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# Reflections on Apologies: Promoting Order in the International Arena

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## **Abstract**

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This paper considers the role of apologies in the promotion of order in the international arena. It will introduce the following claims: first, that ethical issues, particularly the subject of dealing with moral wrongs through apologies, are an important part of the greater discussion of world and international orders; and second, that the strategy of dealing with a past transgression through an apology contributes to the realization of stable order. The main argument of this paper is that apology and forgiveness undertaken by international actors, even though not legally obligating, facilitate the maintenance of order. Although the legal aspects of world order and international order are prominent, they do not alone indicate the internalization of order and its values by actors. Common social “unwritten rules” accompany these legal obligations. Extensive compliance to these rules by actors is a valid sign of order. Apology and forgiveness can be seen as such rules: as social ordering principals.

## **Introduction**

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In the book of Genesis (50:17), Joseph's brothers, fearing his revenge after their father's death, ask Joseph to forgive them: "Forgive, I pray thee now, the transgression of thy brethren, and their sin, for that they did unto thee evil. And now, we pray thee, forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." In verse 21, Joseph forgives his brothers and promises not to seek revenge: "Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." We can learn from these verses that forgiveness is possible when a victim is willing to accept the perpetrator, either because of shared relations or because the two wish to form a relationship.

The story of Joseph and his brothers is the story of how to live with a moral wrong. In other words, it illustrates that a perpetrator's willingness to come to terms with the past (by taking responsibility for it and admitting that an act was unjust) and a victim's readiness to forgive the perpetrator create the basis for better relations between them. Each brother represents a tribe. Together they form a society or community. The society of the twelve tribes in the land of Canaan arose through a request for forgiveness. Forgiveness, then, was an essential condition for reconciliation, perhaps even a *sine qua non*. The acts of apology and forgiveness enabled a new order.

Apologies carry a significant potential for "moral repair." Through an apology, "the wronged are recognized as morally equal human beings, deserving of respect from those who wronged them. Their moral stature and their membership in the wider moral community are undermined" if no apology is offered (Howard-Hassmann 2010). Expressing contrition for an injustice may lead the victim to forgive the offender, in spite of the fact that full justice cannot be achieved given the graveness of the wrong. The victims of a wrong, through the



act of forgiving, abandon their revengeful feelings and open the door to a common moral universe with their perpetrators (Jeffery 2008, 195; Howard-Hassmann 2010).

Thus, the story of Joseph and his brothers emphasizes the important roles moral values and ethics play in constructing relations between human beings-and therefore between international actors as well. This story is “a powerful account of how communal solidarity can be renewed in the aftermath of betrayal [...] Although Joseph struggles with the impulse toward revenge, his commitment to communal/family solidarity proves stronger” (Amstutz 2005:51). We can argue that through the renewal of solidarity, order was restored-or indeed that a new order was created.

When thinking about order in the international arena, the concepts “apology” and “forgiveness”<sup>1</sup> cannot be left out of the discussion. The anarchic nature of the international system creates many opportunities for moral wrongs. Moral wrongs are a source for conflicts, and conflicts in turn hinder order due to their inherent destabilizing nature. Thus, moral wrongs are facts that must be considered in the process of creating or restoring order, as well as in any theoretical discussion of order.

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1 There is more than one way to apologize or forgive. Scholars from various disciplines have defined public apology’s main elements by emphasizing several or all of the following: acknowledgment of the wrong; expression of sorrow; regret; contrition; responsibility; offering reparations; and referring to the victim (Tavuchis 1991; Thomas 1995; Harvey 1995; O’Neill 1999; Gill 2000; Govier and Verwoerd 2002; Kampf 2009; Löwenheim 2009) There is no one agreed upon definition for forgiveness. Most scholars agree what forgiveness is not: it is not reconciliation; it is not amnesty nor is it forgetfulness, acceptance or toleration of the wrong (Digeser 2001, 74-75; Crespo 2002; Elshtain 2001, 42; Elder 1998, 151; McCullough, Pargament and Thoresen 2000, 8; Babic 2000, 87). However, forgiveness raises three themes (Jeffery 2008, 183): forgiveness as opposed to revenge; overcoming resentment; and forgiveness as the final step in a reconciliation process.

One strategy for dealing with acts of moral wrong and preventing them from occurring in the future (and thus fostering order) is through apologies. The concept of apology has a prominent place in debates on order-specifically when dealing with issues of ethics or barriers to reconciliation. Questions regarding ethics are interconnected with questions of the responsibilities states have toward one another. Defining these mutual responsibilities is an essential part of the architecture of both international and world order. While international order refers to the relations between states, world order refers to human relations that transcend borders, and thus the latter can be viewed as a broader term which includes international order.

This paper considers the role of apologies-made by states (or other international actors) that committed great harm in the past-in the promotion of order in the international arena. My emphasis will be on ethical and moral principles, which are crucial elements of any social order. I will introduce the following claims: first, that ethical issues, particularly the subject of dealing with moral wrongs through apologies, are an important part of the greater discussion of world and international orders; and second, that the strategy of dealing with past transgressions through apologies contributes to the realization of stable order. The main argument of this paper is that apology and forgiveness undertaken by international actors, even though not legally obligating, facilitate the maintenance of order. Although the legal aspects of world order and international order are prominent, they do not alone indicate the internalization of order (and its values) by actors. Common social “unwritten rules” accompany these legal obligations. Extensive compliance to these rules by actors is a valid sign of order-perhaps, given their “unwritten” nature, an even stronger sign than mere obedience to legal stipulations. Apology and forgiveness can be seen as such rules.

## Apologies in the International Arena

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Apology and forgiveness are relatively new concepts in the literature of international relations. The increasing interest in them is a result of numerous apologies and expressions of regret in the last decade of the twentieth century made by state leaders, governments, and religious organizations toward peoples they have wronged in the past. The Vatican in 1998, for example, was willing to say that it was sorry for the Crusades, and it also apologized for the failure of the Roman Catholic Church to do enough to prevent the Holocaust. The year 1997 saw a mutual Czech-German apology. In 2000, Germany's president, Rau, asked forgiveness for the Holocaust during his speech to the Israeli Parliament; in 2008, Italy apologized to Libya for damage it inflicted during the colonial era. Also of importance to note here is Japan's apologies for its violent behavior in World War II.

Some claim that apology and its acceptance influence and contribute to conflict resolution (Digeser 2001, 69-70; Cohen 2004, 178; Auerbach 2004, 156). Others, however, argue that forgiveness is irrelevant in international relations because this arena is still not ready for it (Long and Brecke 2003, 3; Shriver 1995, 6). Some claim that apology and forgiveness are concepts that should be relegated to interpersonal relations. Furthermore, critics argue that because of the religious roots of forgiveness, it has no place in the political arena (for elaboration on this debate see Shriver 1998, 133-134; Digeser 2001, 14; Arendt 1958, 212-219).

Sociologist Nicholas Tavuchis holds that apology from the many to the many is possible: he suggests that collectives can communicate with each other through authoritative representatives (1991, 98). According to this view, the state is a corporate actor that transcends time and government change, and because of this we can ascribe to it responsibility for the past. A wrongdoing is thus an inheritance

from the past, which means that a state can apologize years after the wrongful act took place.<sup>2</sup> This would be an “official” apology, one made in the name of a state or nation (Löwenheim 2009).

Using Peter Digeser’s (2001) concept of political forgiveness helps us to implement the idea of forgiveness-and thus also apology-to the international realm. This type of forgiveness ensures that past claims do not continue to press against the future: it is a path to political reconciliation, a way to start anew. It is not about removing the resentment of the victim, nor can it achieve full justice for the victim. It is about achieving a restorative justice and not retributive justice (Amstutz 2005; Löwenheim 2009). In the context of solving international conflicts emanating from a past moral wrong, restorative justice is more efficient in fostering order. Restorative justice, which will be discussed below, encourages former perpetrators to acknowledge the truth about the offensive act, admit accountability, express remorse, and compensate the victims-that is, to apologize.

Lakoff asserts that apologies are hard to identify, categorize, and classify (2001, 201). Despite the existence of relative concepts clustered around the ideas of recognizing guilt and asking for forgiveness, there is no valid paradigm of apology (Cohen 2004, 181). Several avenues for apologizing are available to a state that has committed injustice. The apology could be verbal (a speech-act<sup>3</sup>) or it could be an action. The speech-act of apology occurs in a variety of forms, from a direct, obvious apology to an indirect, oblique one

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2 Wrongdoing is defined as a gross historical atrocity-a historical injustice. During the execution of an apology, or while the apology is being negotiated, a wrongdoing is regarded as an act that is non-normative and illegitimate tool. A wrongdoing originates in the perpetrator’s refusal to recognize the rights of another group, and is deliberately calculated to circumvent the rights and freedoms of that group. It results in grave physical or mental harm and property damage. Because of its broad nature, a wrong is usually perpetrated by states.

3 The philosopher J. L. Austin used the term “speech act” to refer to an utterance and to the “total situation in which the utterance is issued.” Today the term is used to mean an “illocutionary act,” that is, doing something by saying something (Thomas 1995, 51; Kratochwil 1991, 8).



(Lakoff 2001, 201). The choice of one avenue over another in the international arena is not incidental, nor is it neutral. It should be noted that the more illocutionary power an utterance of apology has (the greater the intentionality behind the words), the more influence it will have on the victim-perpetrator relationship (Löwenheim 2009).<sup>4</sup>

Different types of apologies carry different levels of meaning. The most meaningful apology fulfills the requirements of “the five-elements definition”, introduced by Löwenheim (2009, 538). This apology-following a wrongful act that a perpetrator committed with the intention to cause hurt-contains (1) public acknowledgement that an injustice took place; (2) public acknowledgment of responsibility for the injustice perpetrated by the state apologizing; (3) an expression of regret or remorse and willingness to make amends; (4) material compensation; and (5) an expectation to be forgiven.

The expression of remorse greatly promotes the process of forgiveness and reconciliation by cultivating norms and institutions that promote harmonious human society (Amstutz 2005, 78). Another key element in apologies is responsibility: “An admission of responsibility is a very important symbolic act that could result in reparations.” Furthermore, the significance of an apology in the international context is magnified when it is followed by material compensation (Löwenheim 2009, 538). Elazar Barkan argues that the expression of collective remorse through reparations contributes to the renewal and restoration of moral order in global society (Barkan 2000). In other words, it contributes to the propagation of world order.

The type of apology a former transgressor chooses to issue indicates how a past is perceived and presented by that transgressor

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<sup>4</sup> The perlocutionary effect is the impact an utterance has on the hearer (Kratochwil 1991, 8).

and the how much responsibility the transgressor is willing to take (Löwenheim 2009, 538). If an apology is meaningful (that is, the perpetrator expresses regret, admits accountability and responsibility, and offers compensations), it has greater potential to facilitate reconciliation and trust between antagonists, thus contributing to stability, which is an essential element of world order. An apology acknowledges an act as a wrong and embodies a promise that the wrong will not be repeated. In other words, it admits that such an act is not acceptable in the international arena. Therefore, once a perpetrator has apologized, regardless of the type of apology, it has committed itself to not repeating the wrong in the future. Further, it has strengthened international norms and helped to establish a desirable ethical order between international actors.

Apologies reflect ideas (beliefs) and views about how the world should look. Ideas provide road maps that increase actors' clarity about goals and direct their behavior and actions. Ideas help to order the world, and by doing so they may shape agendas and outcomes (Goldstein and Keohane 1993). Apologies reveal principled beliefs that consist of normative shared ideas specifying criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and just from unjust. While a wrong violates the common moral code (Howard-Hassmann 2010), an apology aims to re-establish this code or commit to it. In other words, apologies, by denouncing an act as a moral wrong, provide an outlook on order, suggesting what behavior to avoid. They send a clear message about how states should act toward other actors by eliminating the possibility of causing unjust harm.

We can conclude that even if the apology lacks crucial parts of the five elements definition, a perpetrator only has to acknowledge that a wrong has occurred through an apology to denounce that deed in the international arena (Löwenheim 2009). Therefore, apologies have an

ordering trait. Yet, a restriction has to be added here. Although words have power-meaning that the perpetrator having uttered an apology must stand behind it-if the victim group or other actors perceive the apology to be one of a lesser degree (an excuse rather than apology, for example) or finds it incomplete, then this could block the path to solving the conflict or achieving order (see for example Lind 2008).

## **World Order**

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Many or most states and empires in the course of history, as Linklater observes (2002, 325), have warred with, conquered, enslaved, injured, and otherwise disadvantaged others. Inflicting harm seems to have been the dominant pattern in world politics “since the appearance of the Sumerian city-state system and the establishment of the first empires.” The main purpose of morality and the crucial aspect in constructing an ethical world is to prevent harm: that is, to constrain the power to hurt and to extend cooperation.<sup>5</sup> The collapse of order would bring widespread suffering to peoples everywhere (Linklater 2002, 320, 326). Thus, the aim in preserving order is to prevent harm. An apology embodies the purpose (and promise) of avoiding future harm: it is one arrangement available to states to reduce the harm they cause each other and to set limits on behavior.

There are many kinds of order, and thus one can find many definitions of the concept (Schweller 2001, 169). Minimal order is defined as the absence of war (Amstutz 2005, 105). Realists would argue that world order (or “international order”) is equivalent to the notion of a balance of power. Alternatively, cosmopolitans would likely argue that world order is equivalent to justice. World order or international order are not just about balancing material capabilities, and they cannot fulfill the ideal vision of justice for all. Rather, they are a compromise—a middle ground arrangement or formula—that different parties can agree to live by.

Ikenberry defines international political order as the “governing arrangements among a group of states.” This definition favors

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<sup>5</sup> Several moral philosophers regard the harm principle as the foundation of morality, seeing it as a *prima facie* obligation since there are times when harm to others is justified—for example, in self-defence (Linklater and Suganami 2006, 170-171).

constitutional orders (Schweller 2001, 169-170). This definition, however, can be criticized as being too narrow, as settled orders that are not constitutional do in fact exist. Hedley Bull has claimed that world order is wider and more fundamental than international order:<sup>6</sup> it is the ordering of relations between the world's peoples-among all mankind-and not simply the ordering of relations among states (Bull 1977, 20, 22; Held and McGrew 1998, 219-220). World order does not necessarily require the existence of This higher authority, since order and society can exist even in the absence of such authority (Linklater 2002, 321).

The possibility of a social order without a "world government" is also found in Wight's discussion of the three traditions of international theory: realism, rationalism, and revolutionism. These three traditions can be related to three political conditions that make up the subject matter of international relations (Wight 1991, 7; Little 2000: 397): international anarchy (emphasized by realists); diplomacy and commerce (emphasized by rationalists); and the concept of society of states, or family of nations (emphasized by revolutionists). The third condition stipulates that even when there is no political superior, an international society-a moral and cultural whole-exists and imposes certain moral and even legal obligations (Wight 1991, 7). In other words, order is possible even if no international authority is present. Although Wight is speaking about a society of states, we can take his argument regarding the third condition one step further. A society of states can be seen as a pre-condition to world order: that is, order between human beings. Achieving an order with which states can identify promotes a common moral cause that transcends the borders

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<sup>6</sup> International order is a pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society (Bull 1977, 8). Like Bull, Rosenau also claims that global order is more extensive than international order (1992, 12).



between states. And finally, another contribution to the discussion of world order is Rosenau's argument that global order consists of those routinized arrangements through which world politics progresses from one moment in time to the next. Whether fundamental or routinized, not all of the arrangements are the result of self-conscious efforts on the part of those who sustain them (1992, 5).

In the international arena, apologies are issued by states or other international actors (such as the Catholic Church). This might lead us to discuss international order. However, the subject of discussion in this paper is related to the wider concept of world order because the emphasis of world order is on the universal community of humankind—a community of individuals—and not just on states systems. The importance of our fellow human beings and our sympathy for them is embodied in apologies and forgiveness. Although a wrong perpetrated by a state aims to hurt a group as a whole and not specifically one person (when an individual is hurt it is because of his or her group identity), individuals are nevertheless hurt (the victims are humans who belong to that group). Apologies, even when performed among states or groups, do not neglect the hurt individuals. Apologies reflect values that are universal: their message is to respect the rights of fellow human beings, regardless of their national identity, by abstaining from a future wrong.

## Elements of Order

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### Legitimacy

The basic condition for order is legitimacy. Legitimacy refers to the normative belief of an actor that a rule or institution must be obeyed. Acceptance of a certain rule or institution as legitimate gives it authority. Legitimate rules and institutions are essential parts of the ordering mechanism of the international system. A rule will become legitimate for individuals when they internalize it, thus perceiving that their interests accord with that rule. Obedience follows naturally since individuals believe in that rule's legitimacy. According to Weber, this belief constitutes a basic element for the creation of an imperative coordination system (Weber 1976, 34). Thus, legitimacy is a powerful ordering tool, as it backs a certain system and directs actors in coordinating and managing their activities in that system. The maintenance of order depends on the existence of a set of rules internalized as legitimate by the majority of actors. When actors share a common definition of what is legitimate, we can say that they constitute a community (Hurd 1999, 381-382, 387-389).

### Legal Order and Social Order

The word "order" indicates clarity, predictability, and a stable framework outlining how one should act or behave. Order is something formal, codified, and legal. Order dictates certain actions: one must act in a certain legitimized way to achieve order or sustain it.<sup>7</sup> Thus

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<sup>7</sup> Ikenberry's theory of international constitutional order should be mentioned when discussing the subject of legal order in the context of the international arena (Schweller 2001:165-166).

order has a prominent legal aspect. But order, by definition, is a social phenomenon. Therefore, on all its levels-domestic, international, or world order-it also includes unwritten social components: that is, an ethical moral perception of values, principles, and obligations that stem from mutual respect among actors belonging to the same society. If we focus mainly on “positive” law made by agreements between states, we miss seeing the whole picture. International society is a broader concept than international law (Buzan 2001, 486).

The legal aspect of order contains a coercive external element, whereas the social aspect is the result of mutual consent, internalization of moral values, and tolerance. The social element of order, therefore, because of its less coercive nature, contributes greatly to the stabilization and maintenance of order. Stable order is the result of combining legal institutionalized rules (as every society requires binding coercive rules) with unwritten internalized moral values.<sup>8</sup> Order falls apart in the absence of rules that are effective because they are enforced (Onuf 1989, 127). But without internal consent of individuals or social groups to support these rules-that is, without internalization of moral values-order cannot be sustained for a prolonged time since actors will eventually perceive the enforced rules as illegitimate.

Accordingly, in the international context we talk about social order. The ordering principle of a system refers to how the social parts are arranged and function together (Schweller 2001, 169). A society of states<sup>9</sup> (or other actors) can agree on some basic universal moral

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8 Durkheim’s solution to the problem of order was to emphasize the internalization of norms: “they enter directly into the constitution of the actors’ ends themselves” (quoted in Onuf 1989, 129).

9 Wight claims that all societies of states have appeared within culturally unified regions. The existence of a common culture is necessary for the emergence of the most basic pluralist rules of coexistence. Bull rejected Wight’s claim that some degree of cultural

rights and duties (this is one point on which the Kantian and Grotian traditions of thought converge: Linklater 2002, 324). International order is possible if corporate actors (mainly states) adopt certain common beliefs and practices. Through the reproduction and diffusion of these beliefs and practices, the social order is institutionalized and thus maintained. International order is assured if the actors internalize beliefs and practices such that they become part of their own repertoire, cognitions, and behaviors. In this sense, the actors go through a process of socialization (see Schimmelfennig 2000, 112). Hedley Bull claims that because there is an institutionalized normative social order, there is an international society (1977).<sup>10</sup> For Bull, “order” in social life is “a pattern of human activity that sustains elementary, primary or universal goals of social life”: it sustains security against violence, observance of agreements, and stability of property (Bull 1977, 5; Linklater and Suganami 2006, 57).

Having established international order, the next level is to establish world order. Adherence to order between states will spill over to the societies of the states—that is, it affects individuals. The rules and practices that produce international order are internalized by societies, which are composed of individuals. Identifying with the order’s principles not just at the state level but at the individual level creates a bridge, a common ground, between individuals regardless of their citizenship. When a wrongdoer state goes through an internal process of confronting its crimes of the past, its society embraces the

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unity is a necessary condition for the development of international society, although he maintained that cultural similarities are desirable (Linklater and Suganami 2006, 136).

<sup>10</sup> International society (Grotius) is about the institutionalization of shared interest and identity among states. World society (Kant) takes individuals, nonstate organizations, and the global population as a whole as the focus of global societal identities and arrangements (Buzan 2001, 475).

moral codes that the victim group and others adhere to. By apologizing, the wrongdoer accepts the illegitimacy of its past actions, agrees to the stipulations of the existing order, and asks to be part of a society that denounces such actions. In doing this, the wrongdoer accepts (moral) values that are supported not only by states but also by individuals.

### **Apology, Forgiveness, and Order**

I argue that apology and forgiveness complete the (international) legal order; they accompany and supplement it. “International law recognizes apology as a formal remedy for violations of international law. However, its role is generally exceptional and subordinate or auxiliary to the role of other remedies (...)” (quoted in Bilder 2008, 17). Article 37 of the UN Draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts states that satisfaction for a wrongful act “may consist in an acknowledgement of the breach, an expression of regret, a formal apology or another appropriate modality” (quoted in Bilder 2008, 18). Apologizing or granting forgiveness are not obligatory, but in certain cases order cannot be formed or persist without them. In spite of the facts that the role of apology as an official remedy in international law (as it currently appears in formal written law) is limited (Bilder 2008, 19) and that there is no legal obligation to forgive, these concepts still convey an important message: that is, they indicate the appropriate behavior and responsibilities of states. Therefore, apology and forgiveness strengthen norms (ethical issues) and help sustain the legal order without official status among the official primary rules of international law. The growth of international apologies since the 1990s is clear evidence of the importance of this phenomenon. I contend that apology and forgiveness have ordering traits and thus can be viewed as social ordering principals. Rules are



necessary in any viable community, but commitment to communal solidarity via apology and forgiveness is even more fundamental (Amstutz 2005, 52).

One of the elements of order is stability. Apologies advance stability by reducing the threatening image a perpetrator has due to a moral wrong it has done. In other words, an apology improves a state's image. In doing this, an apology could prevent the possibility of a pact forming against the perpetrator state (Lind 2003). As Walt claimed, states balance not simply material capabilities but also offensive intentions (Walt 1987). Thus, if state A can convince state B that it has friendly intentions by apologizing, then B will be more inclined to cooperate with A.<sup>11</sup>

Norms provide standards for evaluating behavior. Adherence to norms through an apology can diminish threat perceptions since it helps to establish behavioral transparency (Kratochwil 2000, 54), which is another element of order. In addition, adhering to international norms gives a state a reputation of conformity, which also helps to diminish the perception of it as a threat. An apology conveys the message that the apologizer complies with certain norms supported by other states and is willing to accept the community's norms in order to be included in that community (Löwenheim 2009, 545). By accepting the norms, the former perpetrator assimilates ethical principles that enhance stability.

As mentioned earlier, apologies reveal what is considered to be

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<sup>11</sup> According to Lind (2008) unapologetic remembrance elevates threat perception and inhibits reconciliation. Chances are that internal backlash (within the perpetrator state) would be the response to a state apology. Thus, apologies can also be unsettling. However, when backed by the wrongdoer's state's society (in other words, when the past is confronted), backlash can be avoided.

unacceptable behavior among international actors.<sup>12</sup> Thus, apologies diminish uncertainty. Although words themselves have power, the promise that the moral wrong will not be repeated is backed up by the legal dimension of order, which regulates the actors' behavior through the threat of sanctions and punishment. Legal and moral constraints—legal and moral conventions—are thus requirements of world order.

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12 Apologies function as “road maps.” They reflect world views and principled beliefs about the fundamental nature of human life and the morality of practices. They reflect beliefs about what is right and what is wrong (Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 13).

## **The Perception of the “Other”**

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The danger to world order derives from how the “self” perceives the “other.” Tolerance (acting with restraint) toward the “other” is a basic condition for a society of states (creation of common rules and mutual respect), and thus for world order. How a former perpetrator perceives its victims is crucial in understanding when an apology is possible. How the self sees the other is vital to an assessment of the stability of world order. A key element in understanding what enables international and world order is embedded in whether one perceives the other as an enemy, rival, or friend (Wendt 1999). Apologies are a means of recognizing how another group (the victim group) is viewed by the former offender, and could serve as an indicator for the prospects of strengthening or maintaining the stability of order.<sup>13</sup>

When the “other” is perceived by the self as an enemy, then side A does not recognize side B’s right to exist as autonomous being and will not limit the use of violence against B (Wendt 1999, 260; Löwenheim 2009, 541-542). In this state of affairs, an act of moral wrong could be executed and regarded as a legitimate tool by the perpetrator: actors that are not recognized do not count, and thus can be killed or harmed (Wendt 2003, 511). When the role of the “other” is that of rival, side A recognizes side B’s right to exist. In this case, when violence is being used, its usage is limited. Finally, when the “other” is perceived as friend, the two sides avoid the use of violence in their relationship.

The type of the apology will be influenced by how far the aggressor side is willing to change the pattern of relations existing

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13 This argument applies to the offended and offender parties relations. However, it could affect order and stability beyond these two actors in light of their relations or connections with other states.

up to time of the apology. As long as the perpetrator state perceives the victim group as an enemy, it will not apologize and will not acknowledge the offence as moral wrong (Löwenheim 2009, 542). Here, perceiving the “other” as an enemy and refusing to acknowledge an act as a moral wrong is potentially destabilizing and thus poses a threat to the possibility of order. In these situations, the victims never forget the wrong done to them, and as long as the perpetrator refuses to come to terms with the past, the conflict between them will continue. In addition, the victim group might pursue vengeance, and if the perpetrator group does not accept the victim group’s rights, then a repetition of a wrong is possible.

In a state of enmity, acts that are seen as morally wrong in situations when the “other” is perceived as rival or friend are seen as legitimate. Consequently, there is nothing to apologize for, since there is no perception the act was wrong. In a state of enmity, an actor is not recognized by other actors, and in these circumstances the nature of international politics exempts states from moral duties (Forde 1992, 64-65); therefore there is no need to apologize. In this state of affairs, violent conflicts are always concrete options and order is very difficult to implement.

When a state is ready to accept the other as a rival, it stands to reason that the perpetrator will acknowledge some minimal rights of the victim group. This is because they share an understanding of what acts are permissible and what acts are forbidden. If the wrongdoing violated the rights of the victim group, they are entitled to an apology (Löwenheim, 2009). Here, it is possible to talk about wrongdoing and apologies since actors share norms, and unlimited acts of violence are not acceptable.

Wendt asserts that when the “other” is perceived as friend, states have developed a sense of shared collective identity regarding

issues of security (Wendt 1999, 298-299). The individual's rights are emphasized and actors abide by the law, believing that each individual and group should be acknowledged (Wendt 2003, 521, 523-524). Through the acknowledgment of rights in societies, roles (and rules) are stipulated, relations are directed, and accountability is assigned to actions (a moral wrong for instance). The discussion of rights enables the possibility of apologies. Thus, the view of the "other" as rival or friend has a stabilizing effect, which is essential for the construction of order based on ethical conceptions.

Acknowledgment of rights attests to some sense of community, or what Gong calls "a standard of civilization" (1984, 3). Moreover, acknowledging the out-group (the "other") to some extent includes it in the same category as the in-group (the "self"), which reduces negative perceptions toward it and implements a policy of toleration (Wohl et al. 2005). Such situations can be viewed as world order. If the "other" has rights, apologizing for a past moral wrong is an obvious necessity. The acceptance of the others' rights evinced through apologizing indicates the existence of common ethical principles. Therefore, apologizing is not only the result of an order but it also contributes to the assimilation of the order; this is because articulating an apology symbolizes acceptance of the order's ethical values.

The acts of acknowledging the "other" and changing attitude toward that "other" through apology (Löwenheim 2009) endorse solidarity among nations. Moral principles articulated in the apology reveal that human sympathies need not be confined to co-nationals but can be expanded to include all members of the human race (Linklater 2002, 321).

In some situations, a state that committed a wrong in the past will refuse to apologize for that wrong or will submit an apology that is not meaningful (e.g., "We are sorry for your tragedy but we



do not apologize since we are not accountable”). This scenario could weaken the order, for as long as the conflict between the perpetrator and the victim continues, so does a threat to stability. In addition, the refusal of the perpetrator to admit that a moral wrong has occurred could indicate a different perception regarding normative principles—or, what constitutes a wrong. Different normative understandings among international actors could also negatively influence the order: arguments over whether an offense should be defined as morally wrong could create a destabilizing breach.

An apology is an expression of responsibility assumed by a perpetrator state. By apologizing, a state conveys the messages that states have responsibilities toward other peoples and that actions have consequences. Determining responsibility for offenses is an important part of establishing order (Löwenheim 2009). Furthermore, accountability is an essential part of restorative justice.

## **Responsibility, Justice, and Apologies**

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An apology can be submitted by a state's representative generations after the wrong has been committed. Because the wrong is performed in the name of the state, it is possible to apologize in its name at a later period. Indeed, we can attribute responsibility to a state even when the regime or the state has changed (for example, after the division of post-World War II Germany). We inherit not only a legacy of bravery but also one of moral wrongs, insults, sins, and obligations. A refusal of descendants to come to terms with their inherited past and confront it through apology results in a perpetuation of the conflict. Victims and their descendants will not stop demanding amends (a prominent case is Turkey's refusal to acknowledge the Armenian genocide), making it difficult to ignore the past. States are responsible for the outcomes of past actions since their consequences still resonate in the present (Löwenheim 2009). And, as claimed earlier, refusal to apologize-and admit responsibility for a wrong-could endanger order.

The question of whether states have collective responsibility is a question, first and foremost, of whether they are responsible for the outcome: Do they have to pay the price and bear the consequences of the wrongful deed? (Miller 2004). When we attribute moral responsibility, we usually refer to the actual perpetrators, whereas outcome responsibility could be attributed to generations that did not commit or participate in the wrong. Since states inherit the past, they also inherit the responsibility that comes with it. Apologies usually take place years after the wrong has been committed; therefore, we can expect that these apologies will acknowledge only an outcome responsibility: they acknowledge the damage done to the victim group (Miller 2004, 246-247).

We expect that perpetrator states that apologize will acknowledge the wrong, admit their collective responsibility, and atone for

the past wrong by offering reparations. These acts are important developments in the international community because they contribute to the restoration and renewal of the moral order in the global society (Barkan, 2000). Accountability for a past wrong through apology is part of achieving restorative justice, which, as we have mentioned above, is more stabilizing than retributive justice and thus more effective in relation to world order.<sup>14</sup> Restorative justice helps to build trust among former adversaries, advancing peace as a result. Francis Fukuyama asserted that social trust is essential for the development of obedient societies (in Amstutz 2005, 98); in other words, trust promotes order. It is important to remember that full justice can never be achieved subsequent to a moral wrong.

Unlike retributive justice-which focuses on the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators-restorative justice emphasizes healing and the restoration of interpersonal relations and communal bonds. Emphasizing restoration does not mean that legal accountability is not important. On the contrary, restorative justice demands accountability through truth-telling, acknowledgment of the wrong, and reparations. Restorative justice addresses victim's needs by encouraging offenders to take responsibility. "But whereas retributive justice seeks to restore and maintain the credibility of the legal order through prosecution and punishment, restorative justice seeks to heal the damaged social, cultural, and political fabric of society" (Amstutz 2005, 87; Zehr 2002, 10). Because of its more voluntary nature, restorative justice contributes to establishing and maintaining order.

Restorative justice is concerned with needs that are not met in the usual legal process (Zehr 2002, 13). Judicial retribution is important

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<sup>14</sup> Rawls views justice as fairness. A just basic structure will be a fair scheme of cooperation among citizens regarded as free and equal (Waner 2001, 81).

in providing justice, deterring future wrong, and restoring the moral equality between victims and perpetrators; however, such an approach does not necessarily restore damaged relations (Amstutz 2005, 95). The concepts of apology and forgiveness are included in the perception of restorative justice. As mentioned earlier, apology and forgiveness are not obligatory duties, but they are essential if the object is to maintain order by strengthening normative cohesion. Apology and forgiveness enable reconciliation without necessarily fulfilling the demands of legal justice (prosecution and punishment).

Although retributive justice provides an effective way to deal with crimes of individuals, it is not fully equipped to address past collective offences and systemic wrongs. Retributive justice focuses on backward-looking accountability instead of forward-looking moral reconstruction of society. Restorative justice, on the other hand, promotes reconciliation, which becomes possible after anger and resentment between the victim group and perpetrator group turn first to toleration and then to cooperative relations (Amstutz 2005, 107, 110). In order to promote these objectives supporting the moral order-moral order being the basic condition for forging a sense of community-the perpetrator must apologize and the victim must forgive.

Apologies, justice, and order are interlinked. Apologies are ethical commitments to avoid unnecessary suffering and to abstain from unjust acts in the future. They are part of the efforts to promote restorative justice. The value of order lies in the fact that without it, efforts to promote justice are set to fail (Linklater 2002, 321). It is important to note that many concepts in politics, including justice, are illusive, lacking a single conventional definition. And yet, these concepts are valuable when thinking about communal relations and order since they portray the core elements of a good society (Amstutz 2005, 97). Because justice is an illusive concept, it could stand in

the way of order; for example, victims may claim that in spite of the apology justice has not been achieved, and they may, as a result, refuse to reconcile with the offender. In these instances, a compromise should be negotiated regarding the definition of justice in each particular case.

## Motivation for Apology

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Three motivations can be identified for a former perpetrator to apologize and acknowledge that a wrong has been committed: first, the perpetrator may be coerced into apologizing; second, apologizing may be in the perpetrator's best self-interest; and third, the perpetrator may perceive the act as morally wrong and unjust, therefore fully accepting the legitimacy of the norm forbidding such acts (Wendt 1999; Hurd 1999; Löwenheim 2009).<sup>15</sup> These are three ways to achieve the obedience of actors and some measure of order. I will discuss the first two of these motivations together, and the third separately.

### Coercion and Self-Interest

If a state acknowledges a wrong because it was coerced (for example, it feared being punished) or out of self-interest (for example, connection to the wrong might endanger the perpetrator state's relations with other states and undermine the fulfillment of its interests) then we can argue that its commitment to world order principles are not of a high degree. The former scenario does not leave much hope for the establishment of long term order because of the continual risk that coerced actors will rebel. In latter cases, obedience is achieved through external restraint. Apologies stemming from coercion or self-interest often resemble an account, an explanation, or an excuse, and the phrasing that used will rarely be followed by compensation. We can also assume in these cases that the wrongdoer has internalized neither its responsibility for the consequences of the wrong nor the

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<sup>15</sup> Some parallels to these three motives for apologizing can be found in Weber's fundamental essay on types of legitimate authority (1976).

severity of the wrong (Löwenheim 2009, 548).

## **Legitimacy**

When a former perpetrator feels that the wrong was illegitimate we can assume that a meaningful apology will follow. In these cases, the perpetrator perceives its act as wrong due to an internal acceptance of norms regarding human rights and an internal sense of moral duty. A state that has acknowledged a wrong because it has internalized international society's norms will most likely offer reparations along with an apology. The perpetrator is willing to pay a high price that contradicts its self-interest because it values international moral principles (Löwenheim 2009).

Such an apology thus indicates that actors perceive common social principles as legitimate and abide by them naturally: that there is an assimilated social order. If actors adhere to the orders' ethical principles because they identify with them-through internalization (that is, internal self-restraint)-then the stability of the order is validated. The moral legitimacy (that is, "the right thing to do") embodied in apologies reflects a pro-social logic that differs fundamentally from narrow self-interest (Suchman 1995, 579) and thus its contribution to order is obvious.

By tracing the motive of apologies, then, we can assess the nature of the actors' support in the practices of the order. A motive of legitimacy indicates the achievement of a stable international order between states and world order among people. In such cases, the principles at the core of the existing order are shared and supported by the actors and constitute and reflect their beliefs.



## Conclusion

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This paper addressed the role of apologies in establishing and strengthening order, emphasizing moral and ethical issues. Although this emphasis was to some extent dictated by the subject matter of this paper, apologies that arise as a result of moral wrong, it also arises also from the direct connection between order and ethics. For world order to be established, the issues of moral principles and respect to fellow human beings must be addressed. These principles are an essential part of any order, since legal principles alone cannot suffice.

Order is formed of both legal and social elements. When these two dimensions are combined, order will more likely be stable and lasting. Order is not just simply the adherence to rules. It also reflects an acceptance of values, norms, and ideas that are not always expressed in written agreements or conventions. Obedience to rules and social principles can be achieved through coercion, self-interest, or legitimacy (Wendt 1999; Löwenheim 2009). However, the first two of these motives stem from external origins and thus raise questions about the order's stability. On the other hand, the final motive—legitimacy—emanates from internal sources and thus has the highest stabilizing potential among the three.

Moral wrongs not addressed by the perpetrator pose a threat to order and undermine the validity of moral principles. By refusing to come to terms with a past moral wrong (including refusing to apologize), the perpetrator conveys the message that such acts are acceptable (and may be repeated) in the international arena. Moral order is threatened by such attitudes. Apologies are an indispensable part of any discussion of moral wrong, as they significantly articulate what behaviors are not acceptable among actors who belong to the international society, and thus promote order.

Most of the conflicts among nations of the world result from

an injustice—a moral wrong (one must remember that conflicts can also cause wrongs). Conflicts influence not just the adversaries but can have an impact on other actors. Accordingly, conflicts pose a risk to the existence or restoration of (international or world) order. Apologies are a strategy for dealing with past transgressions and bringing conflict to an end. Depending on two conditions, they can prove to be a very valuable tool in conflict resolution. The first condition is that the two belligerent parties must have negotiated the apology and agreed on an acceptable formula. And the second is that the apology must emanate from an internal social process of the wrongdoer state, through which it comes to terms with the wrongdoing and its implications. Thus, because of the important role of apologies in conflict resolution, restorative justice, and reconciliation—and the obvious contribution of these to establishing or strengthening order—any discussion of constructing world (or international) order must include some reference to the concept of apology.

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