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Kamminga, M.R.

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Menno R. Kamminga*

Is Neorealism Obsolete?
Etzioni's Communitarian Confirmation of Neorealist Theory

Abstract. Amitai Etzioni has recently criticized the (neo)realist paradigm for overplaying military and economic factors and overlooking the independent power of normative ones. Relying on empirical evidence and moral reflection, Etzioni claims his communitarian paradigm to have the distinct quality of acknowledging a major role to global values sharing and political community formation, boosted by a realistic and legitimate American foreign policy that promotes “security first” universally. This essay claims that Etzioni’s communitarianism offers no compelling reason for neorealists to consider abandoning their theory - rather the contrary. Etzioni’s analysis confirms neorealist core propositions about states as primarily egoistic security-seekers under anarchy, strongly suggesting the actual relevance of a moderate, flexible neorealism that attributes clear priority to national security.

Keywords: neorealism; Etzioni; communitarianism; International Relations theory

INTRODUCTION

In his *From Empire to Community* (2004) and *Security First* (2007), renowned sociologist and public intellectual Amitai Etzioni extends the communitarianism he became famous for in the 1990s (Etzioni, 1996) from the domestic to the global realm. In the former work, Etzioni develops a longer-term global vision, arguing that principal and pragmatic reasons exist for a world order that features “global community” rather than “American empire”.

* Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations and International Organization, University of Groningen, The Netherlands. Contact: m.r.kamminga@rug.nl.

In the latter work, he defends the immediate importance of a realistic yet morally sound American foreign policy, offering principal and pragmatic arguments for universal “security first” promotion. The books differ in focus, but agree that not only military and economic factors but also normative ones shape international relations. One of Etzioni’s targets, then, is realism, particularly neorealism. What is arguably the dominant international theory seems to neglect the independent and increasing impact of moral principles. In contrast, Etzioni’s “attempt to contribute to a communitarian theory of international relations” is “deliberately both positive and normative” (2004, p. 213), grounded in “empirical evidence and moral reflection” (2007, p. xiv).

In this essay, I claim that Etzioni’s communitarianism offers no compelling reason for neorealists to consider abandoning their theory - rather the contrary.¹ Neorealism, in Kenneth Waltz’s (1979) authoritative account, holds that the international system structures and constraints the behavior of states. I take it to be a theory that is methodologically deductivist and microeconomics-inspired, focuses on the system rather than everything international, and rests on three core propositions. First, in the absence of world government, the international realm is invariably anarchic, while allowing the international system to vary in the way in which capabilities are distributed among units. Second, states, particularly the ones most capable and powerful, are the international system’s main units. Third, in seeking to ensure their survival under anarchy, states have security as their primary goal and are primarily egoistic, pursuing the other goals they may have, including altruistic ones, only once security is assured. Generally, the interstate competition for security results in a balance of power. Thus, I take neorealism not in an extreme

¹ An earlier version of this essay was presented at the 5th ECPR General Conference in Potsdam, Germany, 10-12 September 2009. I thank Michael Agner, Nienke De Deugd, and an anonymous reviewer for their constructive comments.

version that assumes states to try maximize their power and achieve hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001), but in a moderate version that assigns clear priority to national security (Glaser, 2003, p. 412, Olsen, 1998, p. 347, cf. Kamminga, 2007). I claim, then, that, despite Etzioni's aim to challenge (neo)realism and to defend the prospect of valuable global change, the moral-empirical content of his communitarianism confirms - is supportive of, explainable by, or consistent with - our neorealist propositions. Etzioni's analysis strongly suggests the actual relevance of a flexible neorealism that holds altruistic international behavior, albeit constrained, to be possible (cf. Waltz, 1993, p. 55, Glaser, 2003).

Etzioni's challenge rests on the insight that a theory, which aims to explain "reality", cannot rely on deductive causal reasoning alone; it also needs moral and empirical adequacy (1988, ch. 1). Neorealists, I would argue, should be open to a moral test of their theory. Value-free theories cannot exist. Waltz recognizes that neorealism is rooted in a normative rejection of world government - "an invitation to prepare for world civil war" (1979, p. 112) - and a celebration of the "virtues of anarchy" (*ibi.*, pp. 111-114). Like Kant, he fears that a world government would suppress freedom, become awfully despotic, and finally collapse into chaos. Like Niebuhr, he believes security and decency are better served by balanced than by (so easily misused) concentrated power (Waltz, 1986, pp. 340-341). I shall argue that Etzioni's communitarianism entails a moral confirmation of neorealism. Further, Etzioni (1988, p. 19) overemphasizes induction for a theory to stay "closer to the data" and "reality"; it makes a theory vulnerable to the inductivist fallacy (Waltz, 1979, pp. 4-11). Yet a theory needs empirical success for giving us reason to believe in its fruitfulness. It makes little sense for a neorealist to hold on to her theory if that would not regularly be verified by "the facts" or would even be falsified (cf.

Waltz, 1986, pp. 335-336). I shall also argue that Etzioni's communitarianism offers an empirical confirmation of neorealism.

ETZIONI'S COMMUNITARIANISM

Etzioni's (1996) communitarianism assumes a tension between the "I" and its autonomy and rights and the individual's responsibilities for the common good: the "We" that offers order and identity.² A "good society" seeks a "balanced position" between I and We, relying as much as possible on moral suasion, not on power (Etzioni, 2008a, p. 170). This communitarianism justifies obligations to compatriots, although "[p]articularistic communal responsibilities are not a substitute for universal claims [to basic human rights]" (Etzioni, 2007, p. 67).³ Particularistic obligations, argues Etzioni (2002), are a key part of what constitutes human beings' identities. Also, particularistic communities foster free agency and universalism, diminish the need for state coercion, humanize relations, and promote human flourishing. Yet "the greatest need for a new understanding along the 'I&We' communitarian lines is a study of transnational relations, since the world is becoming ever more one social system" (Etzioni, 2008a, p. 171). Thus, Etzioni holds that nations can share common goals and interests, and develop a willingness to make the required sacrifices, because there is a growing influence of normative elements in international relations. He expects the formation of a global "We": a "Global Nation", albeit a *sui generis* one (Etzioni, 2004, pp. 193, 199, 201). Etzioni, then, rejects (neo)realism:

² This section includes an adapted and shortened version of the reconstruction of Etzioni's account in Kamminga (2009).

³ Etzioni's (cf. 2007, pp. 67, 200) communitarianism is "responsive" or "neo" in accepting as basic both the universal claims of human rights and the particularistic claims of communities.

Strong realists (neorealists [notably Waltz] included) belittle the use of normative power in international relations if they do not dismiss it altogether, focusing instead on the use of economic power...and military threats and applications...As I see it, normative principles are best treated as one significant factor among a handful of others (*ibi.*, p. 73, cf. pp. 213, 225). [Against realism,] the distinct quality of my communitarianism is that it accords sharing of values a major role...and sees a major role for allies and the United Nations (Etzioni, 2005b, p. 1663).

Communities, argues Etzioni (2005a, p. 129, 1996, p. 127), have two features, which both operate transnationally, not just domestically. First, community members participate in a web of criss-crossing relationships. The rise of transnational citizenship, affective communications, voluntary associations, and social movements suggest transnational identity and loyalty formation. Second, communities share a moral culture. A globally shared set of values and norms exists, on a low yet rising level. Human rights are the best example; other norms that gain worldwide (albeit not always deep) respect are “women’s rights”, environmental concern, whaling limiting, ivory trade bans, opposition to land mines, and rejection of the Bush Doctrine of unilateral and pre-emptive intervention. Etzioni (2006, 2007, pp. 194-201) underlines “sovereignty as responsibility”, conceiving this new but widely adhered principle as the international application of communitarianism. This principle challenges the Westphalian notion of sovereign states, balancing nations’ rights with their responsibilities to the “international community”, which may intervene when a nation violates human rights. Hence the widespread condemnation of the United Nations’ inaction against the 1994 Rwanda genocide or the 1995 Srebrenica massacre; hence the transnational legitimization of the 1999 NATO intervention in Serbia to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. But can there be a

global “We” without a “They”, as communities are typically defined in separation from other human groups? Etzioni (2004, p. 195) replies that “the new ‘they’ are weapons of mass destruction [WMD] and pandemics [SARS, anthrax and botulinum toxin, HIV]; they fully qualify as enemies of humanity”. Etzioni (2005a, p. 143) admits that this does not guarantee that a global community will evolve, but he insists that sociological factors facilitate global-scale community development. He adds: “Communities...do not come in digital switches, on or off; they come in varying degrees of thickness” (Etzioni, 2004, p. 197).

In Etzioni’s view, the global community is empirically forming *and* morally valuable. The evolving global normative synthesis leads toward a “good society”. Fortunately, “East and West are...moving toward the middle of the autonomy/social order spectrum” (*ibi.*, p. 30). The “West” supplies a heavy stress on individual rights and choice. The “East” contributes respect for the common good, authority, and social obligations. The synthesis, then, is communitarian, featuring both autonomy and order. Accordingly, the coming global society can be seen as “good”: it is based on a “carefully crafted” balance between autonomy and order; it continuously re-examines its autonomy-order balance; and its order is based more on “normative controls” than on political coercion (*ibi.*, pp. 20-22). Hence Etzioni criticizes the Eastern “export” of autonomy-disregarding ideologies and social designs, but especially the Western tendency to export only autonomy and neglect the foundations of the social order, particularly by urging free market virtues on other countries. The lack of order in countries freed from communism, Taliban, or Saddam shows that spreading Western principles cannot suffice (*ibi.*, pp. 23-27).

Ultimately, the world *needs* a true global community (*ibi.*, p. 214), protected by a global state and government, and so it will strive for one. The

present regime of nation-states, American dominance, great powers, international organizations, and transnational movements fails. It is slow at solving the problems of capitalist globalization, such as proliferation of nuclear weapons, terrorism, genocide, ethnic cleansing, famines, crime, trafficking in people, environmental degradation, and spread of infectious diseases. A global architecture is needed in which morals, power, and costs are shared; and indeed, it is emerging (*ibi.*, chs. 9-13). This new polity is not replacing the old system, but adds a supranational layer of institutions. What will arise is a quasi-European Union (EU) global system, “in which the holding of sovereignty is split between nations and supranational bodies [and which] returns to a feature of pre-Westphalia Europe, where authority over a people was divided between the local rulers and the Church” (Etzioni, 2006, p. 83). Etzioni argues that the way the new order is arising is through the American-led formation of a Global Safety Authority (GSA), which paves the way for global authorities for health, environment, welfare, human rights, and social service. The GSA, created to deal with terrorism, is broadening its scope to include nuclear deproliferation through a Proliferation Security Initiative and related activities that exceed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Etzioni does not expect the GSA to dismantle and the old system to fully return, if only because of the continuous threat of terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Most likely is the GSA’s lasting presence, with the expansion of its missions to include pandemics curbing and humanitarian intervention. The end result will be “somewhat like a nation writ large”, “an actor in a way that the European Union already is” (Etzioni, 2005b, pp. 1659, 1660). After all, “nations are considered communities invested in a state, and if one can have a community of almost 1.3 billion (in China), one may also have such an imagined community of 6 billion citizens of the world” (*ibi.*, p. 1659). Thus, “the nation-states will gradually become more ‘invested’ in the

shared community, as nurturing it will become part of their commitment even when it conflicts somewhat with their particularistic, parochial, national interests" (*ibi.*, p. 1660). Etzioni stresses that this process is gradual, with delays as well as benefits. Regional community formation is essential first, because we cannot go directly from more than 190 nation-states to global governance. Yet we may expect "the global state, whose first duty - like that of all states - is to protect the safety of the people living in its territory" (Etzioni, 2004, p. 212).

Etzioni next examines what the foreign policy of the United States as an economically and military great and therefore morally responsible power (*ibi.*, pp. 90-91) should now entail. The Bush Doctrine mistakenly made democracy its top priority. Not democracy, but security is primarily lacking in failed states, newly liberated states, and the Middle East. Also, democracy may be highly desirable, but security at least is achievable (Etzioni, 2007, p. 3). Etzioni, then, opts for a foreign policy of "Security First" for the global community. "[F]ocusing on security...is not only in the best interest of the United States and its allies, but is also in the interest of most if not all peoples...It is effective *and* right, pragmatic *and* principled" (*ibi.*, pp. xii-xiii, emphasis in original). "Security" means "*basic* security, the conditions under which most people, most of the time, are able to go about their lives, venture onto the street, work, study, and participate in public life..., without acute fear of being killed or injured - without being terrorized" (*ibi.*, p. 2, emphasis in original). Etzioni justifies this "Primacy of Life" policy as follows:

[H]ow the United States should conduct itself abroad [depends] on [the] recognition that the world is in a Hobbesian state and is not yet ready for a Lockean one...Much of the world is [close] to the raw, brutish, violent state of nature that Hobbes wrote about...The world first and foremost requires a higher level of security. As long as nations can threaten others with

weapons of mass destruction or be threatened by massive terrorism, other considerations...must take a backseat (Etzioni, 2004, pp. 116-117). [O]n both principled and pragmatic grounds, the right to security is of the highest order...[Morally, it] is widely agreed that the first duty of the state is to provide security [even if this entails the use of force] - on the domestic front. With the international reality being even more brutal than the internal conditions of many nation-states, this dictum applies with special force to the priority that must be accorded to forming a stable global order...[T]he main reason that the right to security takes precedence over all [other, legal-political and socioeconomic rights] is that all the others are contingent on the protection of life - *whereas the right to security is not similarly contingent on any other rights*...[Empirically, the] better that life is protected, the stronger the support is for nonsecurity rights (Etzioni, 2007, pp. 5-7, emphasis in original).

Etzioni believes his approach to provide key guidance for: establishing security in Iraq and Afghanistan; handling conflicts with rogue states (North Korea, Iran); dealing with failing states; and assessing when armed interventions are justified. Failing states are more dangerous than rogue ones, and thus demand the highest priority. The main threat to American security is nuclear terrorism: an attack that unleashes WMD, especially nukes possessed by terrorists. To limit the danger of massive terrorism, the focus should be on the sources from which terrorists may acquire nuclear arms or weapons-grade uranium: failing states. Without certain states armed with nuclear weapons, the terrorist danger would be greatly diminished. The United States should not have attacked Saddam's Iraq (a rogue country without WMD), but concentrate on states such as Russia - the leading failure, seriously and increasingly lacking control of nuclear arms and materials - and Pakistan - with its possession of nuclear

weapons, knowledge to produce them, and its vulnerable government (*ibi.*, pp. 222-231, cf. 2004, pp. 118-120). Concerning intervention, the Primacy of Life articulates the international responsibility for it: “when genocide or ethnic cleansing is unfolding, armed intervention to stop it is both morally right and a price worth paying” (*ibi.*, p. 33). However, armed intervention is not justified to make regimes more democratic, stable or human rights-attentive. We should have stopped the genocides in Rwanda and Sudan (like in Somalia and Kosovo), but not have intervened in Grenada, Haiti, and Panama. We should avoid intervention decisions to “become inconsistent and difficult to justify, aside from raising false expectations in the populations involved”; and “interventions are best limited to help provide basic security rather than to bring about regime change” (*ibi.*, p. 31). Thus, “we cannot hide from the fact that painful and costly sacrifices must be made to achieve ‘merely’ basic security. Ethnic cleansing often cannot be stopped without bringing home body bags” (*ibi.*, p. 3). Etzioni stresses that his approach, in contrast to both (neo)realism and idealism, rests on solid moral foundations:

[Neorealists] may well hold...that a nation indeed ought to be concerned first and foremost about its own security and even that of its allies, but not that of other peoples. Thus, for instance, armed US interventions in Somalia and Kosovo...might be said not to have been called for. More generally, some may say, humanitarian interventions should not be included in our foreign policy, unless they happen to serve a more immediate national security interest...But a nation that...adopts the Primacy of Life as the mainspring of legitimacy for its foreign policy, will be unable to maintain this justification successfully if it is applied only to securing the lives of its own citizens and not those of others. For a principle to be legitimate it has to be capable of being applied universally...A Security First policy is much

more modest, much less demanding [than a policy of worldwide democratization], and the conflicts between its ideals and the vital interests of the various nations involved are much more limited (*ibi.*, pp. 32-33). It avoids squandering many thousands of lives and scarce resources in the pursuit of elusive or illusionary goals; it avoids delays in coping with conflicts that result from pursuing such goals; it avoids making promises that cannot be met, thus avoiding the loss of credibility abroad and at home...; and it avoids the hubris implicit in attempting to deliver more than one is capable of delivering (*ibi.*, p. 4).

Stressing Security First worldwide, Etzioni (2004, pp. 166-167) rejects more global equality and American action on this front; again, resources squandering is anathema. He points to problems about the effectiveness of funds spent and the ways how transfers may happen: the oppressed will not unite to make the powerful surrender; guilt-provoking rhetoric will fail. Rather, once global security has been achieved, "the evolving global architecture should commit itself to ensuring that all people are [granted the basic minimum of three meals per day, clothing, shelter, and health care],...because of the basic moral worth of all human beings" (*ibi.*, p. 169, cf. 2007, pp. 67-68). Socioeconomic equality is wrong: "[a] world in which basic supplies are securely available is vastly preferable to one in which whatever meager resources are available are more equally distributed" (*ibidem*, emphasis omitted). Also, "given that equality is unattainable [and] that promoting it often squanders the political appeal of those who care about the vulnerable members of society, equality is a notion best avoided" (*ibidem*).

Etzioni appears skeptical about environmentalism, too. He recognizes that "the more that people across the world become involved in the high production/consumption project, the more the environment is undermined"

(*ibi.*, p. 58). Yet he thinks that radical environmental policies make no sense in the absence of actual massive threats:

[A]lthough numerous governments pay lip service to environmental protection and are willing to undertake some limited steps, major expenditures and adaptations cannot be realistically expected. All this would change if the environmental crisis equivalent of a pandemic arose. When there was a sense that the depletion of the ozone layer would cause irreparable harm to life on Earth, national governments worked together to develop an international framework[: the] Montreal Protocol...Similarly, if the world were to face...a clear and present danger due to sizeable global warming, it likely would act (*ibi.*, p. 171).

Etzioni (2008b, p. 103) adds two other skeptical arguments: “climate improvement...is not a pressing national security issue for the United States”; and “whatever the United States and its allies do...is most likely to be more than offset by damage to the climate from China and India and other emerging economies. At best, climate improvement is a very slow and costly process.”

Etzioni ends up negative about all global projects not security-related, at least for the shorter run. “[T]he particularly harsh conditions that characterize the international environment...greatly curb that which can be done” (Etzioni, 2008c, p. 1452). Pursuing a just and free global order risks producing evil outcomes. It likely leads us to squander limited resources on wanton activities, undermining the attainability of security. Etzioni observes that “the United States is still the premier global military power, and [that many], especially the EU and Japan, want a seat at the table but are very reluctant to allow their youth to die for [new global institutions formation] or even make significant budgetary allocations for these purposes” (*ibi.*, p. 1458). Sadly, even

communitarian policies could be harmful: they may lead to allocating scarce resources away from accomplishable tasks (*ibi.*, p. 1452).

ETZIONI'S MORAL CONFIRMATION

I now argue that Etzioni's communitarianism, in contrast to what Etzioni himself believes, offers a moral confirmation of neorealism's core propositions.

As regards the neorealist proposition of invariable anarchy with variable capabilities distribution, Etzioni's insistence on the need for a world community and government - otherwise we cannot solve the great problems facing us all - is morally consistent with, even somewhat supportive of, it. Thus, the world government Etzioni defends is not a hierarchical, anarchy-transcending one. First, the global nation and government he aims for are *sui generis*, less "thick", unified, and encompassing than their domestic counterparts (Etzioni, 2004, pp. 198-201, 213). He actually argues for global-scale "neomedievalism": a global system featuring crisscrossing loyalties (cf. Bull, 2002, pp. 245-266). Etzioni, the communitarian, wants the global polity to become an EU-like multilayered actor: it should weaken, but not eliminate, the particularistic bonds of communities. In effect, Etzioni adds to Waltz's fear of world government the suggestion that another undesirable consequence of globally centralized power may be the destruction of particularistic communities and thus of cultural and religious diversity (cf. Walzer, 2004, p. 176). Second, what matters for Etzioni is that globally shared problems are tackled, even if not fairly. He rejects global socioeconomic equality, arguing that striving for it will have bad, counterproductive consequences. Accordingly, he refuses to consider, let alone defend, cosmopolitan principles of global distributive justice (Beitz, 1999, Pogge, 1989, 2002, Caney, 2005, Singer, 2002). If Etzioni did opt for a cosmopolitan project of global interpersonal egalitarianism, he would

presumably have to endorse its “inherently revolutionary” (Bull, 2002, pp. 84-85, 280) consequence: a strive for a centralized world government with the capacity to break the power of states and communities, and enforce a huge redistribution of resources from rich to poor people (cf. Walzer, 2004, p. 177, Kamminga, 2006). In short, Etzioni appears to be in moral accordance with the neorealist view that anarchy has been constitutive of international relations for millennia (the medieval period included), and, despite its harshness, fortunately so (Waltz, 1979, p. 66, cf. p. 88). He merely advocates a benign change in universal security - from “Hobbes” to at least “Locke” - that should make the anarchical system more bearable (cf. Waltz, 2000, pp. 5, 39).

Concerning the neorealist proposition that states, particularly the most capable and powerful ones, are the main units of the international system, Etzioni’s analysis broadly supports it. True, he defends an encompassing, sovereignty-curtailing, and human security-protecting global state, advocates “sovereignty as responsibility”, criticizes the Westphalian notion of sovereign nation-states, and sees nations as responsible community members who share moral bonds, commitments, norms, and concern for the common good. Yet, first, Etzioni supports neorealist state-centrism by supplying an explicit defense of the basic moral value of state-level societies (nations) as “communities”. As particularistic communities, nations constitute identity, promote free agency, soften state coercion, and sustain the very capacity of people to act for the welfare of others, at home and abroad. In contrast, the global nation’s moral significance is more limited and instrumental. It should meet global dangers - thus function as an (important) addition to the decentralized nation-states configuration - but not entail the abandonment of state sovereignty as a basic value. Second, Etzioni argues that the state’s first duty is to protect its citizens’ lives and provide security, even if this requires using force, and that many

people will agree (cf. also Walzer, 2004, p. 139, Beitz, 1999, p. 216). This argument implies further recognition of state legitimacy: states are valuable for their potential to provide (at least) domestic security. No other actor can have this quality - apart from the emerging global state, which is to have it in an additional sense. Etzioni, then, avoids philosophical-ethical notions about pacifism or the duty of a state to offer domestic security as conditional on the actions of its people being peaceful and just (Brown, 2002, p. 104). Addressing the non-ideal world we live in, Etzioni strives to be consistent with conventional views about the domestic duties of the state (cf. Walzer, 1977). Thus, morally, Etzioni's communitarianism does not distract from, but rather legitimizes, neorealism to theorize about states as the basic international actors.

As regards the neorealist proposition that, in seeking to ensure their survival, states have security as their essential goal and are basically egoistic, pursuing other, including altruistic, goals only once security is assured, Etzioni's explicates moral criticisms that are consistent with, even somewhat supportive of, it. He argues that the United States has a responsibility to strive consistently for universal security. He castigates neorealists for their tendency to claim that a nation ought to be concerned first and foremost about its own security (and that of its allies), not that of other peoples. Believing intervention to be justified if aimed at stopping massive violence inflicted on people by their own state, Etzioni criticizes neorealists for not wanting humanitarian interventions to be included in foreign policy, unless they promote a direct national security interest. Now it should immediately be noted that Etzioni tends to misinterpret neorealism as a prescriptive theory of foreign policy, even of an "amoral" (Etzioni, 2007, p. 32) kind. Neorealism, of course, is a theory of international politics, not some foreign policy perspective. It is agnostic about the potential obligation to include humanitarian intervention in foreign policy.

A “(neo)realist objection” that American intervention in Somalia and Kosovo might have been unjustifiable for not serving any clear American or allied security interest does not exist. However, it still needs to be shown that neorealism can accommodate Etzioni’s moral challenge at the deeper level of what drives states’ behavior.

First, like neorealism, Etzioni treats security as the most basic value. Etzioni argues as follows: (i) security takes priority over all other rights; (ii) with international reality being harsher than domestic reality, still Hobbesian instead of Lockean, providing security first holds globally as well as domestically. Plausibly, the right to security, as this includes freedom from deadly violence, maiming, and torture, is deeply fundamental: without life itself being secured, other rights have no meaning. Now philosophical-ethically, this argument seems inconclusive: if what makes a right most basic is that it safeguards the Primacy of Life, then security may not be sufficient. One may hold that the (socioeconomic) right to “subsistence” is just as foundational as the (legal-political) right to “security” (cf. Shue, 1996, Sanchez, 2008, Kamminga, 2009). However, Etzioni’s moral argument aims to be practically relevant. Under uncertain international conditions, without security being guaranteed, it seems very hard to successfully pursue goals such as democracy, human rights, a global community, and a “world government” that should also have security as its primary goal and the solution of other problems as advanced goals. And it seems realistic to demand of separate states that they protect security, but not that they (simultaneously) honor a right to subsistence (cf. Brown, 2002, pp. 121-124). Etzioni’s definition of security (survival of human beings) does differ qua subject from the neorealist one (state survival). However, (neo)realists may note that human security normally presumes state security - the state can only perform its duty of domestic protection (which is

not to say that it always will) if it is secure itself - which shows during crisis and especially during wartime. "The united front [behind foreign policy] is enforced by the...conviction [of individuals] that their own security depends on the security of their state" (Waltz, 1959, p. 179). Thus, Etzioni's argument seems to permit neorealism to theorize about security as the major goal of states.

Second, Etzioni points out that the external moral responsibility of the United States is rooted in its economic and military great power, and that this responsibility entails a consistent strive for universal security. Significantly, Etzioni (2007, p. xiii) writes: the United States "has a higher purpose than *merely* serving American interests" (emphasis added). Also in combination with the "first duty" argument (see above), Etzioni suggests that (American) state interests should generally come first and - insofar as, and in case of the United States, precisely because, it is wealthy and powerful - the promotion of universal security second. This "higher purpose" of promoting universal security, while it will demand "painful and costly sacrifices", is not so demanding that it will come at the cost of vital American interests (cf. Etzioni, 2004, p. 192). Again, purely ethically, Etzioni's argument that the United States and its allies have an overriding moral obligation to provide security for the citizens of all the world's nations may not be conclusive (cf. Ish-Shalom, 2008, pp. 1297-1301, Kamminga, 2009). Etzioni's own Primacy of Life logic may imply the (demanding) obligation to provide subsistence worldwide, even if Etzioni is right that already achieving basic security will demand serious sacrifices. However, Etzioni will presumably argue that it is unrealistic to analyze differently than he does, and that cosmopolitan claims or universal calls for democratization are simply utopian. We should avoid what is ideal and stick to what is realizable: a realistic understanding of world affairs requires security to have priority and the abandonment of cosmopolitan visions (cf. Ish-Shalom,

2008, pp. 1295-1296). A Security First foreign policy may be realistic, efficient, credible, consistent, and hubris-free, as it avoids not only squandering many lives and scarce resources for utopian goals, but also making false promises, avoiding the loss of credibility abroad and at home, and the hubris of trying to help others more than one can. For Etzioni, “realistic” means that American assets and capabilities are the driving force behind his quest for morally adequate political judgment (cf. *ibi.*, pp. 1289-1290): “ask not what international order you desire - but which you can help achieve” (Etzioni, 2007, p. 3). Etzioni’s analysis thus is morally consistent with, even supportive of, the neorealist view of security-driven and egoistic state behavior: states, especially powerful ones, are expected to behave altruistically, but only insofar as they do not violate their own, already safeguarded vital interests - sustainable altruism becoming possible only then.

Third, Etzioni’s view that a Security First policy would have stopped - by the use of armed forces - the Rwanda and Sudan genocides, and that states should be willing to pay the human costs for intervention in other states is consistent with our neorealist proposition. True, neorealism cannot explain humanitarian intervention (Somalia, Kosovo) directly. Yet neorealism may (without theoretical self-damage) “allow” states to accept the importance of limiting themselves by moral judgments, and their willingness to let soldiers fight and die for the security of people living in faraway countries (thus to accept “body bags”) when their own security is not at stake or put at risk by intervening. As Etzioni himself points out, a fighting genocide or ethnic cleansing policy can be adhered to much more readily than can a policy of worldwide democratization, human rights idealism and, one may add, global justice: the costs are still manageable, not going at the expense of vital national interests. Thus, the neorealist “state security first” is compatible with states’

performing the (“secondary”) obligation to humanitarian intervention Etzioni defends.

Fourth, Etzioni rejects socialist or ethical arguments for global justice, going no further than pleading that the global architecture eventually commits itself to a universal basic minimum of three meals a day, clothing, shelter, and health care. Again, he regards socioeconomic equality as a rather counterproductive goal. Ethically, it may be that rich nations ought to make (much) more sacrifices than Etzioni envisages, and work to diminish the present gross global inequalities in income and wealth rather than stimulate the global normative synthesis of a “good” global society that allows such inequalities to persist (Kamminga, 2009). However, Etzioni points out that the moral cost of socialist or ethical politics would be too high: it would harm or even destroy communities, entail resources squandering, and have otherwise bad consequences. While aiming at “containing capitalism” and protecting the environment (Etzioni, 2004, ch. 3), he avoids defending strong principles of global justice and recommending strong, unrealistic policies. Instead, he puts his hope on people’s recognition that they should no longer “worship mammon” (*ibi.*, p. 59) and on a multi-level global state. Thus, Etzioni’s present argument - better to do some good than to act unduly ambitiously and frustrate attainable purposes - offers moral support to neorealism: states are not asked to risk their security and primarily egoistic attitude.

In short, Etzioni’s moral challenge of neorealism is actually a confirmation. Etzioni’s international morality appears to be quite conservative, which is in line with neorealism.

ETZIONI'S EMPIRICAL CONFIRMATION

I now argue that Etzioni's communitarianism, albeit unintentionally, offers an empirical confirmation of neorealism's core propositions.

Concerning the neorealist proposition of invariable anarchy with variable capabilities distribution, Etzioni argues that the world is evolving towards a world community and government that will tackle pressing global problems. Before addressing this challenge, I should note that the empirical trend toward a global polity Etzioni envisages is, of course, not obvious. Realist Colin Gray (2005) even dismisses Etzioni's assessment as communitarian wishful-thinking. Pointing to the re-emergence of geopolitical rivalries among states, Gray predicts "the rise of China as [an] aggressive...superpower; the return of a forceful authoritarian Russia; and the slow emergence of a European superstate" that strives for "collective political influence to match its economic weight in a world characterized by competitive multipolarity" (*ibi.*, p. 1621). Yet it would be unwise for (neo)realists to side with Gray instinctively and claim an easy victory. Etzioni (2004, p. 214) plausibly emphasizes that "the stakes are high", as access to and production of WMD are becoming easier and terrorism more popular, and many transnational problems - particularly environmental degradation - cannot be treated effectively by a cumbersome system but require a more global approach. As necessity is at least one force that drives social change (Etzioni, 2005b, 2004, p. 160), the world may not need a "menace from outer space" (Gray, 2005, p. 1619) to unite for cooperation against global superthreats. And while Gray may be right that Etzioni's ambitious vision lacks conclusive historical support, he admits that it cannot be proved that such a change in international relations will always remain impossible. Finally - and Gray admits this, too - Etzioni realistically stresses the gradualism of the global trends and the need to conceive communities as flowing. Etzioni (2005b)

explains his project with ample caveats and generous time allowances, acknowledges the possibility of serious setbacks, and includes the prior formation of regional communities. Therefore, for the sake of argument, neorealists should not comfortably accept Gray's "brazing critique" (*ibi.*, p. 1660), but concede that Etzioni may be right to expect a global system addressing security and other issues.

Yet Etzioni's global polity argument is empirically consistent with, even explainable with the help of, our neorealist proposition. His stress on the likelihood of a "world government" notwithstanding, Etzioni does not show or observe system transformation towards hierarchy. He does not see evidence for "one streamlined global government" with the power to break the power of (major) states; rather, the *sui generis* world government will be "limited in scope and authority" and not have "full sovereignty" (Etzioni, 2004, pp. 199, 195, 199). The evidence - the gradual emergence of transnational governmental networks, global authorities, and supranational communities such as the EU as building blocks - points to a "new global architecture...cobbled together out of several different elements" (*ibi.*, p. 199), such as a radically restructured United Nations and various supranational bodies such as the International Criminal Court and a number of Global Authorities (for safety, environment, health). It seems, then, better to speak of global *governance*, as does Etzioni himself at times: "There is much evidence to suggest that an increased measure of global governance is...slowly evolving" (*ibi.*, p. 213). Again, the outcome approximates a global neomedievalist system of crisscrossing loyalties. Thus, Etzioni's analysis supports the neorealist insight that anarchy is to stay - even if that progresses from "Hobbesianism" to "Lockeanism" and perhaps even further (cf. Wendt, 1999).

Etzioni could object that he predicts a mitigation of anarchy serious enough to discredit neorealism. He might recall John Gerard Ruggie's critique of neorealism - it cannot "account for...the most important contextual change in international politics in this millennium: the shift from the medieval to the modern international system" (Ruggie, 1986, p. 141, emphasis omitted) - arguing that now a major change occurs from the modern system to a neomedieval one. Now a neorealist may insist that such a change is still internal, changing the units' domestic structures but not basically changing the international structure. It would change the distribution of the units' various capacities, but not transform anarchy (and thus leave the units' function, self-preservation, intact) (Waltz, 1986, pp. 326-330). Yet a more assertive reply seems appropriate: neorealism, while unable to explain Etzioni's global polity "directly", or "immediately", can explain it "permissively" (terms borrowed from Waltz, 1959) - and this suffices. Neorealism by no means denies the (possible) international existence of morals, rules, institutions, cooperation patterns or even shared governance. What it does deny is that such normative patterns can have the same depth and firmness internationally as they may have domestically: anarchy poses limits that hierarchy does not (Waltz, 1986, p. 336). Thus, the really relevant question is not: why is a neomedieval global polity developing, one that (hopefully) offers a better way for solving global problems than the contemporary system does? But: why is not a world hierarchy developing, one strong enough to enforce solutions to global problems? From a neorealist perspective, what matters is that Etzioni's global polity will be more limited and of lesser quality than (ideally) the domestic one. Again, Etzioni himself says that the global polity will be restricted in reach and authority. His account suggests that the global community features values, norms, identities, and solidarities much weaker than those of domestic

communities. Compared to particularistic We's, the global We will be less basic, more instrumental (for the purpose of handling humanity's problems), much wider in scope, and even heavily dependent on "old" I's: (great) states, particularly the United States (see also below).⁴ Also, the global We's common "enemies" or "they" (WMD and pandemics, not human groups) are harder to identify than for a particularistic We. Etzioni's neomedieval polity, then, is much more vulnerable to collapse than the national one, especially if no longer needed for solving world problems or proven ineffective. Thus, neorealism may explain Etzioni's communitarianism by noting that, once it has crossed the state border, the political community loses its original firmness and indeed becomes *sui generis* because of the logic of anarchy. Etzioni might retort that the lesser firmness results from national communities' not wanting the global community to overwhelm their own - possibly at the cost of the solution of world problems. Yet such a communitarian explanation would still fit within a neorealist worldview: nations need state power if they wish to give firmness and consistency to their members' interests and obligations, and this entails the existence of a separate international environment that may have causal significance for state behavior (Waltz, 1959, p. 184).

As regards the neorealist proposition that states, especially the most capable and powerful ones, are the international system's main units, Etzioni's evidence concerning the ability of the future world government to curb the behavior of (powerful) states on balance supports it. First, it is clear that states, the United States in particular, will continue to play a dominant role in Etzioni's global architecture. Nations would not disappear but be subsumed by the new system (Etzioni, 2004, p. 175). Etzioni pays by far the most attention to the

⁴ A neorealist may plausibly add that Etzioni's communitarianism presupposes the recent move from a bipolar to a unipolar international structure, as that has enlarged the action field of the United States as the remaining great power (cf. Waltz, 2004, p. 4).

United States as by far the most powerful state, implying that it is its power as opposed to that of other states that matters, not its ideology as being different. He stresses the reality (and virtues) of the GSA as led by the United States. In Etzioni, American leadership is and remains the bedrock for the new global architecture, determining its fate: “community” does not really replace “empire”, but needs the latter as the only soil on which it can grow (Lenzi, 2008), also because the EU and Japan are not very cooperative. Also, Etzioni (2007, pp. 247-248) appears insecure concerning the question of whether the world’s superpower will ever accept the authority of a world government.

Second, Etzioni (2007, pp. 243-248) observes that international organizations are powerless without the contribution of states, especially the greatly capable ones, and that this will remain so in the new global architecture. Norms and institutions will always need the backing of state power. The following analysis by Etzioni of the realization of humanitarian intervention offers support to the neorealist view that the effectiveness of international institutions or supranational agents, insofar as it exists, depends on the active support of major powers (cf. Waltz, 1979, p. 88):

Those who view the United Nations as a key legitimator and hence a major source of soft power often overlook the fact that the U.N. on its own does not and cannot command the hard power required to back up its resolutions and declarations. It must draw on the armies of this or that nation, or on those of several nations acting in concert. Thus if the United States (in Haiti, Somalia, and Liberia), France (in the Ivory Coast), Britain (in Sierra Leone), Russia and NATO (in Kosovo), or Australia (in East Timor) had not provided the muscle, then the U.N. resolutions would have been of limited consequence at best (Etzioni, 2007, pp. 244-245).

In Etzioni (2004, pp. 201-209), even the future role of the United Nations - an important piece of a new global architecture - is no replacement for Westphalian and, first of all, American, hard power, but rather the latter's more effective soft complement (Lenzi, 2008, p. 133).

Third, Etzioni's observations concerning threats for American security and that of other great powers coming from terrorists that have obtained nuclear weapons supports the neorealist picture of a (great) states-based international system. According to Etzioni, without states armed with nuclear weapons, the terrorist danger would be greatly diminished. Fighting WMD and massive terrorism demands primacy, as that is dangerous for all states, especially the United States. Etzioni's solution is to focus on the "sources" of these dangers - failing *states* - and the interests and contributions of great powers. Thus, his plea for deproliferation as the means against massive terrorism rests on the empirical insight that it engages the vital interests of the United States and other major powers: "The major powers [America, Russia, China] are keenly interested in...a rollback of nuclear arms and ensuring better control of the materials that might be used for their production, because it is the major powers who are most threatened by massive terrorism" (Etzioni, 2004, p. 121). Particularly America's hard power is needed for deproliferation to succeed. It is best to see the GSA as working with the United Nations, who cannot make the difference itself (*ibi.*, pp. 120-128). Etzioni's dismissal of full justice in this respect and even of world security further supports the neorealist emphasis on the role of great powers:

What about the United States and Russia? In a fair, just world, their WMD also would be removed. Nobody can question that foregoing nuclear weapons would greatly enhance the justness of their cause, their legitimacy as major GSA powers, and, of course, world safety. However, here idealism

must be blended with a measure of realism. To demand that the United States and Russia submit to a deproliferation regime in order for deproliferation to take place in other countries amounts, in effect, to condoning leaving such weapons in the hands of much more dangerous states. Hence, at least for the near future, one will have to accept that these powers will retain their WMD (*ibi.*, p. 125).

One might think that the present claim is too quick. Ariel Ilan Roth (2007, pp. 381-383) argues that neorealist theory has far less to say about the new possibility of terrorists obtaining nuclear weapons than about the acquisition of nuclear weapons by states less sympathetic to the United States (Iran, North Korea). Terrorist groups lacking the territory, population, and other trappings of sovereignty are outside the realm of neorealist theorizing. But Waltz (in Kreisler, 2003) appears anything but indifferent to WMD in terrorist hands, arguing that: (1) leaders of rogue states would not share nuclear weapons, if only because they know they would be “slammed” by the United States; (2) terrorists may be more successful in trying to steal nuclear weaponry from Russia, which has so much of it and lacks an adequate control system; (3) the difficulty is if terrorists achieve control of WMD: in contrast to governments, they have no “address” and thus will not be deterrable, cannot be threatened with retaliation; the only thing one can do is by all means to prevent nuclear weapons or materials from getting into their hands; (4) America does this somewhat, having subsidized Russia to enable it to dismantle its nuclear weaponry and to guard the nuclear weaponry it does have (cf. Etzioni, 2007, pp. 220-222). Etzioni’s assessment does support this position of Waltz’s (cf. also Baglione, 2008, p. 1318). Crucially, Etzioni’s plea for focusing on failing states - nuclear terrorists are parasitic on states such as Russia and Pakistan (cf. Waltz,

2003, p. 130) - exhibits neorealist logic: nuclear terrorism depends on states for territory and support.

Fourth, Etzioni's emphasis on the EU as an "actor" and typical "building block" may seem anti-neorealist, but it is worth stressing how greater European particularism can be explained from the neorealist view that one should focus on the great powers that shape the international system's structure (Kamminga, 2007). It has often been argued that neorealism cannot account for post-war European integration. Thus, Simon Collard-Wexler (2006) argues that neorealism poorly explains the breadth and depth of European integration and EU formation. However, the picture becomes better for neorealism if we appreciate its contribution in terms of permissive rather than immediate causes (cf. Waltz, 1959). Thus, from the bipolar international system time onward, the United States as a great power has spent enormous financial resources to provide for its own security and that of its smaller allies. "The emergence of the Russian and American superpowers created a situation that *permitted* wider ranging and more effective cooperation among the states of Western Europe. They became consumers of security...These new circumstances made possible [that] unity could effectively be worked for," writes Waltz (1979, pp. 70-71, emphasis added, cf. 1993, p. 77, 2004, p. 5, Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 382). In contrast to what Collard-Wexler (2006, pp. 418, 423) asserts, then, neorealism can consistently acknowledge that American hegemony is no direct cause of European integration. Waltz's neorealist point is that American hegemony has been necessary for European unification as the desired institutionalization of a specifically European identity to become possible, and thus is its permissive cause. Perhaps we may say that, in emphasizing the continued role of the United States in providing universal security, Etzioni adds some more strength to this neorealist explanation of European unification.

As regards the neorealist proposition that states as survival-pursuers have security as their primary goal and are primarily egoistic, and at best show altruistic behavior once their security is guaranteed, Etzioni's analysis of the independent impact of normative factors provides significant, even straightforward empirical support. First, Etzioni offers various empirical grounds for the universal priority of security. He backs up his claim that the better that security is protected, the more secure are other rights by pointing to: (i) public opinion polls about attitudes toward civil liberties following 9/11, which indicate that shortly after the al-Qaeda attack on America nearly 70 percent of the public was ready to give up various constitutionally protected rights in order to prevent further attacks; but as no new attacks occurred on America and a sense of security was gradually restored, as revealed by the return of passengers to air traffic, support for rights increased; (ii) evidence concerning the period in which violent crime rates were very high in American cities, when many people sympathized with the idea of hard police action against criminals and rioters; but when violent crimes declined, police policies of disrespecting rights this way would likely be dismissed immediately; (iii) evidence that shows that liberal democracies have been undermined primarily by their failure to provide for security and not by the gradual erosion of legal-political rights; one can think of the Weimar Republic's failure to meet peoples' need for security and the lack of governmental power to do so in post-Soviet Russia. Also, Iraq shows that basic security provision must precede the development of democratic institutions; and postwar Germany, Italy, and Japan have all followed this order (Etzioni, 2007, especially pp. 7-8). Thus, people probably care about security more than about any other right, and, also as there may be no individual security without state security, will probably expect the state they happen to live in - Etzioni mentions the United States, Germany, and

Russia - to protect this right. Whether that state is to be complemented by a (security-protecting) global state, as Etzioni predicts, or not is actually a secondary issue.

Second, Etzioni seems to acknowledge that the actual power of moral factors, albeit increasingly significant, will remain secondary to the power of state security and egoism. Etzioni appears hesitant about the communitarian global policies he personally favors, because of the damaging consequences they may have. Moreover, in Etzioni it seems clear that principles without pragmatism have little meaning. Security First is possible, since that is in the best interest of the United States; failing states and nuclear terrorism are main threats to American security in particular; and so the United States has a vital interest in deproliferation (*ibi.*, pp. 234, 246). More directly, Etzioni (2004, p. 192, cf. p. 88, 2007, p. 33) himself observes that states, superpowers such as America in particular, will never allow sacrifices that involve their “vital interests” – which is simply consistent with his own account of citizens’ basic interest in security and the first duty of the state to protect this interest. Apparently, states will continue to want their core interests to be guaranteed first and use their power for this purpose if needed. Etzioni’s analysis offers support to the neorealist insight that the (American) strive for national security continues to prevail and global principles and community are secondary at best.

Third, insofar as long-term community concerns conflict with short-term state security concerns, Etzioni, ironically, supports neorealism more than communitarianism. Thus, he observes that climate improvement is very slow and costly, and entails no direct American security interest. Apparently, there is no evidence to suggest that the United States will take action serious enough to affect its wealth level. However, not pursuing a more or less ambitious climate policy seems inconsistent with communitarianism. All this is at odds with

Etzioni's own Principle of Life and his belief that the security of other communities and their members should matter, too (Ish-Shalom, 2008). The same point holds for India and China: Etzioni expects these states to behave egoistically rather than to make sacrifices for the global good. Also, Etzioni's observations sit uneasily with his worries about the Earth's incapacity to sustain an ever-growing population at ever-higher levels of production and consumption. Offering the Montreal Protocol as evidence, Etzioni expects that only if the world were to face an "imminent" danger due to global warming, it likely would act to solve the problem. Thus, Etzioni's criteria concerning global environmental policy seem mainly rooted in a (neo)realist worldview.

In short, Etzioni's empirical challenge of neorealism actually confirms it. The "anti-neorealist" evidence concerning the probability of global change Etzioni offers is quite restricted and thus absorbable by neorealism.

CONCLUSION

Presumably without his blessing, Etzioni's communitarianism entails a confirmation of neorealist theory: a moral-empirical affirmation of the continuing relevance of neorealism's key propositions. Etzioni tends to misconceive neorealism as a wholly collective-egoistic doctrine that makes military and economic factors absolute, with little or no room for incorporating normative factors. Yet his communitarianism, morally conservative and empirically restrained as that becomes when applied internationally, actually suggests the primacy of such material factors and the status of normative ones as influential yet secondary. Etzioni does not show that, internationally, the "moral dimension" (cf. Etzioni, 1988) is robust enough to compete seriously with the egoistic dimension of state-centric international relations.

Yet, even if the distinct communitarian theory Etzioni aims at could not be had, his approach might pave the way for a softer and more dynamic, communitarian neorealism: an anti-utopian theory that assigns priority to national security and maintains the causal primacy of military and economic factors, but also accepts that, insofar “as a global community is beginning to form” in the light of planetary wide (security) threats, “normative factors are growing in importance” (Etzioni, 2004, p. 213) and have moderating impact on the dangers of international anarchy. Etzioni’s deproliferation argument seems particularly relevant for investigating whether such a theory would be a progressive amendment, with improved moral adequacy and closer correspondence to reality. Waltz (2003) has argued that a measured spread of nuclear weapons may be a positive development. But Etzioni might rightfully foresee major powers cooperating for a neomedieval world less nuclear and more secure, generally characterized by power configurations softer than the ones neorealists and others have observed for the medieval period (Fischer, 1992) and the contemporary age (Waltz, 1979, Bull, 2002).

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