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Rawlsian Public Reason and Climate Change: a Blueprint for Integrationist Justice*

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Integrationist methodologies to climate justice aim to formulate a conception of justice that encompasses principles of global and intergenerational justice, arguing we should treat climate issues in the light of this general theory. In this article, we contend that there are compelling reasons to pursue a minimal conception of justice, and, within this context, Rawls' late conception of public reason is particularly relevant. We propose that a minimal conception of justice for an integrationist approach need not be bound by specific overarching global principles to govern the global international society. The mechanism of public reason can facilitate agreement between climate issues and other related issues by allowing countries to appeal to reasons that reflect the shared and implicit values of constitutional democracies found in international institutions. Although this approach may introduce more ambiguity, it also results in a less idealized scenario, which in turn can contribute to integrating climate and social justice at a minimal level. In summary, we advocate for a two-fold approach, involving both a far-reaching maximum conception of justice and a flexible minimal conception that prioritizes international deliberation and shared values as the means to address diverse dimensions of justice within the global context.

Keywords: Integrationism; global justice; climate justice; public reason; Rawls; legitimacy.

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The climate crisis is a global threat that affects everyone, regardless of social status or nationality. Addressing it requires the collective efforts of all nations, as its impacts are distributed unequally across the world. In this sense, climate justice aims to fairly distribute the rights and responsibilities of addressing climate-related issues while promoting effective cooperation among countries, organizations, and individuals.

In the discourse on climate justice, several important responsibilities arise. One of the main climate responsibilities is the need for mitigation strategies, which play a central role in reducing the progression of global warming. These strategies include the development of policies and the implementation of actions that aim to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, the main cause of global warming. Additionally, the conversation extends to adaptation efforts, which focus on implementing strategies to help communities adapt to the harmful effects of climate change — for example, by building dams in countries that are more susceptible to rising sea levels. Furthermore, with the Loss and Damage Fund agreement reached at the latest Conference of the Parties (COP), the concept of compensation has become relevant, referring to the provision of financial support or other types of support to communities or countries that have been disproportionately affected by climate change. In essence, climate justice involves defining how the costs, rights, and responsibilities associated with all these topics should be distributed. International leaders discuss who should bear the costs (i.e., the burden-sharing problem), when these costs should be allocated (i.e., the intergenerational problem), and how they should be implemented (i.e., methodological problems).

Caney (2012b) presents two methodologies to describe how different theories of climate justice can operate: the isolationist methodology and the integrationist methodology¹. The isolationist approach argues that we should treat the responsibilities associated with climate change listed above in isolation from other justice issues, such as poverty, migration, or rights to cultural lands. This approach

¹The distinction between the isolationist and the integrationist approach can be applied in various ways to address a range of concerns related to climate change. For instance, Caney (2012a) argues that this distinction can be observed in the context of fundamental principles as well as in the context of deciding which policies should be implemented (CANEY, 2012a, pp. 93-96). We offer here a general account for the sake of providing a comprehensive overview on it.

usually mentions the difficulty of reaching an agreement on these matters and the need for quick responses to the climate crisis. On the other hand, the integrationist approach argues that we should treat climate justice "in the light of a general account of global justice" (CANEY, 2012b, p. 259). This approach argues that social issues are inseparable from climate issues, usually arguing that richer countries pollute more than developing countries, given their social and economic wealth².

The two methodologies have different implications for our collective action. For instance, the distribution of greenhouse gas emissions is one of the most debatable topics opposing these two methodologies³. The equal per capita principle is a well-known example of an isolationist stance on the distribution of global greenhouse gas emissions. It is based on a single principle of justice, according to which greenhouse gas emissions should be distributed equally among all human beings⁴. This principle is equalitarian and applies only to this specific good. Integrationists contend that imposing an equal per capita emission standard on developing nations would be unfair. They usually argue that citizens in these countries often engage in activities that lead to greenhouse gas emissions to maintain a decent minimum standard of living. As a result, integrationism suggests that developing nations should be granted higher greenhouse gas emission allowances. It is considered unjust to expect extremely impoverished individuals to bear an equal share of the cost of greenhouse gas emissions, as this would push their standard of living below an acceptable level. Integrationism, therefore, stands in opposition to any climate justice approach that views goods solely in terms of isolated distribution, without taking other associated factors into account, be they social, economic, generational, or historical in nature.

There has been intense debate between integrationism and isolationism. And while our work supports the integrationist approach, our article's primary objective is

²Going forward, when we refer to the integration of climate and social justice, we are encompassing climate justice and all interconnected issues, including economic justice, historical justice, racial justice, and cultural justice, under the broader umbrella of social justice.

³For instance, in favor of adopting an isolationist approach to the distribution of greenhouse gas emissions, see Blomfield (2019); Gosseries (2005); and Meyer and Roser (2006). For views in favor of integrationism in this context, see Bell (2008); Caney (2018, 2012b, 2005); and Hayward (2007).

⁴There may be variations to this principle, but it is usually advocated that the distribution of greenhouse gas emissions among countries should only take into account the number of people a country has (AGARWAL and NARAIN, 1991, pp. 09-10). This has been the ruling principle among countries and academics, albeit with significant corrections, such as allowing for the traceability of greenhouse gas emission quotas.

not to prove the superiority of integrationism⁵. Rather, we aim to show how John Rawls' (1997) mechanism of public reason, as per our interpretation, serves as a viable method to initiate the advancement of legitimacy and justice within the ambitious integrationist framework.

While Rawls' global justice project (1999), as expounded in 'The Law of Peoples', has garnered significant attention and debate, it's important to note that he doesn't explicitly formulate a comprehensive global theory of distributive justice. Furthermore, despite the extensive discourse on global public reason projects, there appears to be a noticeable gap in the examination of how public reason can effectively address integrationist approaches to justice and the intricate challenges presented by climate change⁶.

We contend that Rawls' postulations (1997) on public reason offer an intriguing perspective that aligns harmoniously with the tenets of an integrationist approach. Our argument unfolds in two key dimensions. Firstly, it traces Rawls' normative (1997, 1996, 1993) evolution of the concept of public reason. Secondly, it posits that the most recent iteration of this concept remains relatively uncharted territory and aligns particularly well with a minimal account of justice for an integrationist approach. This suitability arises from its autonomy, as it does not depend on one single conception of justice. This becomes particularly advantageous when considering the necessity for cooperation among different nations, each embodying

⁵To support these claims, we consider Caney's work (2012b) to be an excellent reference that effectively illustrates the moral superiority and practicality of an integrationist approach. We briefly address three arguments that merit special attention: 01. Critics claim that integrationism leads to a deadlock. Caney (2012b) counters these arguments by stating that isolationism can also lead to a deadlock, as countries like India, China, and Brazil usually require additional considerations in their negotiations beyond the equal per capita principle. 02. Critics argue that global institutions are too divided for integrationism. Caney (2012b) refutes this by highlighting that international conferences, like COP, address more than just greenhouse gas emissions, distributing resources, technology, and funds. Even if they focus solely on emissions, they can still consider the distribution of other goods through a single distributive principle. 03. He emphasizes the inappropriateness of exclusively focusing on greenhouse gas emissions when substitutability is possible through increased energy sufficiency, alternative energy sources, and alternative agricultural methods, where we should create policies that cross over these different methods.

⁶With the exception of Nielsen and Hauge-Helgestad (2021), who demonstrate how public reason can incorporate non-anthropocentric perspectives and address intergenerational justice, our search has yielded limited relevant literature linking John Rawls' (1997,1993) concept of public reason to the subject of climate change. Our goal is to contribute to this body of work by clarifying the evolution of the public reason concept and its alignment with an integrationist approach.

different concepts of political or social justice⁷. This independence allows for divergent interpretations within a spectrum of different conceptions of justice while still serving as an effective catalyst for legitimacy and justice within the discourse and policymaking. We formulate the essential arguments for the application of public reason in the international domain. Subsequently, we undertake a comparative analysis between Rawls' theory (1997) of public reason and other relevant theories, elucidating why Rawls' approach (1997) is better suited for an integrationist perspective.

Rawls conceptual evolution of public reason

The term 'public reason' lacks a clear and universally agreed-upon definition. At their core, public reason approaches serve as a normative framework for political dialogue by providing a set of rational and impartial guidelines. It is a means to establish political legitimacy through a common foundation for decision-making on fundamental matters, despite the variety of belief systems. We argue that the latest version of this concept, as proposed by Rawls (1997), has yet to be fully explored and is worth considering in any integrationist approach to climate justice.

Rawls' theoretical framework (1997, 1996, 1995, 1993, 1971) on public reason is characterized by an evolutionary trajectory, which is arguably influenced by the critique and opposition leveled against his ideas. The transition from 'A Theory of Justice' (1971) to 'Political Liberalism' (1993) is extensively discussed and explained by Rawls himself (RAWLS, 1993, pp. xviii-xxii), who attributes it to his recognition of the profound implications of reasonable pluralism. Reasonable pluralism suggests that, in modern democratic societies, there exists not only a diversity of comprehensive

⁷For methodological clarity, we establish our definition of social justice as encompassing the broad aspects of wealth distribution, opportunities, and privileges, both within a society and across societies, over time and geographical boundaries. This broad interpretation encompasses economic justice, intergenerational justice (including historical reparative justice), migration justice, cultural justice, and more. Our argument is centered on the notion that a comprehensive integrationist approach can draw upon a minimal ideal of justice, specifically rooted in Rawls' (1997) concept of public reason. Importantly, public reason, being independent of any particular political conception of justice, presents a challenge regarding offering a precise account of the type of social justice for which we advocate. We contend that countries, each characterized by distinct political conceptions of justice and varying interpretations of social justice, should, nevertheless, adhere to the principles of public reason. This means that the legitimacy of a law is not dependent on its accordance with a particular political conception of justice or an exact definition of social justice. Instead, these laws should reflect the common political and moral values typically observed in constitutional democracies and international discussions.

doctrines, but also a plurality of incompatible yet reasonable political conceptions of justice. In ‘Political Liberalism’ (1993), Rawls embraces this concept by allowing for the coexistence of various reasonable political conceptions of justice within the liberal framework.

However, as Langvatn (2016) and we argue, Rawls' evolution does not end with ‘Political Liberalism’. Subsequent writings, including ‘Reply to Habermas’ (1995), ‘The Paperback Edition’ (included in the 1996 edition of ‘Political Liberalism’), and ‘The Idea of Public Reason Revisited’ (1997), reveal further modifications to his foundational ideas. Our analysis will delve into these subsequent changes, elucidating their significance. And how they represent a continued refinement of Rawls' thinking.

Compare how public reason is described in Political Liberalism (1993) and in ‘The Idea of Public Reason Revisited’ (1997) (Chart 01):

Chart 01. Evolution of the understanding of public reason in Rawls' work

Political Liberalism (1993)	Public Reason Revisited (1997)
“To this political liberalism says: our exercise of political power is fully proper only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to their common human reason. This is the liberal principle of legitimacy” (RAWLS, 1993, p. 137).	“Hence, the idea of political legitimacy based on the criterion of reciprocity says: Our exercise of political power is proper only when we sincerely believe that the reasons we would offer for the political actions — were we to state them as government officials — are sufficient, and we also reasonably think that other citizens might also reasonably accept those reasons” (RAWLS, 1997, p. 771).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In ‘Political Liberalism’ (1993), legitimacy arises when political power acts in accordance with a constitution that is reasonably acceptable to citizens, and citizens accept that constitution because its ideas and principles are acceptable in the light of their ‘common human reason’. But what exactly does Rawls mean by common human reason?

A broader reading of *Political Liberalism*, however, reveals that what Rawls means is that the constitution must be such that it is acceptable to citizens “in light of what they regard as their reciprocal advantage”, and that this condition is best secured insofar as citizens can see the essentials of their constitution as reflecting the principles of justice they would choose in the original position (LANGVATN, 2016, p. 139).

This interpretation of the liberal principle of legitimacy comes about because the principles and ideas of the constitution must be accepted by equal and free,

rational, and reasonable people — that is, people who seek fair terms of cooperation among themselves, terms that bring mutual benefits to all. In order to know what these mutual benefits are, Rawls provides the principles of justice as fairness (RAWLS, 1993, pp. 397-398), drawn from the original position but reformulated as part of a freestanding political conception of justice. These principles will unfold in the 04-stage sequence, the process of moving from the original position to the constitutional level, to the legislative level, and to the background culture. In this sense, collective power is legitimate when it comes from a process of public reason that acts according to a sufficiently just constitution, and this constitution is the result of the principles of justice found in the original position, independent of any comprehensive doctrine.

In order to apply the notion of public reason found in ‘Political Liberalism’ (1993) to global politics and promote the integration of climate and social justice, we would need to develop an original position for the international community, identify the principles of justice to be applied, and, through a process of public reasoning, articulate them in the form of a global constitution or treaty. While Rawls does not go as far as drawing an international global redistributive scheme of justice, he does, in ‘The Law of Peoples’ (1999), propose a second original position to govern international relations where the national representatives of each country are present in an impartial philosophical reflection and all reasonably agree on the laws that are to govern international politics. Nonetheless, as emphasized by Clements (2015), when dealing with problems related to climate justice, “national representatives will often be inadequate” (CLEMENTS, 2015, p. 463), particularly due to the intricate nature of justice matters involving different nations and generations⁸. Clements (2015) introduces a novel perspective by proposing a third original position that includes representatives of individuals. This alternative position aims to create a foundation for establishing principles of justice related to climate change.

⁸Clements argues that national representatives are primarily concerned with their own nation's interests, which may sometimes conflict with the interests of those most severely affected by climate change. In many cases, the people most affected by climate change are those in marginalized and impoverished communities. National governments might not adequately represent these vulnerable groups, and their interests may not align with the government's priorities. Furthermore, Clements also argues that climate change is a global issue that transcends national boundaries. It is not limited to the concerns of individual nations but affects the entire world. Therefore, solutions to climate change need to be comprehensive and consider the interests of future generations, not just the concerns of individual countries (CLEMENTS, 2015, pp. 461-463).

While Clements (2015) does not outline specific distributive principles for the global international community, we see that this type of thought aligns with what Caney describes as a "maximum conception of justice" (CANEY, 2012a, p. 96). This involves determining the most ambitious and comprehensive ideals of justice by considering a wide-ranging distribution of burdens and benefits. A full integrationist approach, through this lens, would require drawing, from a very impartial and idealized procedure that considers a package of goods. A specific account of global distributive justice that all should adhere to, encompassing principles of global justice, principles of intergenerational justice, and principles of historic injustice to apply to all persons throughout the world, including current and future people. Public reason here would offer a pathway to legitimize international policies when the reasons put forth for their support align with principles that are derived impartially through the original position designed for a global context.

While these ideals are undeniably crucial and, as we contend, should shape our long-term aspirations, we also recognize the need for a minimal framework of global justice. This moral minimal should be less idealized and more attuned to the realities of practical politics. Caney provides two arguments for the need of a minimal conception of global justice: the need for political feasibility and political legitimacy (CANEY, 2012a, p. 96). 'That is, to be effective, a normative standard must be politically feasible, not overly idealistic'. The original position is a philosophical mental procedure that is too removed from the reality of everyday citizens. Therefore, it is important to have a standard that is more practical and agreeable to the general public. There is also a need for political legitimacy: some opposition to ambitious ideals does not arise solely from self-interest, but from sincere and reasonable disagreement about what a perfectly just world would look like.

We argue that one sensible strategy for establishing a minimal framework of justice is for participants in urgent international negotiations to refrain from imposing their own idealized notions of global redistributive justice, even if these conceptions are derived from the impartiality of the original position. Instead, they should aim to identify a common ground on what is mutually acceptable to them, at the moment. This approach enables progress on a minimal level while leaving room for ongoing discussions about what a maximum just world is. This implies that an integrationist strategy for addressing climate and social justice can begin the process of integration

in a less idealistic manner. It should recognize the existence of conflicting perspectives on distributive justice, refrain from promoting an all-encompassing global model of redistributive justice in the short term, and be open to embracing a basic standard of justice⁹.

In this context, we contend that Rawls' later concept of public reason is the most suitable approach for integration. It can establish a basic level of justice and legitimacy without the necessity of prescribing specific overarching principles of justice, while still developing some common ground of values paving the way for the potential application of a comprehensive global justice framework in the future.

In his later writings, Rawls (1997) posits that the legitimacy of collective power is contingent upon the criterion of reciprocity, which he did not mention in the formulation of this principle in 'Political Liberalism'. Legitimacy, expressed through the criterion of reciprocity, is now founded on a practical, deliberative process where we exchange reasons — still as citizens of a constitutional democracy. But reasons that meet a certain threshold for us and others, leaving behind the idea that what matters is the accordance of reasons with a constitution that reflects what citizens would choose in the original position. If we look at how he defines the liberal principle of legitimacy, we see that Rawls focuses more on the kind of reasons and the process of reasoning, where reasons are public if:

01. Our arguments are reasonable and sufficiently complete, interpreted in the light of the basic moral political ideas of the public political culture of constitutional democracies (and not in the light of principles chosen in the original position), and

02. Our arguments support a justification that we can give to others in the light of these basic moral and political ideas found in society (there is a jump from premises to conclusions depending on how others can reasonably receive our arguments).

By adopting a more intersubjective and participant approach to the principle of legitimacy, Rawls (1997) seeks to ground the legitimacy of collective power on a deliberative process with two thresholds, where we think of reasons that are sufficient for us and we reasonably think are acceptable for others. This displays an

⁹Ultimately, we posit that integration between climate justice and other forms of justice is feasible at a minimal level in the absence of all-encompassing global distributive justice principles. However, it is crucial to ensure a certain level of robustness in these integrationist decisions to prevent gross injustices. We will delve deeper into this aspect in the ensuing sections of this paper.

intersubjectivity that makes public reason more responsive to the needs and interests of citizens in a pluralistic society, while still being oriented to the basic political-moral ideas and values of a democratic constitutional society.

What this means is that a constitutional society contains core values that must be upheld and protected. When we discuss how to apply these values, we must ensure that our interpretations and disagreements do not contradict these fundamental ideas. Reciprocity means that we can provide a justification for our beliefs that is grounded in all the essential political and moral values of our society, and it should be one that we sincerely believe other citizens can understand and accept. This implies an ideal of public reason: the idea of public reason is public justifiability (the possibility of this policy being justifiable to all because it is justifiable from the basic political moral values of constitutional democracies). And the ideal of public reason, how we achieve this public justifiability, is through the duty of reciprocity, by explaining to others in what way a certain policy supports these basic political-moral values. Public reason begins to focus more on deliberative duties or criteria — such as guidelines of inquiry to ensure our policies take into account all basic political-moral values, openness, and willingness to listen to others — and less on general principles of justice.

We contend that this version of public reason proves to be particularly advantageous when navigating global negotiations concerning social and climate justice, especially between nations that exhibit substantial disparities in their perspectives on distributive justice from the outset. In this context, public reason necessitates the consideration of various values, encompassing social, economic, environmental aspects, etc. This aspect represents a significant advantage for an integrationist approach that must accommodate different goods and values. Moreover, it obliges us to understand the common values we all share as reasonable citizens and formulate policies that we anticipate others can reasonably endorse based on these values, all without necessitating adherence to an idealized framework of global distributive justice. It escapes many of the critiques arguing that public reason standards or integrationist standards are too idealized because not all will converge on the same principles: here we converge on the same values, but we can reasonably disagree on specific principles or policies.

Public reason in the global sphere

The development of our argument — that Rawls' latest (1997) version of public reason suits an integrationist approach to climate and social justice — requires the establishment of a series of assumptions that we think could be better developed and are disputed in Rawlsian literature.

The application of Rawls' public reason (1997) to climate justice needs to show 01. that this mechanism can be separated from the argument of the original position, i.e., that issues of legitimacy can be disentangled from issues of justice; 02. that there are fundamental values of human society equally shared by all countries on a global scale; 03. that international policies (treaties and COPs) are liberal modes of collective decision-making; 04. that the relationship between countries should be understood as a social cooperation relationship on a global scale among free and equal countries; 05. that the moral duties of reciprocity and civility must be observed by all countries, regardless of their democratic regime; 06. that the agreement in public reason can be established based on values, not principles, and based on comparison criteria between countries, like the threat they face to basic rights to subsistence.

Addressing (01), the main concern is to understand how justice and legitimacy interact on a global level. We propose using a Rawlsian framework (1997, 1995) of legitimacy, achieved through public reasoning, with an integrationist approach to climate and social justice. It is important to ensure that this process of legitimacy does not lead to grossly unjust outcomes. This requires a thorough examination of how the pursuit of legitimacy aligns with the idea of minimal justice in the global context. Rawls explicitly addresses these concerns in 'Reply to Habermas' (1995).

Rawls (1995) connects legitimacy to justice but notes that the former imposes weaker constraints, as it allows a certain 'leeway' concerning justice. It is tied to a threshold of sufficient justice, requiring both procedural and substantive justice. Additionally, Rawls highlights legitimacy as an institutional practice tied to the pedigree of those in authority, emphasizing adherence to established rules and traditions in the creation of laws and institutions (RAWLS, 1995, pp. 175-176). This means that Rawls' consideration of political legitimacy goes beyond assessing the justice of outcomes: it also involves determining the authority of the decision-maker

and whether the decision follows established, authorized, and transparent procedures, a deliberative practice that is known and accepted.

Rawls (1997, 1995) asks us to identify the fundamental political and moral principles underpinning constitutional democracies and deduce policies from them. Disagreements arise due to the inherent vagueness of these values and the necessity for specific legislation and policies to operationalize them. By introducing the criterion of reciprocity in his later works, Rawls argues (1997) that laws are justified when they are grounded on basic political moral values (the substantive content) and undergo a transparent and institutionalized practice of deliberation (the procedural content). The argument here is that, if we observe these two contents, then even the minority that does not prevail in decision-making can view majoritarian decisions as politically reasonable and legitimate, as they go through a process of debate and reflect the core moral and political values. Laws can be legitimate while not being 'fully just', but will not be grossly unjust because of the criterion of reciprocity. The very design of the deliberative procedure, including who can participate in it and the constraints on what's considered valid reasoning, embodies specific value choices. It is crafted to put into action the fundamental political and moral values of constitutional democracies, encouraging citizens and officials to align with these principles.

These developments hold significant implications for the integrationist approach. Under this public reason framework, state representatives are compelled to adhere to prescribed deliberative processes. It is our belief that international treaties and COP agreements are already established and accepted by the general public. Therefore, we can apply public reason demands in this deliberative forum, and an integrationist approach also requires these international spaces of deliberation. Representatives are expected to follow specific guidelines for reasoning, which include the utilization of scientific data and effective methods for monitoring outcomes. Integrationists can appreciate this, as any global project needs the back and forth of ideal and non-ideal theories if they are to work in such a complex manner.

This approach also implies that an initially international irregular process with weak democratic credentials can evolve over time, gaining further legitimacy by adopting transparent and inclusive procedures and yielding outcomes perceived as reasonably just by other participants.

The integration of Rawls' late (1997) criterion of legitimacy, therefore, offers a favorable avenue for the convergence of climate and social justice in international practices. It encourages the consideration of multiple justice perspectives while promoting transparent and publicly recognized decision-making processes, ultimately enhancing the legitimacy of climate-related policies and actions on the global stage while still not producing gross injustices.

Second, regarding item (02), this public reason approach to integrationism needs the presence of shared basic values in the global arena: fundamental values must underpin global society, ideally shared universally or, at the very least, by those nations participating in international treaties and negotiations. We assert that implicit political and moral values of constitutional democracies are worth protecting and are already inherent in the international community. Concepts such as human rights, the rejection of slavery, the right to religious liberty, the principle of self-determination, and the imperative to safeguard our environment are values that already permeate the majority of international treaties. The public reason approach does not demand consensus on the most effective methods for promoting or distributing these values. It asserts only that different principles of distributive justice need to show that they are grounded on these values that are shared among or can reasonably be shared by all countries.

Within the domain of Rawlsian scholarship, a contentious discourse centers on whether climate-related goods or intergenerational concerns should be classified as fundamental values. This debate arises from the specific criterion that public reason deliberation constraints only apply to fundamental issues. If an integrationist approach is to encompass considerations related to global justice, social justice, and intergenerational justice, our argument for the application of public reason must demonstrate that these climate-related values are indeed fundamental and can be effectively integrated into the framework of public reason.

We argue, alongside Nielsen and Hauge-Helgestad (2021), that the Rawlsian public reason framework can encompass certain climate-related goods as fundamental values, and it allows for the inclusion of certain ecological considerations as essential issues, as long as these ideas are in alignment with or can contribute to a consensus on political values shared by reasonable agents. And they do form this basis from two different standpoints. While one might argue that

climate-related goods lack inherent value as fundamental basic values, the urgency of the climate crisis and its existential threat to humanity now compels us to regard them as fundamental values, albeit in an instrumental sense. Second, and this was a point made by Nielsen and Hauge-Helgestad (2021), while negative environmental changes escalate, there is a risk that the prospects for a reasonably just and stable political order may be undermined. When people are struggling for survival in the face of environmental crises, their focus may shift away from political justice concerns. Given that the conditions for maintaining a stable and just society are of utmost importance in a Rawlsian framework, climate policies become highly relevant from a fundamental standpoint.

Furthermore, with respect to values related to intergenerational justice, the criterion of reciprocity does not exclusively depend on providing specific benefits to all agents in the present and future. It hinges on the establishment of shared values, the trustworthiness of shared methods of reasoning, and the promotion of mutual understanding. In an intergenerational context, this implies that the shared values endorsed through public reason need not necessarily demonstrate direct benefits to every member of the ‘initiating generation’. Instead, this approach can be justified as a means of compensating for the harm inflicted on future generations by the actions of the present generation. As citizens increasingly advocate for these concerns and as these issues are addressed in parallel discussions and non-voting deliberations, they gradually become implicit in the shared values of our international political forum.

It is essential to bear in mind that the later Rawls embraces the ongoing evolution of public reason: as articulated in his work, “the forms of permissible public reason are always several,” otherwise “the claims of groups or interests arising from social change might be repressed and fail to gain their appropriate political voice” (RAWLS, 1997, p. 775). This means that new values may be introduced periodically, and older ones may gradually lose their representation. As society transforms, its fundamental values similarly evolve, and public reason adapts in tandem, mirroring these shared values.

The third pivotal step, as mentioned in (03) above, entails comprehending how non-liberal nations can harmonize with liberal constitutional values and engage in legitimate decision-making procedures. In essence, one of the foundational

underpinnings of public reason is the presence of liberal constitutional democracies. We assert that international policies, such as treaties and COPs, inherently operate in alignment with the principles of liberal collective decision-making, even when non-liberal nations are active participants. The involvement of non-liberal countries neither necessarily erodes the legitimacy of these regulations nor automatically transforms these countries into liberal entities simply by their participation in these negotiations.

In the context of international treaties and COPs, participating states engage in these agreements voluntarily, demonstrating their respect for state sovereignty and their autonomy in choosing to partake in global collaborations. These accords typically require consensus through the collective voting of participating states, ensuring that decisions are made jointly, and each participant wields influence in determining the final outcome. Furthermore, these treaties establish a set of rules and norms that govern the conduct of states, creating a framework that fosters stability, predictability, and adherence to the rule of law. They often include mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of disputes. All these attributes align closely with liberal principles that emphasize nonviolent conflict resolution, diplomatic negotiations, and peaceful alternatives to the use of force or coercion. In essence, international cooperation is structured to safeguard and advance human rights, which resonates with liberal values that underscore the significance of individual rights and freedoms.

When non-liberal countries engage in these agreements, they implicitly align themselves with liberal values of constitutional democracies, without the necessity of adopting liberalism as their domestic political system. What is asked of them is that, when deliberating, they reflect those shared values implicit in international treaties and protected by constitutional liberal democracies; but they can do so and still advocate for different distributive policies. The objective of public reason in international negotiations is not to resolve disputes regarding the specific distribution of goods and rights, nor to impose a singular liberal principle of distributive justice on all countries, which might deter non-liberal nations from participation. It is rather to defend what type of considerations can be an appropriate basis for collective decisions, and non-liberal countries can be present when they advocate for the basic political-moral values shared by these international treaties.

Furthermore, their participation does not undermine the legitimacy of the international deliberative process. In this perspective, legitimacy is derived from a comprehensive consideration of all fundamental political and moral values embraced by constitutional democracies, alongside a deliberation process characterized by the criterion of reciprocity. This does not imply that non-liberal societies, which uphold comparable standards of human rights, should be excluded. They can still endorse the basic political and moral values of constitutional democracies and advocate for diverse distributive policies that align with these shared values, even if they are not strictly liberal¹⁰.

A fourth point, mentioned in item (04) above, addresses our need to establish that the relationship between nations is a global-scale social cooperation among free and equal nations. Just as citizens are seen as free and equal in the Rawlsian domestic public reason, countries should be seen as free and equal in the global forum. This is rooted in the belief that countries should enjoy freedom because they are not inherently subject to the moral or political authority of other nations, and equality stems from the fact that all nations share this freedom from external natural authority. This is expressed through the principle of the self-determination of peoples, which states that countries should not be compelled to enter treaties or international institutions they disagree with.

How does this concept apply to a global public reason approach? Well, it means that even though each country is free to enter or exit institutions in the global political forum, they should acknowledge that, when they choose to engage with these institutions or treaties, they will adhere to the policies that result from a legitimate process of public reasoning, even if they are in the 'losing side' of the minority.

The international society should also be regarded as a framework for social cooperation across generations because countries do not perceive this social order. As dictated by a fixed natural order or imposed by religious or aristocratic values. It is

¹⁰At present, it's important to acknowledge that we are seeking a minimal account of justice for an integrationist approach. It will have limitations in terms of enforcement when it comes to international treaties, as we cannot compel any country to strictly adhere to these agreements. However, we argue that this minimal account of justice and the current application of these mechanisms contribute to the gradual establishment of a global institutional society. William Smith (2011) addresses the complex standard of legitimacy in an idealized global institution. In this context, he argues that non-liberal countries could have presumptive veto power, while tyrannical regimes would not have the same privilege (SMITH, 2011, pp. 119-122).

implicit in this view that fair terms of cooperation, in the international arena, fall between the principles of impartiality and mutual advantage. While state representatives are expected to advocate for their countries' interests and for basic political and moral values, they should not exclusively pursue mutual advantage where every country benefits equally based on their current circumstances. This concept of social cooperation should not be judged against a fixed standard of equality, as Rawls does in 'Political Liberalism' (1993), because, in this fundamental interpretation of justice, we are not searching for one specific distributive justice principle to establish equality. Instead, we should conceive social cooperation as a collaborative endeavor, aiming to enable citizens from all nations to promote basic political and moral values or the primary goods necessary for sustaining life. In the context of pressing challenges such as the climate crisis, it is crucial for developed countries to recognize their inherent advantages in addressing mitigation or adaptation policies, given their greater wealth and power. Consequently, in international negotiations, they should strive for a form of social cooperation that benefits countries requiring protection for their fundamental political values. We can already observe this idea being put into practice with the implementation of specific measures, such as the Loss and Damage Fund in the most recent COP. In this case, developed countries have agreed to collaborate to assist developing nations in recovering from the devastating impacts of climate change.

Furthermore, as stated in (05) above, it is also essential for all countries, regardless of their democratic or non-democratic regimes, to uphold the moral principles of reciprocity and civility. We acknowledge that leaders, especially those from non-democratic states, may often enter negotiations primarily guided by self-interest, seeking personal benefits rather than being intrinsically motivated by the values inherent in a process of public reason. However, our argument suggests that these values should be the driving force even within a minimal framework of justice in an integrationist approach.

The ability to elucidate how the policies we advocate for align with the values shared by others and the readiness to listen to the perspectives of others and determine when it is prudent to accommodate their views are minimal keystones for a legitimate and minimally just process. This is what ensures that non-liberal countries can enter the policy decision-making process and still not affect the legitimacy of the

process, as all are bounded by the duty of reciprocity. This duty not only serves immediate interests but also sets the stage for a more profound and maximum collective pursuit of justice, as the affinity ties that can be created by these duties are necessary for any ideal of global distributive justice. This duty should be seen as a minimal normative duty necessary for the first steps in integrating climate justice with other types of justice, as it is what helps to reach a common ground.

Finally, regarding (06), we maintain that consensus in public reason can be built upon shared values rather than specific principles. However, there are instances where the need for comparison criteria arises. In 'Political Liberalism' (1993), such criteria are derived from the development of liberal political conceptions of justice, which systematically evaluate various values. In contrast, our perspective emphasizes that the contemporary concept of global public reason relies less on alignment with these liberal political conceptions and more on adherence to the criterion of reciprocity and a transparent and publicly recognized deliberative practice.

The necessity for comparison criteria arises because, even though public agreement can be rooted in shared values, situations may emerge where it becomes essential to evaluate or compare different sets of values or principles. This is crucial for making informed decisions and resolving conflicts effectively. Comparison criteria provide a structured framework for assessing and weighing these values in a rational and systematic manner, thereby ensuring that the decision-making process maintains fairness and transparency. We discern two different solutions in this regard.

One of them is introducing a primary value that can serve as criterion between different policies of distributive justice that aim to identify which countries are 'the least advantaged'. For instance, Henry Shue's concept (2020) of a basic right to subsistence is defined as the right to have access to essential elements like clean air, clean water, sufficient food, proper clothing, adequate shelter, and basic preventive public healthcare (SHUE, 2020, p. 23). Shue argues (2020) that this right to subsistence is crucial because it serves as a fundamental prerequisite for the exercise of other rights, such as the right to liberty, freedom of association, or religious worship. The key point being presented here is that Shue contends (2020) that it is impossible for individuals to fully exercise their other rights if they are unable to meet their basic subsistence needs. In essence, he asserts that the right to subsistence is an 'inherent necessity' for the enjoyment of other rights.

What we argue is that any approach like Sue's (2020) can be considered an essential benchmark for evaluating the relative importance of other values or policies in public reasoning and decision-making. As previously discussed, the concept of international social cooperation should be construed as a collective endeavor aimed at enabling citizens from all nations to promote fundamental political and moral values, as well as the primary goods necessary for the preservation of human life. Advocating for the protection of this basic right to subsistence as a cornerstone of global justice and a benchmark for addressing specific distribution concerns is a proposition that may find widespread consensus among various sovereign states.

Secondly, we can adopt Caney's concept (2012b) of the 'Narrow Substitutability Proviso' as a valuable tool for comparing different policies within an integrationist framework (CANEY, 2012b, pp. 297-298). Caney's proposition (2012b) emphasizes that the achievement of distributive justice can manifest in different ways, contingent upon the impact on the natural environment and the varying degrees of substitutability inherent in the processes that promote these values.

When considering the satisfaction of people's fundamental needs or values, various means can be employed. For example, ensuring access to electricity can be accomplished through burning fossil fuels or harnessing renewable energy sources. It is crucial to remain open to the possibility of employing different policies to attain these objectives. This entails a dynamic interplay, involving an understanding of how essential political and moral values can be preserved while factoring in the natural conditions of our world and recognizing the different degrees of substitutability that different processes may offer.

This comparison process can effectively occur within a deliberative environment characterized by the values of public reason, where all fundamental political and moral values are considered. In this setting, different policies can be proposed and advocated for based on these shared values. This deliberative process aims to reach a reflective equilibrium, similar to the one Rawls addresses (1996, pp. 384-385), where coherence and consistency are achieved in one's moral and political beliefs through ongoing adjustment and revision.

The key takeaway is the necessity for a dynamic interplay in comprehending how to safeguard basic values while considering the world's natural conditions and the substitutability of different processes. This implies an ongoing process of reflection and

adjustment to find the most suitable way to meet basic needs while upholding fundamental moral values. Public reasoning serves as the mechanism to facilitate this by allowing for the consideration of different distributive justice policies.

Rawls vis-à-vis other forms of public reason

We have compared our argument with the concept of public reason as understood in Rawls' 'Political Liberalism' (1993). Other than Rawls, different scholars have articulated different foundations for embracing public reason as the pertinent standard for assessing rules and guiding human behavior. For instance, Jürgen Habermas (1996) underscores the centrality of rational discourse about moral norms, grounding public reason in the importance of rationality and morality. Blain Neufeld's (2022) perspective places public reason primarily in the value of autonomy, asserting that individuals should only adhere to laws or rules they could rationally endorse for themselves. Conversely, thinkers like Andrew Lister (2013) connect the value of public reason to civic friendship, viewing it as a vital component of a beneficial relationship within a political community.

Nonetheless, our contention is that Rawls' theory (1993) is better suited for an integrationist approach due to its primary grounding in justice. In Rawls' framework (1993), public reason serves primarily to assess the justice of laws and policies, offering a publicly recognized perspective from which all citizens can collectively scrutinize the fairness of their political and social institutions (RAWLS, 1993, p. 09). This perspective aligns with the fundamental aim of international cooperation, which has always included the pursuit of justice among nations in their interactions. There is a broad consensus regarding the significance of justice, often regarded as "the first virtue of social institutions" (RAWLS, 1999, p. 01): countries agree on the need for international justice and come together to discuss these terms. This is something that an integrationist approach can welcome as it directs itself toward its primary necessity: justice.

In the deliberative international arena, expecting the presence of impartial, idealized deliberators, as required by Habermas' theory (1996), is impractical. Moreover, the global arena is characterized by substantial diversity, making it challenging to anchor a process of public reason in a concept of citizens' autonomy or civic friendship due to the dependence of these concepts on comprehensive doctrines

about what the good life is or what autonomy requires. However, the value of justice remains a common aspiration in international relations, and therefore, grounding the integrationist approach between climate and social justice in the overarching importance of justice is both relevant and unifying. If integrationists aim to establish a symbiotic relationship between climate and social justice, it is logical to anchor the process that unites these two entities, namely, public reason, in the foundational value of justice.

Another important comparison is between Rawls' (1997) and Gerald Gaus' theories (2011, 1996). We will focus on just one aspect of the distinction between both theories that we find crucial: their consensus or convergence criterion. Rawls focuses on a consensus of reasons: in public reason discussions, people don't need to have the exact same justifications for a policy. What is crucial is that each person's reasons for supporting a policy must rely on shared or public reasons, which reflect fundamental political and moral values. In contrast, Gaus (2011, 1996) promotes the convergence of reasons. According to this perspective, everyone does not have to share the same set reasons for supporting a policy. What matters is that each person has their own valid justifications for supporting the policy, even if these reasons are based on their individual worldviews and are not necessarily shared by others. It is enough that a person views a reason as relevant and for that reason to meet some basic evidentiary standards, such as being understandable to others as a reason.

Consider the scenario where different states are debating whether developing countries should receive higher greenhouse gas emission allowances. Country A argues for it because it supports the economic growth necessary to meet the basic needs of the citizens of developing countries. This justification is valid for Rawls' public reason (1997) since it is grounded in international political and moral values such as prioritizing basic human rights. However, Country B supports the same policy but justifies it on religious reasons, stating that their faith guides them to help the less fortunate. According to Rawls (1997), Country B's justification does not align with public reason as it is not rooted in shared political and moral values — not everyone is reasonably expected to share the same faith in God as a religious person. Yet, for Gaus (2011, 1996) and his convergence view, the policy would be considered legitimate because both countries accept it, even if their reasons are not shared.

Let us now imagine a different scenario where the international community is considering a drastic measure on taxes related to intensive animal agriculture, recommending some type of vegetarian diet to reduce CO₂ emissions and land use. Country A advocates in favor of these taxes and recommendations because a vegetarian diet (let's suppose so) helps minimize CO₂ emissions and land use, which is necessary to meet basic subsistence needs. Country B supports this recommendation but is based on a perfectionist view that refraining from causing harm to animals is ethically imperative. Gaus' convergence view (2011, 1996) would accept Country B's justification because it can be seen as a valid reason for someone to have, even though some of its justifications are rooted in perfectionist values of what morality is.

Why should an integrationist approach through public reason use Rawls' version (1997) and not Gaus' (2011, 1996)? As we have stated earlier, a complete integrationist approach requires both global justice principles that determine what all individuals are entitled to and intergenerational justice principles that address justice between past and future generations. We argue that a Rawlsian practice of public reasoning, where we collectively consider our shared and underlying political moral values at a global scale and deliberate on different policies for distributive justice that align with these values, is essential for achieving the highest level of distributive justice integrationism needs.

First, in an integrationist approach, there is a need for a definition of common goals and values and a need to reach a consensus on what the basic political moral values constitutional democracies in the international forum share. However, this is only achievable when we begin to direct our decisions towards defining these fundamental values. The convergence view falls short in this regard, as it does not require shared values and may hinder the long-term goal of integrationism.

Second, the integrationist view necessitates a way to connect these different values. It necessitates a stable international collaboration to effectively address interconnected issues like climate change and social justice. When nations come together based on common values or principles, they are more likely to work together cohesively in tackling complex and interconnected challenges such as climate change. Consensus views like Rawls' (1997) encourage precisely this approach. By fostering shared values and principles, they create a stronger allegiance to them and a common ground on which nations can stand. In the context of integrationism, this shared

understanding is crucial because it allows for a more comprehensive and coordinated response to these multifaceted issues.

On the other hand, the convergence view, while it might initially expedite the legitimacy of a policy as its scope of justifiable reasons is more extended, can lead to individual nations justifying their policies based on unique rationales specific to their own interests. This leads to what is described as a mere 'modus vivendi': a strategic agreement, based on pragmatic or self-interest grounds, that ends up being subject to change based on contingent factors. Rawls gives the example of a treaty between two states that have conflicting interests. In a 'modus vivendi', each state would negotiate the treaty in a way that creates an equilibrium point where neither side has an advantage in violating it. Each state would view adherence to the treaty as being in its own national interest, justifiable to each by their own comprehensive worldviews and not by shared values. However, this is a practical arrangement that does not resolve the underlying conflict between the two states. If circumstances were to change, either state might pursue its own goals at the expense of the other (RAWLS, 1996, p. 147). A similar dynamic can be seen in any social consensus that is based on self-interest, group interests, or political bargaining without any common ground. In such cases, social unity is only apparent, as it is contingent on circumstances remaining favorable for the convergence of interests. Gaus' theory (2011,1996) can only lead us so far as to reach a 'modus vivendi', not being a good approach for any integrationist view that necessitates a committed shared international global society to ensure global justice.

Third, the Rawlsian notion of public reason (1997) we are advocating is deeply connected with the deliberative practice: it involves a process of public reasoning where participants publicly justify their policy decisions, often through well-recognized deliberative processes like COPs. In contrast, convergence approaches, such as the one proposed by Gaus (2011, 1996), do not impose the same requirement on officials. They are not compelled to engage in extensive public debate to defend their policy decisions. In this sense, Rawls' public reason (1997) ensures higher degrees of transparency, which is crucial for integrationism as it fosters trust among nations and ensures that decisions are in the best interests of all parties involved. When officials must publicly present justifications for their policies, it ensures that decisions are made openly and with accountability. Furthermore, Rawls' public reason (1997) needs a type of public participation where different participants can be present as

long as they have the right pedigree for doing so¹¹. In processes like COPs, a wide range of participants, including civil society, can engage in discussions and express their concerns. This inclusivity is essential for addressing interconnected issues such as climate change and social justice comprehensively and is something that Gaus' theory (2011, 1996) does not rely on.

Conclusion

The application of the public reason approach holds significant potential to illuminate the discourse surrounding social and climate justice. This approach facilitates the nuanced delineation of and advocacy for different distributive policies while concurrently demanding consensus on shared values. While a comprehensive integrationist approach to global justice, encompassing climate justice and all other forms of justice, necessitates well-defined principles of global justice that are universally applicable and principles of intergenerational justice that extend across generations, we argue that a more minimalist approach is warranted.

In our perspective, this moral baseline can be drawn from Rawls' later (1997) conception of public reason. Through this mechanism, we can synthesize the concepts of justice and the legitimacy of policies without the need for unanimity regarding specific liberal political conceptions of justice. Our objective is to define, advocate for, and interconnect the various shared values present in the international community, which mirror the shared values of constitutional democracies. This approach mitigates the level of idealization that is often a primary critique of Rawlsian theory (1997), as it does not rely on highly idealized, abstract, and impartial procedures akin to the original position. At the same time, we also acknowledge that this introduces a degree of uncertainty into the pursuit of any global justice initiative, but we firmly believe that a practice of public reasoning can fortify the legitimacy and credibility of international institutions. It constitutes an initial step toward comprehending how, through a deliberative process, we can understand what shared political moral values are related to the international forum and allocate these values in a manner that is reasonably acceptable to all reasonable nations. It initiates a legitimate and minimally just process

¹¹While national representatives are ultimately voted into office by their citizens, who endow them with a minimal legitimate pedigree in the international forum, it is important to note that this principle is not confined exclusively to them.

for the global distribution of different goods and, ultimately, fosters the necessary bonds of affinity that are crucial for a comprehensive account of global distributive justice.

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