What are the salient features of Grotius' theory of citizenship? The question acquires renewed relevance as the Westphalian system of sovereign states, established and undergirded by 'Grotian' international law, is replaced by new forms of political organization in what some identify as a new 'Grotian moment'. This paper explores Grotius' writing on citizenship and political community to reach three main conclusions. First, Grotius combines classical moral concerns with a focus on human rationality: he sees reason as the means to a better and more noble morality. Second, a key theme of Grotius' thought is his focus on political order: good citizens strive to preserve their political institutions and further the common good. Third, Grotius balances a strong defence of individual rights with an emphasis on the shared duties of citizenship.

Though his works have seemingly always been lauded, the interpretation of Grotius' writings has changed in subtle yet crucial ways. The introduction to a collection of essays about Grotius and international relations tellingly observes that even De Jure Belli ac Pacis 'has in some measure evolved away from its author,' and hints that there may be 'a need for revisions of some standard views about Grotius'. In attempting such a revision, I focus on Grotius' thinking on citizenship and political community. Though today neglected in favour of his ideas on the freedom of the seas and the notion of

1 I would like to thank Andreas Kinneging and participants in his classicism seminar, David Lumsdaine, Michael Mosher, Mark Emery and other participants in the Yale graduate political theory workshop for comments on previous versions and related work. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Canadian Political Science Association's 72nd annual meeting, Québec City, 29 July 2000.


just war, Grotius' concern with citizenship clearly reflects his attempts to revise classical thought in order to address contemporary issues.4

The notion of citizenship is today generally regarded as inextricably linked to, and largely a result of, the development of modern democracy. Indeed, many argue that the ideal of citizenship found its clearest expression in the French Revolution with the Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen (1789), while some even claim that the French revolution 'invented' both the national citizen and the legally homogenous national citizenry.5 Others acknowledge that the concept had precursors—such as in the Greek poleis and republican Rome. But they likewise tend to identify the development of the notion of citizenship with the rise of modern nation-states following the French Revolution.6 Yet questions of citizenship were also debated in the seventeenth century. Indeed, citizenship was as much a preoccupation for Grotius as it would be for the French revolutionaries a century and a half later. Grotius has important things to say about citizenship, and his positions deserve examination. Such a re-examination is relevant today as we enter what some term 'another Grotian moment.'7 It is also necessary in order to elucidate how Grotian views of citizenship influenced subsequent thinking about the nature of political community.

* Reason and the proper role of citizens in politics

In the early seventeenth century, theorizing about the proper role of citizens in politics was generally limited to the small circles of elites in the various European capitals who shared in ruling and were the sole beneficiaries of the few privileges and responsibilities of citizenship (as distinguished from subjection) then existent.8 Over the course of the next century, Enlightenment

4 Religious turmoil and massive political transformations in Europe and the burgeoning colonies culminated in the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire and the curtailment of Habsburg power with the peace of Westphalia (1648) three years after Grotius' death.
7 Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 'The Role of International Law in the Twenty First Century: A Grotian Moment.'