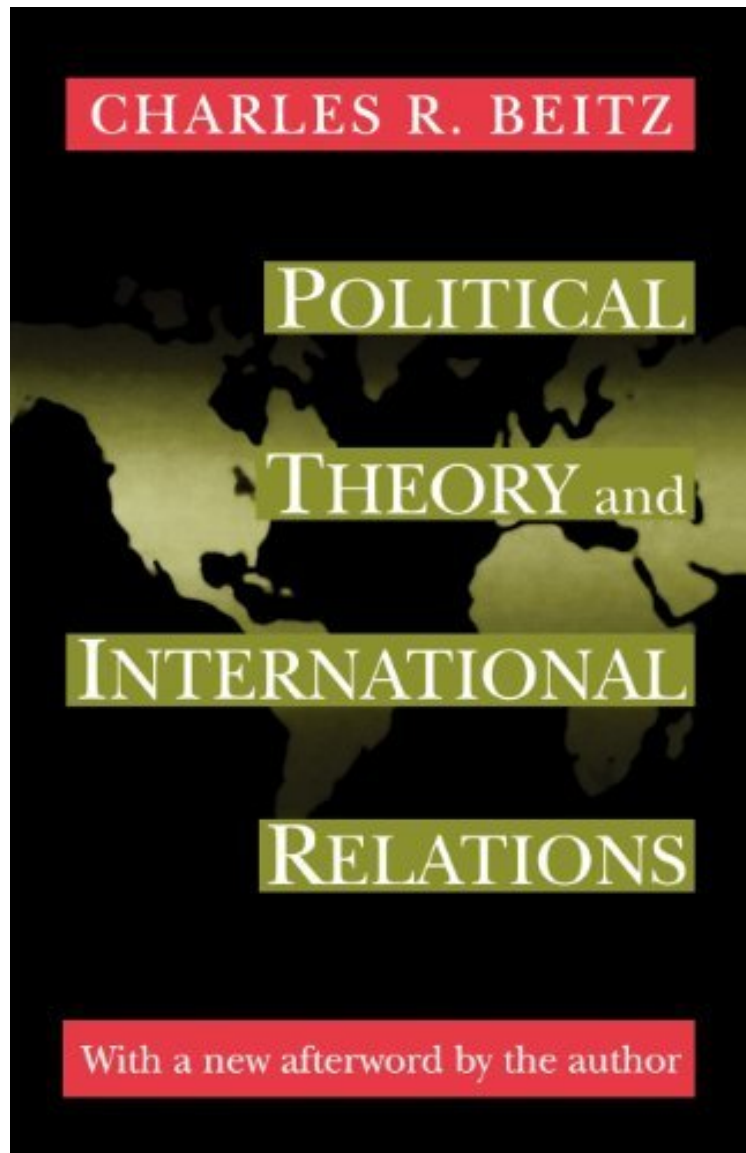


# Political Theory and International Relations

*Von Charles R. Beitz*

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**Von Charles R. Beitz : Political Theory and International Relations** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Political Theory and International Relations:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen2 von 2 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Global Justice ReconsideredVon Big Bad AlCharles Beitz's book 'Political Theory and International Relations' is one of the earliest and best statements in the current debate about global justice and cosmopolitanism. Moreover, it is a major theoretical contribution to the fields of International Relations (IR) and political theory alike. The novelty of the work

lies in its attempt to fuse conventional political theory with the study of IR. Traditionally scholars of the two disciplines did not have to say much to each other. Most mainstream IR theorists upheld the 'timeless truth of realism' (Buzan) and stressed the difference between domestic politics and international affairs. Similarly political theorists were, especially since the publication of the late John Rawls' book 'A Theory of Justice' in 1971, primarily concerned with justice within certain political communities, i.e. with domestic justice. However, Beitz was having none of it and sought to re-introduce normative theorising into IR, thereby laying the foundation for the current interest in global justice. Beitz's outlook is broadly cosmopolitan and like other contemporary US liberal philosophers he is deeply indebted to Kant. Yet, unlike Rawls, who thought that justice was a value to be pursued within bounded communities, Beitz argues that national boundaries merely have secondary moral importance when compared to the overwhelming moral status of the individual. From this perspective Beitz undertakes insightful and critical discussions of classic IR realism and the contentious issue of national self-determination. However, his book is probably best known for its theory of global justice, which is formulated in the third part of the work. Beitz is a Rawlsian, but unlike Rawls, he imagines the social contract, which is set up in the Original Position, to take place between all individuals in the world. Beitz wants a global Original Position and defends his theoretical constructions with two arguments. First, he argues that we now live in an international society that has developed a 'basic structure', which has to be regulated by principles of justice. Second, he maintains that, even if there was not a 'global basic structure', we should construct global principles of justice because the world's resources are unequally distributed. People should not be 'worse off through no fault of their own' just because they happened to be born into a resource poor country. Thus Beitz argues that Rawls' famous 'difference principle' (that only those inequalities are justified that work to the benefit of the worst off) should be applied globally, which means that a resource re-distribution from rich to poor individuals, no matter where they happen to reside, should take place. These are radical conclusions and they haven't remained unchallenged. Communitarian critics have argued that justice can only work within bounded communities and that a comparable form of community does not exist at international level. Others have questioned Beitz's claim that we now live in an international basic structure, although the phenomenon of globalisation adds force to Beitz's initial argument. Rawls himself replied to Beitz in his last great work, 'The Law of Peoples', by arguing that living standards within a country do not depend on resource endowment but its political culture and institutions. To cut a long story short, Beitz's provocative theses, be they on Realism, Self-determination or Justice, have sparked numerous important debates in IR as well as in the study of political theory. Consequently the book is a must read for anyone interested in either (or both) of these disciplines. It is also recommended to those, who reject the cynical power politics of hawkish neo-cons and are interested in the global justice debates. However, the book is best read in conjunction with some other works: John Rawls' 'A Theory of Justice' and 'The Law of Peoples'; Chris Brown's 'Sovereignty, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today' and Thomas Pogge's 'World Poverty and Human Rights' as well as David Held's and Tony McGrew's 'Globalisation/Anti-Globalisation'. Charles Beitz is currently professor of politics at Princeton.

**Kurzbeschreibung** In this revised edition of his 1979 classic *Political Theory and International Relations*, Charles Beitz rejects two highly influential conceptions of international theory as empirically inaccurate and theoretically misleading. In one, international relations is a Hobbesian state of nature in which moral judgments are entirely inappropriate, and in the other, states are analogous to persons in domestic society in having rights of autonomy that insulate them from external moral assessment and political interference. Beitz postulates that a theory of international politics should include a revised principle of state autonomy based on the justice of a state's domestic institutions, and a principle of international distributive justice to establish a fair division of resources and wealth among persons situated in diverse national societies.

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