World Order: What, Exactly, are the Rules?

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The international rules-based order established after World War II seems to be under relentless pressure, threatening its foundations existentially. If so, what if anything can be done to reinvigorate it? This question raises several others *a priori*: First, what are the most distinctive attributes of the post-1945 world order; how did that order come into being; and what explains its longevity? Second, what forces are now placing this order under strain? Third, what aspects of today's order are most vulnerable—and which are most resilient? Fourth, what principles, frameworks, and objectives should guide U.S. policy toward world order going forward? This essay seeks to answer those fundamental questions in an effort to strengthen the foundation of global stability and order.

Contemporary analyses of world order tend to fall into two camps: "the sky is falling!" and "what, me worry?" A torrent of tomes over the past decade have documented the "decline" of the West and the rise of the "rest."[1] Whether mournful or phlegmatic, all agree that rising powers want more than to shake up the standings of the global "Premier League": they dispute longstanding rules of the global game itself. Beyond upending status hierarchies and flexing muscles within existing institutions, they are determined to alter fundamental principles and standards of international conduct. At their most pessimistic, such analyses predict not only the "return of geopolitics," but resurgent ideological competition.

Other prophets envision a less turbulent future. Back in 1989, Francis Fukuyama published his celebrated essay, "The End of History." That work, subsequently elaborated in *The End of History and the Last Man*, argued that the major ideological debates that had convulsed the twentieth century had been

settled definitively in favor of democratic capitalism.[2] That model was destined to spread globally, ultimately resulting in a Kantian world of pacific liberal states, trading in harmony.

More recently, political scientist G. John Ikenberry has insisted that the Western liberal world order laid down in 1945, and which emerged victorious in the Cold War, is here to stay.[3] This "Liberal Leviathan" has powerful advantages: First, capitalist democracies still hold a majority of global power. Second, today's "sprawling landscape of rules, institutions and networks" easily accommodate newcomers, making it both "easy to join and hard to overturn."[4] Third, rising powers will never align into a cohesive, counter-hegemonic bloc, given their distinct histories, identities, and interests. Finally, all major powers, rising and established alike, have a status quo orientation. Far from revolutionary, emerging powers are only mildly revisionist: they seek not to overhaul existing regimes, but to attain greater voice and weight within them. Ikenberry is thus insouciant about the future, confident in the vigor and attraction of Western preferences.

Both the pessimistic and optimistic outlooks share the same premise: there exists a Western liberal international order whose distinctive values, norms, laws, and institutions were designed to inform and govern state conduct. This order originated in Europe but achieved full expression only with the U.S. rise to global leadership (or hegemony), as the post-1945 United States combined power and purpose to forge a multilateral world order, using a mixture of persuasion, incentives, and coercion to do so. Where these outlooks part ways is on how ongoing shifts in the distribution of material power affect the substantive content of world order including its regnant norms, rules, standards, and institutions.

How to Think about World Order

"World order" denotes a baseline level of predictability, or patterned regularity, that makes interstate relations something more than a war of all-against-all, despite the inherent structural anarchy of a system composed of independent, sovereign states. More substantively, it implies accord on basic principles and standards of (and some self-restraint in) state conduct. Indeed, the very concept suggests the existence not just of a "system" but of a "society" of states whose members share "a sense of common interests in the elementary goals of social life; rules prescribing behavior that sustains these goals; and institutions that help to make these rules effective."[5]

The quality and depth of world order can vary (and has varied) immensely over time, space, and domain (issue area).[6] Three centuries ago, the foundation of (European) international order was the classical balance of power—a system of few, albeit important, tenets. Today, international organizations, treaties, and

law have formalized countless rules and principles of conduct. After 1945, a truly global world order began to emerge, based on the principle of sovereign equality (albeit including two distinct sub-orders, one communist and the other democratic-capitalist, alongside and competing for influence within a heterogeneous "Third World").

World orders can also vary in the scope and depth of their mutual expectations. Since World War II, we have seen a dramatic proliferation of treaties, organizations, and other frameworks covering new spheres of global life, purporting to regulate everything from chemical weapons possession to pandemic response to civil aviation. This latticework of institutional arrangements has facilitated unprecedented cooperation in addressing challenges which transcend national borders.

Thanks to this institutional proliferation, there is a measure of "governance," or purposive order, in world politics. ("Order plus intentionality," in the late political scientist James N. Rosenau's words.)[7] Unlike governance at the domestic level, which is supplied by a specific government, "global governance"[8] is inherently more uneven and elusive. Modest elements of hierarchical authority exist globally (e.g., the UN Security Council), but—thankfully—no world government exists. Sovereign states often cooperate horizontally to negotiate norms and rules of behavior, and they may embed these within organizations to provide goods and mitigate bads, but most international organizations are unable to enforce compliance with decisions. What passes for global governance is inevitably a patchwork of institutional arrangements.

The potential sources of world order are numerous. They include power, interest, values, institutional inertia, and systems effects. A critical distinction is between *coercive* orders imposed by the powerful and *consensual* orders undergirded by some mixture of rationalist calculations of material self-interest and convergent values, affinities, and identities. As tempting as it is to view world order as a mere reflection of power and interest, enduring orders typically rest on broader foundations than abject submission or pragmatic acquiescence. As Max Weber wrote, "So far as it is not derived merely from fear or from motives of expediency … a willingness to submit to an order … always in some sense implies a belief in the *legitimate* authority of the source imposing it."[9] According to Henry Kissinger, an international order is "legitimate" if all powerful (and most small) states accept the identity and roles of the great powers and embrace basic conventions and rules governing state conduct.[10]

> Enduring orders typically rest on broader foundations than submission or acquiescence.

Historically, globally dominant norms and rules have borne the imprint of the great powers. Norms are collective expectations about the proper behavior of actors with a given identity—at the international level, norms are shared

understandings among sovereign states about what constitutes legitimate conduct, describing not only what states may do but also what they should *not* do. Rules are more formal strictures, often embodied in law, governing state behavior. Self-described "realists" typically dismiss international norms and rules as mere epiphenomena—window-dressing to conceal the interests of the world's "poachers turned gamekeepers" (in E. H. Carr's phrase), but quickly discarded when it suits great power purposes. The "structure" of international society is normative as well as material, and its rules exercise a "pull to compliance."[11] As international law scholar Louis Henkin observes, " … almost all nations observe almost all principles of international law and almost all of their obligations almost all of the time."[12] And when they do not, they feel compelled to justify these violations.

Norms and rules are not divorced from power, however. Historically, great powers have been the *makers* of world order, the weak the *takers*. More interesting are the would-be *breakers*, dissatisfied states pursuing alternative principles of world order (at times in revolutionary ways such as Napoleon's France, Lenin's Soviet Union, or Mao's China). Such challenges are most likely during rapid power transitions, as emerging powers seek to alter or replace regnant rules to conform to their own distinctive preferences.[13]

The Post-1945 Order

For most of history, the structure of world politics has been multipolar, or "oligopolistic."[14] Multiple great powers competed for influence and, collectively, determined the rules of the game. What sets the post-1945 Western order apart is that it was shaped overwhelmingly by a single power, the United States. Operating within the broader context of strategic bipolarity, it constructed, managed, and defended the regimes of the capitalist world economy. Assessing this role, international political economy (IPE) scholars in the 1970s and 1980s popularized the "theory of hegemonic stability," arguing that an open, stable world economy

> A liberal ideology and willing followers distinguished U.S. hegemony from mere dominance.

requires the conscious leadership of a dominant state prepared to assume certain burdens. In the trade sphere, the hegemon presses for liberalization and maintains an open market; in the monetary sphere, it supplies a freely convertible international currency, manages exchange rates, provides liquidity, and serves as a lender of last resort; and in the financial sphere, it serves as a source of international investment and development.[15] For the theory to hold, the system's architect had to possess not only preponderant power but also a

liberal ideology and willing followers.[16] These two non-material factors distinguished U.S. hegemony from mere *dominance*.

Indeed, the post-1945 order was a function not only of U.S. power but U.S. purpose—and the attractiveness of that vision to partner countries. This is what Harvard professor John Ruggie means when he writes that "*American* hegemony" proved to be as important as "American *hegemony*" (emphasis in original).[17] Had an illiberal power along the lines of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, or (even) imperial Britain acted in the United States' stead, it would have pursued a very different order—and had more difficulty attracting followers to its project. This insight—that world order visions inevitably bear the imprint of national purposes, historical legacies, ideological predispositions, domestic institutions, and political culture—is useful in considering whether any other power (China, say) might plausibly assume the U.S. mantle.

The Roosevelt and Truman administrations (1933–1953) recognized that world order was too important and fragile to be left in invisible hands. It must be the product of U.S. power, imaginatively organized and robustly deployed. What animated U.S. world order-building in the 1940s was the vision of an open world—a rule-bound international order in which countries could cooperate to advance common purposes.[18] In its initial conception, this would rest on three mutually supporting pillars. The first was a system of collective security, in which balances of power, spheres of influence, and secret alliances would give way to a universal organization for peace and security, grounded in law and supervised by a concert of great powers. The second was economic multilateralism that replaced disastrous policies of economic nationalism, bilateralism, imperial preference, and mercantilism with a liberal, non-discriminatory system of trade and payments, governed by international institutions. The third was political self-determination: As European powers emancipated colonies, the era of empire would yield independent, self-governing (and ideally democratic) nations.

During the early post-war years, the U.S. hopes for an open world were dashed by the onset of the Cold War. As the hoped-for One World divided into two, the Truman administration moved to safeguard a narrower Free World coalition. But the principles of order—based on liberal internationalism—remained remarkably consistent, and they survived the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Ten Contested Rules of Order

At its most fundamental level, the post-1945 order rested on certain bedrock principles. A non-exhaustive list would include: All sovereign states are entitled to political independence, territorial integrity, and freedom from intervention; the

use of force, except in cases of self-defense, requires collective authorization by the UN Security Council (UNSC); vessels from all states are free to traverse the open ocean without hindrance; the commerce of all nations should be accorded non-discriminatory treatment; and all peoples should be entitled to political self-determination as well as the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. It should be clear from this list, of course, that even fundamental norms are often violated. What follows is an effort to outline the most important rules of world order today— and where they have become contested.

Sovereignty and Non-Intervention

Although the post-1945 order was founded on state sovereignty and non-intervention (as set out in Articles 2.4 and 2.7 of the UN Charter), emerging security threats and competing normative claims have weakened this presumption. Especially in the West, sovereignty is increasingly depicted as *contingent* on fulfilling certain obligations, such as not sponsoring/harboring terrorists, pursuing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), or committing atrocities. The doctrine of "contingent sovereignty" has gained greatest traction with the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P). According to the R2P norm, endorsed unanimously at the 2005 UN High Level Summit, a state may forfeit its presumption against external intervention if it makes war on its people or fails to protect them from atrocities. Particularly in the wake of the Libya intervention, many governments now express buyer's remorse of this policy on the grounds that Western states allegedly hijacked the norm to pursue a policy of regime change. (When it comes to R2P and sovereignty, it is arguably Western countries that are most "revisionist.")

No Altering Borders by Force

Resurgent great power imperialism is also testing norms of territorial integrity. Russia's seizure of Crimea and intervention by proxy in eastern Ukraine represents the clearest violation of national sovereignty since Saddam Hussein's 1990 conquest of Kuwait.[19] These actions in Ukraine, as well as Transneister, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, are designed to secure tacit recognition of a Russian sphere of influence (or *cordon sanitaire*) in its "near abroad." To justify these actions, President Putin has invoked the nationality principle, asserting an inherent right to protect not only Russian citizens but Russian-speaking "compatriots." This opens a Pandora's Box, since globally countless minority populations could become targets for irredentism. The elevation of ethnicity over citizenship would be explosive, violating a central pillar of world order: the global consensus on freezing territorial borders in the absence of negotiated settlements.

No Use of Force without Security Council Approval

The UN Charter prohibits military force in the absence of UNSC authorization (except for self-defense). This rule has of course been violated repeatedly since 1945. Nevertheless, countries typically offer justifications for deviations, suggesting it retains some normative power. Over the past two decades, the norm has suffered major blows. This includes the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 (launched without the prior approval of the UNSC) and, even more damaging, the invasion of Iraq by a U.S.-led coalition invasion in 2003. The administration of George W. Bush also unsettled established norms of world order by advancing a novel interpretation of the established doctrine of "preemption," by justifying armed action even in the absence of an imminent attack.

More recently, many have perceived Security Council paralysis in the Syrian conflict as evidence of the UNSC's growing irrelevance to international peace and security. (An alternative reading is that the UNSC is functioning precisely as intended in 1945, in preventing the authorization of coercive action when one or more permanent member—in this case Russia—is opposed.) A greater long-term threat to UNSC legitimacy and credibility is the failure to update Council membership to reflect changes in the global power distribution since 1945.[20] The UNSC also faces a growing legitimacy challenge from the African Union, which has called for joint authorization of military interventions in Africa.[21]

Nonproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

A rare bright spot in Cold War cooperation was U.S.–Soviet agreement to limit the development and spread of nuclear arms. Today, world order depends more than ever on agreement among world powers to control Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and there have been notable successes. The actual proliferation of such weapons remains limited, thanks to overwhelming support for major international instruments including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC); UNSC Resolution 1540 (obliging UN member states to prevent transfer of WMD and related technology); and ad hoc initiatives such as the Nuclear Security Summit.

Nevertheless, pressing challenges remain. They include bringing India, Pakistan, and eventually Israel into the NPT; making sufficient progress on the disarmament obligations of recognized nuclear powers under Article 6 of the NPT; ratification of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)—in which states agree to ban all nuclear explosions in all environments; bringing into force the

Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), which would prohibit further production of nuclear weapons material; achieving universal adherence to the IAEA Additional Protocol, which enhances the agency's ability to detect both declared and undeclared nuclear programs; and ending not only Iran's but also North Korea's proliferation activities.

An Obligation to Combat Terrorism

Since 9/11, UN member states have made uneven progress in multilateral efforts to combat transnational terrorism. One bright spot is UNSC Resolution 1373, passed in September 2001 in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States. It established a UN Counterterrorism Committee (CTC), which requires all states to crack down on terrorist groups. The CTC's Executive Directorate (CTED) provides assistance to help states fulfill these obligations. In parallel with these efforts, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and other multilateral entities have attacked sources of terrorist financing.

More recently, the United States and its partners have struggled to crack down on the "foreign fighter" phenomenon, whereby tens of thousands of extremists have journeyed from the West as well as Muslim-majority countries to swell the ranks of the Islamic State. Western and Muslim governments have also struggled to implement effective national campaigns geared toward combating the ideological appeal of violent extremism. Counterterrorism cooperation suffers from continued disagreement on the definition of terrorism; the frequent blurring of terrorist and insurgent groups; disagreement over the legitimacy of targeted assassinations (and detainee treatment); and failure to delineate norms of state responsibility for terrorist groups operating on a nation's territory.

Maintaining an Open, Non-Discriminatory World Economy

Arguably, the norms, rules and institutions of world order are most well-established in the global economy. There is broad (though not universal) commitment to an open system of trade and payments based on multilateral principles of non-discrimination and reciprocity. All major economies—and most smaller ones—are members of the main multilateral bodies governing monetary, financial, and commercial relations including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO). This implies acceptance of the standards and rules embodied in the international financial institutions' (IFI) articles of agreement as well as the jurisdiction of the WTO's dispute resolution mechanism.

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In the wake of the global financial crisis, major developed and developing nations elevated the G20 to the leaders' level and designated it the premier forum for global economic coordination, displacing the Western-dominated G8/G7. In addition, they created a Financial Stability Board to improve regulation of large cross-border financial institutions and approved certain standards on capital account requirements. The infrastructure of international economic coordination also includes regular meetings of central bankers and finance ministers, as well as the activities of regional multilateral developments banks (e.g., European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Asian Development Bank) and regional initiatives like the Chiang Mai Initiative, a multilateral currency swap arrangement among the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Such surface unanimity conceals significant fissures, however. Major players disagree over the governance reforms needed in IFIs; the dollar's role as the world's reserve currency; the appropriate ambition and scope of regional trade agreements; the right standards that should govern development cooperation; the wisdom of capital market controls; and the proper role of the state in the market. A variety of potential lightning rod issues exist.

One is delayed IFI governance reforms. Perceived Western foot-dragging in overhauling IFI governance is an impetus behind recent "minilateral" initiatives led by major emerging economies, including the

> There is widespread uncertainty about the long-term role of the dollar.

BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) Bank and Contingency Fund, as well as the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB). A case in point, rectified only in December 2015, was Congress's failure for five years to ratify the painstakingly negotiated 2010 reforms to "shares" and "chairs" on the IMF Executive Board.[22]

Currency questions are another issue. There are no agreed international procedures or standards to assess, much less adjudicate, accusations of currency manipulation, whether these arise in the case of (say) an undervalued renminbi or U.S. quantitative easing. More generally, there is widespread uncertainty about the long-term role of the dollar. Although no currency is likely to replace the greenback in the short or medium term, the gradual internationalization of the renminbi is designed to cut into the United States' longstanding "exorbitant privilege."[23]

A third problem is deadlock in global trade liberalization. The biggest disappointment in global economic cooperation since 2001 has been failure to complete the WTO's Doha Development Round (Indian resistance to agricultural liberalization is but one factor).

Yet another issue is the rise of competing models of regional trade. As momentum in global trade shifted toward mega-regional free trade deals, including TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) and TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership), the impact on global trade liberalization remains uncertain. Washington depicts these as high-standard deals to harmonize behind-the-border regulations on procurement, IP protections, and foreign investment (etc.). The question is how these regional free trade agreements (RFTAs) will compete with or complement other regional efforts, such as the Chinese-sponsored Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and whether they might hasten the world's fragmentation into economic blocs.

Finally, divergent standards of development cooperation, differences between the Beijing Consensus v. Washington Consensus, and disagreements over capital controls present other problems. The emergence of "non-traditional donors"—including China, India, Brazil, and the Gulf countries—challenges OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) norms of development cooperation and aid conditionality. Particularly controversial is China's "no-strings attached" approach—dubbed "rogue aid" by critics, who see it as linked to a strategy of resource mercantilism and corrosive of good governance. Regarding capital controls, many OECD and emerging market countries continue to disagree on their appropriateness to discourage sudden and volatile investment flows and dampen dramatic exchange rate fluctuations. On the Beijing vs. Washington Consensus, splits persist between advocates of state capitalism, in which a (typically) authoritarian state plays a heavy role in economic (often export-led) development, and the neoliberal model focused on liberalization, privatization, and deregulation.

Mitigating—and Adapting to—Climate Change

The gravest long-term threat to world order, because it poses an existential threat

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to life on planet Earth, is global warming. For nearly two decades after negotiating the Kyoto Protocol (1997), the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change were deadlocked by normative as well as interest-based disputes over the relative burden of adjustment that should be assumed by developed versus developing countries, including how to translate the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" into concrete action. The Paris Accord of December 2015 represented a breakthrough, with countries abandoning the quest for a legally binding, comprehensive treaty with common obligations in

favor of a process based on "intended, nationally determined contributions" (INDCs), whereby each country would make its own pledges to concrete action that could then be reviewed collectively.[24] Implementation of this accord will require hammering out common standards and rules on multiple issues from monitoring and verification to technology transfer.

Promoting Human Rights and Democracy

Among the most contested questions in contemporary world order is the degree to which sovereign states can be held accountable for how they treat their citizens (beyond the commission of mass atrocities covered under R2P, as discussed earlier). At first glance, the UN Charter is clear: principles of sovereignty and non-intervention imply that the nature and behavior of a governing regime is of no international concern. On closer inspection, however, things are more complicated. Since 1945, international treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) have recognized that individuals, too, have fundamental rights under international law. More unevenly, global acceptance has grown that governments derive their just powers—their legitimate authority— from the consent of the governed. Despite these trends, lack of democracy is no barrier to full participation in world politics. Nor, except in most egregious cases (such as North Korea in March 2015), has the United Nations significantly condemned governments—including UNSC permanent members Russia and China —that routinely violate their citizens' rights. Indeed, many of the world's major rights abusers routinely win election to the UN Human Rights Council.

Safeguarding Access to the Open Global Commons

A major challenge to contemporary world order is preserving the stability of and open access to the global commons—domains that are not under sovereign control but upon which all nations depend for security, prosperity, and welfare—as these become "congested, contested, and competitive."[25] The four most important global commons are the maritime, air space, outer space, and cyberspace domains.[26]

Freedom of the seas has been a core U.S. national security objective since 1776, and the principle is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which the United States has not ratified but accepts (in the main) as customary international law. Stable governance of the maritime domain is increasingly under threat, however, most acutely by assertive Chinese territorial and jurisdictional claims in the East and South China Seas. Beijing continues to advance the infamous "nine-dash line," based on dubious historical claims, to argue for sovereignty over virtually the entire South China Sea. Meanwhile, it continues to develop anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities that could

infringe on the U.S. Navy's right of innocent passage through countries' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). To be sure, U.S. pressure for a multilateral code of conduct in the South China Sea—something Beijing has resisted—would carry more diplomatic heft if the United States were to become party to UNCLOS.

In outer space, the rise of new "space-faring" nations, as well as surging private commercial activity, is putting similar pressures on stable governance. For nearly five decades, the foundation for space cooperation has been the Outer Space Treaty (OST) of 1967, which establishes important rules such as prohibition of sovereignty claims. Unfortunately, the OST fails to address pressing contemporary issues like orbital debris, vehicle collisions, and (most worrisome) space militarization, creating a potential "Wild West" scenario. Given the obstacles to negotiating a successor to the OST, the United States has endorsed internationalization of the European Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities. Meanwhile, Russia and China continue to push for a (problematically framed) treaty intended to prevent weaponization of outer space vehicles (while remaining silent on the more pressing problem of antisatellite weaponry).[27]

Finally, cyberspace is the global commons most urgently in need of rules of the road. The United States, where the digital age began, has been the premier champion of an open, decentralized, and secure cyber domain that remains largely in private hands. This vision is in jeopardy thanks to threats from four sources.

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The first is international disagreement over cyber-governance, specifically whether the Internet should continue to be governed according to the multistakeholder model, which grants private corporations and civil society actors a place at the table with states, or (as many developing and particularly authoritarian states desire) by an intergovernmental model promising greater state control, including censorship. The second is a surge in cybercrime by both private and public actors which threatens to compromise global supply chains, and the lack of agreement on norms/standards to combat it. The third is increased cyber-conflict, as states deepen offensive capabilities and disagree over what rules (including laws of war) should govern state-sponsored attacks. The fourth is blowback from revelations of U.S. mass surveillance, including bulk data collection, in cyberspace and the ramifications of such practices for privacy (as well as trade liberalization).[28]

Technological Innovation and the Frontiers of Global Governance

As the cyberspace example suggests, new technologies often expose gaps in, and provide a motor for, innovations in global governance.[29] Necessity is the

mother of invention, including the invention of new rules and standards. Several recent breakthroughs cry out for regulation.

First is geoengineering. As Earth heats, some scientists propose planetary-scale interventions to mitigate CO_2 emissions, including through Solar Radiation Management or Carbon Dioxide Removal. Unless regulated, such experiments could have catastrophic unintended consequences by interfering with complex climate systems humanity is only beginning to understand.[30] And yet, few rules exist even domestically. Increasingly, countries and private actors may be tempted to take matters in their own hands, with potentially disastrous results.

Drones are another innovation needing regulation. The controversial use of unmanned aerial vehicless (UAVs) by the United States for "targeted killings" (assassinations) of suspected terrorists, coupled with the global proliferation of drone technologies in both public and private hands, underscores the need for international regulation and some legal agreement on their appropriate use as instruments of war.

Synthetic biology is a third potential threat. Rapid advances in biotechnology allow scientists to create novel biological organisms. Unlike traditional genetic engineering, which involves the swapping of genes from one species to another, synthetic biology permits scientists to write an entirely new genetic code on a computer and, after printing it out, to insert it in living organisms—or even create entirely new life forms.[31] The therapeutic and public health benefits will be great, but so too could be the harm, if rogue states or scientists fabricate deadly pathogens or even bioweapons. At present, few regulations exist.

A final area needing oversight is nanotechnology, manipulating materials at the atomic or molecular level. There are no global regulatory arrangements to govern research on and uses of nanotechnology. What little regulation exists takes place at the national level. Moreover, most R&D is done by the private sector, which has a lower incentive to consider threats to public safety.

> Can this order survive the fastest redistribution of global economics in world history?

Rising Powers, Endangered Institutions?

By organizing its post-World War II primacy around multilateral institutions grounded in principles and norms, the United States set in motion a profound historical trend—a profusion of international organizations and rules to regulate multiple global arenas. The result was to alter the context in which nation-states formulated and pursued national interests. Today's salient question is whether the post-1945

Western liberal order can survive the fastest redistribution of global economics in world history, a process likely to upset at least the membership if not the existence of many of these global institutions.

When we look at today's power transitions, two things stand out. The first is the sheer number of emerging powers. Never before have we seen the simultaneous rise of multiple regional (and potentially even global) powers—led by China, of course, but also including India, Brazil, and—though smaller in economic size and political clout—South Korea, Turkey, Mexico, Indonesia, and South Africa. In 1990, when the Cold War was ending, the OECD advanced market democracies accounted for 62 percent of global GDP.[32] Today, that figure is only 47 percent, despite the OECD's addition of a dozen new members including South Korea and Mexico.[33] Most emerging players are at least mildly revisionist. The question is whether their demands can be accommodated with modest adjustments to voting weight and shares within existing institutions, as well as tweaking of rules, or whether their challenge is more fundamental. Both George W. Bush and Barack Obama assumed rising powers could be integrated smoothly as "responsible stakeholders"[34] into an existing Western liberal order.

The second novelty is that today's power shifts are occurring in a dense, and still thickening, institutional landscape. A century ago, when Germany challenged Britain for supremacy, few multilateral organizations existed beyond the International Postal Union. Between 1945 and 1999, the number of such bodies jumped more than six-fold, from 955 to 6,076. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, the United States concluded or acceded to 450 new multilateral agreements.[35] Today, it is party to more than 10,000 bilateral and multilateral treaties,[36] on matters ranging from defense cooperation to environmental protection, communications standards, pandemic response, foreign investment, and trade preferences.

A recurrent theme of Obama's foreign policy has been insistence on global adherence to established rules and norms: Rising powers must assume responsibility, not just privilege, by maintaining and defending world order; and outliers like North Korea and Iran that repeatedly violate rules must be punished. As the President declared in Prague in April 2009, "Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something."[37] The 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy continued this theme.[38] From the perspective of established Western powers, the ideal scenario would be for rising powers to simply accept existing frameworks—much as aspirants to the European Union must accept the *acquis communautaire* (the EU's accumulating body of body of jurisprudence and regulations). In return for a seat and voice at the high table(s) of world politics, emerging countries would accept regnant norms and contribute to realizing common purposes.

Unfortunately, six obstacles complicate this integration scenario: (1) persistent strategic rivalry, (2) enduring value divergences, (3) incompatible regime types, (4) different developmental stages, (5) institutional inertia, and (6) ambivalent U.S. multilateralism. First, serious geopolitical rivalry persists. The Obama administration had hoped otherwise, declaring in its 2010 NSS that "power, in an interconnected world, is no longer a zero-sum game."[39] If so, great power competition should now take a back seat to the joint management of interdependence. Alas, from Syria to Ukraine to the South China Sea, strategic competition has proven to be alive and well.

> Six obstacles complicate a simple scenario of integration of rising powers into world order.

Second, emerging and established powers often diverge on the principles, norms, and rules they believe should govern world order and state conduct. Issues up for grabs include the appropriate boundaries of sovereignty, the correct role of states in markets, the role of religion in national and international politics, the authority of the state to regulate and restrict information flows, and the proper foundations of domestic political legitimacy.

Third, agreement on global rules of the road is often stymied by differences in the domestic authority structures of major powers. Take internet governance: Western democracies support an open, global internet largely in private hands, whereas China insists on state control including censorship and persecution of dissidents.

Fourth, differences in levels of development accentuate differences in interests and outlook. Many emerging market governments, democratic or not, are preoccupied with delivering growth, employment, and social welfare—and thus resist shouldering international obligations or complying with rules perceived to collide with societal expectations.

Fifth, the goal of adapting the existing governance structures to give emerging powers greater voice and weight is often undercut by vested interests within institutions, as current power-wielders cling tenaciously to their privileges. Such dynamics explain the slowness of the UN Security Council, International Energy Agency (IEA), and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to adapt to global power shifts.

Finally, the Janus-like U.S. attitude toward multilateralism complicates the "responsible stakeholder" scenario. Since World War II, no country has done more to build institutions of world order. And yet, few have so resisted submitting to norms and rules it hopes will bind others. American "exemptionalism" reflects a desire to preserve U.S. sovereignty (variously conceived as external freedom of action, domestic policy autonomy, and the supremacy of the U.S. Constitution).

Collectively, these several factors explain why reforming existing international organizations, institutions, and rules to adapt to dramatic power shifts is so hard. In the absence of sweeping global governance reform, the United States and other major players (both established and emerging) increasingly rely on informal, non-binding, purpose-built partnerships and coalitions of the interested, willing, and capable to address global problems ranging from pandemic disease to nuclear security.[40] Such ad hoc, disaggregated approaches to cooperation bring advantages including speed, flexibility, modularity, and possibilities for experimentation. But an "à la carte" or "minilateral" approach to world order also presents dangers, by encouraging rampant forum-shopping, undermining critical international organizations, and reducing accountability in global governance.[41]

Guidelines and Objectives for U.S. Policy

The overriding world order goal for U.S. policymakers should be to preserve the fundamental contours of an open, rule-bound international order that is as universal as possible in its membership. At the same time, the United States must recognize certain realities—and set its objectives in the light of them.

First, *normative solidarity will continue to remain strongest among advanced market democracies*, so that it is appropriate to conceive of world order as a set of concentric circles, with like-mindedness strongest among traditional Western allies. *Washington should seek to expand this inner circle*, with a special focus on cultivating relations with the most important emerging market democracies—including regional giants like India, Brazil and Indonesia—that have traditionally kept some distance from the United States.

Second, the United States *must become more comfortable with "compartmentalizing"* in its relations with major power centers, balancing areas of cooperation with arenas of competition and (even) conflict.[42] The reason is plain: the depth of the contemporary world order varies by issue area. Generally speaking, like-mindedness will continue to be strongest across major centers of world power in global monetary and commercial matters, less so in the political-security sphere, where the United States will continue to collide with China and Russia in particular. One implication is that while the United States should remain dedicated to promoting democracy, it cannot afford to elevate that regime type to a criterion of international legitimacy. As much as the United States might wish to work with likeminded advanced market democracies (in frameworks like the G7 or a proposed "League of Democracies"), global issues like climate change and macroeconomic coordination will inevitably demand more broad-based cooperation.

Third, the United States *must commit itself to reforming the world's bedrock institutions*. A foundation of U.S. leadership after 1945 was the willingness of the

United States to bind itself to multilateral institutions in a manner that legitimated its leadership and reduced others' fears that it would exploit its preponderance for purely narrow gain. Bolstering the institutional foundations of world order is arguably even more important today, allowing the United States to consolidate agreement on principles, norms, and rules at a time when its relative power is likely to continue to decline. At times, this will necessarily require a diminution of the prerogatives enjoyed by the West, including even the United States itself. The U.S. Congress' December 2015 endorsement of the IMF governance reform package is a promising (albeit belated) first step. In those cases where major emerging powers are not eligible for immediate membership in important bodies, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or the International Energy Agency, there may be creative "half-way" house solutions.[43] By the same token, the United States should be philosophical rather than alarmist when rising powers like China take the initiative in establishing international institutions of their own, such as the AIIB, recognizing that this represents an assumption of responsibility as much as a declaration of privilege.[44]

Fourth, the United States should *lead the creation of new institutions where none exist*, including to address global problems that were anticipated only dimly (if at all) in the early post-war era. In addition to promoting new formal multilateral bodies, where these are appropriate and possible, the United States should *continue to experiment with less formal approaches to multilateral cooperation*, by using ad hoc, flexible arrangements to complement (and to break log-jams within) treaty-based multilateral organizations. Indeed, a defining feature of twenty-first century multilateralism is not only institutional density but institutional diversity. Today's most effective frameworks are often "minilateral" rather than universal, voluntary rather than legally binding, disaggregated rather than comprehensive, transgovernmental rather than just intergovernmental, regional rather than global, multilevel and multi-stakeholder rather than state-centric, and bottom-up rather than top-down.[45] Among all the world's powers, the United States is best positioned to "pivot" among formal and informal forms of collective action. At the same time, Washington should seek to ensure that its forays into informal or networked forms of global governance do not undermine the formal institutions whose standing capacities, technical expertise, and legitimacy will be needed over the long haul to sustain an open, liberal international order.

Fifth and finally, sustaining an open, vibrant, and resilient international order will require the United States to temper its often "exemptionalist" stance toward multilateral order. One of the persistent paradoxes of the post-1945 decades has been that

> Sustaining order will require the United States to temper its often "exemptionalist" stance.

the United States is at once the world's most vocal champion of a rules-based international order and the power most insistent on opting out of the constraints that it hopes to see binding on others. The sources of this propensity are multiple: they reflect unmatched U.S. power and responsibilities; a political culture of liberal exceptionalism and vigorous defense of U.S. sovereignty; and a constitutional system that gives enormous power to the legislative branch—a frequent source of vetoes on proposed U.S. global commitments. At a minimum, adopting a more "normal" approach to a rules-based international order will require psychological, as well as practical policy, adjustments.

Conclusion

Reinvigorating a rules-based international order must be one of the main priorities of whoever is elected President of the United States in November. This is not a utopian dream but enlightened self-interest, based on the lessons of history. The U.S. architects of the post-World War II international system understood that the best way to advance U.S. national security and prosperity was to ground U.S. leadership and American might in stable and legitimate international institutions.

World order-building is vastly more complicated today, thanks to an ongoing diffusion of global power, normative diversity among major players, and the sheer complexity of the international agenda. Unlike *Pax Americana*, world order in the twenty-first century will not bear the stamp "made in America"—at least not entirely. It will be the product of ongoing negotiations and compromise among established Western and rising non-Western powers on how best to reform old and create new institutions—and how to allocate burdens and privileges within them.

The sky is not yet falling. But the turbulence of the past sixteen years, over two very different U.S. administrations, suggests little room for complacency. The international rules of order laid down over the past seventy years are fraying, even as rules of the road are needed to address challenges the "wise men" of the 1940s could scarcely have imagined. Beginning with its likeminded allies, the United States must use its still-unmatched position to forge workable consensus among established and rising powers. And it must temper its historic "exemptionalist" stance towards multilateral cooperation—or risk seeing others mimic its behavior, to the detriment of world order.

Notes

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4. *Ibid.*, pp. 340, 345.

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