

**The Governance Turn in the World Bank Discourse  
from a Normative IR Lens:  
Cosmopolitanism or Communitarianism?**

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**Abstract**

When structural adjustment programmes which had dominated the lending conditionality of the leading international financial institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) in the 1980s failed to deliver the expected success stories, governance gained traction as a predictor of aid effectiveness. Development discourse and practice began incorporating governance indicators and defining a governance concept in line with the effort to reassess the role of the state in development. This paper examines whether the inclusion of governance in the development discourse of the World Bank in the 1990s reflects cosmopolitan or communitarian ethical norms. Normative international relations theory permits an assessment of the so-called governance turn in World Bank conditionality which interrogates the understanding of the state and of the international community which are put forth. Key World Bank publications from the 1990s are selected for content analysis. The first level of analysis interrogates whether the conceptualization of the state emerging from the documents reflects a communitarian or cosmopolitan approach. The second level of analysis focuses on the universalism-particularism tension in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. What emerges from the analysis is a hybrid of cosmopolitan and communitarian

sensibilities where the technocratic approach of the World Bank allows operationalizing conditionality and (good) governance in a list of indicators without a consistent normative framework.

**Keywords:** World Bank, governance, cosmopolitanism, communitarianism

## **Introduction**

The latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were crucial in the transformation of the discourse and practice of development aid. The domestic popularity of the neoliberal doctrine and the taste for far-reaching reforms found an echo in the rising popularity of structural adjustments programmes which came to dominate the conditionality of the international financial institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) in the 1980s. A corollary of this trend was the governance turn in the 1990s when, in the effort to reassess the role of the state in development (and the lack of success of structural adjustment-driven reforms), governance was identified as a crucial predictor of aid effectiveness. The governance turn was noticeable both in the development discourse and in the practice of conditionality, with the explicit inclusion of governance criteria among conditions for lending. It is the aim of this paper to examine whether the inclusion of governance in the development discourse of the World Bank in the 1990s reflects cosmopolitan or communitarian ethical norms.

The paper will first outline the theoretical framework by presenting the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate from normative international relations and its main points of contention, as well as underlining where it echoes the liberalism-communitarianism debate from political theory. The following section contextualizes the emergence of the governance turn in the World Bank discourse by assessing the pivotal World Bank publications of the 1990s which modified the mainstream discourse, as well as by connecting it to the previous decades. The third section analyses a selection of World Bank publications from the 1990s by employing a normative IR lens and assessing

whether they fit a cosmopolitan or communitarian ethical sensibility. The conclusion offers some further thoughts on the ethical hybrid that emerges from the analysis.

### **The Cosmopolitan-Communitarian Debate**

Contemporary normative international relations theory has been defined for the past few decades by the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. The 1970s revival of liberalism through influential works like John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1999 [1971]), Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1999 [1974]) or Ronald Dworkin's *Taking Rights Seriously* (1978) redefined the focus of political philosophy. In international relations theory, Charles Beitz (1999 [1979]) adapted Rawls to a theory of international distributive justice and Thomas Pogge (1992, 2002) focused on how the existing global order actively harms the poor and why it should be reformed. The 1980s communitarian critique of liberalism did not offer a grand theory to contrast liberalism, but rather core counterarguments (primarily to the Rawlsian take). Authors like Alasdair MacIntyre (2007 [1981]) and Charles Taylor (1979) present some the strongest voices in the communitarian camp. International theorist Michael Walzer (1983) develops the concept of complex equality on communitarian grounds, while David Miller (1995) offers a defense of the moral significance of nationalism.

Far from being novel, the seeds of the debate had been planted beforehand. Walzer compares the communitarian critique of liberalism (in the article bearing the same name) to a recurring fashion: "transient but certain to return" (Walzer, 1990, p. 6). Hegel's critique of liberal individualism and Marx's critique of the theory of human rights are earlier examples of a communitarian-minded critique of liberalism (Morrice, 2000, p. 234). Cosmopolitanism itself can trace its modern legacy to Kant. While cosmopolitanism in IR and liberalism in political theory largely overlap (though both terms encompass a rich variety), the contribution at hand is concerned primarily with cosmopolitanism because it aims to employ a normative IR theoretical framework. Important for the analysis is the central cosmopolitan claim

to a universal community. This universal community can be conceived as a moral one, a political one or an economic one (Kleingeld and Brown, 2019). Communitarianism, in contrast, disagrees with the possibility of there existing a sole community, instead proposing a multiplicity of communities whose interests are in tension.

While the debate between the camps can be simplified to a disagreement about human communities, there are three distinctions which are generally underlined when dissecting the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate:<sup>1</sup> the concept of the person, the moral relevance of states, and universalism versus particularism (Caney, 1992; Cochran, 2004; Morrice, 2000). The first point of contention is a descriptive one about the nature and essence of the person. This issue overlaps in political theory and its normative IR counterpart. Like liberalism, cosmopolitanism has an a priori, pre-social concept of the person, placing great value on individualism: “the ultimate units of concern are human beings, or persons” (Pogge, 1992, p. 48). An individual’s identity and value, as well as moral subjectivity is held to be independent to society. Nozick offers a strong rebuke to the idea that there could be a “*social entity* with a good that undergoes some sacrifice for its own good. There are only individual people, different individual people, with their own individual lives.” (Nozick, 1974, pp. 32–33) Communitarianism criticizes the atomistic cosmopolitan description of human nature by offering a competing one comprising an embeddedness thesis, a social thesis and a cultural options thesis (Caney, 1992, p. 274). The embeddedness thesis refers to the argument that persons are embedded and constituted by communities: “I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point.” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 220) The social thesis holds that a person achieves full moral agency only by living in society (Taylor, 1985,

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<sup>1</sup> These distinctions carry over and largely overlap with the cleavage points in the liberalism-communitarianism debate; Cochran (2004) translates Caney’s (1992) analysis of the three issues from political theory to normative IR and this contribution will maintain the bridge-building exhibited by Cochran (2004) in explaining the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate by referring to its political theory counterpart.

p. 191). Finally, the cultural options thesis draws attention to the exercise of autonomy (Caney, 1992, p. 280).

The second notable cleavage in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is concerned with the role of the state. With its privileging of the individual, cosmopolitanism does not offer special moral agency or character to the state. While political cosmopolitanism can argue for a version of a world state (Kleingeld and Brown, 2019), it is not needed to achieve full moral agency, but rather as a recognition of equal moral agency of all individuals. The communitarian position holds that the state is “morally relevant because it is necessary to the development of the individual as a free person” (Cochran, 2004, p. 12). Thus, full moral agency is not attainable outside a community. The communitarian position is also closest to a traditional international relations one which privileges sovereignty and sees the international realm as being comprised of equal sovereign states. Communitarians offer equal moral standing to all states in the international realm.

The third issue in the debate is the one which Cochran (2004, p. 50) finds insurmountable: “the dispute on the universal versus the particular stands.” This tension revolves around the question of how to establish ethical standards across different societies. Cosmopolitans, as a result of their conception of the person as being freely chosen and pre-social, argue that there can be universal standards because individuals are morally equal. Communitarians regard communities as those being morally equal while the individuals embedded in them have differing ethical standards and moral groundings, circumscribed by space and time. This epistemological question of moral grounds colours the ability of normative international relations theory to make unimpeachable ethical judgements on concrete aspects of practical ethics in the international system. Importantly, the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate distinguishes itself from the liberalism-communitarianism one here by always having a global dimension in the issue of universalism versus particularism. To put it plainly, it is a question of establishing moral standards between states, not within states.

It is on the basis of these three issues outlined above that questions of distributive justice can be interpreted differently in a cosmopolitan or

communitarian framework. Best (2005) argues that international financial institutions, specifically the IMF, have adopted a moral language which combines aspects of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism. She calls this moral hybrid a “communitarian liberalism—that so far has demonstrated more of the weaknesses than the strengths of these two moral frameworks” (Best, 2005, p. 362). She arrives at this conclusion after analysing a series of moral tropes employed in IMF discourse, such as transparency, universal standards, ownership, solidarity, and discipline. To some extent, this paper seeks to test whether her assertion holds for the IMF’s twin, the World Bank, by looking at the development discourse surrounding the introduction of the concept of governance in aid conditionality.

### **Development Discourse: Tracing the Emergence of the Governance Turn**

Before proceeding to contextualize the establishment of the new aid paradigm in the development discourse of the 1990s, it is necessary to highlight a few key points about the role of the World Bank in shaping development discourse. First, World Bank discourse on the matter is highly influential. As Gavin and Rodrik note, “the Bank’s strength lies in its tremendous powers to spread and popularize ideas that it latches on to. Once the Bank gets hold of an idea, its financial clout ensures that the idea will gain wide currency.” (Gavin and Rodrik, 1995, p. 333) As this influence is mainly exercised upon other development actors, changes in the Bank discourse and practice echo in the larger development field. Second, it is subject to fashions and fads. Ziai’s analysis of flagship World Bank publications leads him to argue that, while the organization’s thinking of the 70s imagined a central role for states in development, this tide had turned in the 80s with the popularity of neoliberalism which marginalized the state, which was then supplanted by a more nuanced consideration of the role of institutions at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ziai, 2016, pp. 135–136). These fashions largely mirror the mainstream in development theory, with critiques of conventional development existing in academia unsurprisingly not penetrating the Bank’s

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discourse. Third, there appear to be factions within the institution engaged in an intellectual and ideological struggle of defining development (Ziai, 2016, p. 136). The discourse that emerges from the Bank in its multiplicity of publications is thus not uniform, though general trends can be detected. The paper at hand is concerned with such a trend in particular, specifically what it calls the governance turn, that is, the adoption of the concept of good governance in World Bank discourse and, later, conditionality (via the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment).

While the 1980s undoubtedly belonged to neoliberalism, so much so that it has been dubbed the lost decade for development, it equally belonged to structural adjustment reforms. Both the IMF and the World Bank shifted their conditionality towards one promoting specific, market-friendly, policy reforms. Going into the 1990s, structural adjustment had a less than stellar record. When no quick miracles were delivered by structural adjustment, the development discourse shifted towards the new ‘concept of the decade’: governance. The 1989 report on Sub-Saharan Africa already signalled this shift, arguing that “Underlying the litany of Africa’s development problems is a crisis of governance.” (The World Bank, 1989, p. 60). The fault rested with the state still, except it was not because it impeded the functioning of the market, as a pure neoliberal explanation would claim, but because it was inefficient. As Ziai notes: “In a situation where the majority of African countries have been undergoing structural adjustment, the failure of these policies to improve lives or even spur economic growth can now be attributed to ‘weak public sector management’ (...) – instead of blaming the economic reforms themselves.” (Ziai, 2016, p. 131)

This shift was intimately linked with the increased concern for aid effectiveness in an age when funds were dwindling and poverty and underdevelopment were persisting. It was easy to point to examples of government mismanagement and abuse of aid money and to persisting levels of underdevelopment, be it in Somoza’s Nicaragua or Mobutu’s Zaire, so it is unsurprising that this line of argument gained steam (Hout, 2007, p. 135). In the development sector at large in the 1990s, “There is heightened awareness that the *quality* of a country’s governance system is a key determinant of the ability to pursue

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sustainable economic and social development.” (Santiso, 2001, p. 5) The Burnside and Dollar (1997) paper as well as the 1998 annual report *Assessing Aid* were crucial in cementing the narrative of aid effectiveness alongside that of governance. “Despite fierce criticism levelled at the methodology of the studies and the validity of their conclusions by academic researchers, the relationship between governance quality and aid effectiveness became almost a dogma in certain policy-making circles.” (Hout, 2007, p. 135) A natural result of this concern for aid effectiveness was the shift to aid selectivity. Governance represented a key distinguishing aspect in determining who was deserving of aid, as recipient countries were selected based on their past performance in regard to policies and governance. This new aid paradigm thus included what is called ex post conditionality, alongside the ex ante conditionality imposed by structural adjustment programmes (Hout, 2007, p. 23). In effect, it established a system where good performers were further rewarded and bad performers were starved of resources.

Another important aspect of the new aid paradigm is its reassessment of the state. The 1991 World Bank annual report highlighted how the relationship between the state and the economy influences development and considered this one of the most valuable lessons learned in the past decade (The World Bank, 1991, p. iii). It further argued that “Reform must look at institutions” (The World Bank, 1991, p. 10) as a means to increase the quality of governance. Annual reports like *The State in a Changing World* (1997) and *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why* (1998) put the relationship between state and development centre stage, a notable departure from the neoliberalism of the Washington Consensus which marginalized the state and regarded it as an obstacle in the functioning of the market. Many considered this move as a signal that a Post-Washington Consensus was emerging, however “although the good governance agenda acknowledges the importance of the state in the development process, it would be a grave misconception to regard it as a complete break with neo-liberalism” (Abrahamsen, 2000, pp. 41–42). Rather than denying the premises upon which the development agenda of the 1980s was constructed, the new agenda added governance considerations on top of them, resulting in what could more accurately be called an augmented Washington Consensus.



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It was not only Bank publications and discourse which revolved around the new ‘concept of the decade’. The governance turn was also reflected in the Country Performance Rating being replaced in 1998 by the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) which now included governance and social policy criteria. The CPIA rating is used to decide allocation of the International Development Association (IDA) funding. There were six governance-related indicators, making up 30% of the CPIA criteria: “policies and institutions for environmental sustainability (indicator 10); property rights and rule-based governance (indicator 16); quality of budgetary and financial management (indicator 17); efficiency of revenue mobilisation (indicator 18); quality of public administration (indicator 19); transparency, accountability and corruption in the public sector (indicator 20)” (Hout, 2007, pp. 31–32). The rest of the CPIA criteria were made up of macroeconomic policies and structural policies which echoed the same development formula prescribed in the 1980s.

Thus, we can consider that the governance turn emerged in the World Bank discourse already from the 1989 Sub-Saharan Africa report, partially as explanation for the failure of structural adjustment reforms, partially as a strategy to salvage the neoliberal agenda by grafting governance concerns on top of it. World Bank influence acted as a multiplier to ensure other development actors took up the discourse and the concerns brought up, thus waving in the age of aid selectivity and (new) aid conditionality.

### **A Normative Analysis of World Bank Publications: Finding the Cosmopolitan-Communitarian Balance**

Perhaps most significant about the governance turn was that it brought a reassessment of the role of the state in development. To many, it signalled a shift to a Post-Washington Consensus which was not (as) market fundamentalist. As the role of states is a major point of contention in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, it is worthwhile to begin the analysis here. While the state did indeed get recast as a central actor in the new development discourse, it would be an exaggeration to say that its new role

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went against the previous neoliberal script. The Bank promoted an effective state, which was not “a direct provider of growth but (as) a partner, catalyst, and facilitator” (The World Bank, 1997, p. 1). This message was central in its 1997 World Development Report and it echoed in other papers and reports on governance published throughout the 1990s which argued for a “smaller state equipped with a professional, accountable bureaucracy that can provide an „enabling environment“ for private sector-led growth, to discharge effectively core functions such as economic management, and to pursue sustained poverty reduction” (The World Bank, 1994, p. xvi). It must also be noted that the Bank recognized that effective institutional arrangements were subject to variation between countries on basis of their culture and history (The World Bank, 1992, p. 7). Overall, the ideal state was still a minimal one, but an effective one.

While such a conceptualization of a minimal state might fit in with liberalism, it does not necessarily follow that it fits in with a cosmopolitan view. Even Pogge’s proposed institutional cosmopolitanism, though not going as far as imagining a global state, argues for a vertical dispersal of the sovereignty concentrated in the hands of the state (Pogge, 1992, p. 58). Pogge (1992) criticizes the concentration of sovereignty and considers it an impediment in establishing international justice, while the Bank makes no special effort to address such concerns. When it addresses the importance of civil society, it does so as a means to support state functioning, not with a view to dispersing sovereignty downwards: “Stimulating debate in civil society about policy is an intangible way for development assistance to influence policy reform.” (The World Bank, 1998, p. 57) More importantly, the Bank discourse on this lacks any reference to a global community, so an upwards dispersal of sovereignty, which would be essential if we were to characterize its stance as cosmopolitan. Instead, it shapes its discourse to reflect recognition of equal state sovereignty.

While this does come closer to the communitarian stance that maintains the state’s moral relevance as the means of providing personal self-realization (Cochran, 2004, p. 12), imagining it as the only viable instrument, besides market forces, through which development can be assessed and spurred, it

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would be an exaggeration and an omission to call the Bank's approach a communitarian one. Though it does allow for some measure of maximalism in determining domestic policies, it does not fully respect what Walzer (1994) considers the minimalist claim to tribalism. In his theory on spheres of justice, Walzer (1994, p. 4) highlights the maximalist/minimalist dualism as a "feature of every morality. Philosophers most often describe it in terms of a (thin) set of universal principles adapted (thickly) to these or those historical circumstances." The World Bank fails the simplistic test of tribalism through the imposition of conditionality when this conditionality seeks to shape non-Western governments to reflect Western political and economic arrangements. Because tribalism, understood as commitment to your own community, can never disappear, it must always be accommodated, Walzer (1994, pp.81-82) argues, defining a common argument in communitarian approaches.

While corruption and mishandling of aid funds for personal gain are clear enough cases where a minimalist conception of justice can be used as condemnation, it is difficult to imagine that the public sector management reforms promoted by the Bank (such as public expenditure management or civil service reform) (The World Bank, 1992, p. 12) in its quest to instil good governance do not contravene the maximalist morality framework as imagined by Walzer (1994). After all, in a communitarian approach, it is the community itself which is to negotiate the rules for communal living and the public sector is an essential part of that. The World Bank's treatment of the role of the state in its publications cannot be comfortably placed in either side of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. Though privileging sovereignty may on its face appear communitarian, such privileging ends when it comes to reforms and aid conditionality. Corruption may be condemned from a minimalist morality, as it is recognizable and condemnable regardless of the community from which it is seen, but public sector management done in a way that contradicts World Bank recommendations is not, per se, a case of injustice or something to be condemned, much less penalized by withholding aid funds. What this promotion of uniform reform schemes in certain sectors shows is a tendency towards universalism, as well as a privileging of certain governmental infrastructure (political, economic, administrative) over others.

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It is the universalism versus particularism division of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate where the Bank takes its clearest stance in one of the camps. Before looking at the discourse, the imposition of the CPIA criteria is already very telling. This mechanism uses “a uniform model of what is assumed to work in development processes, irrespective of the context to which it is applied” (Hout, 2007, p. 44). Criticism of over-reliance on one size fits all prescriptions is not new to Bretton Woods institutions. Though, as noted above, some lip service is paid to the cultural and historical variation of governance practices, the underlying message of the CPIA seems to be that democratic regimes are the only appropriate frameworks for good governance practices. It is certainly the case that such arrangements are rated highly via CPIA and then rewarded with aid funds. The Bank even introduced a so-called governance discount in 1998 which reduced IDA funds allocation to countries which scored poorly on the governance criteria in the CPIA (Hout, 2007, p. 32). Moreover, democracy and economic liberalism are conceptually linked as determiners of good governance (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 51).

As the Soviet Bloc had just dissolved and a democratic wave (together with a transition to capitalism) had swept the globe, it is understandable that democratic political arrangements were the ones considered appropriate for delivering good governance. However, there was some room for variation allowed: “This does not mean that Western-style democracy is the only solution. Experience from parts of East Asia suggests that where there is widespread trust in public institutions, effective ground-level deliberation, and respect for the rule of law, the conditions for responsive state intervention can be met.” (The World Bank, 1997, p. 116) *The State in a Changing World* report is equally cautious in overstating the relationship between growth and democracy (The World Bank, 1997, p. 149). However, no degree of caution on the matter can disguise the fact that the Bank has a universalist tendency. The universalism-particularism tension rests on whether we can find a standard by which to make judgements “across plural conceptions of the good” (Cochran, 2004, p. 12). By introducing the good governance agenda in development, the World Bank did exactly that. It found a formulation of both ex ante and ex post standards by which to judge and reform aid recipient

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countries. Abrahamsen goes further and argues that the good governance agenda not only promotes a particular understanding of democratisation which legitimises specific interventions, it also delegitimises and marginalises “alternative representations of democracy and development” (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 13).

In its characteristic technocratic fashion, the Bank’s good governance agenda was broken down into actionable aspects. The most ambitious portrayal appears in the Kaufmann et al. (1999) paper which emerged at the end of the decade. Their study confirms what the earlier Burnside and Dollar (1997) paper had argued: that there is a strong causal relationship between good governance and good development outcomes. This study of data measuring subjective governance quality perceptions is organized around six clusters of indicators: Voice and Accountability, Political Instability and Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Burden, Rule of Law, and Graft (Kaufmann et al., 1999, p. 2). As each indicator is described in detail, the report would merit a separate analysis which goes beyond the scope of the present contribution. For the purpose of the paper at hand, it is sufficient to use it as illustration of the standardizing and universalizing approach adopted by the World Bank in regard to its governance agenda. This approach suggests a level of clarity and agreement on how to achieve good governance which is non-existent in the literature: “There are still no clear or settled ideas about how effective governance and democratic consolidation should be suitably defined, let alone how they could be supported from abroad.” (Santiso, 2001, p. 6)

While it might be easy to recognize bad governance, the variety of governance practices which might be characterized as good outside the World Bank’s technocratic breakdown of the concept is significant. The methodology employed in the mentioned study also draws the obvious criticism that perception may not be factual and treating such qualitative data in a quantitative manner may lead to overreaching. That the Bank proceeds with an overabundance of confidence in the promotion of certain governance practices despite the difficulty in measuring governance and prescribing reform and that it even excludes countries whose record does not conform

to its agreed upon illustration of good governance demonstrates a clear universalist tendency. This standardization is the mark of universalization which Best (2005) also identifies in the IMF discourse. By technocratizing the discourse, the moral underpinning is hidden under the veil of objectivity. In actuality, when setting standards, one cannot do without a standard setter and in the case of the IMF and the World Bank alike, both the standard maker and the standard example are Western democracies which places them in the position of moral arbiter while feigning a cosmopolitan veneer of universal standards derived from moral equality. There is no Rawlsian veil of ignorance from which the CPIA or the good governance criteria emerged.

Though not addressed directly in the reports analysed, a few observations on the underlying conceptualization of the person can be read between its lines. The World Bank stance on distributive justice is the clearest pathway to revealing this stance. While the Bank recognizes a moral duty to help through its very mandate to end poverty (2021), irrespective of belonging to a community, aid flows, aid conditionality and aid selectivity show the opposite. A purely theoretical cosmopolitan stance would hold that all individuals are equal moral agents and thus equally deserving of aid if needed, which could not square with aid selectivity. A communitarian stance, on the other hand, would not shy away from privileging certain groups above others when it comes to prioritizing aid. However, it would not prioritize according to efficient use of aid, but according to one's belonging to the same community or tribe. The World Bank has thus made prioritizing aid à la communitarianism a practice, but without grounding it on communitarian ethical norms of selectivity. However, the communitarian concept of the person prevails in the Bank's stance through the very simple fact that the World Bank deals with governments in need, not people in need.

## **Conclusion**

By focusing the analysis along the three tensions inherent to the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, the paper at hand has concentrated mostly on assessing the conceptualization of the role of the state and the universalist

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versus particularist tendencies of the discourse. Best's (2005) argument that international financial institutions promote a hybrid cosmopolitan-communitarian moral language was confirmed to some extent, though the variation in methodology has produced a different looking picture of the World Bank than what emerged for the IMF. Instead of focusing on tropes, this analysis focused on identifying illustrations of the three tensions in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate.

On the concept of the person, the reports selected say very little, but the World Bank's privileging of states over people (and of specific states over others through aid selectivity) shows a communitarian bias overall. Reassessing the role of the state in the governance turn showed a clear contradiction to cosmopolitan norms, but a selective respect for communitarianism. Far from promoting a moral arrangement in which the state has no special function in the fulfilment of moral duty, as cosmopolitanism would dictate, the governance agenda is obsessive about how the state should look and act so as to promote development. In areas of policies deemed of relevance to the reformist effort of the World Bank, foreign intervention and support was considered necessary. Thus, public sector management appears as a policy area rightly exposed to Bank scrutiny and reform, while distributive policies are largely left to the discretion of the states, as long as they maintain the government apparatus within acceptable minimalist limits. A technocratic approach to governance which breaks it down into actionable dimensions allows for such selectivity in the Bank's respect for tribalism. However, selective tribalism means no true respect for tribalism.

Allegiance to the cosmopolitan camp is much clearer when assessing the tension between universalism and particularism. Just as structural adjustment reforms were deemed a cure-all in the previous decade, so now governance emerged as a vital predictor for sound development in the 1990s. Though lip service was paid to the cultural and historical variation, there was still a clear message that governance, specifically whether it was good or bad, could be measured and assessed by using the definitions and criteria promoted by the World Bank. Such criteria rested on an underlying prioritization of liberal democratic practices and demonstrated a type of confidence in the

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descriptive and prescriptive strength of their governance agenda which is not echoed in a research field which can first and foremost agree on how difficult it is to measure governance accurately. Such confidence is understandable from an organization which seeks to turn its theory into practice, but it is also bullishly ignorant of criticism which it cannot incorporate into its existing framework. Criticized as universalist and ignorant of contextualization, the Bank augmented the Washington Consensus by adding governance considerations, but not eliminating its core.

Overall, the World Bank does not emerge as a fully cosmopolitan actor. It falls short in its conceptualization of the role of the state, as well as its underlying conceptualization of the person. There is nothing to indicate respect for the agency of individuals in developing states. Rather, they are victims to be saved from poor governance and poverty or civil society to be galvanized into pressuring for Bank-approved reforms. Their representatives are similarly considered as objects of the reform effort. That there is a universalist bias in the development discourse surrounding governance is unsurprising for an international organization whose most frequent criticism is that it promotes 'one size fits all' policies. The analysis here can be further extended into tackling governance indicators as envisioned by the Bank on a case-by-case basis so as to obtain a more comprehensive picture of whether the universalist bias holds for each. Rather than combining cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, it appears that the World Bank fails at fulfilling cosmopolitan norms and retreats into respect for tribalism as an excuse.

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