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Doyle, Michael W.



Deen Chatterjee

S.J. Quinney College of Law, University of Utah,
Salt Lake City, UT, USA

Introduction and Biographical Matrix

Michael W. Doyle is an American political scientist and international relations theorist whose work carries far-reaching consequences for the theory and practice of global justice. He is the leading scholar in assessing the moral consequences of global interdependence, and he has set the tone and direction of this increasingly important area of scholarship for years to come. Doyle's ideas on human mobility, peace, warfare, and other related issues have elevated the discourse on global justice to a new height.

Doyle's career has been defined by a sustained effort to translate abstract normative commitments (to liberty, equality, human dignity, and institutional accountability) into concrete frameworks for governing a deeply unequal world. As University Professor of International Affairs, Law, and Political Science at Columbia University, Doyle occupies a pivotal position at the intersection of empirical social science and normative political theory, consistently interrogating both how the world is ordered and how it ought to be. His unique capacity to bridge theory and practice was further solidified through his high-level

service at the United Nations, notably as Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan from 2001 to 2003, where he directly shaped global policy on the Millennium Development Goals and international migration.

Doyle's contribution to global justice scholarship is also distinguished by his methodological pluralism. Rather than privileging a single theoretical tradition, he treats realism, liberalism, and socialism as complementary analytical lenses, each illuminating a distinct dimension of injustice in the international order. Realism exposes the structural vulnerabilities of power and the ways in which weaker states are systematically subordinated to stronger ones. Liberalism maps the institutional conditions under which cooperation and rights-protection become possible. Socialism directs attention to the deep economic inequalities and class dynamics that undermine meaningful freedom for the world's most marginalized populations.

In combining these traditions, Doyle resists the tendency common in both academic and policy circles to treat global justice as the province of a single ideological framework. Instead, Doyle demonstrates that durable justice requires grappling simultaneously with power, institutions, and material conditions. He crystallized this pluralistic worldview in his foundational text, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism* (1997), a sweeping intellectual history that argues no single school of thought can

adequately address the full complexity of global injustice.

Global Peace: The Democratic Peace Thesis and the Justice of Domestic Structures

Prominently among Doyle's most consequential contribution to global justice debates is his systematic reformulation of the Democratic Peace thesis, developed through a revitalized reading of Immanuel Kant's 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace*. Published in a landmark series of articles in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1983a, b) and the *American Political Science Review* (1986b), Doyle's work fundamentally reoriented international relations theory by demonstrating that the domestic constitutional structure of states (not merely the distribution of power among them) determines the prospects for peace and justice in world politics.

The global justice implications of Doyle's democratic peace argument are profound. If durable peace among states depends on their internal democratic character, then the promotion of constitutional government and civic representation becomes not merely a matter of domestic preference but a structural precondition for international order. Doyle shows that liberal democracies sustain an enduring "separate peace" among themselves through three interlocking Kantian mechanisms: (1) constitutional representation that requires public consensus for war; (2) shared moral values that foster mutual recognition and trust; and (3) transnational economic interdependence. As Doyle emphasizes, the simultaneous existence of peaceful restraint and external aggression is not accidental: "The differences among liberal pacifism, liberal imperialism, and Kant's internationalism are not arbitrary. They are rooted in differing conceptions of the citizen and the state" (Doyle 1986a). Together, these mechanisms create a zone of peace that is, in effect, a zone of institutionalized justice, one in which disputes are resolved through deliberation rather than violence, and in which citizens hold their governments accountable for decisions that affect others across borders.

Doyle is equally attentive to what might be called the "dark side" of liberal internationalism, another dimension of his analysis with acute relevance for global justice. Liberal states, precisely because they extend trust and institutional recognition only to other liberal regimes, tend to regard nondemocratic states with deep suspicion and to discover ideological justifications for intervention and coercion. As Doyle observes: "Liberal states have created a separate peace... and have also discovered liberal reasons for aggression, as many of the inhabitants of the Third World can testify" (Doyle 1983a). This double inheritance, a commitment to peace within the liberal order paired with a persistent tendency toward interventionism beyond it, reveals a structural tension at the heart of liberal global governance: the institutions designed to protect rights among liberal states can become instruments of domination when turned outward.

Critics such as Georg Cavallar (2001) have argued that converting Immanuel Kant's categorical moral imperative into an empirically testable framework risks diluting the normative force of Kantian ethics. By mapping peace onto empirically verifiable variables, these critics contend that Doyle grounds the duty of peace in historical contingency and institutional pragmatism rather than rational principle. Cavallar specifically highlights a textual point in Kant's *Toward Perpetual Peace*: in the Second Definitive Article, Kant describes the pacific federation (*foedus pacificum*) as open to states generally, rather than explicitly limiting its membership to fellow "republics." From this perspective, restricting the pacific union strictly to liberal democratic republics imposes a narrower, heterogeneous framework onto what Kant intended as a universal, homogeneous path to global peace.

Doyle directly engages Cavallar and this textual critique, acknowledging that the wording of the Second Definitive Article does not explicitly restrict federal association to republics. However, Doyle counters that Kant's hypothetical peace treaty must be interpreted as an integrated whole rather than a set of isolated clauses. In Doyle's view, the First Definitive Article—which requires states to establish republican civil constitutions—

serves as the non-negotiable foundation for the rest of the treaty. Because an international federation lacks a sovereign global authority to enforce compliance, any reliable peace must be inherently self-enforcing. Representative republican constitutions provide this essential internal mechanism: by requiring the consent of citizens—who bear the direct financial, human, and material burdens of war—republics introduce a systemic caution and restraint that autocratic monarchies lack. Without the domestic political accountability enforced by the First Article, agreements under the Second Article remain precarious and unreliable.

Far from abandoning Kantian ethics or reducing peace to mere institutional engineering, Doyle maintains that his framework reflects how Kant envisioned moral reason operating through practical human history. Doyle emphasizes that liberal peace is not sustained by institutional design alone, but by the simultaneous interaction of three mutually reinforcing pillars:

1. *Republican Institutions*: Representative governance that instills popular caution and constitutional checks
2. *Liberal Ideas and Norms*: Shared principles of individual rights and publicity that foster mutual respect and trust among liberal polities
3. *Transnational Connections*: Cosmopolitan hospitality and economic ties (the “spirit of commerce”) that reflect moral commitments and create tangible material incentives to avoid conflict

By demonstrating how these three strands operate together, Doyle argues that institutional pragmatism does not betray ethical ambition; rather, it provides the necessary historical mechanism through which universal Kantian obligations are actualized and safeguarded in an anarchic world (Doyle 2012).

Doyle’s commitment to the democratic peace thesis extends far beyond retrospective empirical analysis into the active cultivation of democratic infrastructure worldwide. This was most prominently manifested in his public service as a member and eventual Chair of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

from 2006 to 2013, a position to which he was appointed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. While his academic writing demonstrates that liberal democracies rarely wage war against one another, his leadership at UNDEF operationalized this insight by directly routing resources to grassroots civil society organizations in developing or transitioning nations. Under his tenure, the fund prioritized projects that strengthened the voice of citizens, expanded women’s political empowerment, and secured human rights, reinforcing his theoretical stance that a just and peaceful international order is fundamentally predicated on the robust democratization of its domestic units.

Empire, Hegemony, and the Structural Roots of Global Injustice

To understand how political power operates when mutual institutional respect collapses, Doyle turns to the history of empire. His comprehensive study, *Empires* (1986a), offers a searching analysis of asymmetric domination as a structural feature of international order and a foundational source of global injustice. Doyle defines empire as a relationship of “effective political control imposed by some political societies—those called metropolises—on other political societies—called peripheries” (Doyle 1986a), a definition that foregrounds the coercive and hierarchical character of imperial arrangements.

For global justice theory, Doyle’s analysis of empire is significant on multiple levels. His historical sociology demonstrates that imperial systems do not simply subordinate peripheral societies economically; they systematically undermine their political self-determination, replacing organic local governance with centralized administrative coercion that is ill-equipped to accommodate the cultural and political diversity of the populations it controls. Through detailed case studies (including the nineteenth-century scramble for Africa, the slow entanglement of Nile and Niger societies with British and French metropolitan power, the survival of independent Ethiopia, and the rapid dissolution of imperial

arrangements in the twentieth century), Doyle shows that social orders built on unilateral hegemony are not only unjust, but structurally fragile. Such orders reliably generate crises of legitimacy that eventually undermine their sustainability.

Crucial to Doyle's historical framework is his typology of imperial control, which distinguishes between *formal* empire (direct annexation and rule by a metropolitan governor) and *informal* empire (where local rulers remain nominally sovereign but are subject to regular, effective metropolitan veto over internal and external policies). By dissecting the machinery of both British informal control in nineteenth-century Egypt and formal rule in India, Doyle illustrates how imperial governance distorts local institutional evolution, embedding structural dependencies that outlast the formal period of occupation.

The global justice implications thus extend beyond the historical record. By demonstrating that imperial arrangements emerge from complex interactions among metropolitan capabilities, peripheral vulnerabilities, and competitive transnational environments, Doyle resists monocausal explanations that locate the problem of empire solely in the intentions of dominant powers. His structural understanding challenges global justice theorists to attend to the systemic conditions such as economic disparities, institutional asymmetries, and competitive state dynamics that make domination possible, and to design remedies adequate to that complexity.

Doyle emphasizes that empire is an interactive product: it requires not just a powerful metropole possessing a "surplus of power" and the domestic societal drivers to expand, but also a vulnerable periphery characterized by political fractionalization or institutional weakness, and a competitive international system that rewards preemptive expansion. Long-term international equilibrium, Doyle concludes, requires a transition toward reciprocal, self-determining institutional frameworks, a conclusion that resonates directly with contemporary debates over postcolonial reparations, institutional reform, and the democratization of global governance.

United Nations Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding, and the Justice of Multilateral Institutions

Doyle's engagement with the institutional machinery of international peace and security connects his theoretical commitments to global justice with the practical question of how multilateral organizations can advance it. Working in collaboration with Nicholas Sambanis, Doyle introduced sophisticated quantitative and theoretical tools to evaluate international peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, most notably in their landmark article "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis" (2000) and their book *Making War and Building Peace* (2006).

Their central finding, that multilateral United Nations operations significantly improve the prospects for both durable peace and post-conflict democratization, carries direct implications for global justice. Drawing on a dataset of 124 civil wars fought since 1945, Doyle and Sambanis demonstrate that UN interventions work best when they are calibrated to the specific local dynamics of each conflict, endowed with sufficient authority and resources, and grounded in an understanding of the three-dimensional political space governing sustainable peace, a space composed of "the intensity of local hostilities, the availability of domestic capacities for change, and the extent of international commitment" (Doyle and Sambanis 2000).

To conceptualize this three-dimensional space, Doyle and Sambanis developed the "Peacebuilding Triangle" model. In this framework, the probability of a successful peace is mathematically and conceptually determined by the interaction of these three vectors: as the height of the triangle shifts based on deep-seated hostility (measured by factors like ethnic fractionalization, numbers of factions, and human casualties), it must be countered by expanding the base through greater domestic capacity (measured by GDP per capita and institutional infrastructure) and international capacity (measured by the scale, mandate, and financial funding of the UN

mission). This paradigm shifts the evaluation of interventions away from simplistic, binary tallies of success or failure toward a structural assessment of whether an international mandate is mathematically and logistically adequate to the environment it enters.

From a global justice perspective, two aspects of this analysis are especially significant. First, Doyle's insistence that lasting stabilization requires substantial investment in economic development, and not merely security monitoring, reflects a broader normative claim: post-conflict justice demands material reconstruction, not merely the cessation of violence. Societies emerging from civil war are among the world's most vulnerable, and the failure to address their economic devastation perpetuates cycles of inequality and instability that undermine any durable peace. Doyle and Sambanis's empirical models demonstrate that while military peacekeeping is highly effective at preventing an immediate return to violence in the critical first two to three post-conflict years, long-term sovereign survival depends almost entirely on deep economic regeneration and the rebuilding of civic institutions.

Second, Doyle's recognition that UN operations must be tailored to local conditions challenges the "one-size-fits-all" technocratic model of peacebuilding that has often imposed externally designed institutional templates on societies with distinct historical and cultural contexts, an antiquated approach that raises serious questions of self-determination and epistemic justice.

This insistence on pairing physical security with material reconstruction was not merely an academic posture; it directly reflected, and was informed by, Doyle's active role in the highest echelons of international policymaking. Earlier, as UN Assistant Secretary-General under Kofi Annan, he had been one of the architects of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and had led a UN team that had proposed strategies for sustainable peace (United Nations Report 2001). By bridging the gap between security operations and broader developmental milestones, Doyle operationalized his empirical finding that long-term post-conflict survival is fundamentally tied to socioeconomic viability. In

tandem with his strategic planning for the MDGs, Doyle's portfolio in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General included a foundational role in designing and managing outreach to the transnational corporate sector through the launch of the United Nations Global Compact. As a political philosopher who treats socialist critiques of structural market inequalities with rigorous seriousness, Doyle recognized that state-centric models of global justice were insufficient in an era of hyper-globalization.

By reframing the architecture and expanding the Global Compact, Doyle helped establish the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, legally and normatively pushing transnational corporations to align their strategies with universal principles of human rights, labor protections, environmental sustainability, and anti-corruption initiatives. Rather than relying on traditional top-down, hard-law international treaties—which often stall in deadlocked multinational negotiations—Doyle developed the Global Compact as an innovative network-based governance mechanism that re-focused on the "Global South." This flexible, decentralized design closely mirrors his academic critique of rigid, "one-size-fits-all" institutional templates, offering instead a highly adaptable framework that respects local contexts while upholding universal standards. This corporate framework leverages corporate social responsibility (CSR), public transparency, and civil society accountability, utilizing a platform of several foundational principles derived from historic instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

This institutional mechanism effectively brings private market actors under the umbrella of global governance, reflecting Doyle's pluralistic methodology by checking raw capitalist power with institutionalized normative mandates. By integrating private market actors into the global justice equation, Doyle's policy actively bolstered the "domestic capacity" vector of his peacebuilding triangle. In doing so, he practically demonstrates that sustainable peace, human rights, and economic development are not separate policy silos,

but rather deeply interdependent dimensions of a singular, coherent vision of global justice.

Distributive Justice and the Law of Peoples

Doyle's engagement with John Rawls grounds his institutional analyses in the deeper philosophical questions that animate the field of global justice. In his 2006 essay "One World, Many Peoples: International Justice in John Rawls's *The Law of Peoples*," Doyle examines one of the most contested issues in contemporary political philosophy: whether Rawls's Difference Principle (which requires that socioeconomic inequalities be arranged to maximize the position of the least advantaged) should apply globally as well as domestically.

Doyle navigates the intense debate between cosmopolitans like Charles Beitz and Thomas Pogge—who argue that global interdependence requires a global application of the Difference Principle—and Rawls's own more bounded "Society of Peoples," which limits international duties to a duty of assistance to burdened societies. Doyle selectively defends Rawls's caution regarding a globalized Difference Principle, noting the immense practical difficulties of implementation without a global state, while simultaneously pushing the boundaries of Rawlsian international ethics to demand more robust, systemic redistribution than Rawls originally articulated.

Doyle's position reflects a characteristically pragmatic engagement with idealism. He argues from a Rawlsian perspective that a community in conditions of extreme desperation can justify temporarily compromising absolute political liberty if (and only if) doing so is structurally necessary to secure basic economic subsistence and public justice (Doyle 2006). This claim, that material deprivation can justify temporary constraints on formal freedom, has significant implications for debates about setting conditions in international development, the obligations of wealthy states toward poorer ones, and the sequencing of rights claims in post-conflict or transitional contexts. It

also positions Doyle within a tradition of global justice theory that resists the sharp separation between civil-political rights and economic-social rights, insisting that both dimensions of justice are implicated in the construction of a fair international order.

This argument directly mirrors the lexical priority rules within Rawls's own *A Theory of Justice*, where the absolute priority of the First Principle (Equal Liberty) over the Second Principle (Distributive Justice) is explicitly conditional upon a society having reached a certain baseline level of economic development where basic material survival is guaranteed.

Moving beyond purely theoretical critiques of Rawlsian distributive frameworks, Doyle directly engaged with macroeconomic institutional design to address global economic inequality. Recognizing that the economic baseline required for political liberty cannot be secured without active, systemic intervention in the global economy, Doyle sought to translate these philosophical thresholds into concrete policy targets. In a seminal 2014 collaboration with Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz, titled "Eliminating Extreme Inequality: A Sustainable Development Goal, 2015–2030," Doyle argued that extreme economic inequality within and between states is not merely an economic metric, but a profound violation of global justice that systematically undermines democratic governance, social stability, shared prosperity, and human rights (Doyle and Stiglitz 2014).

Doyle and Stiglitz advocated for the explicit inclusion of a stand-alone post-2015 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) aimed at curbing the concentration of extreme wealth. They proposed highly specific metrics to operationalize this goal, including tracking the income share of the top 1% relative to the bottom 40% (a variant of the Palma Ratio) and setting institutional targets to ensure that post-tax income inequality decreases consistently across nations.

Their exact formulation for a standalone wealth-curbing goal was ultimately subsumed into the broader architecture of SDG 10 ("Reduced Inequalities"), making their intervention both intellectually and practically transformative. By

bridging his empirical commitments with normative political theory, Doyle demonstrated how extreme disparities in wealth act as structural barriers to the realistic utopia he envisions, providing a measurable framework for global institutional accountability.

Preemption, Prevention, and the Legitimate Use of Force

Doyle's engagement with the legal and ethical dimensions of military force represents one of his most direct contributions to global justice theory. In *Striking First: Preemption and Prevention in International Conflict* (2008), he addresses a question of profound normative consequence: under what conditions, if any, can states justifiably use force before they have been attacked? His answer is shaped by a rigorous analysis of the distinction between preemption (force used in the face of imminent threats) and prevention, force used to forestall the growing offensive capability of a potential adversary. As Doyle argues, contemporary frameworks have consistently elided this "vital distinction in international law" (Doyle 2008), with significant harmful consequences for global justice.

The stakes are high. When the preemption/prevention distinction collapses (as it did in the Bush Doctrine's justification for the 2003 Iraq War), powerful states acquire a nearly unlimited license for unilateral military action against weaker ones, generating a profound asymmetry of rights and vulnerabilities in the international system. Doyle's analysis of historical case studies, including the Iraq War, the 1998 missile strikes against al-Qaeda, and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, warns that permitting unilateral preventive war creates a dangerous moral and legal slippery slope that disproportionately threatens states lacking the military and political resources to resist great-power pressure.

Doyle's proposed remedy of strengthening UN Charter procedures and developing clearer collective standards for responding to lethal but temporally distant threats reflects a deep commitment to multilateralism as a mechanism of global justice

(Doyle 2008). A world in which force is governed by clear, collectively endorsed rules, rather than the strategic calculations of powerful states acting unilaterally, is a world in which weaker states and their populations have greater protection against the arbitrary exercise of military power. This normative vision extends into his 2015 volume, *The Question of Intervention: John Stuart Mill and the Responsibility to Protect*, in which Doyle appeals to John Stuart Mill's 1859 essay "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" to interrogate the conditions under which sovereignty can be legitimately overridden in the name of humanitarian protection.

Doyle's findings in this regard are sobering and consequential for any theory of humanitarian intervention. Cross-referencing Mill's principles with data from 334 overt foreign interventions since 1815, Doyle finds that only 26 resulted in a government that did not actively worsen democratic and civil liberties (Doyle 2015). This empirical record demands a fundamental caution, that even well-intentioned interventions designed to advance human rights risk corrupting or replacing the organic civic autonomy of the host population, substituting external judgment for the internal processes through which genuine self-determination is realized. For global justice, the lesson is not that intervention is never justified, but that its legitimacy depends on rigorous procedural constraints, genuine multilateral authorization, and a serious reckoning with the history of external coercion masquerading as liberation.

Anchoring his expansive work on international law and humanitarian intervention is his foundational co-edited volume, *The Globalization of Human Rights* (with Coicaud et al. 2003). This work explicitly interrogates how the imperatives of civil, political, economic, and social rights can transition from abstract moral claims to institutionalized rights across highly divergent legal, cultural, and regional landscapes. The text serves as a core philosophical touchstone for Doyle's broader work, postulating that human rights must serve as both the baseline horizon of global justice and the explicit standard to which domestic and international institutions must be made to conform.

Doyle's corpus reveals a cohesive intellectual arc wherein the universal human rights outlined in his 2003 volume serve as the moral benchmark that justifies—yet strictly limits—the external use of force explored in his later works. Both *Striking First* and *The Question of Intervention* grapple with these limits of state sovereignty, warning that unilateral military action—whether disguised as preventive self-defense or humanitarian rescue—frequently degenerates into great-power overreach that actively undermines local autonomy. To prevent this degradation, Doyle consistently champions multilateral institutions and codified international law as indispensable shields, ensuring that neither the prevention of distant threats nor the protection of vulnerable populations becomes a pretext for neo-imperialism. By combining the rigorous empirical skepticism of his intervention studies with the normative framework of global human rights, he constructs a realism-informed liberalism that recognizes the tragedy of historical failures without abandoning the pursuit of global justice. Together, these three works demonstrate that protecting human dignity on a global scale requires not just high-minded ideals, but a legally constrained, multilaterally authorized international order that fiercely guards the self-determination of weaker states against arbitrary violence. These studies bridge the gap between empirical legal frameworks and normative theory, defending a universal yet culturally sensitive defense of human dignity that also informs Doyle's later, highly praised work on global migration regimes and refugee rights.

Global Mobility and Forced Migration

Among Doyle's most innovative contributions to global justice is his work on international migration and forced displacement. Humans have been mobile since day one, and especially so in today's globalized world, but, as Doyle points out, there has been no international treaty yet on human mobility as such. Doyle has been working on the philosophical, political, and legal foundations of the treaty. Doyle argues that existing legal

instruments (particularly the 1951 Refugee Convention) provide only partial, fragmented protections, failing to address the full spectrum of cross-border human movement in the twenty-first century. The resulting gaps expose millions of people to legal limbo, exploitation, and rightlessness, constituting a fundamental failure of global justice.

To remedy this, Doyle led an international commission in constructing the Model International Mobility Convention (MIMC), a comprehensive framework designed to establish a minimum baseline of legal rights for all categories of cross-border movers: tourists, students, labor migrants, investors, refugees, and the forcibly displaced. From a global justice perspective, the MIMC's most significant innovation is its formal legal recognition of "forced migrants." Doyle expands this category beyond the 1951 Convention's narrow focus on political and religious persecution to include individuals fleeing pressing threats of serious harm, such as climate change, environmental degradation, and generalized organized violence.

This definitional expansion reflects a deeper normative claim: that the causes of forced displacement in the contemporary world are multiple, interconnected, and increasingly tied to global structural processes such as climate change, economic inequality, and organized violence, for which wealthy states bear significant responsibility. The MIMC's responsibility-sharing mechanism, "modeled on climate agreements, to distribute equitably the financial and social burdens of refugee protection" (Doyle et al. 2018; Doyle 2019) directly addresses the justice dimension of this responsibility, proposing a burden-sharing architecture analogous to those developed in international environmental law.

Doyle conceptualizes the MIMC as a "realistic utopia": a normative blueprint that combines legal precision, ethical solidarity, and reciprocal state interests, serving not as an immediately codifiable treaty but as a coherent model capable of guiding states toward a fairer and more humane regime of international mobility. In his 2025 essay "An Immigration Philosophy Fit for Our Better Selves," he argues that the international

community must construct migration policies that reflect shared ethical values rather than yielding to xenophobic political pressure. This insistence on the moral stakes of migration policy and the human costs of its failures marks Doyle's work on mobility as a vital contribution to the global justice literature on membership, exclusion, and human rights.

The MIMC's elucidation of the centrality of human mobility in our global world is gaining momentum in justice literature, political philosophy, and the social sciences. This framework has rich potential for effectively responding to the dynamics of autonomy, identity, vulnerability, integration, and empowerment that lie at the core of current public debates. These debates center on some of the most pressing concerns of our time (such as poverty, war, uneven development, and climate change), where mass migration, displacement, and refugee crises are the most visible fallout. These challenges raise questions central to the theme of global justice.

The opposite of an isolated policy initiative, Doyle's work on global mobility complements his prior work and serves as the natural culmination of his lifelong engagement with the interlocking crises of the international order. His ability to spearhead such a landmark, multinational undertaking is directly informed by his deep expertise in the ethics of military force, the structural causes of global poverty, and the institutional machinery of UN peace operations. By treating migration not as an isolated phenomenon but as the inevitable human fallout of conflict, deprivation, and systemic governance failures, Doyle successfully translates his foundational commitment to universal human rights into a concrete, legally precise framework. Ultimately, the MIMC bridges the gap between his theoretical critiques of sovereignty and his pragmatic policy designs, offering a legally viable blueprint that protects the world's most vulnerable populations. In doing so, Doyle demonstrates that a truly just global order must recognize the right to move not as a challenge to international stability, but as an indispensable pillar of human dignity.

Geopolitics of the New Cold War: Justice in an Era of Great-Power Competition

In *Cold Peace: Avoiding the New Cold War* (2023), Doyle addresses the fracturing of the post-Cold War international order and its consequences for global justice. He argues that the intensifying rivalry among the United States, China, and Russia need not replicate the catastrophic choices of the mid-twentieth century: "the world could enter a phase of 'Cold Peace' rather than a full-scale 'Cold War II' if prudent and realistic diplomatic measures were taken to promote accommodation" (Doyle 2023). This framing reflects his characteristic commitment to institutional pragmatism in the service of normative ends.

To delineate this shift, Doyle emphasizes that while the first Cold War was a rigid, binary ideological confrontation between incompatible economic systems (Capitalism vs. Communism), this twenty-first-century iteration operates across a tri-lateral axis characterized by deep geoeconomic interdependence, cyber warfare, and a clash of governance models (Democracy vs. Authoritarianism).

From a global justice perspective, Doyle's analysis identifies a double threat to the international order's capacity to address the world's most urgent shared challenges. Externally, great-power rivalry displaces cooperation on climate change, global health security, and nuclear nonproliferation, precisely the transnational issues whose effective management is most consequential for the world's most vulnerable populations. Internally, the domestic political crises that exacerbate geopolitical tensions (democratic backsliding, economic inequality, right-wing populism, authoritarian consolidation) themselves represent failures of justice within the great powers, failures that reverberate outward into the international system. He notes with critical urgency that the internal decay of democratic institutions and the rise of hyper-nationalism within these states create a structural diversionary incentive, wherein domestic ruling elites manufacture or exaggerate

external threats to legitimize internal inequality or authoritarian control.

Doyle's proposed framework of "managed competition," grounded in strategic ambiguity, military confidence-building measures, respect for minority rights, and the strengthening of democratic institutions, is thus simultaneously a geopolitical strategy and a justice agenda. To operationalize "managed competition," Doyle outlines concrete institutional mechanisms, most notably proposing a series of reciprocal "non-subversion pacts" and clear ideological borders. For example, he advocates for explicit, reciprocal agreements regarding cybersecurity to ban state-sponsored electronic interference in domestic elections, alongside structured, mutual limitations on ideological subversion and territorial expansionism—using specific case studies like the sovereignty of Ukraine and the cross-strait status of Taiwan to demonstrate where "live-and-let-live" diplomatic architecture must be institutionalized.

By insisting that the conditions for avoiding catastrophic military escalation include the protection of democratic norms and minority rights within great powers, he connects the internal justice of states to the external stability of the international order, reinforcing one of the central arguments of his democratic peace research. Durable global peace cannot be detached from domestic institutional rectitude; it requires a calculated framework that checks raw revisionist power while preserving the essential baseline of multilateral cooperation needed to safeguard the global commons.

Conclusion: A Liberal Institutionalism for Global Justice

Across five decades of scholarship, Michael Doyle has developed a body of work that is simultaneously empirically rigorous and normatively ambitious, crafting a liberal institutionalism deeply oriented toward the concrete demands of global justice. The foundation of this framework lies in his pioneering democratic peace research, which established that the domestic constitutions

of states fundamentally shape the possibilities of international order, effectively linking internal political justice to the quality of relations among nations. By extending this inquiry to the structural roots of international inequality, Doyle's analysis of empire exposes the inherent fragility of global systems built on domination, reinforcing the need for just institutional frameworks.

Building upon these systemic foundations, Doyle's later scholarship transitions into the practical and legal mechanisms required to sustain a fair international community. His assessments of UN peacekeeping demonstrated that multilateral institutions can actively advance justice in post-conflict settings, provided they are adequately resourced and attentive to local conditions. Parallel to these institutional dynamics, Doyle's legal analyses of preemption, prevention, and intervention articulated the strict normative constraints necessary to prevent military power from becoming an instrument of great-power domination. By engaging directly with Rawlsian distributive justice, Doyle successfully situates his empirical and institutional proposals within the broader philosophical debate over what a truly fair international order requires. And his work on global mobility developed a comprehensive legal architecture capable of addressing the twenty-first century's most pressing humanitarian emergency.

Unifying these diverse contributions is an abiding conviction that global justice is neither a utopian aspiration beyond the reach of practical politics nor a mere byproduct of strategic calculation, but an achievable institutional project requiring sustained theoretical work, rigorous empirical analysis, and genuine normative commitment. In this sense, Doyle's "realistic utopia" is far more than a description of the Model International Mobility Convention; it is the animating spirit of his entire intellectual enterprise. By anchoring the boldest ideals of human rights in the hard realities of global power, Doyle provides an enduring testament to his realistic utopia, that a just world is not a mere philosophical vision but an institutionally buildable reality.

Cross-References

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- [Constitutionalism](#)
- [Cosmopolitan Democracy](#)
- [Democratic Peace Thesis](#)
- [Distributive Justice, Global](#)
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