After liberal world order

CONSTANCE DUNCOMBE AND TIM DUNNE

Underpinning a great many classical writings on international relations is the idea that order is achievable among the actors despite the fact that, in Martin Wight's words, state systems are 'the loosest of all political organizations known to us'.[1] Yet in the years since the global financial crash of 2008, talk of order has given way to talk of disruption: the disruption and attendant risks associated with the end of the unipolar moment; disruption posed by illiberal populist forces in the heartland of the West; disruption among the P5 in the UN Security Council, leading to paralysis over Syria; disruption to assumptions about development posed by the stark and worsening underdevelopment of areas that are home to one-fifth of the world's population. Little wonder that many scholars claim we are witnessing the end-times of the liberal world order.

While there are different accounts of these disruptive dynamics and their causes, this is nevertheless a rare moment in International Relations (IR), in which all mainstream theories concur that the hegemony of the liberal world order is over. Yet there is considerable uncertainty about the global architecture that will take its place. Nor are narratives of disruption and crisis confined to academic writings: policy-makers, advisers and practitioners are also searching for answers to the big questions about who is going to provide order in the new multipolar world.

Claiming that the liberal world order is in trouble is just a starting-point; a deeper account needs to show whether, and how, the interrelated elements of this order hang together. It may be, for example, that certain logics of the liberal order are more vulnerable than others. The post-Cold War agenda around democracy promotion seems, intuitively, at greater risk than the WTO regime for managing world trade. As previously argued, three interrelated dimensions may be identified in the pattern of liberal world ordering—internationalism, integration and imperialism.[2] In this article, we focus mainly on internationalism and

---

[1] Martin Wight, *Systems of states* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), p. 149.
[2] This framing follows the conceptual design found in Tim Dunne and Trine Flockhart, eds, *Liberal world orders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). That volume draws the reader's attention to the tendency to conflate the 'future of liberal order' with the question of the decline in US hegemony. Instead, it offers an account of liberalism that is more historical and contextual. Liberalism is not just what the hegemon does; rather, it is an aggregate of countless decisions and actions taken by diplomats, lawyers and 'governance' practitioners. By operating with a different conception of agency, contributors to this book are able to advance two important arguments: first, that liberal modes of ordering are more resilient and enduring than the 'decline' debate would suggest; and second, that being attentive to the multiple modalities of liberal

imperialism, as these are the elements most obviously in play when considering the state of humanitarianism today; to try also to cover the logic of integration would have been too ambitious in a single article. What, then, are these elements and how do they hang together? They approximate to what Neta Crawford calls 'institutionalized ideas'; such ideas become embedded through practice, and in so doing they affect 'the possibility and legitimacy of later ideas'.[3] To celebrate, as liberals are prone to do, the virtues of internationalism without recognizing the attendant 'dark side of virtue' is at best incomplete and at worst hypocritical. As Stanley Hoffmann reminded us many years ago, the road to hell is paved with good intentions[4]—a recurring example of relevance here is how UN missions to 'save strangers' often end up with the imposition of imperial modes of governance.

Thus we focus our narrative here on the politics and practice of humanitarianism. Other cooperative regimes could equally well have served our purpose of ensuring the narrative is not free-floating. Humanitarianism is of course deeply intertwined with liberal assumptions about an ethic of care for peoples who are either at risk of, or worse still suffering from, large-scale natural disasters and politically motivated atrocities. In fact, the humanitarian regime has so many actors, doctrines, institutions, functions and personnel that Michael Barnet refers to the development of an international humanitarian order.[5] Our inference is that the condition of humanitarianism provides a good indication of the state of the liberal world order—its limits and its possibilities. If that order does not enable us to meet the basic needs of people, such as the right to subsistence or security from violence, then it would be hard to argue that it should be morally valued.

End-times of the liberal world order?

World order is regularly invoked by IR scholars but is rarely defined. Reviewing the rare occasions when it is, we find a diverse set of meanings and understandings. The function of the term 'order' is to signal something purposive, while the function of 'world' (or 'international') is to fix a level of analysis that is either state-centric or world-systemic. These building blocks of an ontology familiar to IR enable certain macro-level descriptions of the character of world order at particular moments in history—'colonial', 'mercantilist', 'multilateralist', 'hegemonic' or, to use Ruggie's term for the post-1945 period, an 'embedded liberal' world order. Orders are not free-floating. Instead, they ought properly to be understood as the coming together of 'power and legitimate social purpose', such that these elements 'become fused to project political authority into the international system'.[6]

---

ordering—internationalism, integration and imperialism—reveals how institutions and rules are clustered around these different and competing practices. It may be that internationalism, for example, is in trouble yet integration remains a dominant logic, even if the engine of integration is shifting to include non-western centres of power and authority.

[3] Neta C. Crawford, 'How previous ideas affect later ideas', *The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 267.

[4] Stanley Hoffmann, 'The hell of good intentions', *Foreign Policy*, no 29, 1977, pp. 3–26.

[5] Michael Barnett, *The international humanitarian order* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009).

[6] J. G. Ruggie, 'International regimes, transactions, and change: embedded liberalism in the postwar economic order', *International Organization* 36: 2, 1982, p. 380.

26

To what extent is the embedded liberalism of the post-1945 world order in retreat? Here we look at the argument for the demise of the liberal international order from the perspectives of both mainstream and critical theories of the international; we draw from these literatures to enrich our understanding of precisely where the challenges to the liberal world order stem from—and what, if any, conceptual resources are available to evaluate the order's capacity to adapt, change and survive. What mainstream and critical theories share is a perspective that the liberal world order is being challenged in fundamental ways: first, through a crisis of authority, and second, through 'the rise of the rest'.

Mainstream accounts of the liberal world order agree that we are at the 'end-times'.[7] This pessimism is reinforced by what G. John Ikenberry, one of the pre-eminent writers on the liberal world order, terms a 'crisis of authority'.[8] When the United States as the key international actor responsible for the progressive development of the international order is not 'articulating a commitment to liberal values', either in rhetoric or in practice, the leadership of that order is called fundamentally into question.[9] The illiberal practices that characterized the US 'war on terror' and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have been clear indications of a complex disengagement from liberal values, not only by the United States but also by other states that helped to institutionalize human rights as a pillar of the international order.[10] The 'crisis of authority' is thus not so much a crisis of liberal internationalism as one of US leadership, wherein the global liberal ambitions of the US and other powerful western states are challenged by 'persistent development failure, potent identity-based mobilisations, "illiberal democracies", as well as the rise of transnational Islamic insurgency', which compounds the hypocrisy of illiberal practices by western powers.[11] Ikenberry and other liberal theorists have hardened their position in 2017 as it becomes ever more apparent that we are in the midst of another great transformation.[12] Stewart Patrick has warned that the election of Donald Trump 'imperils the liberal international order',[13] as the United States withdraws from a raft of international agreements, signalling America's retreat from multilateralism both as an idea and as a process. What the 45th President of the United States understands very clearly—and what propelled him into office—is the stark reality that the liberal trade regime has not benefited

---

[7] This is Stephen Hopgood's expression: Stephen Hopgood, *The endtimes of human rights* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

[8] G. John Ikenberry, 'The future of liberal world order', *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 16: 3, Sept. 2015, p. 451.

[9] David Rampton and Suthaharan Nadaraja, 'A long view of the liberal peace and its crisis', *European Journal of International Relations* 32: 2, 2017, p. 444.

[10] Rampton and Nadaraja, 'A long view of the liberal peace', p. 444.

[11] Rampton and Nadaraja, 'A long view of the liberal peace', p. 444; Stewart M. Patrick, 'An open world is in the balance: what might replace the liberal order?', *World Politics Review*, 10 Jan. 2017, http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/20868/an-open-world-is-in-the-balance-what-might-replace-the-liberal-order. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 9 Oct. 2017.)

[12] See Ikenberry's piece in this issue: G. John Ikenberry, 'The end of liberal international order?', *International Affairs* 94: 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 7–23.

[13] Patrick, 'An open world is in the balance'; Joyce P. Kaufman, 'The US perspective on NATO under Trump: lessons of the past and prospects for the future', *International Affairs* 93: 2, March 2017, pp. 251–66; Peter Drombrowski and Simon Reich, 'Does Donald Trump have a grand strategy?', *International Affairs* 93: 5, Sept. 2017, pp. 1013–38.

enough US citizens (evident in the often-quoted fact about stagnant median wages for the last 25 years). Globally, America and its allies 'no longer serve', in the words of Robin Niblett, 'as an example to others of the strength of liberal systems of economic and political governance'.[14]

Yet Ikenberry is in no doubt that the wheels of world order are turning. In his words, 'the old order dominated by the United States and Europe is giving way to one increasingly shared with non-Western rising states'. If understood as a set of social practices that change over time, the liberal order thus evolves through a balancing of 'liberal and non-liberal practices'.[15] The world we are entering is not only going to be less American, it will be 'less liberal'. Writing in 2011, Ikenberry neatly captured the essence of the position taken by those who fear the liberal order's demise:

Newly powerful states are beginning to advance their own ideas and agendas for global order, and a weakened United States will find it harder to defend the old system. The hallmarks of liberal internationalism—openness and rule-based relations enshrined in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and norms such as multilateralism—could give way to a more contested and fragmented system of blocs, spheres of influence, mercantilist networks, and regional rivalries.[16]

If liberals are getting nervous about the world's capacity for a peaceful transition, it is fair to say that realists are expecting the worst. In the domain of international peace and security, leading realists tell us, we are in trouble. Here we see the claims of a 'crisis of authority' move beyond a weakening of US liberal values to a failure of Great Power ambitions, which have been challenged by the 'rise of the rest': non-western powers such as China, India and Russia, and interrelations between emerging economies.[17] Material shifts in economic and military power from West to East provide the preconditions for intense security competition that risk bringing an end to the era of peace among major powers.[18] The structure of the international system drives states to pursue military and economic power to ensure their ultimate survival. Instability arises when the power of the hegemon erodes and new powers balance or bandwagon against it, creating 'power-political tensions'.[19] Using the past behaviour of hegemons to predict the future behaviour of rising powers, realists argue that rising powers will seek regional domination first before potentially seeking global military hegemony.

Realists call on history to illustrate the impact the 'rise of the rest' will have on world order. Consider China. As Stephen Walt argues, 'if China is like all previous great powers—including the United States—its definition of "vital" interests will grow as its power increases—and it will try to use its growing

[14] Robin Niblett, 'Liberalism in retreat: a demise of a dream', *Foreign Affairs* 96: 1, 2017, p. 24.
[15] G. John Ikenberry, 'The future of the liberal world order: internationalism after America', *Foreign Affairs* 90: 3, 2011, p. 56.
[16] Ikenberry, 'The future of the liberal world order', p. 56.
[17] Kristen Hopewell, 'The BRICS—merely a fable? Emerging power alliances in global trade governance', *International Affairs* 93: 6, Nov. 2017, pp. 1377–96.
[18] John Mearsheimer, 'China's unpeaceful rise', *Current History* 105: 690, 2006, p. 160.
[19] Andrew Hurrell, 'Hegemony, liberalism and global order: what space for would-be Great Powers?', *International Affairs* 82: 1, Jan. 2006, p. 5; Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of international politics* (Detroit, MI: McGraw Hill, 1979).

28

muscle to protect an expanding sphere of influence'.[20] While some argue that China's rise will be peaceful—and that it gains much more from acting within the structural constraints of the international order than from revisionism—China's naval expansion, construction of artificial islands and military deployment in the South China Sea raise concerns about its potential for aggressive behaviour in the region.[21] Consider also Russia and its obstruction of intervention by western powers in a number of conflicts. Russia's Syria policy reflects at once a domestic imperative of internal political control and a desire to assume greater regional and international influence, thereby affirming its legitimacy as a Great Power.[22] Challenging western dominance in eastern Europe was the strategic imperative behind the Russian invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014. A close reading of Russia's justifications for its military assertiveness reveals a strategy of emulating NATO's interventions in its own 'near abroad', be it Kosovo (1999) or Libya (2011).[23] Additionally, the economic power of China and India emphasizes the growing role of non-western states in global governance, particularly in relation to the international financial institutions and monetary system that are integral to the international order.

For critical theorists, current events signalling the end-times of the liberal world order are an affirmation that attempts to achieve global modernity for all peoples were problematic from the beginning. Here we see the 'end-times' narrative being combined with assumptions about how 'the rest' will rise. A great deal of liberal modernization theory from the 1950s onwards has assumed that there is a 'common pathway to modernity',[24] irrespective of the particular size of the state, its geography or its resource endowments. Drawing largely on forms of Marxist theory, critical theorists point to the continued polarization of wealth in the global economy throughout the twentieth century as evidence that markets do not distribute wealth and resources equally. Some see the expansion of global capitalism as preventing some states from taking a guaranteed 'place within the dominant networks of the global economy'.[25] Others argue that inequality between states emerges because of their integration into the global economic system, not as a result of their exclusion from it. Thus the promotion of particular liberal values, including individual rights, democracy and freedom, effectively 'elides the conditions of possibility of these values in structures of material inequality under capitalism'.[26] Circuits of trade established throughout long periods of colonial

---

[20] Stephen M. Walt, 'The end of the American era', *The National Interest*, no. 116, 2011, p. 9.

[21] Robert D. Kaplan, 'The South China Sea is the future of conflict', *Foreign Policy*, 15 Aug. 2011; Amitav Acharya, 'Power shift or paradigm shift? China's rise and Asia's emerging security order', *International Studies Quarterly* 58: 1, 2014, pp. 158–73; Zhou Fangyin, 'Between assertiveness and self-restraint: understanding China's South China Sea policy', *International Affairs* 92: 4, July 2016, pp. 869–90; Doug Stokes and Kit Waterman, 'Security leverage, structural power and US strategy in east Asia', *International Affairs* 93: 5, Sept. 2017, pp. 1039–60.

[22] G. John Ikenberry, 'The liberal international order and its discontents', *Millennium* 38: 3, 2010, p. 515.

[23] Roy Allison, 'Russia and the post-2014 international legal order: revisionism and *realpolitik*', *International Affairs* 93: 3, May 2017, pp. 519–44.

[24] Ikenberry, 'The liberal international order and its discontents', p. 515.

[25] Mark Duffield, 'Social reconstruction and the radicalization of development: aid as a relation of global liberal governance', *Development and Change* 33: 5, 2002, p. 1054.

[26] Marjo Koivisto and Tim Dunne, 'Crisis, what crisis? Liberal order building and world order conventions', *Millennium* 38: 3, p. 624.

rule entrenched deep inequalities in the global system, challenging the prospects of the state as the vehicle through which to achieve modernity. In this context the institutions of the state helped to facilitate the implementation of markets.[27] Rather than providing a tool for addressing global economic inequality through a just distribution of the world's resources, however, such market forces have eroded the power of the state and at the same time have increased economic disparities worldwide.[28]

Critical perspectives also contend that state power has been reconfigured through the forces of neo-liberal globalization, which have dissolved the private/public divide so that the ideas and values of the market have become enmeshed with the practices of social life.[29] The ability of the state to protect its citizens from the power of the self-regulating market is in correspondingly stark decline. With the increasing power of global markets, the state has retreated from its role as the central provider of social and economic goods for its citizens. In this account, rising global inequalities are intimately connected to deregulation, privatization and the increasing disciplinary power of multinational corporations, undermining the sovereign state and replacing its authority with hyperliberal competitiveness in the global market.[30] Nor is this experience exclusive to the global South: communities in the global North are also subject to rising economic and social inequality, including increasing levels of relative deprivation and a revival of populist movements that can successfully mobilize powerful emotions about 'ordinary people' being 'left behind'. Consider the election of Donald Trump and 'alt-right' populism. His campaign rhetoric was 'distinct in its simplicity, anti-elitism and collectivism'—features that defined his brand of populist appeal, effectively employing a rhetoric of relative deprivation as an instrument of political mobilization.[31] Yet the alt-right is not the only populist movement emerging; radical left political parties are gaining credibility in the light of the increasing inability of states or international institutions to address systemic questions of injustice and inequality. Political parties in Greece (such as Syriza) and Spain (such as Podemos) rose to prominence following the global financial crisis out of a combination of the tensions inherent in globalization and 'protest, anti-mainstream sentiment and unfulfilled expectations'.[32]

[27] Philip McMichael, *Development and social change: a global perspective*, 6th edn (London: Sage, 2016), p. 46.

[28] David Rieff, 'A new age of liberal imperialism?', *World Policy Journal* 16: 2, 1999, p. 6; Andrew Linklater, 'The evolving spheres of international justice', *International Affairs* 75: 3, May 1999, pp. 473–74; Stephen Hopgood, 'Saying "no" to Wal-mart? Money and morality in professional humanitarianism', in Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, eds, *Humanitarianism in question: politics, power, ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 98–123.

[29] Hopgood, 'Saying "no" to Wal-mart?'; Duffield, 'Social reconstruction and the radicalization of development'; Richard Falk, 'False universalism and the geopolitics of exclusion: the case of Islam', *Third World Quarterly* 18: 1, 1997, pp. 7–24; Elizabeth Povinelli, *Geontologies: a requiem to late liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

[30] Robert W. Cox, 'Civil society at the turn of the millennium: prospects for an alternative world order', *Review of International Studies* 25: 1, 1999, p. 18; Falk, 'False universalism and the geopolitics of exclusion'; Andrew Hurrell, 'Power transitions, global justice, and the virtues of pluralism', *Ethics and International Affairs* 27: 2, 2013, p. 192.

[31] J. Eric Oliver and Wendy H. Kahn, 'Rise of the Trumpenvolk', *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 667: 1, 2016, pp. 189–206.

[32] Luis Ramiro and Raul Gomez, 'Radical-left populism during the Great Recession: *Podemos* and its competition with the established radical left', *Political Studies* 65: 1, 2017, pp. 108–26.

Previous historical junctures have often been seen by one group of theorists or another as moments of crisis. The Congress of Vienna (1815) was a turning of the tide against republicanism in Europe; Versailles (1919) signalled a pending crisis for realists; the failure to deliver a 'New International Economic Order' for the Third World (1970s) was a catalyst for a shift away from Marxist-inspired theories of development; and the end of the Cold War (1990) triggered concern among neo-realists about the capacity of NATO to deliver security for 'the West' after the end of bipolarity. What is intriguing about 2017 is the extent to which proponents of *all* the main theoretical approaches agree that world order is at a crossroads, and that there is no sign marked 'straight ahead'.

Ordering modalities: internationalism and imperialism

As we have seen, there is no shortage of scholars predicting the demise of the liberal world order. But what many of these interventions lack is a nuanced account of which aspects of liberal ordering are at risk, how they are being modified, and whether there is capacity in the system to adapt and survive. Below we tease out two key elements of liberal ordering and examine the interplay of the institutionalized ideas of internationalism and imperialism.

Internationalism

Internationalism is a two-centuries-old story, even if its origins are disputed.[33] Prior to the doctrine being developed, the term 'international' was invented by the liberal philosopher and pamphleteer Jeremy Bentham. This new word was designed to capture the body of legal rules needed to promote peace and equality.[34] The search for peace through law has been a signature moral purpose of internationalism from Bentham's time to the present.[35]

Free trade and self-determination were the two other normative commitments of internationalism that came to the fore during the nineteenth century. Neither Kant nor Bentham, neither Cobden nor Mazzini, envisaged the roadblocks that would be put in the way of their particular variant of internationalism—the reactionary power of sovereign parliaments to limit domestic reform, and the manner in which diplomats and lawyers used emerging international institutions to shore up the sectional interests of monarchs and aristocrats rather than to pursue the emancipatory goals articulated by early internationalists. By the turn of the twentieth century, it was clear that internationalism was in retreat while imperialism was well and truly on the march as the Great Powers of Europe decided, in 1914, to 'give war a chance'.[36] Attempts to institutionalize the ideas

---

[33] See Mark Mazower, *Governing the world: the history of an idea, 1815 to the present* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

[34] See Hidemi Suganami, 'A note on the origin of the word "international"', *Review of International Studies* 4: 3, 1978, pp. 226–32; Mazower, *Governing the world*, p. 20.

[35] Although the story of internationalism is at least two centuries old, the phrase was 'barely used in English before the 1980s', according to Samuel Moyn in 'Beyond liberal internationalism', *Dissent* 64: 1, 2017, pp. 116–22.

[36] Edward N. Luttwak, 'Give war a chance', *Foreign Affairs* 78: 4, 1999, pp. 36–44.

of liberal internationalism in the Versailles settlement were short-lived as world order collapsed again under the combined weight of economic depression, total war, tyranny and genocide.

History was not to repeat itself during the 1940s as those countries drawn into the war against Nazi Germany committed themselves to building a different and more resilient world order. What emerged from the chaos and misery of the Second World War was 'a loose array of multilateral institutions in which the United States provided public goods' such as free trade, access to credit, freedom of the seas and security guarantees.[37] Yet as Inis Claude and other pivotal intellectuals of the post-1945 order realized,[38] these 'secondary institutions' were layered upon the primary institutions of international society—diplomacy, law and the balance of power. A good example of such compromises is the UN Security Council. Charged with maintaining the internationalist goal of achieving security through law, it nevertheless reflected the balance of power both in allowing the Great Powers to be permanent members and in granting each of them—and not the elected members—the power to veto any resolution that was thought to be antithetical to its narrow national interests.

Many would argue that the post-1945 liberal world order—what Ikenberry calls 'version 2.0' of internationalism[39]—has been broadly successful at serving many of the moral purposes that would have been intelligible to the founding fathers a century earlier. According to this narrative, the United States 'pursued a foreign policy that played a central role in the creation of an international order based on rules … this liberal international order has been immensely successful in advancing peace, prosperity, and freedom—to the great benefit of much of humankind'.[40] Self-determination and the end of empire (in a formal sense) now mean that the political authority of the sovereign state is truly global. This global international society enables a multiplicity of diverse cultures and beliefs to coexist, each conception of 'the good life' being protected by the rights of all states to non-interference in their respective domestic jurisdictions.

Internationalists such as Ikenberry often use a metaphor that depicts someone or something 'steering' the liberal order. What if there were no driver, no locomotive, no script for running the world according to liberal principles and goals? Integration is the term that best describes the characteristics of liberal ordering that are non-intentional—the ordering that happens because of convergent institutional procedures, individuals playing roles, the spread of universal standards such as the scientific method, and the forging of a common sense that is somehow above politics.

Since the end of the Cold War there has been an intensification of international integration. Regulatory regimes and institutions establish governance standards

---

[37] Joseph S. Nye Jr, 'Will the liberal order survive? The history of an idea', *Foreign Affairs* 96: 1, Jan.–Feb. 2017, pp. 10–16, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-12/will-liberal-order-survive.

[38] Inis Claude, *Power and international relations* (New York: Random House, 1962).

[39] G. John Ikenberry, 'Liberal internationalism 3.0: America and the dilemmas of liberal world order', *Perspectives on Politics* 7: 1, 2009, pp. 76–80.

[40] Daniel Deudney, 'Liberal Leviathan: the origins, crisis, and transformation of the American world order', *Ethics and International Affairs* 27: 2, 2013, pp. 223–6.

32

across almost every domain of global politics—the environment, trade, shipping, aviation, the internet, weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, human rights, even criminal conduct. This web of regimes is designed to 'bind' states (and other powerful actors) into the liberal world order. Anne-Marie Slaughter argues that these binding mechanisms signal a shift away from an interstate model of world order to what she calls 'transgovernmentalism'.[41]

An intriguing dimension to the model of transgovernmentalism is the, all too often implicit, assumption that American exceptionalism is not only a reality but is also a form of order that is convenient to itself. In other words, beneath the technocratic language lies a political project to build alliances and open up markets. This political project of integration is not neutral; as Robert Keohane argued in the mid-1980s,[42] integration can enable declining hegemons to continue to lead long after their relative power advantage has been eroded. In this narrative, hegemons use their soft power advantage to allow them to set the rules of the game in ways that serve their interests. World order may no longer be quite as American as it was in the decades after 1945, but the assemblage of world order rules, conventions and purposes continues to support America's broad agenda in relation to economics, security and world culture.

Imperialism

Imperialism is often misrepresented as antithetical to liberalism. Yet imperial rule has been a means by which liberal ideas of markets, individualism and scientific rationality have been socialized beyond their European origins. The historical constitution of imperial forms of rule illustrates the way in which institutionalized ideas are modified. Through the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, motives of occupation and exploitation began to coexist with beliefs about the betterment of the 'natives'. Ideas about the superiority of Christian European peoples continued to inform law and diplomacy in the first half of the twentieth century as the mandates system modified imperial ordering by legitimating rule over 'backward peoples' through the principle of trusteeship. And even with the advance of the norm of self-determination under the UN order, the idea that the rich, white North held in 'trust' the fate of peoples at risk in the global South continued to be part of the repertoire of the UN. One UN official, in the Secretary-General's office at the time of the UN mission to East Timor after the independence vote in 1999, noted that the overtones of imperialism that underpinned 'international administration' were regrettable but should not be viewed as 'a decisive objection'.[43]

[41] Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A new world order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[42] Robert O. Keohane, *After hegemony: cooperation and discord in the world political economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[43] Edward Mortimer, 'International administration of war torn societies', *Global Governance* 10: 1, 2004, pp. 7–14; Tim Dunne, Trine Flockhart and Marjo Koivisto, 'Introduction: liberal world order', in Dunne and Flockhart, eds, *Liberal world orders*.

33

An 'imperial temptation' continued to inform the hierarchy that characterized international order in the post-1945 era.[44] From its foundations in the 1940s the UN has developed and institutionalized 'a body of practices aimed at "the maintenance of order" and "the protection of life" in the decolonized world'.[45] Over time the UN has established a form of international rule based on governance practices and structures of authority. These practices and structures are best characterized as a combination of indirect rule and an outgrowth of 'techniques of colonial administration'.[46] When local laws do not support the goals of UN governance, they are subject to pressures to reform in the best interest of the international community.[47]

An institutional example of imperium in the contemporary era that arguably reflects a hypocrisy in the liberal world order is the International Criminal Court (ICC). While liberal ideals of good governance suggest the ICC should be a useful mechanism for promoting internationalist ends, some charge that in practice the court reinforces racialized hierarchies wherein African subjects are disproportionately represented in those indicted on charges of war crimes.[48] Although Kenneth Roth denies that the ICC institutionalizes victor's justice, the legal authority of the liberal world order continues to reinscribe imperial logics of discrimination, between the agency and capacity of liberal subjects on the one hand and those illiberal actors who lack the ability or desire to behave according to the liberal ideals underpinning progress and modernity on the other.[49]

The evolution of UN peace operations further illustrates the commingling of internationalism and imperialism.[50] Consider the increasing use of 'robust' peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Central African Republic and South Sudan. During the Cold War, peacekeeping operations were largely employed in pursuit of the short-term objective of stopping fighting between warring parties and the long-term goal of developing solutions to ongoing conflict.[51] Peacekeeping became central to a 'new form of executive rule and, in the words of US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, "the beginning of a world order"'.[52] However, in the post-Cold War era the lines between protecting civilians and practices of state-building have become increasingly blurred, such that the neutrality of UN operations is called into question. As Charles Hunt argues, these peacekeeping missions are 'increasingly predicated on stabilization logic that places (sometimes abusive and often recalcitrant) host

---

[44] Michael Cox, 'The empire's back in town: or America's imperial temptation—again', *Millennium* 32: 1, 2003, pp. 1–27.

[45] Anne Orford, *International authority and the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 1; Mazower, *Governing the world*.

[46] Orford, *International authority and the Responsibility to Protect*, p. 203.

[47] Orford, *International authority and the Responsibility to Protect*, p. 203.

[48] Kenneth Roth, 'Africa attacks the International Criminal Court', *New York Review of Books*, 6 Feb. 2014, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/feb/06/africa-attacks-international-criminal-court/?pagination=false; Hopgood, *The endtimes of human rights*, p. 14.

[49] Kimberly Hutchings, 'Liberal quotidian practices of world ordering', in Dunne and Flockhart, eds, *Liberal world orders*, p. 161.

[50] Stephen Hopgood, 'Moral authority, modernity and the politics of the sacred', *European Journal of International Relations* 15: 2, 2009, pp. 229–55.

[51] Hutchings, 'Liberal quotidian practices of world ordering', p. 171.

[52] Orford, *International authority and the Responsibility to Protect*, p. 57.

34

governments at the centre of the "peace"'.[53] In making such judgements, the UN and its executive agencies have developed 'an implicit account of authority that inform[s] their decisions about which local actors [are] proper collaborators',[54] which in turn reinforces a hierarchy of rule. One indication of this is the mandate to use lethal force against actors who deliberately endanger civilians and challenge the extension of host state authority. The evolution of peacekeeping missions into counterterrorism operations is a key illustration of the institutional logic of governance that seeks to transform Africa into a stable and secure region. Even decisions about whether to intervene for humanitarian purposes are taken in the light of counterterrorism strategies that often entail bolstering so-called 'regime security'. Humanitarianism, in becoming another pathway to effect social restructuring within the state, is increasingly determined by the political imperatives of the liberal world order.[55] By attempting to manage the disorder created by humanitarian crises through the restructuring of internal social relations, liberal authorities effectively further enable state intervention and the persistence of relations of dominance and dependence.[56]

Humanitarianism after liberalism

Humanitarianism ought to be a hard case for the endurance of the liberal world order given the traditional priority accorded by states to narrow national interests. We can use humanitarianism—including discussions on human rights and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)—to illustrate where and how contestations of the liberal world order are occurring, and the capacity in the order to adapt to transformative change.

The internationalist vision of the universality of human rights is clearly linked to liberal internationalism and the progress of the liberal world order as a vehicle 'for the pursuit of ethical purposes beyond ourselves'.[57] Humanitarianism carries within it a duty of care to protect, and relieve the suffering of, distant others. A key point is the understanding of what constitutes a basic right—not the enjoyment of the idea of a right, but the demand for the fulfilment of that right that transcends any imposed boundaries of territory, nationality, ethnicity, religion or gender. At a fundamental level, humans have a basic right to subsistence and security from arbitrary and lethal violence.[58] The right to subsistence, as Henry Shue argues, 'includes the provision of subsistence at least to those who cannot provide for themselves'.[59]

---

[53] Charles Hunt, *Back to basics or adapt to circumstance? The options for UN peace operations*, IPI Global Observatory (New York, Vienna and Manama: International Peace Institute, 14 June 2017), https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/06/united-nations-peacekeeping-cote-divoire/.

[54] Orford, *International authority and the Responsibility to Protect*, p. 44.

[55] Hopgood, 'Moral authority, modernity and the politics of the sacred'.

[56] James C. Scott, *Seeing like a state: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 78.

[57] Jacinta O'Hagan, 'With the best will in the world …? Humanitarianism, non-state actors and the pursuit of "purposes beyond ourselves"', *International Politics* 50: 1, 2013, p. 119.

[58] Henry Shue, *Basic rights: subsistence, affluence, and US foreign policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[59] Shue, *Basic rights*, p. 24.

Syria poses the first humanitarian crisis of the post-American world order. Can we really argue, as many internationalists imply, that there is a consensus on a norm of 'sovereignty as responsibility' in the UN system when two of the Council's permanent members proclaim that non-intervention must be strictly adhered to even when evidence of mass atrocities being committed in Syria is virtually uncontested?[60] Despite the backlash caused by the unsuccessful Libya intervention of 2011 and the dire consequences of non-intervention in the case of Syria, internationalist voices in IR argue that there is evidence of enhanced civility in world order. Andrew Linklater's new book *Violence and civilization in the western states-systems* examines the extent to which western state systems have socialized standards of self-restraint. It is an examination of the changing thought and practice around the permissibility of violence both within and—especially—between states, predominantly in the West. A key claim in the book is that 'the relationship between violence and civilization has been transformed fundamentally', particularly 'over the last few decades'.[61]

Linklater believes that the experience of total war and genocide led to 'unprecedented' advances in establishing mechanisms for compliance with human rights standards. It is worth quoting him in relation to how he sees the norms of restraint and responsibility emerging from earlier intellectual systems of thought:

In an unparalleled change in the relationship between violence and civilization in world politics, national governments, international organizations, and non-state actors have in their different but complementary ways created the outlines of a cosmopolitan legal and political sphere that links two interrelated principles—the Stoic value that every human being has a prima facie duty to refrain from harming all others, and the Kantian conviction that all people should unite to ensure that assaults on human rights in any part of the world are universally condemned and prevented wherever possible. Those twin normative standpoints that have affirmed the values of 'ordinary life' have their institutional counterpart in global agencies with responsibility for promoting compliance with international humanitarian law.[62]

With respect to Linklater's powerful argument about a 'shift' in standards of civility, it is important to assess whether such claims are supported by evidence that civilizing practices are increasingly shaping state practice. In relation to both universal jurisdiction for international crimes and R2P, the more persuasive argument is not that a solidarist conception of sovereignty has been internationalized but rather that it has been modified. As countless wars without end in Africa and the Middle East remind us, the global order might have succeeded in shaming sovereigns, but it has not tamed them.[63]

Evidence to support Linklater's internationalist hope with regard to 'taming of sovereigns' is conspicuously less apparent than the important, though infinitely

[60] Derek Averre and Lance Davies, 'Russia, humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect', *International Affairs* 91: 4, July 2015, pp. 813–34.
[61] Andrew Linklater, *Violence and civilization in the western states-systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 341.
[62] Linklater, *Violence and civilization*, pp. 382–3.
[63] For a sustained discussion of this point, see Tim Dunne and Richard Devetak, 'Civilising statecraft: Andrew Linklater and comparative sociologies of states-systems', *Review of International Studies* 43: 4, 2017, pp. 686–99.

36

less demanding, practice of shaming through scrutiny and censure. Mass killings, which were permitted in earlier state systems, may now be 'forbidden'; in this sense, international legitimacy has evolved. Yet the pattern of thought and practice associated with restraint and civility continues to coexist alongside other decivilized logics, such as that of extermination, and other brutal forms of statecraft that are routinely justified by the doctrine of necessity. And in the context of a deeply divided Security Council, it is difficult to see how the human protection regime can exert a greater impact on state practice than it has done in the last years of the unipolar moment.

Syria and the state of the humanitarian order

Scholars and practitioners alike point to the failure of the international community to intervene in and assist in ameliorating the complex humanitarian emergency that is unfolding in Syria as a key example of the disintegrating liberal world order. Syria shows the limits of humanitarianism. The failure to provide medical relief—to treat those injured in the civil war and to deliver a very basic level of health care to Syrians affected by the conflict—at best signifies the fragility of the liberal world order, and at worst portends its ultimate demise.

The provision of medical aid in a neutral and impartial manner has been the linchpin of humanitarian action that seeks to facilitate the implementation of basic rights to security and subsistence.[64] Since Henry Dunant witnessed the wounded of the battle of Solferino going untreated in 1859, medical humanitarianism—the basic provision of medical supplies and surgical equipment and expertise during humanitarian emergencies—is understood to be the most rudimentary level of care that should be offered to those in need. More than 150 years later, the games played by Great Powers in the UN Security Council can enable a recalcitrant authoritarian state to block the delivery of basic medical supplies to victims of its aggression.

When the Assad government denied safe passage to a humanitarian aid convoy setting out from Turkey in September 2016 under a strict ceasefire agreement reached only days before, many were frustrated but few were surprised. This decision followed a pattern whereby Assad has rejected aid convoys travelling through border crossings that the Syrian government does not control, including along the Turkish and Jordanian borders. Instead, even UN-backed humanitarian aid must travel from Damascus via circuitous routes that add days of driving time, require passage through numerous unnecessary checkpoints and expose aid workers to excess risk of harm.[65] Such is the concern about Assad's 'significant and substantial' influence over the UN-led humanitarian relief effort that over 70 humanitarian NGOs operating in Syria suspended cooperation with the UN

---

[64] On the idea and content of basic rights, see Shue, *Basic rights*. See also Hugo Slim, 'Violence and humanitarianism: moral paradox and the protection of civilians', *Security Dialogue* 32: 3, 2001, p. 327.
[65] Lama Fakih, 'Syrian government blocking aid to millions of refugees', Human Rights Watch, 14 April 2014, https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/14/syrian-government-blocking-aid-millions-refugees.

in 2016.[66] This disquiet at the apparent reluctance of the UN to take a stronger position against Assad is further substantiated through the successive failures of the Security Council to approve resolutions for tougher sanctions against Syria.[67] As a result, the UNHCR estimates that over 6.5 million people remain displaced within Syria, with a further estimated 5 million refugees having fled to the neighbouring states of Lebanon and Jordan and further afield to Europe. Turkey has received the bulk of Syrian refugees, with over 3 million people having sought refuge within its borders since 2011. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi has labelled this the 'biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time, a continuing cause of suffering for millions which should be garnering a groundswell of support around the world'.[68] Given the 'lessons learned' from Rwanda, Bosnia and, more recently, Darfur, how is it that the key institutions, organizations and states upholding the liberal world order remain in a constant state of paralysis?

The logic of internationalism underpinning the liberal world order is grounded within a moral purpose that perceives the protection of distant others from the excessive violence of their governments to be the best way 'the rights of individuals are to be taken seriously in world politics'.[69] Coupled with the difficulties in providing food aid in Syria, failures in the provision of medical humanitarianism in Syria suggest the liberal project is in trouble. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), one of the biggest humanitarian aid organizations, has so far been unable to gain authorization from the Syrian government for its presence in the failing state. MSF, like other NGOs, has thus been severely constrained in its attempts to provide medical assistance to those most in need in the northern Syrian cities of Aleppo, Idlib and Hama. Medical humanitarianism in Syria faces unprecedented obstacles, including the killing of more than 800 health workers and increasingly violent means used to prevent civilians from gaining access to medical care.[70]

The weakness of liberal internationalism as witnessed through the complex humanitarian emergency of Syria is thus clear to supporters and detractors of the liberal world order alike. Such claims about the failure of internationalism continue to focus on the role of the state in upholding the normative structure of the liberal world order. Yet the 'focus on the state as the principal moral agent can be problematic to the extent that states are limited in their willingness and capacity to act in pursuit of other regarding interests'.[71] Dominant arguments for intervention in Syria reflect this statist focus. The debate about what constitutes best foreign policy practice in view of the daily atrocities faced by Syrians

---

[66] Emma Beals and Nick Hopkins, 'Aid groups suspend cooperation with UN in Syria because of Assad "influence"', *Guardian*, 9 Sept. 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/08/aid-groups-un-syria-concern-assad-united-nations.

[67] Tim Dunne, 'Internationalism and interventionism', in Dunne and Flockhart, eds, *Liberal world orders*, p. 230.

[68] UNHCR, 'Syrian emergency', 2017, http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/syria-emergency.html.

[69] Dunne, 'Internationalism and interventionism', p. 245; O'Hagan, 'With the best will in the world…?', p. 119.

[70] Sandro Colombo and Enrico Pavignani, 'Recurrent failings of medical humanitarianism: intractable, ignored, or just exaggerated?', *The Lancet*, 8, June 2017, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)31277-1 .

[71] O'Hagan, 'With the best will in the world …?', p. 119.

is framed in dichotomous terms, between the norm of 'saving strangers' on the one hand and self-serving non-interventionism on the other. Here we see western states advocating humanitarian intervention, contrary to arguments about sovereign inviolability put forward by non-western states such as China, Iran and Russia.[72] Given the continued stalemate in the Security Council—wherein eight of the proposed resolutions on Syria have been vetoed by Russia—we can arguably claim that the institutions of internationalism are in danger of being emptied of moral purpose. Rather than simply positing states as 'irrelevant to "purposes beyond ourselves"',[73] we need to recognize the agency of non-state actors in facilitating liberal internationalism. Such agency in addressing ethical and moral obligations to aid those in need is well illustrated by MSF, which continues to provide medical aid where it can in Syria, although its actions are highly circumscribed. In doing so, MSF challenges the territorial authority of the state, envisaging its intervention as undertaken within a 'smooth space of universal human medical relief that knows no boundaries'.[74] While states have largely accepted humanitarian norms, particularly those concerning the basic rights of civilians and soldiers alike to receive medical care, humanitarian NGOs are nonetheless responsible for the promotion of the '"oughtness" of humanitarian action', especially when states and international organizations fail to act.[75]

The emergence of humanitarian governance as another pillar complementing the broader economic, social and security frameworks of the liberal world order nonetheless demonstrates the integration of human rights with state interests in the pursuit of ethical foreign policy.[76] This integration is in part related to the turn to neo-liberalization and the subsequent 'explosion' of humanitarian NGOs that work 'with a strong belief in the holy trinity of the global market economy, promoting liberal democracy and human rights'.[77] In doing so, humanitarian NGOs are often conceived of as helping to support the institutions of fragile states by fostering their capacity to provide resources to their populations.[78] Providing humanitarian aid by working either with or through NGOs in the pursuit of ethical foreign policy offers states an opportunity to promote peace and stability without direct military intervention. In doing so, states and their citizens recognize their moral obligations to help suffering distant others.[79]

---

[72] Averre and Davies, 'Russia, humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect'; Roy Allison, 'Russia and Syria: explaining alignment with a regime in crisis', *International Affairs* 89: 4, 2013, pp. 795–823.

[73] O'Hagan, 'With the best will in the world …?', p. 119.

[74] François Debrix, 'Deterritorialised territories, borderless borders: the new geography of international medical assistance', *Third World Quarterly* 19: 5, 1998, p. 831.

[75] O'Hagan, 'With the best will in the world …?', p. 128.

[76] On humanitarian governance see Michael Barnett, 'Humanitarian governance', *Annual Review of Political Science* 16, 2013, pp. 379–98; for discussions of ethical foreign policy see Nicholas J. Wheeler and Tim Dunne, 'Good international citizenship: a third way for British foreign policy', *International Affairs* 74: 4, 1998, pp. 847–70; Karen E. Smith and Margot Light, eds, *Ethics and foreign policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[77] Frank Johansson, 'The question of power: a view from a critical insider', in Doutje Lettinga and Lars van Troost, eds, *Debating the endtimes of human rights: activism and institutions in a neo-Westphalian world* (Amsterdam: Strategic Studies Project, 2014).

[78] Laura Zanotti, 'Cacophonies of aid: failed state building and NGOs in Haiti: setting the stage for disaster, envisioning the future', *Third World Quarterly* 31: 5, 2010, p. 757.

[79] Barnett, 'Humanitarian governance', p. 386.

Yet, as Michael Barnett points out, while we are far more likely to examine the 'good norms' of humanitarian governance to demonstrate normative progress around the institutionalization of human rights and thus the resilience of the liberal world order,[80] 'bad' norms are equally likely to present themselves in humanitarian governance and to contribute to such resilience. For example, the globalization of markets has led to increased competition between humanitarian organizations for the limited financial resources provided by the UN, donor states and their general publics. Humanitarian governance is thus intertwined with the organization of global markets, which have perpetuated massive economic inequalities contributing to the poverty of the 'bottom billion'. The normative structure of integration has also resulted in the overt professionalization of humanitarian organizations, particularly since the large-scale failures of the Goma refugee camp in central Africa; yet this professionalization has also introduced problems associated with humanitarian NGOs distancing themselves from those for whom they seek to care. One explanation for the longevity of humanitarian governance, despite the inequalities and exploitation manifest within it, is that its relationship with neo-liberalism produces resilient subjects capable of withstanding the 'shocks of a socio-economic order naturally attuned to produce crises'.[81]

Another explanation is that the violence that often accompanies civilizing missions, including those in humanity's name, is indicative of the logic of imperium. As Hugo Slim argues, humanitarianism in some ways both legitimates and mitigates violence through the codification of 'duties of repair and protection in the midst of violence'.[82] Violence continues not only in the failure of states to 'do something' in the light of systemic human rights abuses, but also in the provision of humanitarian aid.[83] The violence of humanitarian action is interwoven with the ordering of imperium, to the point where some scholars consider humanitarian NGOs to be acting within a liberal 'assemblage of occupation'.[84] In Antonio Donini's words, the 'ideology and practice of humanitarian action coexist in parallel and are sometimes functional to the logic of Empire, that is, not the imperial reach of one state or even an alliance of states, but a new form of "sovereignty", or "network power"'.[85] In doing so, humanitarianism acts to legitimize an unequal distribution of power through governance practices that reinforce political conditionality.[86] The increasing activism of humanitarian organizations gives rise to concerns that the conventional humanitarian practice of neutrality has become organized ethical confusion and precedes attempts to restructure social relations which are in themselves inherently political.[87] The

[80] Barnett, 'Humanitarian governance', p. 381.

[81] Luca Mavelli, 'Governing the resilience of neoliberalism through biopolitics', *European Journal of International Relations* 23: 3, 2017, p. 491.

[82] Slim, 'Violence and humanitarianism', p. 327.

[83] Sophia Hoffmann, 'Humanitarian security in Jordan's Azraq camp', *Security Dialogue* 48: 2, 2017, p. 99.

[84] Zanotti, 'Cacophonies of aid', p. 756.

[85] Antonio Donini, 'The far side: the meta functions of humanitarianism in a globalised world', *Disasters* 34: suppl. 2, 2010, pp. S220–S227, p. S224.

[86] Vanessa Pupavac, 'The politics of emergency and the demise of the developing state: problems for humanitarian advocacy', *Development in Practice* 16: 3–4, 2006, p. 256.

[87] Michael Barnett, 'Humanitarianism transformed', *Perspectives on Politics* 3: 4, 2005, p. 724.

40

production of humanitarian spaces, such as the development of two refugee camps for Syrians in Jordan, the Zaatari Camp and the Azraq Camp, is an example of this ethical confusion. Owing to overcrowding and continued clashes between the refugees and locals in the nearby town of Zaatari, the Jordanian government set up Azraq Camp in 2014 to be jointly run with the UNHCR and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate.[88] Set further out in the desert, at least 20 kilometres in any direction from any existing town, Azraq represents an unprecedented and comprehensive population management system that utilizes iris scanners, community police patrols, data collection, and monitoring of each individual's activities and receipt of aid. Treating refugees as 'both vulnerable and dangerous',[89] as constituting a risk rather than (or as well as) being at risk, arguably reproduces particular structures of power endemic to the civilizing mission, linking colonialism with humanitarianism. While the pursuit of aiding suffering distant others is normatively constructed as morally and ethically virtuous, in practice it is nonetheless highly politicized.[90]

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the liberal world order is in a state of flux. The increasing frustrations of western state populations over growing inequality and unemployment, expressed through moves towards protectionism and nationalism, coupled with the rise of illiberal powers, has called into question both the domestic and the international sources of liberal ordering.

The emergence of internationalist ideas and commitments from the early nineteenth century onwards has been compromised by at least three cross-cutting tensions and contradictions. First, internationalists have believed it possible to conjoin nationalism with cosmopolitan sensibilities; yet states have seldom been (in Hedley Bull's words) 'local agents of a world common good'.[91] A second and related tension is that between norms and power in the global order. The values and purposes in which internationalists believe require an uneven distribution of responsibilities in which Great Powers are required to do the 'heavy lifting'; it has more frequently been the case that Great Powers have been reluctant to pay the price of the pursuit of cosmopolitan ends unless doing so is in clear alignment with their own national interests. Third, and finally, internationalism continues to be vulnerable to the argument that the mission to 'govern the world' ends up reinscribing hierarchical forms of order 'in which some states are more sovereign than others, and [which] justify deep intrusions into the domestic affairs of others on the grounds that they collectively stand for the principle of "legal order"'.[92]

Yet the rush to claim that the liberal world order is in deep decline overlooks

[88] Hoffmann, 'Humanitarian security in Jordan's Azraq camp', p. 104.
[89] Hoffmann, 'Humanitarian security in Jordan's Azraq camp', p. 108.
[90] Lisa Smirl, 'Building the other, constructing ourselves: spatial dimensions of international humanitarian response', *International Political Sociology* 2: 3, 2008, p. 237.
[91] Nick Wheeler and Tim Dunne, 'Hedley Bull's pluralism of the intellect and solidarism of the will', *International Affairs* 72: 1, Jan. 1996, p. 99.
[92] Mazower, *Governing the world*, p. 7.

how the institutionalized ideas that underpin the order hang together. We argue that such complexity is evident in relation to humanitarianism, with its unstinting commitment to universal values of subsistence and security from violence. While the modern state project is weakening, humanitarian organizations have responded in many ways to the incapacity of some states to meet their sovereign state responsibilities. This does not mean that decisions by powerful states do not matter: if the US government declares that NGOs can no longer operate in a country where it suspects terrorists are being 'harboured', then the space for aid is closed at a stroke. However, in other domains humanitarian agencies are able to deliver security and subsistence by working closely with host governments and international organizations. The dominant logic here is the integrative power of the humanitarian order, which would appear to conform to the 'after hegemony' argument suggested by an earlier generations of liberal writers.

Despite the 'retreat' from liberal democracy represented by Brexit and the election of President Trump, there are good reasons to believe that the 'rise of the rest' will provide the public goods that a liberal order requires—even if the language is shorn of its missionary zeal. There is a parallel here with Winston Churchill's wry comment that democracy was the worst form of government except for all the others. China, India, Russia, and other countries and regions that are strangers to liberal values and beliefs, may also agree that the liberal world order is the worst form of global governance—except for all the others.