

The Crises of the Liberal World Order: What Lies Ahead

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PUBLISHER

TRT WORLD RESEARCH CENTRE

April 2020

TRT WORLD İSTANBUL

AHMET ADNAN SAYGUN STREET NO:83 34347

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Introduction

Today, Western elites show a near consensus on that the liberal world order is in deep trouble (Gray, 2019), as it is not only challenged by external forces, but also by domestic developments within Western democracies (Szewczyk, 2019). Since his election campaign, US President Donald Trump has reiterated that the current international order does not serve the interests of the US (Ikenberry and Nexon, 2019). Trump has also repeatedly questioned the function of NATO and called its members to stop free-riding on the US and start sharing the burden of collective defence. Trump is not the first US president who has made such demands from its allies; however, he is the first president who has questioned the relevancy of the alliance system itself. Additionally, Trump has also shown a clear divergence from his predecessors in his approach to multilateral international institutions by favouring bilateral agreements (Nye, 2019). Political and economic developments in Europe have further undermined the foundations of the liberal world order. Brexit in the UK and the rise of far-right parties in consolidated democracies, such as in Germany and France, have cast doubt on the assumed merits of the liberal world order. The West has arguably lost much of its previously-held moral authority as a result of its inability to develop appropriate responses to humanitarian crises to conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen. Europe's handling of the refugee crisis and a political discourse that has fed xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments has only added to this predicament. Accompanied by the economic ascendancy of China and military ambitions of Russia, together with other rising powers that have been shifting the centre of the world economy from West to East, the rules and institutions designed after the World War II have demonstrated an acute inability to effectively

address ongoing structural transformations. Furthermore, hyper-globalization has created clear winners and losers. Despite the claims of the liberal market economy in improving prosperity and wealth, income inequality has increased exponentially (Piketty, 2017). It has also led to a cultural backlash leading people to show a tendency to preserve their own way of life and national identity in the face of increasingly globalised culture. More recently, the liberal world order has been challenged by the Coronavirus pandemic that has paved the way for the retreat of multilateralism and decline of global cooperation. It has also made people doubtful about the efficiency of liberal democracies in combating global crises.

In light of these developments, it can be confidently asserted that the world is in a state of uncertainty where the existing parameters governing global political, economic, security and humanitarian affairs are in the process of transition. This paper aims to discuss the ideological foundations, the roots of the current crisis and the future of the liberal order. The paper will first present an analysis of the concept of 'world order' and why we need it together with the question of who establishes and maintains the world order. After outlining the main premises of the liberal world order, the paper will discuss its ideological foundations with reference to the open economic system and interdependence, liberal principles and democratic peace theory, as well as multilateral institutions. It will be followed by an analysis of internal and external challenges that continue to shake the foundations of the current order. In the final section, the future of the world order will be discussed. It will be argued that the shape of the future world order will be determined by the competition between regional orders and that the concerns and interests of rising powers will be reflected more than they currently are.

What is World Order?

The international system is depicted as anarchic by mainstream international relations theories. This means there is no higher authority to govern interstate relations and to resolve disputes among states (Waltz, 1979). However, anarchy does not mean chaos or disorder. States establish rules, practices and institutions based on their shared values and common interests. Hedley Bull (1977) describes this sort of relationship as a society of states or international society, noting that there is order within the anarchic system that reflects a pattern of activity that helps maintain the primary goals of states. These rules and institutions allow states to organize their behaviour accordingly and govern their relationships through converging expectations. As such, March and Olsen (1998) argue that international order emerges out of common rules and practices as well as norms and institutions that regulate state behaviour in order to organize the use of violence and resolution of conflicts. Hence, the international order is needed in order to enable a group of states to co-exist at minimum standards (Maull, 2019). For instance, the principle of sovereignty can be regarded as one of the crucial organizing principles of international politics (Wendt, 1999). Based on this principle, which requires states to show respect to each other's independence and adopt non-interference policies, states develop a patterned relationship. Even though the principle of sovereignty has been violated on many occasions (Krasner, 1999), it nevertheless allows states to find common ground to act upon. Additionally, the complex interdependence between states makes order a necessity in a globalized world to facilitate interactions among states and increase the efficiency in these interactions (Mearsheimer, 2019).

The questions of who establishes order and when are also key to make sense of the concept of world order. Ikenberry (2001) argues that a new world order emerges after the end of the major wars, as happened in the aftermath of WWI and WWII. He argues that the winning powers decide the main features of the new world order, which is also influenced by the historical context and domestic ideologies of order makers. According to Ikenberry (2001), there are three paths in front of the winning powers; abandon, transform and dominate. If victors prefer to establish an order based on military dominance, this leads to the emergence of an imperial order. However, if victors choose to create institutions that put a restraint on the use of power and require major powers to be committed to the rules and norms, this leads to a constitutional or rules-based order. Hence, the path preferred by the winning powers is a determinant of the main characteristics of the new world order. In a similar vein, Mearsheimer (2019) argues that great powers establish order and manage it – however, the fundamental characteristics of the order is determined by the distribution of power in the system. Accordingly, in conditions of multipolarity and bipolarity, realist orders based on the main dynamics of power politics emerge, while in conditions of unipolarity, the ideological orientations of the pole determine the nature of the order. Robert Gilpin (1975) highlights that the dominant power in the system and its allies establish and maintain the world order, and also notes that the structure of the international order reflects the vital interests of this group. Other states comply with the requirements of the world order as long as their expectations of net gains from overthrowing it does not exceed the benefits offered by the present order.

The Liberal World Order

It is almost a given that the world has been dominated by a western-centric liberal world order for seven decades (Ikenberry, 2018). The liberal international order is broadly defined as an open and rules-based order (Ikenberry, 2011a). While openness refers to the free market economy, its rules-based character suggests that international laws and conventions shape what is acceptable and what is not in terms of state behaviour. Hence, state actions are not determined by pow-

er alone. For instance, the UN Security Council can be considered as functioning as the final platform to decide on what states can do, even for the powerful states. Ikenberry (2011a) includes the following features as the main characteristics of the liberal world order: "open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, democratic community, progressive change, collective problem solving, shared sovereignty, and the rule of law". For Ikenberry (2009), different combinations of

these liberal ideals bring about different rules and institutional structures shaping the form of the liberal order. As such, he differentiates three forms of liberal order that emerged in different historical contexts. Liberal internationalism during the interwar years (1919-1939) was marked by universal membership, Westphalian sovereignty with an emphasis on state independence, loose hierarchy and limited policy domain. The post-1945 period was characterized by a Western-oriented security and economic system, hierarchical order based on US dominance and extended policy domain including human rights and economic regulation. According to Ikenberry, with the end of the Cold War, a new form of liberal internationalism is emerging, and its final shape is still uncertain. In a similar vein, Duncombe and Dunne (2018) emphasize the importance of historical context in shaping the form of the liberal order. They claim that the liberal order is not the product

of the policies and preferences of the dominant state, rather it is the culmination of series of decisions, negotiations and bargains among diplomats, decision-makers, lawyers and practitioners. In this regard, they claim that the liberal order takes a specific form depending on how institutions and rules evolve around the liberal ordering principles, which are defined as internationalism, integration and imperialism. While internationalism refers to the efforts of searching for rules to sustain global peace and security, integration entails the search for converging institutional procedures in global politics and bringing universal standards through regimes and institutions. Although the concept of imperialism might be considered as antithetical to liberal principles, imperialism has indeed functioned as a key mechanism to help socialise the non-western world with liberal ideals.

Ideological Roots of the Liberal Order

Although there is no consensus regarding the nature, scope and components of the liberal world order, it is possible to explore what it is meant by 'liberal world order' in its ideal form. Notwithstanding the fact that the liberal order is not based on a fixed set of principles, it can be said that ideological roots of the liberal world order are predicated on three main premises, which are the belief in the liberal economy, the role of democratic principles and the function of multilateral institutions in bringing peace, stability and order in interstate relations. These are also often referred to as the Kantian triangle (economic interdependence, democracy, international organisations) (Russett and Oneal, 2001).

Open Economic System and Interdependence

Liberal ideology assumes that increased economic interdependence based on the free market economy enhances the tendency for cooperation and peaceful relations among states. In the 1980s, Richard Cobden argued that free trade nations achieve wealth through effective and peaceful means, rendering war and use of force unnecessary and comparatively costly. As such, even in cases of disputes, leaders would be less inclined to consider engaging in violent conflict with their trading partners in order not to disrupt benefits acquired through free trade (Viotti and Kauppi, 2011).

Based on the same logic, Norman Angell (1909) in his seminal book, 'The Great Illusion', claimed that war is obsolete between industrial countries since it does not pay given its costly and devastating consequences. Accordingly, the economic, political and social costs of war make it irrational and futile. Based on this understanding, economic interdependence encourages states to act cooperatively in their relations with other states. More recently, Oneal and Russett (1999) also claimed that free trade functions as economic deterrence by generating growth and prosperity for trading partners, thereby deterring them from resorting to the use of force due to the anticipation of a potential reduction in their gains. There are also other liberal arguments that associate economic interdependence with peaceful interstate relations. It is argued that free trade can reduce the possibility of war by mitigating the problems related to domestic wealth which might encourage leaders to resort to the use of force. Additionally, increased trade activity is assumed to enhance communication and contact between people, thereby improving mutual understandings and friendships between states. This might alleviate the risks of misunderstandings and misperceptions about others that might lead to war (Copeland, 1996). Finally, it has been argued that increasing trade activity empowers domestic groups who gain from trade and who prefer the continuation of peaceful relations (Rogowski, 1989). In paral-

led with belief in the open economic system, Wilsonian principles of open trade and borders appear as one of the critical components of the post-1919 liberal order which entrenched its status as one of the defining features of the reformed liberal order in the post-1945 period and more intensely in the post-1990 liberal order.

Liberal Principles and Democratic Peace

Another central ideological component of the liberal order is associated with the belief in democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law as universal values that are necessary for a more peaceful world. This belief is reflected in Immanuel Kant's Perpetual Peace argument, which asserted that international peace could be achieved through the proliferation of republics that represent the popular will, which is generally peaceful in its orientation and ruled by responsible governments. Although it was empirically challenged (Layne, 1994), the historical record has demonstrated that democracies rarely (if ever) fight with other democracies, which has bestowed it a law-like status in international relations (Jack Levy, 1989). In this vein, Michael Doyle (1986) claimed that democracies are different and more peaceful in their relations with one another since they share common democratic principles and appreciate the moral equality of individuals. Additionally, in accounting for how liberal democracy promotes global peace, John Owen (1994) argued that liberal ideology prioritizes life and property, which are sought by every human being. To achieve these rights, people need freedom which can be obtained only under the condition of peace. Since liberal states are responsive to their people – who demand peace in order to enjoy their basic rights – they are peaceful in their relations with other democracies who seek the same objectives. Bruce Russett (1993) claimed that democratic peace is the consequence of two factors: shared liberal norms and liberal institutions. Liberal states embrace the normative principles of resolving disputes through peaceful methods. By externalizing these norms into their relationships with other democracies, they are able to solve their disputes through negotiations and diplomacy without recourse to force. Furthermore, liberal dynamics such as having checks and balances, the dispersion of power across different government institutions and the need for public debate before taking critical foreign policy decisions dramatically limit democratic states' ability to wage war against other democracies. Finally, James Fearon (1994) argued that since democratic leaders are accountable in front of the pub-

lic for their decisions and face a risk of losing their seats if they make a decision that adversely affects citizens, democracies are better able to signal their intentions credibly to other states. As such, when two democracies confront, their ability to signal their intentions help mitigate the security dilemma and eliminate misperceptions about capabilities and resolves that might cause a war. It should be noted the democratic peace argument has been challenged on several grounds (Rosato, 2003). Particularly, the claim that democratic values and institutions have constraining effects should also hold for all states regardless of the regime type, since the same moral and material considerations that prevent leaders and citizens of democracies from using force would be the same when they confront with non-democracies. However, research has shown that democracies frequently engage in imperial wars without necessarily being threatened and have resorted to covert action against other democracies in lieu of force (Levy, 2002).

As a reflection of the belief in the universality of democratic principles and its contribution to the global peace, liberal states have advocated democracy promotion operations in other countries, which have become one of the defining characteristics of the liberal world order in the post-Cold War period. However, this ideal has produced adverse consequences as was experienced during the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Multilateral Institutions

The other component of the liberal world order is associated with the assumption that multilateral institutions promote cooperation, collective action, peace and stability in international politics. It is assumed that multilateral institutions provide solutions to the difficulty of achieving cooperation among self-interested actors. The problem is well documented by Mancur Olson (1965) in his well-known book, *The Logic of Collective Action*. Olson argued that collective action is not a rational option for utility-maximizing actors because free-riding is more cost-effective. He suggested that cooperation can be possible when a dominant actor provides selective incentives to others in the form of public goods. He also claimed that this is more achievable in relatively small size groups because it is hard to detect and punish free-riders in larger groups. However, liberal institutionalists claim that international organisations, regimes and institutions help mitigate collective action problems and encourage states to cooperate (Keohane, 1984). Institutions, defined as persistent sets of rules

that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations, can facilitate cooperation by providing information, reducing uncertainty, establishing focal points, mitigating transaction costs such as monitoring, enforcement and sanctioning costs, and also increase the credibility of the commitments (Keohane and Martin, 1995). Additionally, international institutions contribute to cooperation by allowing states to engage in iterated transactions, thereby increasing the impacts of the implications of the future (Axelrod, 1984). Knowing that the interaction is not limited to one time and will continue in the future, states become more inclined to prioritize their long-term gains from cooperation by giving up their short-sighted interests. Furthermore, the principle of multilateralism, which is defined as an institutional form coordinating relations among three or more states based on generalized principles (Ruggie, 1992), is assumed to be crucial to sus-

taining the order since multilateralism entails paying the utmost attention to the interests of other parties involved in the institutionalized relationships. This suggests that multilateralism enables the representation of weaker states' interests next to powerful ones. Multilateralism also facilitates the maintenance of order by increasing its legitimacy in the eyes of the other states. As a reflection of the belief in multilateral institutions, many regional and global institutions and regimes have been established. The United Nations and its bodies, as well as its predecessor, the League of Nations, are the flagship institutions constituting the basis for the liberal world order. While the IMF, World Bank and its predecessor, GATT, function as the main organisers of economic aspects of the liberal order, the EU and NATO can be regarded as part of the political aspect of the liberal world order.

The Myth of the Liberal World Order?

Alastair Johnston (2019) states that the claim of a single US-dominated liberal order does not reflect the complex dynamics at play. He offers an alternative understanding of the liberal world order, which consists of multiple orders in different domains such as military, trade, environment, information and human rights. While some of these issue-specific orders represent liberal characteristics, others might be illiberal in nature. Amitav Acharya (2014) also questions the concept of a liberal world order with regards to its applicability to the entire globe and suggests that the liberal order is not universal as it is depicted, but is rather limited to a specific geography.

Other scholars go further and claim that the liberal world order is nothing more than a myth. For instance, by defining the liberal order as mythical, Barma et al. (2013) state that the current global system is neither liberal nor orderly. They claim that there are few instances of global cooperation when it comes to crucial issues such as climate change, international development and global financial crises. For instance, in the realm of economic cooperation, countries outside the West do not directly violate the rules of liberal economic order but develop their own ways to circumvent liberal rules and institutions by trading more and more among each other. Additionally, BRICS countries agreed to bypass the US dollar by increasing credit facilities to one another in their national currencies. This is in addition to bi-

lateral trade agreements that enable payment through the exchange of national currencies. Of particular note here are deals struck between China and Russia, India and Iran, and China and Brazil. In line with this, Graham Allison (2018) also depicts the liberal world order as a myth. He argues that the world order was established out of balance of power politics between the US and Soviet Union during the Cold War and with the dominance of the US after the end of the Cold War. Patrick Porter (2018) also describes the ideal of a liberal world order as nostalgia by highlighting the fact that the order is established out of imperial prerogatives held by the superpower who imposed its preferences by bypassing rules and institutions when they contradict with its interests. Furthermore, the superpower resorts to force and coercion to compel others to comply with the rules and compromises principles to cooperate with illiberal forces when needed. In a similar vein, while acknowledging that a liberal world order existed in the aftermath of the Cold War, Mearsheimer (2019) points out that its rules and institutions have reflected the interests of the US. As such, although multilateral institutions function to achieve mutual gains through cooperation, once these rules and institutions contradict with the vital interests of the US, it simply ignores them as exemplified by the so-called 'War on Terror' and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Shipping Tang (2018) also argues that there is nothing liberal in the current world order except its open economic sys-

tem. Other dimensions pertaining to political and security issues do not resonate with the concept of liberal order as the liberal principles had been imposed rather than submitted to voluntarily by other states. For Tang, even under the condition that every country in the world is a liberal democracy, the world order might be anything but liberal. The condition for a liberal world order is the willing submission of states to the liberal rules without being exposed to any sort of imposition.

In light of these discussions, it can be said that the term 'liberal world order' should be treated as an ideal type

that takes its roots from liberal ideological assumptions. It shows a divergence from the ideal type in its application as other intervening variables such as historical context, imperial dominance, distribution of power and globalisation influence the shape, structure and scope of an emergent liberal order. Hence, relying on Hedley Bull's characterisation of order as a "pattern of activity sustaining primary goals of international society", the liberal world order with its rules, practices and institutions provides a pattern of activity for states to act upon even if these rules and institutional norms are violated from time to time.

The Crises of the Liberal Order

Ikenberry (2018) suggests that the liberal world order is in trouble because of its failure to respond to recent structural transformations in international politics. He identifies two interrelated crises of liberal order: authority and legitimacy. The expansion of the liberal world order towards the non-western world has paved the way for a crisis of authority. As more states with diverging ideologies and priorities started entering the liberal system, they called for reforms in existing institutions and rules that reflect old bargains, roles and responsibilities. The crisis of legitimacy has deepened as the liberal order has lost its capacity to function as a security community among a relatively small group of states that share common interests, shared norms and principles, as well as mutual vulnerabilities. With the inclusion of new states, the liberal order has failed to deliver its promises of economic prosperity, security and stability, thereby undermining its legitimacy.

In addition, it can be said that the liberal world order faces both internal and external challenges. For instance, the election of Donal Trump in 2016 has caused many to become anxious about the future of the liberal world order. Joseph Nye (2020) argues that Trump is more dangerous to the liberal order than China because Trump is the first US president since WWII who has openly questioned the relevancy of multilateral institutions. Trump harshly criticized NATO and questioned its benefit to the US, withdrew from the Paris Climate agreement and withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. However, it should be noted that the debate on the demise of the liberal order started well before the election of Donald Trump. Hence, some scholars argue that Trump is not a cause but a product of the decline of the liberal order (Layne, 2018).

Other challenges have come from domestic developments within democracies that have seen the rise of populism, xenophobia, the far-right and democratic backsliding (Acharya, 2017). These adverse developments have reduced the appeal of liberal democratic models by demonstrating that liberal principles that prioritize human rights, equality, the rule of law and collective problem solving are not necessarily being upheld within democracies. Additionally, the mixed performances of new democracies that emerged during the third wave of democratisation (Huntington, 1991) in terms of consolidating democratic principles, has also cast doubts on the efficiency and applicability of liberal ideals. Additionally, the economic prosperity and wealth promised by the liberal world order have neither materialized equally across the world nor within liberal democracies, resulting in high-levels of income inequality, stagnant real incomes and economic crises (Piketty, 2017). Hyper-globalisation has also created losers and winners. The 'losers', those who have been affected by the process of moving national manufacturing companies abroad, have started to demand protectionist economic policies which have posed challenges to the liberal economy (Rodrik, 2012). The rapid globalisation that has led to the intermingling of diverse cultures, lifestyles and values has also caused backlashes. For example, a significant number of people are increasingly worried about the erosion of their cultural uniqueness and national identities. As a result, resentment has developed regarding foreigners as well as supranational institutions that they see as eroding their local identities. One of the consequences of cultural backlash is the rise in far-right and populist sentiments (Norris and Inglehart, 2019). Furthermore, the le-

gitimacy of decisions taken via multilateral institutions is being questioned as these institutions are increasingly regarded as being inattentive to the needs and concerns of national governments. This was an important issue discussed during the Brexit process. Moreover, the liberal model has also lost its appeal because of the actions of democracies abroad. For Mearsheimer (2019), the liberal order was doomed to fail because of its flawed logic of democracy promotion. Nationalist sentiment in the target countries has paved the way for resistance against the imposed policies of liberal democracies and the development of suspicion about democratic ideals. Additionally, the implications of democracy promotion operations, such as the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, as well as intervention in the name of humanitarian purposes, such as NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999 and the UN-authorized intervention in Libya in 2011, have raised scepticism about the nature of the liberal order since it has increased the perception that multilateral institutions are not respected and are often bypassed. As such, US policies observed as part of the 'War on Terror' and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have cast doubt on the rules-based nature of the liberal world order. Moreover, the inability of the international community to resolve ongoing humanitarian crises, such as in Syria, Libya and Yemen, has demonstrated that one of the most prominent components of the liberal order that evolved over the course of the years and culminated in the principle of 'Responsibility to Protect' is not firmly supported even by its proponents (Duncombe and Dunne, 2018).

Finally, the liberal order is arguably in deep trouble because of the changes in the distribution of power across the system (Mearsheimer, 2019). On this account, the hegemonic stability theory provides significant insights into understanding the nature of world orders. The theory suggests that the world order can be established and managed with the dominance of hegemonic power that provides economic benefits and security protections to other states (Gilpin, 1981). Hence, the possibility of cooperation, peace and stability increases when a powerful state dominates international politics. However, the sustainability of the order is dependent on the distribution of prestige which is a reflection of the distribution of power in the system. When the prestige of the dominant state – which refers to the capability of the dominant state to legitimately coerce others to comply with the established rules and norms – starts to decline, other states attempt to challenge the existing distribution of prestige in order to shift it in a way that better reflects the new distribution

of power and allow them to pursue their interests (Organski and Kugler, 1980).

In light of the logic of hegemonic stability theory, it can be argued that the liberal world order is in crisis because the relative power of the US is in decline as a result of the economic ascendancy of China and the militarily ambitious policies of Russia. Supporting this claim, Christopher Layne (2018) argues that in the arenas of military, economic, institutional and soft power, US primacy is gradually eroding. For instance, in the field of military power, although no country is likely to supersede the US in the near future, China is quickly narrowing the gap. The 2008 financial crisis indicated the US' declining economic dominance as it failed to fulfil its responsibility to provide economic and financial stability to the world. In line with the assumptions of hegemonic stability theory, Jan and Melnick (2020) claim that China has long been seeking to shape the international system and become a rule maker. Given China's economic ascendancy and its increasingly ambitious foreign policy under the Xi Jinping, they argue that China aims at increasing its structural power, which they define as the capacity to control political and economic institutions in major hubs around the world, as well as maintain command over technological knowledge and means of communication through initiatives such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Belt and Road Initiative in order to change the dynamics of the liberal world order. From a political economy perspective, Malkin (2019) argues that the strategic partnership between Russia and China is aimed at more than improving bilateral trade benefits. Viewing this as a Chinese challenge to the liberal world order, Malkin studies China's investment strategy in Russia as an example of an attempt to undermine US ability to control the global economy and regulate financial markets. Through this strategy, Malkin claims China aims at becoming an alternative economic power, thereby reducing the US' dominance in the global economy and technology market.

It should be noted that the implications of the ongoing covid-19 pandemic will likely pose challenges to the liberal world order. Although its ultimate impacts are yet to be seen, it can be said that the latest developments have only exacerbated the crises of the liberal order. Firstly, as the world has failed to engage in collective action and produce solutions to the pandemic, and as each state continues to pursue their own strategies, multilateral institutions – even the norm of multilater-

alism itself – have appeared incapable of addressing global problems of such a scale (Tisdall, 2020). It is also expected that globalization will be more limited in the coming years as governments lean towards nationalist and protectionist policies and businesses rein in global supply chains in order to reduce their future vulnerabilities (Legrain, 2020). Secondly, being one of the leading powers of the liberal order, US inability and unwillingness to lead the world in containing the virus and to develop decisive responses have revealed a shifting balance of power. The lack of cooperation and leadership has provided an ample opportunity to be exploited by China. China has grown its global influence by provid-

ing vital assistance to countries that are suffering most (Campbell and Doshi, 2020). Finally, the pandemic has also triggered a discussion about the relative merits of democracies in providing social wealth and wellbeing in times of crisis compared to authoritarianism (Walt, 2020). As democracies, particularly Italy, Spain and the US, have failed to react promptly while China has allegedly managed to contain the virus thus far, doubts about the efficiency, vulnerabilities and prioritisation of democracies have been raised. Based on these discussions, some scholars have argued that the post-covid-19 world order will be very different from the current one (Kissinger, 2020).

The Future of the Global Order

Given the ongoing discussions about the crisis of the liberal order, the shape of the future world order becomes important. It can be said that all the mainstream theories of international relations, as well as foreign policy elites, scholars and journalists, have embraced the claim that the liberal order is in trouble. Yet, they differ in how they see the shape of the future international order. Hence, a crucial aspect of this debate considers the questions of who is going to establish and lead the new order and what will be its structure.

For neoliberal institutionalists, the existence of a hegemon plays a significant role in the establishment of world order. However, once the institutions are created and rules and practices are settled in these institutions, they take on lives of their own (Keohane, 1984). Accordingly, even if US military, economic and political capabilities continue to erode, liberal institutions will survive and maintain the essence of the liberal order while still serving the interests of the US. The logic behind this argument is that multilateral institutions create a lock-in mechanism as a result of path dependencies, through which other states have become embedded into the political and economic system in a way that they do not risk destroying it in order not to incur a loss (Ikenberry, 2001). On this account, Ikenberry (2011b) suggests that the liberal order will not completely disappear, but rather evolve into a new understanding based on both liberal and illiberal practices. Thus, he anticipates a new world order to be less American and less liberal while envisaging the survival of certain liberal elements within the institutions. In a similar vein, Duncombe and Dunne (2018) claim that not all of the crucial components of the liberal world order will be dismissed alto-

gether. Rather, it is much likely that some aspects of it will be altered in more fundamental ways while others will undergo a process of revision, with some remaining entirely intact. For instance, the promotion of democracy and liberal values will be a less defining factor in the emerging new order while the integration of economic policies through international organisation might continue to exist. Acharya (2017) draws attention to the significance of non-state actors in affecting the final shape of the new world order. Defining the emergent order as a multiplex world, he argues that a world marked by complex interdependencies and interconnectedness will create multiple international orders, some of them liberal while others not. Hence, there will not be a single global order, but many.

Mearsheimer (2019) provides a different perspective regarding the future shape of the global order. For Mearsheimer, the form of order is contingent upon the distribution of power. Therefore, in unipolar conditions, the domestic characteristics of the hegemon determine the main feature of the order. As such, the liberal world order rises only under the condition that a unipolar power holds a liberal ideology. Additionally, in the conditions of multipolarity and bipolarity, the features of the global order are shaped by the dictates of power politics. Since there is no sign of the emergence of a new unipolar in the near future as China is far from becoming the hegemonic power in the system, the new shape of the world order will be realist and institutions will be designed to reflect this reality. Moreover, Mearsheimer suggests that there will be three potential realist orders in the near future: one is a thin world order, while the other is bounded thick orders led by China and the US

separately. He argues that the thin global order will primarily deal with the issues of reducing security dilemmas among great powers and facilitating cooperation in economic activities. If there emerge two bounded orders, security rivalry between the two orders will be the main feature, resembling the Cold War period. In a similar vein, Charles Kupchan (2014) rejects the claim that rising powers will embrace the elements of the liberal world order. He argues that once great powers rise to the status of dominant power, they start pushing out-

ward their norms, values and principles that organize their domestic politics. This suggests that as China and Russia grow in power, they will not simply accept the existing norms and institutions, rather they will seek alternative orders in line with their cultural, social and political values. As such, in a condition of multipolarity, there will be multiple orders each shaped by the ideational elements of great powers. This new situation will require tolerance and coordination among these competing orders.

Concluding Remarks

In light of these discussions, it appears that the liberal world order is vulnerable to the challenges it has created. In other words, the nature of the liberal order generates two paradoxes which are difficult to address via its principles. Firstly, the liberal world order requires open economic systems in order to sustain and spread economic growth. However, as domestic economies become more connected and interdependent with the free flow of capital, labour, investments and products, it creates backlashes in the form of income inequality, lost jobs and global economic crises. Thus, the more liberalized an economy is, the more adverse effects appear that undermine the liberal world order. Secondly, the liberal world order entails the promotion of democratic principles, protection of human rights and intervention in other countries where mass human right violations occur. However, as an intervention into other countries becomes unilateral due to the difficulty of developing collective action or arbitrary because of

the embedded interests in the target country, the principle of protecting human rights contradicts with the principle of sovereignty, one of the well-established principles of international politics. Thus, the more liberalized world politics becomes through the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic principles in general, the more it creates a political backlash. As such, it can be anticipated that the emerging world order will be more sensitive to Westphalian sovereignty, while humanitarian interventions will occur less. Additionally, while economic cooperation will likely be maintained, its centre will move from West to East and economic institutions will represent the concerns, interests, norms and values of rising powers. Finally, it can be expected that regional orders will become a critical aspect of the global order, each reflecting the subtleties of their regions. The crucial arrangements, as well as competition, can be anticipated to take place among the regions.

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