

The International System and Models of Global Order

Liberal Internationalism vs
Conservative Internationalism

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Abstract

The international system is presented as a three-story construct, with the international governance institutions at the top, states in the middle, and civil and political society and social movements at the bottom. Within this construct, four types of globalism contend for hegemony today: the liberal international order; transformative (revolutionary) internationalism; mercantilist nationalism; and conservative (or sovereign) internationalism. Each has its own logic, but at various points normative principles and interests intersect with the logic of the others. This analytical model allows points of contention to be identified, but it also allows for areas of agreement to be recognized. It also suggests that what appears to be an increasingly chaotic international system can be understood to be one in transition from a previously hegemonic structure to a more pluralistic

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DOI: 10.31278/1810-6374-2019-17-3-8-31

one, in which the normative validity of others can be acknowledged. This opens up the potential for a more open type of international politics, and one which is at the same time more balanced.

Keywords: international system, liberal international order, transformative internationalism, mercantilist nationalism, conservative internationalism

International politics today is often characterized as chaotic and disorderly, but such a view implies that we have moved away from a more ordered system in an earlier period (Jervis, 2018). This may be the case, but to understand the general trend of international politics today we need to understand the character of the international system. An analytical exercise of this sort can take many different forms, including an overview of the various competing models of the system (realism, liberal internationalism, constructivism and others). This approach is complementary to the works, for example, of Amitav Acharya (2017) and Trine Flockhart (2016). This paper takes a rather different tack and instead examines what could be called the “software” of international politics by identifying four models of globalism, analogous to computer operating systems. By presenting this four-fold analytical model, we thereby introduce the grounds for a more pluralistic understanding of international affairs. Instead of the monism prevalent since the end of the Cold War in 1989, this approach suggests the need for compromise and dialogue between different models of world order. By providing an analytical framework, some of the analytical confusion that besets analysis of contemporary international politics can be obviated. This does not mean that the system thereby becomes any more ordered, but it does mean that thinking can be more systematic. Observers at least have some sort of analytical frame in which policy analysis can take place.

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Drawing on English School thinking, the international system (the hardware, as it were, of international politics) can be envisaged as a

three-level construct (Sakwa, 2017, pp. 38-68). At the top, there is the developing apparatus and processes of global governance (termed 'the secondary institutions' of international society by the English School), with the United Nations at its apex and complemented by an increasingly ramified network of international law and normative expectations. For the English School the primary institutions of international society comprise sovereignty, territoriality, balance of power, war, international law, diplomacy, and nationalism, and these European-generated elements were then expanded to the rest of the world (Bull and Watson, 1984). The so-called secondary institutions include not only the UN but also other bodies that seek to generalize solidarist practices in a plural international system (Buzan, 2014, pp. 32-36). They cover the institutions of international financial governance, derived initially from the Bretton Woods system comprising the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the system of global economic governance, notably the World Trade Organization (WTO). Here also are the international legal and environmental covenants, as well as those covering the rules of war and international humanitarian practices. These secondary institutions are by definition universal, whereas the primary institutions generate practices of exclusion, with the Western core imposing its own "standards of civilization" and acting as the gatekeeper, notably in the context of colonialism (Gong, 1984).

Many of the secondary institutions are of Western origin, but their development has been governed from the outset less by expansion than by mutual constitution (this is explored by the various authors in Dunne and Reut-Smith, 2017). For example, the establishment of the UN drew on various Western traditions as well as Soviet, Chinese, Islamic and other ideas. As the secondary institutions strengthen and become more genuinely universal, they threaten accustomed patterns of Western hegemony, but at the same time provide the sinews for order after the waning of this hegemony. English School thinking suggests that the international state system evolved out of institutions like the state, territoriality, the balance of power, diplomacy, and sovereignty, which formed in Europe and then expanded through colonialism

and then revolutionary nationalism across the world to become truly universal, whereas many of the institutions of international society were created by the Allies during the war and reflected Western values, and were at first relatively exclusive. Without challenging this genealogy, it should be noted that from the first a universalist dynamic was embedded not only in the primary institutions of international society, but also in the top-level secondary institutions, which have since become generalized as the institutions of “global governance” and have become more delineated and gained in authority.

This is where we move to the second level. Beneath the solidarity of international governance institutions we have competing states whose relations in English School thinking are governed by the primary institutions of international society. In the original English School formulation, the international society of states devised in Europe expanded in successive waves to encompass the whole world. This really was an “expansion,” enlarging a system into which Russia, with its characteristic ambivalence, was soon incorporated (Neumann, 2011, pp. 463-484). However, the original expansion model is based on a single level system, but with the development of the “secondary institutions” and their associated sharing of sovereignty on functional issues (such as the environment), the single-planed model becomes inadequate.

Hedley Bull’s classic study *The Anarchical Society* (1977/1995) stresses the elements of cooperation and regulation in relations between states, highlighting the way that transnational ideas generate norms and interests that are institutionalized in the form of international organizations and rules. Bull explicitly did not “place major emphasis upon international organizations such as the United Nations,” and instead found “the basic causes of such order as exists in world politics” in the “institutions of international society that arose before these international organizations were established” (Bull, 1977/1995, pp. xvii-xviii). Bull’s approach retains much of the traditional thinking about a state-centric world, but this is tempered by his view that states have common interests that can be best advanced through the cooperative institutions of international society (For the articulation

of a less statist ontology of international society than Hedley Bull's, see Watson, 1992). These are the structures of universalism and inter-state cooperation that became increasingly ramified after the Second World War (Anne-Marie Slaughter (2005) and which identify a dense network of "government networks" that increasingly coordinate cross-border cooperation.) It is in this sense that I will use the term 'international society,' a broad conceptualization of the institutions of global governance. After the end of the Cold War they were anticipated to gain greater autonomy and substance. Instead, as Cold War bipolarity gave way to unipolarity, they were eclipsed by great power politics and hegemonic practices.

The third level of the international system encompasses a broad range of civil society organizations as well as the media and other forms of societal intervention. Hardline realists typically dismiss the role that international organizations play in international politics, and even more so sub-state movements and processes. However, in the era of neo-liberalism and globalization these can have a substantive impact on global processes. The peace movement of the 1980s failed to prevent the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles to Europe, but fears of re-awakening the mass anti-nuclear movement are part of the calculation of responses to the end of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) agreement in 2019. Above all, pressure for drastic decarbonization in the face of the climate catastrophe is now part of the calculus of all rational governments. The upsurge of populist movements and sentiments acts as a warning to the complacency of entrenched elites. Civil society may well take its revenge on the widening inequalities of the neo-liberal era and reshape our thinking about international order.

MODELS OF GLOBAL ORDER

It is in this context that four types of globalism have shaped international politics in the post-1945 era. By globalism I mean "software" systems that provide a consistent set of norms about the correct and most appropriate conduct of international affairs. Globalism is the claim that a particular set of norms and institutions have universal validity.

It is not to be confused with globalization, which is a particular technological, communicative, economic and cultural process that cuts across the various models of world order, although populists and other critics tend to confuse the two. The models are not tied to a specific space but to a way of doing international politics and thus represent world “orders.” The four models are ideal types, and the practice of international affairs typically draws from a range of repertoires that are not tied to a single one. States can choose elements from the different models, although the character of a regime and its place in international affairs will predispose it to apply one operating system relatively consistently to the exclusion of others.

Liberal international order

The first is the U.S.-led liberal international order, which was born in the early years of the twentieth century and then formulated by Woodrow Wilson in terms of a commitment to an Atlantic-based system of universal order. The liberal international order is based on an expansive dynamic of universal rules and economic interactions. This has been the most vigorous international order of the modern era, transforming much of the world in its image. The liberal international order combines military, economic and political (normative) sub-orders, each operating according to a specific dynamic but coalescing to create a polymorphic and energetic international order (Chalmers, 2019).

Contrary to much analysis, this order evolves with the changing character of international politics in any particular era. Thus, the post-war liberal international order up to the end of the Cold War in 1989 was shaped by the bipolar confrontation with the Soviet Union and its promotion of an alternative model of world order. The second phase between 1989 and 2014 was characterized by the apparently limitless opportunities opened up by unipolarity. In the absence of a coherent alternative, the liberal international order became radicalized in at least five ways: the Hegelian, associated with the discourse of the “end of history”; the Kantian, with the extreme emphasis on human rights; the Hobbesian, with numerous ill-judged military interventions intended, among other things, to advance democracy in the world; the

Hayekian, which represented the triumph of neo-liberal thinking and the disembedding of the market from social relations; and the cultural victory of social liberalism accompanied by the social fragmentation associated with identity politics (Sakwa, 2018, pp. 27-51). Some of this radicalization was the natural result of the absence of a viable competitor, allowing the inherent character of the liberal international order to be developed to its full extent; but some of it was hubristic, exposing a dark exclusivity and intolerance of other social orders and traditional life patterns (Pabst, 2018).

In the third phase, the one in which we now find ourselves, the expansive liberal order met its limits both domestically (in the rise of national populism and a revived leftist internationalism) and in international affairs, in the emergence of coherent alternative models of world order. In part this reflects the broader shift of economic power from the West to the East, but also from the larger failure of the expanding U.S.-led liberal international order to find ways to incorporate the periphery without the former outsiders fearing for the loss of their identity (Zarakol, 2011). In the Russian case resistance in the end took the form of a New Cold War, while in the case of China long-term civilizational contradictions have re-emerged.

Henry Kissinger argues that the vitality of an international order depends on the balance it strikes between legitimacy and power, with both subject to evolution and change. However, he warns: “When that balance is destroyed, restraints disappear, and the field is open to the most expansive claims and most implacable actors; chaos follows until a new system of order is established” (Kissinger, 2014, p. 66). The Versailles settlement in his view placed excessive emphasis on the legitimacy component and the appeal to shared values, and by ignoring the element of power effectively provoked German revisionism (Kissinger, 2014, p. 83). The argument was made earlier, in 1939, by E. H. Carr in his *The Twenty Years’ Crisis* (2001), which in his view prepared the way for renewed conflict. A similar problem exists today (Sakwa, 2008, pp. 241-267). In the cold peace years between 1989 and 2014 the stick was bent too far towards the legitimacy (values) side, and then after 2014 the balance within the liberal international order

has been increasingly shifting towards the power component, as seen in various sanctions regimes and the return of great power politics.

In the post-Cold War era the liberal international order effectively claimed to be synonymous with order itself. The corollary is that international system as a whole came to be seen as the extension of domestic politics into the international domain. In the post-communist era this gave rise to what can be called 'democratic internationalism' (the term comes from Sokov, 2018). In other words, after 1989 both the power and the legitimacy components of liberal internationalism became radicalized. Exaggerated claims to hegemony undermined its claims to universality and in the end provoked resistance. In our three-storied model of the international system, the institutions of global governance are held effectively to be the property of one of the competing orders. It is this claim to universality that was challenged by proponents of alternative models of globalism.

Transformative (revolutionary) internationalism

The second type of globalism was represented by the Soviet Union and its allies, which for a time in the 1950s included China. The Soviet Union represented an unstable combination of socialist nationalism and revolutionary internationalism, but with the consolidation of Stalin's rule the former predominated. With the disintegration of the Soviet bloc in 1991, the challenge of revolutionary internationalism largely disappeared. There remain some echoes of the old model in the international system today, and the potential of some sort of revived socialism to transform international politics in the future should not be discounted. At the same time, new sources for the transformational renewal of the international system are emerging, notably the climate emergency. The meaning of revolutionary transformation, of course, in this context has changed from the old Leninist idea of the forcible seizure of power towards the more Gramscian notion of the transformation of social relations, beginning above all in the lower level of our three-story edifice, the arena of civil society and cultural norms. The climate emergency demands new forms of social organization and a thorough rethinking of growth-led models

of economic development. Decarbonization will change not only technological but also social relations. Emerging disruptive digital technologies and biotechnologies are already changing the way that people live and work, and we are only at the beginning of this new revolution. In the end, a new form of revolutionary internationalism may be the only answer to the survival of humanity on this planet.

This type of globalism returns to the aspirations voiced by Mikhail Gorbachev and others at the end of the Cold War for a qualitative transformation of international politics. Realists denounce this transformational aspiration as hopelessly idealistic and unrealistic, and they have powerful arguments to support their case (Wohlforth and Zubok, 2017, pp. 405-419). However, the absence of ideational and institutional innovation at the end of the Cold War only perpetuated Cold War practices, which after 2014 re-emerged in full force to divide Europe once again and to roil the world. The prospect of some sort of Greater European partnership was wholly realistic, and in the end probably essential to avoid a renewed bout of Cold War. The failure (so far) of ideas for some sort of European confederation prompted attempts to give institutional form to the political subjectivity of Eurasia and the attempt to delineate some sort of political community for East Asia and Europe in the Greater Eurasia Partnership (GEP) (Diesen, 2017). More broadly, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), established in Bandung in 1955, has gained a new vitality to oppose the re-emergence of bloc politics and to give voice to countries overshadowed by the return to great power relations in international affairs. 'Nonalignment 2.0' has been advanced as the keystone of India's foreign policy in the new era (Tellis, et al., 2012).

The transformative role of civil society certainly should not be exaggerated. Although there is growing popular mobilization in response to the climate crisis, including such movements as Extinction Rebellion, their ability to shape politics is as yet relatively limited. More potent by far today are "uncivil society" movements, with so-called Islamic State (*Daesh*) in the vanguard, threatening the very foundations of international society as it has developed over the last half millennium. Nationalist insurgencies continue to threaten states

and international order. Violent non-governmental organizations are also developing in the heartlands of capitalist democracy, advancing extreme rightwing identity politics as they portray themselves victims of the alleged liberal hegemony. Anti-immigrant movements are pulling even mainstream parties towards more nativist and exclusivist positions (for a recent study of the challenges, see Krastev, 2017).

At the same time, rampant militarism and unchecked arms spending, accompanied by the breakdown in the strategic arms control regime inherited from the Cold War, is provoking the return of active peace movements. The long-term stagnation in middle class and worker incomes accompanied by the erosion of the physical and social infrastructure in the advanced capitalist democracies has prompted a new wave of leftist radicalism. The question of socialism is once again on the agenda. In short, this transformative model of globalism has deep roots in civil society and is forcing change in states and the institutions of global governance. The precise character of a transformed international politics will emerge from the social struggles themselves, but the key parameters will include new forms of localism embedded in rejuvenated forms of pluralist internationalism. This may well represent a revolution in international affairs as profound as any provoked by world wars and economic crises.

Mercantilist nationalism

The third type of globalism is gaining increasing traction today. This is the transactional and mercantilist approach adopted by Donald J. Trump and the various national populist movements of our time (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018). For Trump the international sphere is simply the extension of the market into the larger domain, where a zero-sum logic predominates and in which there is a ruthless battle for market share. The strong become stronger, while the weak endure what they must. There is no room for multilateral agencies or international alliances, which in Trump's view only constrain the United States. Values are humbug, everything is transactional, and there is no need for democracy promotion. This is a stark model of unilateral Westphalian internationalism, harking back to an

earlier era before 1914 when the first era of globalization came into contradiction with statist Social Darwinism. The national interests of sovereign states predominated, and in part the First World War represented a revolt against the erosion of state sovereignty by market relations. Today, this logic is reprised in the arguments of radical Brexiteers in the UK, and in the sovereigntist movements in continental Europe, notably in Marine Le Pen's National Rally in France, Thierry Baudet's Forum for Democracy in the Netherlands and Matteo Salvini's (Northern) League (La Liga) in Italy.

There is an extensive literature arguing that populism emerges when issues of social concern fail to be addressed by existing elites (Laclau, 2018). This helps explain why Salvini, like Benito Mussolini, moved from left to right. Salvini argues: "Ironically, I see more leftist values in the European right than in some left-wing parties; these parties and these movements are those that today defend workers, those who lead right battles. Thus, I do not see anything strange in looking for a dialogue with whoever today embodies the resistance to this wrong Europe" (Madron, 2013). Russia is presented as the defender of a more conservative and traditional representation of Europe, and thus a strange alignment of Moscow and neo-nationalist European national-populists has been forged. Russia thus returned to its nineteenth century manifestation as the defender of conservative cultural values and legitimate government; anti-liberal and authoritarian. This representation is at most only partially accurate, but in conditions of what some call a New Cold War, Russia is certainly looking for friends wherever it can find them, especially if it helps to undermine the unity required for the biannual renewal of European Union (EU) sanctions.

The revolt against globalization is taking place in the very countries that took the lead in outsourcing jobs and services. The benefits have been spectacularly badly managed, and while lifting millions out of poverty in China, globalization destroyed the industrial heartlands of the advanced capitalist democracies while allocating increased wealth to the rich. (Technological change has been responsible for the greater part of job restructuring, but "precarity" and other changes in the

labor process and social relations of late capitalism come together in conditions of globalization to create a new terrain of social struggle and resistance, much of which is regressive and exclusionary.) This is accompanied by a cultural revulsion against not only globalization but also the apparently heedless cosmopolitanism with which it became associated. This is why the *policies* advanced by elites in the Anglo-Saxon world are so readily dismissed, and instead the marginalized masses increasingly look for *meaning*. (This was supplied by the Trumpian slogan of “Make America great again,” and the Brexiteer slogan “Take back control”; they are meaningless but, paradoxically, offer meaning.)

The putative defection of the U.S. from the liberal international order that it had done so much to create was at first welcomed by the Russian elite as a vindication of its conservative stance, but it soon became clear that Trump’s mercantilist nationalism has no room for allies or even friends, and that it lacks the intellectual or political resources to challenge the U.S. national security establishment. The Russiagate collusion allegations were in large part fostered by elements in the security agencies, and not surprisingly Trump had a fraught relationship with them. This difficult relationship will endure into the 2020 electoral cycle as the investigations into the Robert Mueller special counsel investigation report their findings. However, despite its unilateralist agenda and critique of traditional Atlantic relations, the Trumpian insurgency overall made peace with what Michael Glennon (2015) calls the “Trumanite state,” the vast Cold War military and security apparatus. Despite Trump’s calls for an improved relationship with Russia, his policies militated against such an outcome. Russia was once again left out in the cold. It was not alone, and America’s European allies faced the unprecedented situation in the post-war era of having to give substance to the idea of “strategic autonomy” (European Union, 2016; Leonard and Shapiro, 2019). Not surprisingly, they talk of chaos in the international system but in fact the crisis is more localized. It reflects the loss of hegemony and strains in the liberal international order, and, in particular, in the Atlantic power system. A rogue America threatens to spread this chaos globally.

Conservative (sovereign) internationalism

The fourth type of globalism is the one now associated with Russia, China and their allies in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). This model of conservative internationalism emphasises sovereign decision-making by nation states, but it also understands the importance of internationalism. This is what distinguishes this model from the mercantile unilateral approach. As in the two-level European Union, the Commission and its agencies exercise elements of supranationalism while the member states retain large areas of inter-governmental autonomy in decision-making, the international system in this sovereign internationalism model operates on the three levels of the international system presented earlier. For conservative internationalists it is the middle floor that is the most important (for Trumpians it is the only one that matters), but this does not preclude a strong normative commitment to the secondary institutions of international society on the top floor, including as we noted earlier the UN and the whole ramified network of international legal, economic, environmental, and social governance structures.

Although many of these bodies were sponsored by the liberal globalists, exponents of the conservative model of globalism insist that they do not, as it were, belong to them. As far as sovereign internationalists are concerned, drawing in part on the Yalta principles defended by the Soviet Union, they belong to all of humanity. On the middle floor there are the competing states, representing the type of globalism defended by Trump and his ilk, for whom the institutions of global governance are little more than a nuisance. Conservative internationalists tend not to have much time for independent civil society activism, since they emphasize the legitimacy of legally constituted governments, and strongly reject democracy promotion activities sponsored by outside powers. Nevertheless, given the need to pre-empt popular uprisings and “color revolutions,” they pay close attention to popular moods. For conservative internationalists the main pillar of the international system is strong sovereign nation states.

Sovereign internationalists, nevertheless, recognize the importance of global governance institutions to manage economic and social processes, and increasingly to deal with the climate crisis and digital innovations, notably cyberattacks and information management. Their internationalism is more than instrumental, although defenders of this position are certainly not willing to cede extensive supranational powers to international society. We are still a long way from creating a world government, but there remains a constant dynamic (as in the EU) between the two levels. In other words, contrary to the common claim of liberal internationalists that this model represents a regression to non-cooperative Westphalian statism, in fact this model of world order espouses a non-hegemonic and more traditional form of internationalism. It rejects the democratic internationalism promoted by post-Cold War liberal internationalism, based on the expansionist logic of an order that essentially claims to have ready-made solutions to problems of peace, governance and development. Instead, the emphasis is on diplomacy between sovereign subjects, although this does not preclude commitment to the norms embedded in the institutions of global governance. This approach is also essentially defensive, confronting the U.S. and its interventionist allies to maintain the foundations of the post-Second World War international order. In the Yalta-Potsdam system competing national interests were recognized as legitimate and in this pluralistic environment diplomacy flourished. Even before the end of the Cold War the foundations of that order were being eroded—with the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 both confirming and transcending the old system—and after 1989 more universalistic and normative principles predominated.

It is against this erosion of traditional internationalism, and the accompanying degradation of diplomatic norms, that Russia and China align. However, although they both defend traditional representations of world order, their state interests do not always coincide. When it comes to policies in the UN, the Middle East, Ukraine and some other issues, the two countries often have differing views. The normative convergence is accentuated by the common threat from what is perceived to be liberal revisionism and mercantilist unilateralism, and

it is not clear whether policy differences will widen if and when the need for anti-hegemonic alignment becomes less pressing.

In recent years sovereign internationalism has been at the heart of the new regionalism. The Charter of the SCO adopted in June 2001, for example, declared its commitment to the principles of international law represented by the UN and stressed the “mutual respect for sovereignty, independence, territorial independence of states and inviolability of state borders, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force or threat of its use in international relations, seeking no unilateral military superiority in adjacent areas” (SCO Charter, 2001). Similar principles are upheld by the BRICS states, and are the bedrock of ASEAN and other regional organizations. The strongest manifestation of this conservative internationalism can be found in the revived RIC (Russia-India-China) triangle, first outlined by the Russian foreign minister of the time, Yevgeny Primakov, in 1996. It is the counterpart of the idea of multipolarity. Chinese commentators stress China’s partnership diplomacy, with a network of over 100 partners representing a new type of diplomacy and reflecting China’s version of non-alignment. The IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) Dialogue Forum formed in 2003 sought to change the balance of power by reforming the UN and reordering the international system, and although its efforts achieved little, the initiative demonstrated that democratic states are as interested in global institutional rebalancing as their more authoritarian counterparts (Hodzi, 2019, pp. 444-456).

Sovereign internationalism is open to four main critiques. First, while the agenda of interventionism may have been used instrumentally and irresponsibly by the Western powers, the necessity of intervention when warranted by grave human rights and other abuses has now been formalized by the UN in the 2005 Responsibility to Protect protocol, which Russia and other conservative internationalist countries have signed (Averre and Davies, 2015, pp. 813-834). Conservative internationalists appear trapped between their commitment to sovereignty and internationalism and have no coherent answer about the balance to be drawn between the two in any particular situation. However, the two principles are far from incompatible. China, for

example, has been one of the main contributors to UN peacekeeping operations and now positions itself as the defender of globalization.

Second, in a thoughtful defense of the liberal world order, Andrei Kortunov, Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council, argues that it represents the principles of rationality, normativity and openness, and that no alternative can match its dynamism. He insists that “the crisis of political liberalism does not necessarily entail a parallel crisis of the liberal world order” (Kortunov, 2016, pp. 8-19). He proved mistaken in that prediction, and his survey of alternatives (the restoration of empires, the imposition of a single system of values like communism or the global caliphate, or collapse into warring states) failed to examine the whole gamut of other possibilities, as outlined in this paper. Nevertheless, the taint of cynicism and opportunism cannot be easily removed from the sovereign internationalist position. The right to break rules may well be an attribute of a great power, but liberal internationalism at least represented a serious attempt to constrain such behavior.

The third critique is the simplest and yet perhaps the hardest to address, namely that behind the ostensibly attractive notion of a pluralism of systems and orders in the international system, there lurks the simple defense of authoritarian systems. This argument is advanced by the burgeoning literature on the emergence of some sort of “authoritarian international,” in which states opposed to the liberal international order align to defend their abuse of power in what has been “authoritarian regionalism” (Libman, and Obydenkova, 2018, pp. 151-165). Many of the criticisms are pertinent, but the loose use of the concept of ‘autocracy’ and neglect of the power system at the heart of the U.S.-led liberal international order weakens the force of the argument. Conservative internationalism may well turn out to be more pacific and more developmental than its alternatives.

This brings us to the fourth critique, the fundamental question of ‘good governance.’ The term certainly contains a host of normative assumptions, yet the idea of the rule of law, defensible property rights, informational openness and the adequate defense of human dignity from oppressive authority, are not just the concern of the liberal

international order, but too often have been rejected as just another manifestation of Western imperialism. Revolutionary Marxists had earlier thrown out the baby of civil society with the bathwater of capitalist exploitation. Likewise, some of the more particularistic of the sovereign internationalists are also too quick to reject standards of governance when in fact their commitment to internationalism would only be strengthened by recognition of governance problems. In certain international aspects this has been recognized, and the China-led multilateral Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), for example, has adopted rigorous and transparent lending criteria. The rejection of the alleged false universalism propounded by liberal internationalists does not mean that there are no universal values embedded in the top level of the international system. This is not the exclusive reserve of the liberal international order but part of the patrimony of humanity. Implementation everywhere is patchy, but defenders of sovereign internationalism are particularly challenged to live up to their stated commitments.

SOLIDARISM, HEGEMONY AND NEO-REVISIONISM

The models of globalism outlined above suggest that liberal hegemony is not a necessity for the development of international society or for internationalism more broadly. This framework outlines a model of pluralism in the international system whose key value is pluralism itself. This is a pluralism founded on the belief that each state has to resolve its own challenges, and that historical experience cannot be transplanted from one context to another, the assumption of the democracy promotion activities of the expansive liberal international order. This does not mean that comparative lessons cannot be learned, but it rejects attempts to transfer reified programmatic archetypes. This is the conceptual basis for the rejection of norm transfer as an appropriate framework for relations between states. It does not mean simply the restoration of spheres of influence and the defense of state sovereignty of the Westphalian sort. Instead, resistance to Western hegemony is accompanied by the advancement of universal norms by proponents of the transformational and conservative models of global

order. In other words, such a scheme not only suggests that there can be order without hegemony, but that there can also be forms of non-hegemonic solidarity.

English School theorists define solidarism as “the disposition either to transcend the states-system with some other mode of association or to develop it beyond the logic of coexistence to one of cooperation on shared projects.” By contrast, the sovereign internationalist definition of pluralism is closer to the contrasting English School view of pluralism as “the communitarian disposition towards a state-centric mode of association in which sovereignty and non-intervention serve to contain and sustain cultural and political diversity” (Buzan, 2014, p. 16). Solidarism promotes the benefits of international community, an inherent feature of the rules-based norms of the secondary institutions of international society, while horizontal relations between states are inherently pluralistic, except when combined in various sub-orders. Pluralism is achieved by the recognition of diverse developmental paths and the sovereignty of historical experience that combine to create distinctive security and civilizational complexes, each of which taken together is today conventionally described as a project for world order. (This model in part overlaps with the idea of regional security complexes, in which contiguous states establish a regime of intense security interdependence (Buzan and Waeber, 2003)).

This is rather more than the pluralism generated by the realist paradigm, which focuses on great power politics and has little time either for the solidarist elements represented by the shared commitment to international society at the top floor level of global governance, or for the pressures generated by civil society demands on the ground floor. Conservative internationalists stress the pluralism based on the procedures and legal principles enshrined by international society, arguing that this does not require allying with the liberal internationalist order. However, it means that conservative internationalists can autonomously align with the liberal international order and some proponents of revolutionary transformation in defense of the international governance mechanisms, against the destructive impact of the national populists.

What sovereign internationalists reject, however, are definitions of hegemony that limit the autonomy of sovereign powers in the international system. This is where contradictions with Russia and China, as the most consistent defenders of sovereign internationalism, begin. After 1989 it was assumed that the liberal international order was the only remaining viable global order (or operating system in the terminology suggested above). The emergence of alternatives came as a shock to its defenders, and soon drew a response from the radicalized Hobbesian element in that order. The military-industrial component soon rallied behind the Trumpians to confront the challenge. This is why the U.S. *National Security Strategy* of 2017 warned against the “revisionist powers of China and Russia” (Strategy, 2017, p. 25)

But what does revisionism mean in the current international context? Are Russia and China really out to destroy the foundations of the world order as shaped since 1945? Rather than being fully-fledged revisionist powers, a better term to describe their ambition is ‘neo-revisionism.’ This reflects their dissatisfaction with how international affairs are currently run, but it does not mean that the Kremlin and its allies are out to destroy the international system as presently constituted. The fundamental idea of conservative internationalists is to change the practices rather than the principles of the current international order. The fact of American primacy is accepted, either through exercising “leadership” in the liberal international order, or through “greatness” in the Trumpian mercantilist model. America’s overwhelming military and economic predominance is recognized, but this does not mean, as far as Moscow and Beijing are concerned, that all other states have to welcome their diminished role in international affairs. Their fundamental demand is to become accepted co-managers of international affairs. It is on this terrain of sovereign internationalism that the current battle lines are drawn.

The neo-revisionism of Russia and China differs significantly in their practices and the resources that they can devote to the cause. Russia has been forced into a full-frontal challenge, because of the perceived intensity of the threat emanating from the enlarging Atlantic system. China had the luxury of a more leisurely adaptation

to a period of confrontation, until faced with immediate challenges in the South China Sea, Taiwan and in the trade war initiated by the United States. These differences should not obscure the fact that neither Russia nor China will accept a position of subaltern globalism. They are now united in an anti-hegemonic alignment which has the potential to turn into something deeper and more institutionalized, although both sides for good reasons are hesitant to take this step. The alliance politics before 1914 and the bloc politics before 1989 warn of the inflexibility of alliance systems (a stricture that probably applies to NATO as well).

The idea of neo-revisionism fits into the two countries' view of the international system as a whole. As we have seen in our discussion of the conservative internationalist model of the international system, Russia and China accept the normative order represented by the institutions of international legal, economic and security governance in what we call the "top floor" of the system, above all the UN. Both countries seek certain reforms of these institutions, including the way that the Bretton Woods institutions are constituted and run, but neither is out to destroy them. However, under the threat of sanctions and trade wars, both countries have accelerated the drive to outflank some of these bodies, above all by creating an alternative network of financial institutions. This alternative architecture at present is not destructive to the old institutions, although they may in the end marginalize the order in which they are embedded.

Neo-revisionism in this context means, first, the reassertion of interests, typically couched in the language of sovereignty, and thus repudiates the unmediated universalism of the U.S.-led liberal international order. Both Moscow and Beijing reject the idea that the definition of national interests can be outsourced to an external power, or that concern over the patterns of power and authority in their neighborhoods is somehow illegitimate. Second, the idea that the U.S.-led liberal international order is synonymous with order itself is rejected. This entails an ambitious attempt to universalize universalism. The idea is to free the top-level institutions from their perceived instrumental subordination to the U.S.-led Atlantic power

system. Third, on simple empirical grounds Moscow and Beijing point out that this “order” is at best extremely disordered, in part as a result of the radicalization of that order after 1989. Attempts at nation-building following regime change have invariably been catastrophic. The hubristic assertion of the power of the Atlantic alliance has been at best misdirected and at worst folly. Russia, in particular, faced by the relentless onward march of NATO to its borders and into the Balkans, believes that beneath the benign carapace of globalization lies an aggressive globalist power system.

Russia is a former superpower that is unlikely to regain its former glory, while China is a re-emerging power that is confident of achieving far more than ever before, but both are neo-revisionist. Does this mean that neo-revisionism is little more than the prelude to full-scale revisionism, or does it suggest that both are ready to accept suboptimal outcomes? Revisionism here means not only challenging the existing balance of power and the structures of the international system, but also the ability to generate norms and to impose rules. To that extent neo-revisionism by definition contains elements of revisionism; but the “neo” element should not be downplayed. It is a revisionism that is tempered by acceptance of power realities and constrained by self-imposed limitations. It is a model of global order that can work with liberal and transformational internationalists, while recognizing that the economic and political sovereignty asserted by the national populists is an attempt to rebalance the stick of globalization that had been pushed too far.

Recognition of four contesting models of globalism is not necessarily a recipe for conflict but provides an analytical framework in which the most vital elements of each can be combined with the principles and the normative drive of others to create new patterns and alignments. Thus, liberal internationalists for example can find common cause with sovereign internationalists in defense of multilateral institutions of global governance, and both in turn can draw on the normative pressure from climate change activists to transform their economic practices. Common platforms and cross-order coalitions can create order in a post-hegemonic situation. However, as long as one order claims not only universality but fights to maintain its supremacy,

chaos will intensify. The fundamental challenge of international politics today is to move from the post-Cold War monist assertion of one particular model of international order as being synonymous with order itself, because of its assumed privileged relationship with history, to a more pluralistic and dialogical situation in which other models can be recognized as legitimate. An international system in which multiple models compete may be more balanced, ordered and innovative than a hegemonic one, and allow the common challenges facing humanity to be managed more coherently.

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