volume 53, (2013), page 345. Available at: [https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ls/Wood\\_article.pdf](https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ls/Wood_article.pdf)

<sup>140</sup> “The International Court of Justice dealt with such a situation in the Nicaragua case in which it looked at the customary nature of the principles of non-use of force and non-intervention, stating that: It is not to be expected that in the practice of States the application of the rules in question should have been perfect, in the sense that States should have refrained, with complete consistency, from the use of force or from intervention in each other’s internal affairs. The Court does not consider that, for a rule to be established as customary, the corresponding practice must be in absolute rigorous conformity with the rule. In order to deduce the existence of customary rules, the Court deems it sufficient that the conduct of States should, in general, be consistent with such rules, and that instances of State conduct inconsistent with a given rule should generally have been treated as breaches of that rule, not as indications of the recognition of a new rule. If a State acts in a way *prima facie* incompatible with a recognized rule, but defends its conduct by appealing to exceptions or justifications contained within the rule itself, then whether or not the State’s conduct is in fact justifiable on that basis, the significance of that attitude is to confirm rather than to weaken the rule.” For more read: Jean-Marie Henckaerts & Louise Doswald Beck “*Customary International Humanitarian Law*,” Volume I: Rules, International Committee of the Red Cross, Cambridge University Press (2005), at xliii-xlvi. Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/external/doc/en/assets/files/other/customary-international-humanitarian-law-i-icrc-eng.pdf>

<sup>141</sup> “Indeed, ever since the creation of the United Nations in 1945, scholars have been deeply divided over the purport of Article 51 UN Charter, which enshrines the right of self-defense ‘if an armed attack occurs’. Opinions differ as to whether the latter phrase extends to ‘protection of nationals’ abroad; whether it sanctions defensive measures against small scale attacks or ‘imminent’ attacks; whether it permits military action against States engaged in so-called ‘indirect aggression’, et cetera. The confusion over the ‘armed attack’ requirement is further compounded by additional sources of controversy, in particular the relationship between Article 51 and the general prohibition on inter-State use of force of Article 2(4) UN Charter, and the relationship between Article 51 and the customary right of self-defense.” For more see: Tom Ruys “*Armed Attack and Article 51 of the UN Charter: Evolutions in Customary Law and Practice*,” Excerpt, Cambridge University Press (2013), page 2. Available at: [https://assets.cambridge.org/97805217/66647/excerpt/9780521766647\\_excerpt.pdf](https://assets.cambridge.org/97805217/66647/excerpt/9780521766647_excerpt.pdf)

<sup>142</sup> “[The debates] around the permissibility of the use of force by states, acting individually or collectively, but without UN Security Council authorization, for the purpose of stopping or preventing a humanitarian catastrophe. These are the debates about whether there is a rule permitting ‘humanitarian intervention’. Although the UN Charter does not include such a rule, a few states now maintain that such a rule exists<sup>14</sup> and scholars continue to debate whether such a rule should exist. In each of these four areas – Security Council authorization; anticipatory or pre-emptive self-defense; self-defense against non-state actors; and ‘humanitarian intervention’ – it may be argued that the rules as envisaged in 1945, or as articulated at some later point since then, have required change to meet new challenges.” For more read: Dapo Akande & Katie A. Johnston “*Implications of Diversity of Rules on the Use of Force for Change in the Law*,” *European Journal of International Law*, Volume 32, no. 2, (2021), page 683. Available at: <https://www.ejil.org/pdfs/32/2/3171.pdf>

<sup>143</sup> “The U.S. military operation to capture Maduro has prompted international debate. The UN Secretary General said U.S. actions set a “dangerous precedent,” and some U.S. allies condemned the action at an emergency UN Security Council meeting. European Union officials urged restraint and respect for international law. China, Cuba, and Iran have condemned the action. Latin American governments have expressed differing perspectives on the operation.” For more see: Clare Ribando Seelke “*U.S. Capture of Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro: Considerations for Congress*,” *Supra* note 138 at 2.

<sup>144</sup> “In addition to the rejection of interventionism expressed in the Charter of the United Nations Article 2(7) stipulating states’ duty not to intervene in matters that fall within the domestic jurisdiction of sovereign states, a series of other international agreements framed increasingly more restrictive rules on military intervention. . . .” For more read: Charles W. Kegley Jr, Gregory A. Raymond & Margaret G. Hermann “*The Rise and Fall of Non-intervention norm: some Correlates and Potential Consequences*,” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Volume 22, No. 1, Winter/Spring (1998), page 88.

<sup>145</sup> “REISMAN pierces sovereignty’s abstract veil and vests true sovereignty in the citizens of the State. Similarly, D’AMATO points out that international law is about people and not about States.2 This implies that the test for sovereignty is the democratic character of a State. Only elected governments are deemed to represent the people and their atomistic sovereignty. If a government is not elected, it can never embody the sovereignty of the State. Then, basing prodemocratic intervention on this premise is the next logical step. As only democratic States are bearers of sovereignty, any State has the right, even more, the obligation to overthrow non-democratic governments so as to restore the full sovereignty of the State.” For more read: Cedric Ryngaert “*Prodemocratic Intervention in*

force for “*democratization*” as such, and Article 2(4) explicitly prohibits the use of force even when motivated by political objectives. In this sense, liberal rhetoric operates less as a legal justification than as an ideological narrative that reinterprets coercive action as normatively desirable rather than legally permissible.<sup>[146]</sup>

From a classical realist perspective, the episode demonstrates how dominant states may treat legal norms as conditional, observing them when they align with strategic objectives and disregarding them when they do not. The irony is unmistakable. Theories articulated over two millennia ago continue to illuminate modern state behavior, underscoring that the tension between power, law, and morality is not a historical anomaly but a persistent structural feature of international politics. Yet realism alone does not fully account for how such actions are justified, particularly in the case of the United States.

Here, liberalism, especially in its institutional and ideological forms, enters the analysis. Liberal international relations theory emphasizes the role of legal norms, international institutions, democratic governance, and human rights in shaping state behavior.<sup>[147]</sup> The United States frequently frames its foreign policy within this liberal vocabulary,

presenting interventions as efforts to defend democracy, protect human rights, or uphold a rules-based international order.<sup>[148]</sup> “*American Exceptionalism*”<sup>[149]</sup> functions as a crucial connective element within this framework. It supplies the moral and ideological language that classical realism itself avoids.

By portraying United States power as uniquely benevolent or historically necessary, exceptionalism recasts coercive action not as a violation of international law, but as a corrective undertaken in service of higher liberal values.<sup>[150]</sup> When synthesized, realism and liberalism reveal not a contradiction but a layered dynamic in United States conduct. Strategic interests drive action in a manner consistent with realist expectations, while liberal ideals and institutions provide the normative structure through which those actions are explained and legitimated.

In this sense, American exceptionalism operates less as a genuine legal doctrine than as a legitimating ideology,<sup>[151]</sup> one that obscures departures from established norms by cloaking power in moral necessity. The pattern is historically familiar. Just as monarchs once invoked “*Divine Right of Kings*”<sup>[152]</sup> to transcend earthly law, modern hegemonic power invokes liberal virtue to render legal constraint

*International Law*,” Institute for International Law, Working Paper No. 53, April (2004), page 4. Available at: <https://www.law.kuleuven.be/iir/nl/onderzoek/working-papers/WP53e.pdf>

<sup>146</sup> “Some scholars point to U.S. military interests as a reason that American interventions tend to fail to lead to democratization, sometimes even reversing it. Others maintain that the negative results, at least with regard to U.S. efforts to promote democracy, are due to an inherent contradiction between the idea of democratization and its imposition from outside by force. Still a third group contends that the emerging consensus that interventions are an ineffective method of promoting democracy is overdrawn and unwarranted. They argue that a closer reading of the record suggests that under the right circumstances the United States is an effective agent for promoting democracy or at least for promoting general liberal regimes.” For more read: Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & George W. Downs “*Intervention and Democracy*,” International Organization, Volume 60, No. 3, Summer (2006), page 628. Available at: <https://as.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu-as/faculty/documents/Intervention.pdf>

<sup>147</sup> “Liberal IR theory elaborates the insight that state-society relations – the relationship of states to the domestic and transnational social context in which they are embedded – have a fundamental impact on state behavior in world politics. Societal ideas, interests, and institutions influence state behavior by shaping state preferences, that is, the fundamental social purposes underlying the strategic calculations of governments. For liberals, the configuration of state preferences matters most in world politics – not, as realists argue, the configuration of capabilities and not, as institutionalists (that is, functional regime theorists) maintain, the configuration of information and institutions.” For more read: Andrew Moravcsik “*Taking Preference Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics*,” International Organization, Volume 51, No. 4, Autumn (1997) page 513. Available at: <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/preferences.pdf>

<sup>148</sup> “Historically the United States has made claims to a unilateral right to humanitarian intervention in order, presumably, to protect lives and property in foreign states. Recent Presidents did so, for example, in 1965 in the Dominican Republic, in 1983 in Grenada, and in 1989 in Panama. President Carter, in authorizing the attempted rescue of Americans from Iran in 1980, made claims to self-defense rather than humanitarian intervention. There being no codified right of humanitarian intervention in international law to rescue either one's own nationals or foreigners, owing to the widespread and well-justified fear of its misuse, the United States is left with consideration of controversial exercises of power accompanied mostly by claims of self-defense (Iran, 1980) and/or of invitation to act by the consent of the government (Grenada, 1983). President Bush's assertion of an additional right to use force to restore a properly elected government in Panama was met with widespread opposition. President Clinton later side-stepped this issue in Haiti by obtaining UN Security Council authorization to use all necessary means to remove an unelected government, which had deposed an elected one, because of an alleged threat to international peace and security. Some uses of the US military to rescue both US nationals and foreigners have not been controversial in places such as Liberia and Somalia, because US action was met by widespread deference... [Democratic assistance] The United States has manifested a long history of concern with democracy abroad – at least via rhetoric.” For more see: David Pl. Forsythe “*Human Rights and Comparative Foreign Policy*,” United Nations University Press (2000), page 41. Available at: <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/59680/1/95.pdf>

<sup>149</sup> “This first form of American exceptionalism—pursuing an international order that resonated with values the American people saw as their own—became the basis for a global transformational agenda whose effects are unfolding still. Yet from the outset the United States also sought to insulate itself from the domestic blowback of certain of these developments. This, too, has been justified on the grounds of American exceptionalism: a perceived need to safeguard the special features and protections of the U.S. Constitution from external interference. And it also taps into a core element of American identity: ours is a civic nationalism, defined by the institutions and practices that bind us, not by blood and soil, and none is more foundational than the Constitution itself. For more read: John Gerard Ruggie, “*American Exceptionalism, Exemptionalism and Global Governance*,” Princeton University Press, February (2004) page 305. Available at: [https://johnruggie.scholars.harvard.edu/sites/g/files/omnuum3761/files/john-ruggie/files/american\\_exceptionalism\\_with\\_title\\_page.pdf](https://johnruggie.scholars.harvard.edu/sites/g/files/omnuum3761/files/john-ruggie/files/american_exceptionalism_with_title_page.pdf)

<sup>150</sup> “Since 1945 America has displayed exceptional leadership in promoting international human rights. At the same time, however, it has also resisted complying with human rights standards at home or aligning its foreign policy with these standards abroad. Under some administrations, it has promoted human rights as if they were synonymous with American values, while under others, it has emphasized the superiority of American values over international standards. This combination of leadership and resistance is what defines American human rights behavior as exceptional, and it is this complex and ambivalent pattern...” For more read: Michael Ignatieff “*American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*,” Princeton University Press (2005), page 1. Available at: <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/ignatieff.pdf>

<sup>151</sup> “The term ‘American exceptionalism’ used here does not imply an inherent arrogance in the American psyche, rather, it implies a certain self-image of America's role in the world which has grown out of a particularly exceptional historic experience, and continues to be exemplified through a closely related nexus of values and beliefs which can best be described as an ideology.” For more see: Caleb Spencer “*American Exceptionalism: Exemplifying Patriotism and Justifying Patriotism and Justifying Imperialism*,” page 3. Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/51348>

<sup>152</sup> “Unequivocal in his assertions, James argued that the essence of monarchy was divine and supreme in power, authority, and status. All subjects, whether clergymen, nobles, or ordinary citizens, were subservient to his sovereignty. The king claimed to be a little god over his domain, and he articulated his understanding of the nature of monarchy as such: Kings are called Gods by the [prophetic] King David, because they sit [upon] God his Throne in the earth, and have the count of their administration to give [unto] him... since [God] that hath only the power to make him, hath the [only] the power to [unmake] him; and ye [only] to obey.” For more read: Nathan P. Greenhaw “*The Little god of England: The Divine Right of James I and the English Response*,” SMU Journal of Undergraduate Research, Volume 7, Issue 2, May (2022), page 1. Available at: <https://scholar.smu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1119&context=jour>

contingent rather than binding. The Venezuela operation thus illustrates how, even in an era of codified international law and liberal institutionalism, the primacy of power identified by classical realism remains intact, though now articulated through the moral language of liberalism.

While not addressed in this analysis, more recent approaches such as “critical legal studies,”<sup>[153]</sup> alongside contemporary revisions of realism and liberalism,<sup>[154]</sup> explicitly interrogate these legitimizing practices by questioning the neutrality of legal norms and exposing how law may function to legitimize and reproduce existing power structures in international relations. In this broader theoretical light, the Venezuelan episode is not an aberration but a revealing case study in the enduring tension between legality and legitimacy in the conduct of hegemonic power. A parallel illustration of this logic can be observed in recent United States discourse concerning Greenland.<sup>[155]</sup>

United States officials and strategic policy circles have increasingly articulated Greenland as a site of geopolitical interest, often framed in terms of security imperatives and the prevention of rival influence by Russia or China in the North Atlantic region.<sup>[156]</sup> The underlying narrative is striking: sovereignty is treated not as an inviolable legal principle but

as a contingent variable in a broader competition among great powers. Although articulated in the language of collective security and strategic stability, such discourse implicitly reduces Greenland to an object of geopolitical rivalry, as though the prospect of influence were a “zero-sum” contest whose stakes justify anticipatory claims of strategic entitlement.<sup>[157]</sup>

The irony lies in the fact that the logic resembles a tacit competition over spheres of influence, even as it is rhetorically framed as a defensive necessity rather than an assertion of dominance.<sup>[158]</sup> This episode further underscores the epistemic limits of purely doctrinal analysis and the necessity of theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches to international law.<sup>[159]</sup> Doctrinal analysis or “Black letter law” remains indispensable in identifying formal violations of legal norms,<sup>[160]</sup> such as breaches of the prohibition on the use of force, the principle of non-intervention, and the sovereign equality of states.

However, doctrinal analysis alone cannot fully explain why such violations occur, how they are justified, or why they persist despite the apparent clarity of legal rules. H.L.A. Hart did not explicitly deny that international law qualifies as law, but his framework in “*The Concept of Law*”<sup>[161]</sup> suggests it

<sup>153</sup> “[“Law”] remains a technology of rule of some over others, but one that is rarely simple and almost never unerring. This insight of critical legal studies – that law’s determination is compatible with plurality of outcomes – is known as ‘functional underdeterminacy.’ Likewise, law’s performance of social functions coexists with prevalent underdeterminacy in legal meaning – what I will call ‘interpretive underdeterminacy.’ The law allows different readings of constitutions, statutes, and customs. Such readings are manifest in court precedents from the past and historical narratives in the present that choose one meaning over others, not to mention in advocacy strategies that promote some understandings as correct or preferable as a means of achieving desired future outcomes. The critical legal studies movement sought to assess how the generally troubling purposes that law serves are achieved through underdeterminate law.” For more read: Samuel Moyn “*Reconstructing Critical Legal Studies*,” *The Yale Law Journal*, (2024), page 80. Available at: [https://yalelawjournal.org/pdf/134.1Moyn\\_k36xsc3n.pdf](https://yalelawjournal.org/pdf/134.1Moyn_k36xsc3n.pdf)

<sup>154</sup> “Critical legal studies is the first movement in legal theory and legal scholarship in the United... The emergence and growth of the Conference on Critical Legal Studies (“CCL”) ... raises the prospect of generating an impact on scholarship outreach the impact of Realism in the 1920s and 1930s... The publication of the *Politics of Law: A progressive Critique*, as a joint venture between the Conference and National Lawyers Guild, provide a text that comes close to being a manifesto for the critical legal studies movement. This homogeneity is in itself and consciously political; it involves the transplantation of ‘movement’ political idea and lessons in the field of legal scholarship. The diversity of critical legal studies movement is just as distinctive. There is a readily identified communality of starting-point in the critique of liberal legalism and common awareness of the importance of theory and methodology which is a reaction against the generalized atheoretical character of mainstream legal scholarship.” For more read: Alan Hunt “*The Theory of Critical Legal Studies*,” *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, Volume 6, No. 1, Spring (1986), page 2-3.

<sup>155</sup> “American interest in Greenland is not new. The US government has previously discussed acquiring Greenland in 1867, 1910, 1946, 1955, 2019, and 2025. Its current interest in Greenland is underlined by two factors: homeland defense and critical minerals. For US homeland defense, Greenland was important during the Cold War due to its important location both for aerial and maritime reasons.” For more see: Gabriella Gricius “*Trump’s Greenland threat should be taken seriously but it is not for sale*,” *North American and Atlantic Defense and Security Network, Quick Impact*, January (2026), page 2. Available at: [https://www.naadns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/26jan-Trumps-Greenland-threats-should-be-taken-seriously-but-it-is-not-for-sale\\_Quick-Impact-Gricius.pdf](https://www.naadns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/26jan-Trumps-Greenland-threats-should-be-taken-seriously-but-it-is-not-for-sale_Quick-Impact-Gricius.pdf)

<sup>156</sup> “Greenland is a self-governing Arctic Island within the Kingdom of Denmark, which strives for economic self-sufficiency and future independence. In the context of a – literally and figuratively – heating Arctic, this representative democracy of 56 542 inhabitants is a focus of geopolitical competition and growing confrontation between major powers – the United States (US), Russia and China. The island has high strategic importance, due to its proximity to the emerging Arctic shipping routes, its strategic location in relation to security and defense activities, and its vast untapped natural resources, including mineral reserves.” For more see: “*Greenland: Caught in the Arctic geopolitical contest*,” *European Parliament Briefing*, European Union (2025), page 1. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769527/EPRS\\_BRI\(2025\)769527\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769527/EPRS_BRI(2025)769527_EN.pdf)

<sup>157</sup> “Rationality in this Realist word centers on the struggle for power in an anarchic environment. States fend for themselves as they pursue their contradictory interests. Because of the conflictual nature of this ‘self-help’ environment, the situation is mistakenly seen as zero-sum where no cooperation is possible and states can pursue their own best interest without regard for the interest of others. The game-theory perspective reveals that these circumstances prevail only in artificially constructed, two-player parlor games. For real international issues, states’ interest will not be properly characterized by assuming such pure opposition of interests. This leads directly to strategic rationality which incorporates the realization that the pursuit of egoistic interest requires consideration of interaction of one state’s choice with other states’ choice. No state can choose its best strategy or attain its best outcome independent of choice made by others.” For more see: Duncan Snidal “*The Game Theory of International Politics*,” *World Politics*, Volume 38, No. 1, October (1985), page 39.

<sup>158</sup> “The goal of minimizing global injustice... recognizes the need to create powers, namely, institutions, that make this goal possible, namely, that achieve peace equilibrium. While *Realpolitik* is blind to justice in the name of stability, we say that there is no zero-sum game between justice and stability.” For more see: Uri Weiss “*Playing the Game of International Law*,” *Touro Law Review*, Volume 38, No. 3, Article 7, (2022) page 914. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.tourolaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3407&context=lawreview>

<sup>159</sup> “International law scholarship, dominated for decades by an improbable combination of doctrinalism and idealism, has done little to account for these characteristics of international law. And it has made little progress in explaining how international law works in practice: how it originates and changes; how it affects behavior among very differently endowed states; when and why states act consistently with it; and why it plays such an important role in the rhetoric of international relations.” For more read: Jack L. Goldsmith & Erick A. Posner “*The Limits of International Law*,” Oxford University Press (2005), page 1. Available at: <https://iuristebi.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/the-limits-of-international-law.pdf>

<sup>160</sup> “In a doctrinal legal education, skills of case analysis and research of precedents are well developed. The conduct of legal research is necessary in practice regardless of one’s knowledge of doctrine.” For more see: Alister A. Henskens “*Legal Education: Black Letter, White Letter or Practical Law*,” *Newc LR*, Volume 9, (2005-6), page 83. Available at: <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/NewcLawRw/2006/5.pdf>

<sup>161</sup> “Hart believes that there are two different types of rules which comprise the “essence” of law: primary rules and secondary rules. The importance of distinguishing between these two types of rules, while recognizing their interrelation, should not be minimized. Hart described their relationship in *The Concept of Law*: The main theme of this book is that so many of the distinctive operations of law, and so many of the ideas which constitute the framework of legal

does not constitute a fully developed legal system. He emphasized that a complete legal system requires primary rules imposing duties and secondary rules, including rules of recognition, change, and adjudication, to identify, create, and enforce law.<sup>[162]</sup>

International law, lacking centralized institutions equivalent to a legislature, executive, and judiciary, fails to meet these criteria, and scholars have noted that this absence renders it functionally distinct from municipal legal systems.<sup>[163]</sup> Theories of international relations complement legal doctrine by revealing the structural, ideological, and power-based dynamics that shape state behavior. When combined with critical legal approaches that reject the assumption of law's neutrality and objectivity, this interdisciplinary framework exposes how legal norms may be selectively interpreted, strategically invoked, or rhetorically reframed to legitimize hegemonic practices.

#### 4. Conclusion

Renaissance humanism provides a framework for understanding the persistent tension between moral responsibility and the exercise of power in international law. Its emphasis on reason, ethical judgment, and the dignity of the human actor illuminates the normative foundations that underpin liberal commitments, while its attention to competition and strategic foresight anticipates realist concerns with interest and coercion. The 2026 United States intervention in Venezuela underscores the limits of law in isolation. Legal instruments can identify breaches of sovereignty, non-intervention, and the prohibition on force, yet they offer little insight into why states transgress or how such actions are rationalized.

A humanist perspective, by contrast, invites a careful reading of both ethical and strategic dimensions, revealing the intricate interplay of principle and pragmatism that governs state conduct. Ultimately, the governance of international relations demands more than rule-following: it requires judgment, discernment, and the courage to navigate the space between obligation and necessity. By tracing the lineage of these questions from classical thought through Renaissance reflection to contemporary practice, humanist philosophy reminds us that understanding global politics is as much about cultivating moral insight as it is about calculating power.

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thought, require for their elucidation reference to one or both of these two types of rules, that their union may be justly regarded as the "essence" of law, *though they may not always be found together whenever the word "law" is correctly used*. Hart stated that "law may most illuminatingly be characterized as a union of primary rules of obligation with such secondary rules. Hart referred to this union as the 'heart' of a legal system." For more read: William C. Starr "Law and Morality in H.L.A. Hart's Legal Philosophy," Marquette Law Review, Volume 67, Issue 4, Summer (1994), page 675-676. Available at: <https://scholarship.law.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1941&context=mulr>

<sup>162</sup> "Hart elaborates two minimum conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the existence of a legal system: On the one hand those rules of behavior which are valid according to the system's ultimate criteria of validity must be generally obeyed, and, on the other hand, its rules of recognition specifying the criteria of legal validity and its rules of change and adjudication must be effectively accepted as common public standards of official behavior by its officials." For more read: Michael Payne "Hart's Concept of Legal System," William & Mary Law Review, Volume 18, Issue 2, December (1976), page 288. Available at: <https://scispace.com/pdf/hart-s-concept-of-a-legal-system-4nla5idbhb.pdf>

<sup>163</sup> "Hart identifies the absence of an international legislature, of courts with compulsory jurisdiction, and of centrally organized sanctions as the main sources for doubting the legal quality of international law. According to Hart, these differences make international law resemble the 'simple form of social structure' which can be found in primitive societies. For Hart international law consists mainly of primary rules, and he expresses doubts whether any secondary rules exist on the international level. He then examines in greater detail whether the lack of centralized sanctions precludes the characterization of international law as law. According to Hart, no such sanctions exist in international law. Even the powers of the United Nations Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter would not establish such a system due to the probability of the Council being paralyzed by the veto. Hart, nevertheless, rejects the conclusion that the absence of sanctions entails the absence of obligations in international law. Such a conclusion would be intelligible only if obligations were to be equated with the likelihood of a sanction in the case of disobedience." For more read: Mehrdad Payandeh "The Concept of International Law in the Jurisprudence of H.L.A. Hart," The European Journal of International Law, Volume 2, No. 4, (2011), page 975. Available at: <https://www.ejil.org/pdfs/21/4/2121.pdf>

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