



The Future of International Order(s)

Shiping Tang

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The shockwaves of Brexit, Trump, and the rise of ethno-nationalism in the West on one hand, and the rise of non-Western countries on the other, pose challenging questions for the future of the existing U.S./West-centric international order. Certainly, it is no longer tenable to believe in the notion of the “End of History” or the durability of the “Unipolar Moment.” When it comes to the future of the international order, we are now in a new Age of Anxiety.

In this short essay, I advance three principal arguments. First, the more rule-based international order will persist, but it will be increasingly less West-centric. Second, shaping the international order will become more bottom-up and contested, rather than mostly top-down and imposed as it used to be. Third, regional orders will become more critical now that the momentum toward an Americanized global order has stalled and may never regain its lost momentum. In this sense, the future international order(s) will become more regionalized and fragmented.

If my projection is a valid possibility, its potential implications are profound. To begin with, there will be much more competition for making rules beyond the West, though with less violence than in the past. Second, interregional coordination and cooperation will become more critical. Third, the notion of the

Shiping Tang is the Fudan Distinguished Professor and Dr. Seaker Chan Chair Professor at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs (SIRPA), Fudan University, Shanghai, China. His most recent book, *The Social Evolution of International Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2013), received the “Annual Best Book Award” from the International Studies Association (ISA) in 2015. He can be reached at twukong@fudan.edu.cn. Research for this article has been partly supported by a research grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation [grant number 16-1512-150509-IPS], led by Kai He and Huiyun Feng at Griffith University. The author thanks Barry Buzan, Huiyun Feng, Kai He, T.V. Paul, and Etel Solingen for their comments and Jing He for her outstanding research assistance. Shiping Tang  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2038-2598>

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West as a unified bloc may no longer be sufficient, or even always productive, for moving toward a better governed international order.

I begin this essay by emphasizing that it is misleading to label the existing order as “liberal,” based on a more rigorous definition of order developed elsewhere.¹ I then argue that the era of modernization as Westernization may be coming to an end, and that rules within the international order will become more contested. I, however, also hold that this contestation will not necessarily be politically violent or morally bad. I then contend that globalization will be increasingly built upon regionalization, interregional bargaining and coordination. Building on the first two sections, I next underscore the possibility that reforming global governance will be increasingly bottom-up rather than top-down as it used to be in the past century. Finally, I address the future of the West and the project of modernity beyond the West, and conclude with some thoughts on life after Trump.

Getting It Right: A Rule-based but Illiberal Order

The term “order” has garnered much attention, but has not been rigorously defined or measured. For instance, although Hedley Bull’s definition of order being “a pattern of activity [or behavior] that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society” enjoys the widest acceptance in international relations, it is also seriously flawed.² Though order constrains and facilitates subjects’ behaviors, subjects can also disobey order. Meanwhile, violation of an order does not mean order does not exist, because order alone does not dictate agents’ behaviors. Worse yet, when order is defined as a pattern of activity, it becomes tautological when we try to explain behavior with order or lack of it.³

I therefore introduce a more rigorous definition of order based on a conceptual analysis. Briefly, at the ontological level, order is the degree of predictability or regularity of what is going on within a social system, presumably because agents’ behavior, social interactions, and social outcomes within the social system have all come under some kind of regulation. At the operational level, order can thus be measured along four dimensions: scope (the coverage of an order), the relative concentration or distribution of power (violent or nonviolent), the degree of institutionalization along two sub-dimensions (i.e., density and depth)⁴, and the degree of internalization of the specific rules and norms within the order. This framework allows us to not only measure but also compare orders cross time and space, as illustrated by [Table 1](#) with a brief comparison of several prominent regional orders in history.

Table I: Regional and Global Orders in History

| | Europe: From the Century of Peace to the Twenty Years Crisis (1815–1939) | Northeast Asia: The Collapse of the Sino-centric Order and the Defeat of Japanese Empire (1800–1945) | Pax-Americana in the North Atlantic (1914–1945) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Coverage | Western and Central Europe | Northeast Asia and a part of Southeast Asia | Western Europe and the North Atlantic |
| Degree of monopoly of power | Low, mostly based on balance-of-power with alliance | High, and then low | Extremely high, and then high (after the revival of Western Europe) |
| Degree of institutionalization: density | Extremely low | Extremely low | High, esp. post-1945 |
| Degree of institutionalization: depth | Extremely low | Extremely low | Moderate (post-1945) |
| Degree of internalization | Extremely low | Extremely low | High (post-1945) |
| Outcome | War, collapse | War, collapse | Persistence and expansion (post-1991) |

With this more rigorous definition of order, it becomes clear that the much touted liberal international order is liberal only in the open-trading (or economic) sense, but not in the political sense. Under this definition, only a liberal democracy can approach the ideal world of having subjects willingly submit to an order. Hence, only a liberal democracy can be a genuinely liberal political order. In contrast, even under the present “liberal” international order, countries do not get to vote to willingly submit to the order. As such, a genuinely liberal order governing international politics may be impossible even if every country on this planet becomes a liberal democracy. This is not to dispute the fact that the existing order may contain many specific rules with liberal elements.

It is critical to get this label of the existing international order right, for at least four reasons. To begin with, one can credibly speculate that the notion of “liberal” international order has been a product of self-congratulatory justification and intellectual inertia without much critical reflection by international relations scholars from leading Western states. Just because the leading powers have been liberal democracies does not necessarily mean that the international order they have erected is a liberal one, for as long as the order had been imposed by victors, the order is unlikely to be a liberal one.⁵ Second and more critically,

The much-touted liberal international order is only liberal in the economic, but not political, sense.

properly terming the current order allows us to examine it more critically.⁶ Only through critical reflection can we hope to shape a better order. Third and equally important, admitting that the existing order is not liberal allows us to have an un-alarmist mindset. Rather than decrying that any modification of specific rules—especially such a modification that comes from the non-liberal South—would make the existing order less liberal, we can afford to adopt a critical and case-by-case stand toward reshaping an existing rule or crafting a new rule, even if the agents backing these rules are not necessarily all liberal democracies. Finally, because the international order is “liberal” only in the sense of open trade, there is nothing within the “liberal” international order that should prevent the order from integrating and accommodating an illiberal rising power (e.g., China), as long as the rising power relies on peaceful means for shaping specific rules within the international order.⁷

Several additional key points can also be readily derived from the more rigorous definition of order. First of all, defining order in “ideal types” such as power-based, rule-based, or norm-based order is not very helpful, if not potentially misleading.⁸ The reason is that every order rests upon a mixture of power, institution, and norm. As such, if we define order as ideal types based on power, rule, or norm, we risk ignoring order’s complexities as historical products of human society. Second, the more rigorous definition of order points to several proximate causes

There have been and will be international order(s), rather than a single international order.

of order transition or transformation: change in the scope covered by an order, change in the distribution of power that underpins an order, or change in the key institutions within an order. Hence, change in the distribution of power, though often critical, is only one of the triggers of order transition. Third, when we combine the scope of order and the domain of order (e.g., economic, security), we can arrive at a multilayered scheme of order

in different domains. For instance, we can talk about the global economic order (i.e., production, trade, and finance), regional economic order, global security order, and regional security order. In short, *there have been and will be international order(s), rather than a single international order.*

Beyond Westernization: Contesting Rules beyond Power

For a while after the end of the Cold War, many pundits have thought not only that globalization would sweep across the globe, but more importantly that this drive of globalization would essentially be a process of Westernization, if not

Americanization. Today, this myopic, if not euphoric, vision looks increasingly untenable,⁹ even if American primacy is here to stay.¹⁰

There is no doubt that the existing international order remains a mostly Western one, along two dimensions: the West has been the primary source of power that underpins the current order and the West has generated most of the major ideas shaping the order. Yet, the days that Western ideas rule without much dissent and contestation are numbered. Two critical developments drive this trend. The first and more obvious shifting factor is the diffusion of power. With the rise of non-Western states, plus nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs) from the non-West, Western states no longer hold the same concentration of power that they used to, though their power remains formidable.¹¹ Second, because ideas are the other key component for making rules, an overwhelming concentration of power is not necessary for contesting rules. Shaping an order depends not only on the change in distribution of power within a system, but also on the coming of new, often better, ideas.¹² Without power, new ideas may never become rules of an order. Without new ideas, there would not be fundamental changes in order, but rather only cyclic rises and falls of orders.

Admitting that shaping rules is a critical dimension for shaping order, and both power and ideas are indispensable for making rules allows us to grasp that changing certain rules is not necessarily destabilizing for an order. Order is inherently compatible with some instability, especially changes of some of its established rules and norms. In fact, because order can only be maintained through change and hence some instability, it is whether an order can cope with change and instability peacefully that signifies the stability and the resilience of that order. If an order can cope with change and instability peacefully, this all the more reflects the resilience of order. Certainly, the post-WWII international order has managed the rapid pace of technological changes in telecommunication without incurring much instability, even during the period of intense confrontation between the East and the West. Thus, a key determinant of the future stability and resilience of the current international order must be its capacity to cope with or accommodate peaceful changes of rules and norms. There will inevitably be competitions among different ideas for specific rules and norms, as well as power struggles to implement rules once conceived.

If there is anything genuinely liberal within the “liberal” international order, it is the free competition in the “marketplace of ideas.” Rather than fearing the competition in the marketplace of ideas, all countries, including Western liberal democracies, should welcome the contestation of rules and norms in the international order, as long as ideas rather than arms are wrestling against each other.

To be resilient, the international order must accommodate peaceful changes of its rules and norms.

Moreover, if we admit that our unwillingness to accept or respect others' ideas is partly driven by our ethnocentrism,¹³ it becomes clear that others' ideas can be positive, and accepting them need not be emotionally humiliating. After all, human societies throughout history have borrowed ideas and learned from each other, which has often improved welfare.

Intellectual leadership, rather than relative material power and others' support, is thus one of the most valuable components of rule-making, and will likely become even more critical in shaping the future international order.¹⁴ In rule-making within the international order, a country's accumulated expertise in specific issue areas rather than a country's relative material power should be the core criterion for leadership in rule-making, in order to create rules that are most conducive to human welfare. Traditionally, few ideas that have been codified into international institutions have been from the non-Western world, partly because the non-Western world lacks the power to back its ideas, but also partly because the non-Western world has been unable to produce many good ideas. In this sense, social scientists in the non-Western world have a great responsibility in advancing new and more useful ideas.

For example, the European Union (EU) may take the lead in making rules for reducing inequality, providing universal healthcare, protecting labor rights, and respecting human rights. In contrast, the United States may take the lead in making rules for encouraging innovation and technological entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, though China is not a democracy and does not sufficiently respect human rights, China can still contribute to rule-making in international order. In areas such as building infrastructure, providing better schools, reducing poverty, and jumpstarting and sustaining economic development in general, China has vast experience and should be allowed to play a more leading role in informing the international order on these topics. Likewise, India may offer valuable lessons for maintaining democracy within a multiethnic society. Indeed, countries that are not great powers or even regional great powers should be allowed to have a voice in rule-making. Denying countries a place at the table simply because it is neither a great power nor a liberal democracy is not the most constructive approach toward rule-making in international order.

In fact, some key developing countries have been working together to make new rules or at least modify some existing ones, especially in stimulating and sustaining economic development. The launching of the New Development Bank (NDB, formerly, known as BRICS Development Bank) was the first significant development in this area, and China's launching of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) represents a more recent and ambitious endeavor. Importantly, however, both NDB and AIIB retain many of the standard rules in other multilateral development banks (e.g., World Bank, the Asian Development Bank), and at the same time try to find new niches and formulate new rules. NDB and AIIB therefore both compete against and complement older multilateral

development banks (MDBs) that have traditionally been dominated by the West. Indeed, most of the Western countries have become members of AIIB, except the United States and Japan.

Globalization, but More Regional and Interregional

Overlapping regional orders will become a key component of any future international order.¹⁵ Moreover, although the European Union is often the model conjured when thinking of regionalism, we need to approach regionalism without always taking the EU as the yardstick.¹⁶ According to a recent study by J. Thomas Volgy et al.,¹⁷ regions with a single great power (e.g., North America) tend to be the most peaceful, with the exception of South Asia. In contrast, regions without a great power are more violence-prone such as the Middle East. Thus, when a region lacks a regional great power or a regional great power is either unable or unwilling (or both) to construct a peaceful regional order, that region tends to be less peaceful. In contrast, the outcomes for regions with two or more (mostly two) great powers depend on whether the regional powers can work together. Regional great powers working together tend to produce peace (e.g., the European Union in Europe), while their lack of cooperation (e.g., East Asia) tends to be more prone to war.

Western Europe has been largely peaceful since World War II because Germany and France have cooperated with each other. By the same token, Central Asia may be moving toward a zone of peace, now that Russia and China have been increasingly working together. By comparison, East Asia's future is looking increasingly fraught, given the rivalry between the U.S./Japan alliance and China, in addition to many regional states' reluctance to embrace some kind of leadership role for Japan previously and now China. Indeed, with the collapse of the East Asia Summit that aims to forge a more integrated East Asia with only states from East Asia, East Asia seems to be a region lacking a genuinely regional project, at least for now.

What does this mean for global governance? I venture to argue that regional resilience may now be more important than ever. As long as these regional blocs (and even spheres of influence) are rule-based and peacefully shaped, the current international order may be more stable and resilient than an order with only one center. Indeed, one can credibly argue that the post-WWII international system has been so stable precisely because many regions have institutionalized regional peace by constructing more rule-based regional orders.¹⁸ The key is not necessarily that there is one rule-maker, but that each region has rules.

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Here, it may be useful to recall that *Pax Americana* extended beyond the Western hemisphere only after the Cold War, and this may well be the first and the last time that any order approaches a global one. Throughout history, many regional orders have existed, though no truly global one has. Although many regional great powers may attempt to construct regional orders that can manage most regional issues within the region, few, if any, of these orders run counter to *Pax Americana*. The notion that *Pax Americana* is coming to an end and then will be replaced by a new global order underpinned by another global hegemon cannot be easily substantiated.

We therefore should welcome regionalism projects in various regions. When regions can mostly take care of themselves, the world becomes a much safer and better governed place. Indeed, if regional states can manage their regional affairs well, then regions can withstand stronger headwind from the lonely and now whimsical superpower under Donald Trump. After all, almost every one of the existing security communities have originated regionally first.

If regions are becoming increasingly critical, then we can also expect interregional coordination between regions to become more critical for the future international order. There are three possible types of these interregional dynamics. First, extra-regional great powers (EGPs) can choose to work for or against regionalism projects in other regions.¹⁹ It is certainly possible that extra-regional great powers (such as the United States in the European order) and regional great powers (such as France and Germany in Europe, or China and Japan in East Asia) and other regional small-to-medium states work together, if they can realize that doing so is better than plotting against each other.

On this front, the United States has been the traditional go-to extra-regional great power. Today, however, both the EU and China might possibly join its ranks. Arguably, the Asia-Europe Summit, the Africa-China summit, and China's "One Belt and One Road" (OBOR), or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), are initiatives undertaken by the EU and China that may have a constructive role in another region. Of course, it must be admitted that China's OBOR has not always been welcomed, to put it politely. As a result, it is unclear whether and how much OBOR can create interregional linkages. Likewise, it is unclear whether the China-Africa Summit can create much interregional and intra-regional connection within Africa, although several African countries are quite interested in drawing useful lessons from China's economic development simply because these countries would love to achieve a sustained high rate of economic growth. The same can be said regarding the Asia-EU Meeting (ASEM) and the Africa Union-EU Summit: these two interregional initiatives have added little to intraregional integration and the making of regional

orders because countries within one of the regions do not like greater integration, at least for now.

Second, regional organizations (e.g., the EU, the Africa Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN], and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) can work together with each other and other key players to create new interregional frameworks or initiatives that can bring different regions together, or at least make different regions more connected with each other, besides making states within a region work together more. Here, the key question may be whether regions with more mature regionalism projects can lead the way. For instance, can the EU and East Asia work together, or even the EU, East Asia, and the Africa Union together?

Third, different regional great powers can choose to work together with each other. Again, the United States has been the traditional go-to partner for many issues. Now with Trump, will key regional states rethink whether their U.S.-centrism is still warranted, at least until Trump is gone? For instance, can China and Japan work more closely with Argentina and Brazil in Latin America, or with India in South Asia? Likewise, can France and Germany work more closely with China and Japan? Altogether, because regions are becoming more regionalized, closer interregional coordination and cooperation based on open regionalism can become a key pillar of the emerging multiplex international order.²⁰

Reforming Global Governance: More Bottom-up than Top-down?

According to the definition of order noted above, rules or institutions (as key components of global governance) constitute the third dimension of international order, with the first being an order's scope of coverage and the second being the relative distribution of power. Hence, reforming global governance is to reform one dimension of the international order for a better world by revising (or modifying) old rules and making new ones while retaining many key old rules. The post-WWII and then post-Cold War international order was mostly a top-down order because it was mostly imposed by the United States and its allies. Maintaining this status quo looks increasingly unlikely. In terms of making rules and reforming global governance, we are now moving from a mostly top-down style to a more bottom-up one.

We are moving from a mostly top-down order to a more bottom-up one.

There are two critical forces behind this. First, major transformations of international order in the past had been mostly a process of victors imposing order after major wars (e.g., 1648, 1919, 1945, and

1991). With major wars being no longer feasible among great powers, it may be increasingly unlikely to have clear winners and losers. Hence, it may be increasingly unlikely to have clearly victorious sides that can hold the power and moral influence to impose order (upon losers and the rest). Second, with the diffusion of power from the West, the ability to impose order may no longer be realized. States, at least since 1648, were the only central agents in holding a concentration of power. In contrast, in today's "flat" world, agents other than states have gained increasingly significant power in shaping rules, even though states remain key players. As a result, both developments point to new and multiple agents contesting rules.

In addition, more regionalization will also mean that global governance will be increasingly constrained by regionalism projects. More regional, issue-specific, domain-specific (or ad hoc) rule-making is becoming the norm. Climate change is one prominent example of a specific issue getting attention because it is being moved forward by regional and subnational players. Federations of scientists and grassroots movements have played a critical role in pushing forward important agendas for environmental protection and reducing greenhouse gas. Despite serious under-participation from the Global South, subnational players, especially global cities, have taken a more active role in shaping the future rules of environmental protection while state-to-state coordination on climate change has mostly stalled.²¹ This is just one example. There will be many regional orders within different domains and dimensions, meaning more bottom-up rather than top-down rule-making.

Similarly, key progress has been advanced by nongovernmental actors in areas like quality management, transparency accounting and corporate responsibilities.²² Even though many of these major changes such as the ISO certificate system and corporate responsibilities for environmental protection were mostly from the corporate world, they have played an important role in shaping global governance more broadly. Without quality management and corporate responsibilities, it is unlikely that issues such as food security and environmental protection would have the kind of attention they do. Global governance is no longer the exclusive domain of states. Non-corporate nongovernmental actors have also been making moves. One such example is the area of art repatriation. Although often a victim state does formally request its stolen or looted art treasures to be returned and often another state has to approve the repatriation, the real action in art repatriation has been driven by museums, artists, and associations of them.

Finally, we should never forget technological breakthroughs. The capitalist system will continue to spur the relentless drive for technological progress and profit, and thus will continue to bring profound changes in rules underpinning global governance, especially in areas such as communication, logistics, e-commerce, and travel.

All these developments point to a more bottom-up style of shaping the international order, with multiple cross-cutting agents and initiatives. For instance, global cities may work with grassroots movements to pressure their respective national governments in other areas as they have about environmental protection when state-led initiatives (e.g., the Paris Accord) have stalled. The question though remains: can we effectively cope with challenges by having multiple agents competing for rules in overlapping domains? Nevertheless, it appears to be the world (and the order) that we are increasingly living in.

Beyond the West: The Future of Modernity

Though cracks within the West were evident before Brexit and Trump—ranging from how to tackle global warming, the rise of non-Western countries, and regime change in Iraq, Libya, and Syria—I am not predicting the decline of the West. Global governance without the West is both unimaginable and undesirable. However, both the West and the non-West must look beyond the West for partners in a host of issues. Some issues require cooperation within the non-West; others require cooperation between the West and the non-West. Thus, the West needs to reduce its egocentrism and look beyond its borders for the sake of a better international order. More critically, identifying the West as the eternal exception in the modernity project hinders rather than helps progress toward a more inclusive modernity project.

Global governance without the West is both unimaginable and undesirable.

What does the rise of ethno-nationalism within the West (e.g., the United States, the UK, Austria, or even France) mean for the future of international order(s)? Politically, it will mean more “America first,” “Britain first,” and “Germany First” etc. As such, it will deepen the cracks in the West. Economically, it will mean more or less the same as what we have seen in recent years, with more protectionism and less open trade. Both trends present challenges for the operation of the present order.

For the future of the West itself, two critical points should be considered. First, despite the rise of non-Western countries, the United States and the West remain the most critical players of the existing international order in the foreseeable future. Thus, one of the most critical unknowns to the future of international order may be what kind of damages Trump can wreck upon it. Trump will inevitably pass, but Trumpism, for lack of a better term, will likely remain an undercurrent within U.S. domestic politics for some time to come.

What does this mean for the international order? At the very least, two aspects should be considered. First, will Trump and Trumpism have some lasting impact (or do lasting harm) on the U.S. role and power in the world, including on the legitimacy of American leadership? Or could the resilience of U.S. staying power make Trump and Trumpism only a fleeting moment without lasting impact? Also, even if the United States reverted to its pre-Trump approach toward the international order, will the world have changed so much that the United States will need to find new roles for exercising its leadership in a new world order?

The second critical point about the West, for the near future, is whether the idea of a more-or-less coherent West persist with some modifications? Should such an idea still hold special sway inside and outside the West? Within the West, the idea of a unified West certainly provides a sense of security, solidarity, and perhaps superiority. But that idea may also have inhibited the West from coming to terms with the non-West. If this is true, will the West become less Western-centric? Or will the non-West remain so fragmented that the concept of the West will still remain a linchpin of any future international order?

Since World War II, the United States and the EU (often together) have been leaders of the international order by default. Both sides of the Atlantic prefer each other as the go-to partner for almost all key issues. Yet, if the West-centric order really desires to integrate the rest of the world into the existing order, then a partnership between the EU and other key states and regional organizations would be useful. This is especially true with Trump in the White House and the European Union experiencing its own problems of governance and populism backlashes. For one thing, Trump seems to believe that the United States should replace partners, which are expensive and no longer necessary, with followers. The key question then becomes whether the EU can work together with other states and regional organizations. For instance, can the African Union and the EU cooperate to reduce poverty? Can the EU and Asia work together to promote trade? Similarly, can the EU and China forge a stable partnership to combat climate change and advance African growth?

All these possibilities cannot become realities unless the EU and other regional organizations and states no longer see the United States as their only plausible partner. It may be high time for countries to rethink whether their U.S.-centrism is still warranted, at least until Trump is gone. For instance, whether the EU and China can forge a stable partnership really depends on whether they can see each other and approach their potential cooperation from an angle without the United States being at the center of their imagination.²³ Likewise, can the EU and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) provide better ideas on rules of global governance and fill the void of political power now that Trump has only an “America First” policy? This may be the critical question for leaders of these

countries. We need not only “West and West” and “Non-West and Non-West” but also “West and Non-West” partnerships. This rejection of U.S.-centrism, whether temporary or not, may be a critical variable in shaping the rules of global governance in future international order(s) in the next couple years.

The Future of Order(s)

A hidden assumption within much of the existing discourse on order in the liberal West has been that the order has been good overall, and hence identifying the numerous injustices under the order is often ignored.²⁴ Such an attitude might have been a major cause behind the blindness toward many injustices unfolding before us, and serves as a powerful rallying point for anti-liberalism across the globe. Injustices in the West are largely tied to inequality, whereas the rest of the globe has experienced injustices ranging from colonialism and its aftermath (e.g., dependence), to regime change-induced civil war, famine, refugee crises, and population displacement. Unless we come to terms with the backlashes against liberalism today, we cannot fully grasp the crisis within the “liberal” West that currently underpins the international order. Today, it is more important than ever to adopt a more clear-eyed, and critical, approach toward international order, and reveal the injustices within the current international order.

A critical approach avoids the detrimental, positive biases commonplace to the current study of the international order. Many leading neoliberalist students of order often implicitly or explicitly assume (and thus focus on) the “benevolent, voluntary, cooperative, and legitimate” side of international institutions and order.²⁵ Yet, because orders are often made and backed by power, the possibility that they can reduce welfare is real.²⁶ Therefore, our priority should not be to eulogize the existing international order, or focus on recreating it; but rather to expose the hypocrisy, injustice, and illegitimacy within the existing order, and to improve it, without denying that some institutions have indeed improved human welfare.

We are entering a period of “contested multilateralism” in a less Western-centric world.

Despite its possible post-Western nature, any future international order will still be a rule-based one. The key differences may be that non-Western countries, including rising powers, will have more input into the rules of the future order. In this sense, the future order(s) will be an enterprise contested by multiple actors and ideas, with overlapping regional, sub-regional, and global order(s). In short, we are entering a period of “contested multilateralism” in a less Western-centric world.²⁷

In an increasingly interconnected world, if there is one general rule for understanding global, or even state-level governance, it must be this: no country, especially any global or regional great power, can afford to think for herself alone.

Notes

1. Shiping Tang, "Order: A Conceptual Analysis," *Chinese Political Science Review* 1, no. 1 (2016): 30–46.
2. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 4, 8, 16–21, 51. Many authors have adopted Bull's definition either exactly or with some modification. Bull never clearly defined what he meant by "activity" either. In this paper, I work under the assumption that he used a broad definition of activity that includes both behavior and interaction.
3. Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 29–38; See also Shiping Tang, "Order: A Conceptual Analysis," *Chinese Political Science Review*, 2016, 1, no. 1: 30–46.
4. Density measures how many issue areas have been covered by rules whereas depth measures how intrusive the rules are. The more issue areas institutionalization covers, the denser the institutionalization. The deeper institutionalization penetrates, the more intrusive the order.
5. G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
6. Shiping Tang, *The Social Evolution of International Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), Chapter 5.
7. Shiping Tang, "Liberal America, Illiberal China, and the 'Liberal' International Order," *Institute for China–America Studies*, (May 10, 2016), <http://chinaus-icas.org/>.
8. Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, Chapter 2.
9. Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World: The Rise of the Rest* (New York: Penguin, 2008); L. Joseph Quinlan, *The Last Economic Superpower* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2011); Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order* (London: Polity, 2011).
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23. Sebastian Bersick, and Tang Shiping, "Can EU and China Act Together?" *Friends of Europe*, June 23, 2017, <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/publication/can-eu-and-china-act-together>.
24. For a more detailed discussion on a critical approach toward order, see Tang 2013, Chapter 4.
25. James Keeley, "Toward a Foucauldian Analysis of International Regimes," *International Organization* 44, no. 1 (March 1990): 83–105. Quote from 90.
26. For instance, Western colonialism had been instrumental in making the "international law" within the "liberal" international order. For details, see Paul Keal, 2003. *European Conquest and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
27. C. Julia Morse, and Robert O. Keohane, "Contested Multilateralism," *Review of International Organizations* 9, no. 4 (December 2014): 385–412. Notably, Morse and Keohane have cited only cases of "contested multilateralism" initiated by agents from the West.