

Introduction

Liberal World Order

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THE DIFFUSION OF LIBERAL IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS was one of the most striking trends in world politics during the last two centuries. So much so that one leading International Relations (IR) scholar has described liberalism as the ‘default setting’ of modern international society.¹ Even as the League of Nations crumbled during the 1930s, liberal principles and policies were embedded in the post-1945 system of global governance, just as the number of liberal democratic states steadily increased. The continuous expansion of the post-war liberal international order culminating with the end of the Cold War and the subsequent further expansion of the order seemed to confirm liberalism’s triumph, prompting Francis Fukuyama (1989: 3) to proclaim that liberalism is ‘the final form of human government’. The ‘liberal decade’ that followed saw democracy promotion, international cooperation, and collective security becoming the expected behaviour of the leading powers of the liberal order, so that by the end of the decade, on the eve of the Kosovo campaign, British Prime Minister Tony Blair (1999) could confidently declare that ‘we are all internationalists now’.

From the vantage point of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the confidence in liberal international order has ebbed and liberalism is now in question in international theory and in practice. Recurring disagreements over the design and purpose of the multilateral institutions put in place to provide governance over security, trade, and finance, have demonstrated that cooperation is harder to achieve and to sustain than generations of liberals had anticipated. The ongoing violence in relation to the so-called global war on terrorism, the uneven record of post-Cold War liberal foreign policies in delivering a more secure and just world order, and the global financial crisis, have turned the triumphalism of the ‘liberal decade’ into despondency; a growing chorus of scholars, even from within the liberal camp, have questioned the resilience of the liberal order and the ability of its institutions to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

¹ This phrase is Chris Brown’s (1999).

Twenty years after Fukuyama's confident proclamation, G. John Ikenberry's 2009 article 'Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order' marked a final acknowledgement that liberal internationalism as practised since the middle of the twentieth century is at an end. To be sure, at a first glance Ikenberry's statement is not as newsworthy as the proclamation of 'the end of history', and Ikenberry does not suggest that liberal order per se is at an end, but the message in Ikenberry's article is nevertheless every bit as important as an authoritative statement on liberal order's fading in world politics.

G. John Ikenberry is one of the foremost thinkers of America's ordering of the post-1945 period. More than any other contemporary writer, Ikenberry encapsulates with great clarity the dilemmas of liberal internationalism in our times. He pays careful attention to both sides of the liberal register—the recognition on one side that great powers need to provide order, while on the other side being realistic about the limits of multilateralism in trade, finance, and security in an unevenly globalized world. Ikenberry's assessment of American power in the early twenty-first century as a time where the version of liberal world order that was established in the middle of the twentieth century (liberal world order version 2.0) stands in front of major, though uncertain, change, is an important contribution to our understanding of liberal order as a dynamic and changing ordering principle, forever attempting to reconcile internal dilemmas and tensions, and always in a dialectical process with the political realities of the international system.

At the start of the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is apparent to Ikenberry that the US lacks the capacity, and Western institutions the legitimacy, to maintain version 2.0 into the future. Or to put the point in domestic political terms, the tensions between the US's role in the world as a *Liberal Leviathan* (2011), and the forces that generate its identity as a sometimes reactionary nationalist great power, are increasingly in tension; the former identity provides public goods and upholds the international rule structure while the latter consumes and undermines them. To Ikenberry, liberal order's current crisis is a crisis of authority. Moreover, it is a crisis that is closely connected with the declining hegemony of the United States, precisely because the US—its economy, military, and political institutions—became so tightly tied to the wider order (Ikenberry, 2009a: 78).

Ikenberry is not alone in predicting change in the configurations of liberal order and its institutional foundations. Influential policy-oriented think tanks add further weight to concerns about the shape of liberal order to come. The US National Intelligence Council (2008) survey of 'Global Trends 2025' argues that (liberal) international governance arrangements will become unrecognizable in the decades to come, given the challenges brought on by the deepening globalization of the world economy, the further integration of

military planning and operations, and (re-)emergence of non-Western great powers in global politics. The concerns of the US National Intelligence Council were echoed by some of liberal order's most prominent advocates in the Princeton Project (2006) (which Ikenberry made a major contribution to), in which it was argued that the system of international institutions that the United States and its allies built after the Second World War is broken and needs to be fixed.

Another factor that has contributed to the sense that liberalism is a fading force in world politics is the perceived failure of the highly interventionist ideas of the turn of the twentieth century, an era in which self-styled liberal internationalists embraced key tenets of neoconservative thinking. The liberalism associated with peace, commerce, and interdependence, was now being supplanted by justifications for 'empire lite' to protect Western security interests from the threat posed by failing states.² Central to these new justifications for abandoning the norm of non-intervention, at least as it is applied in the West's relations with the postcolonial world, was the belief that an order established by a benevolent hegemon was preferable to the misery that many in the global south experienced on a daily basis. However, when the projects either failed or resulted in a surge of sectarian and political violence, interventionism in the name of some of liberalism's most cherished principles such as democracy and rule of law—the liberal idea set underpinning liberal order—was compromised.

In this collection of essays, the contributors help us to make sense of these apparent contradictions through challenging the way in which the debate about liberalism has been conducted within the IR academy as well as in policy circles. Against the theoreticians, we argue that liberalism has suffered from being too closely tied to the quest for scientific authenticity, resulting in a theoretical perspective with little or no commitment to political values and political vision. By turning the classical liberalism of Kant, Paine, and Mill, into the neoliberalism of Moravcsik, Keohane, and Simmons, liberalism has been shorn of its critical and normative potential. Going beyond the current political debate, we argue that liberalism cannot be understood if its focus is solely directed at the United States and the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. To be sure, liberal order version 2.0 may be seen as synonymous with American power and American policy, and liberal internationalism is to many synonymous with Wilsonianism. However, by viewing liberal order's crisis primarily as a crisis of authority, and by not looking further than the twentieth century, liberalism has been separated from its historical origins and previous rich debates about dilemmas, tensions, and contradictions similar to those of today's liberal order.

² Michael Ignatieff (2003) is perhaps the best known of a new liberal imperialism.

Our response is not to take flight from liberal thinking on world order. Rather, we look to alternative conceptions of liberalism, be they from the classical tradition or from other contemporary world views that incorporate liberal insights into their international theory. This results in conceptions of liberal world order that are historically constituted and institutionally contested. Specifically, the liberalism that has been productive of world order in our time has the following background conditions:

- Liberalism has a history. While this might seem obvious, as G. John Ikenberry reminds us, the endless debates about ‘hegemony’ in world politics often fail to grasp the specific liberal character of the US-led order after 1945.
- Liberalism embodies contradictions. The most obvious being the means–ends relationship that underpins many liberal projects in practice. Humanitarian intervention throws this contradiction into sharp relief. Believing that military power can be a ‘force for good’ (to use the phrase of former Prime Minister Blair) may be a noble and just cause, but accepting the inevitable loss of life that ensues requires the adoption of a morally imperfect framework of political action.
- Liberalism is about both politics and economics. Analogy of the global order as though it were a marketplace where actors bargained according to ‘interests’ that are pre-political, is no more than an ideal-type model of how order is maintained. This ‘new liberalism’ model cannot have the status of an explanatory theory because too much is taken for granted in the setting up of the economic model that underpins it. Such accounts are inadequate at the explanatory level as well as at the level of meaning, since they are devoid of normative conceptions of the right and the good.

It is not just the dominant North American conception of ‘new liberalism’ (Andrew Moravcsik’s term, discussed further below) that we take issue with in this volume. We also find ourselves in opposition to the policy-oriented projections of liberalism’s decline; we argue that path-dependent models are overly simplistic. Instead, what is needed is to identify the mechanisms by which these different orders will come about, and the processes by which liberal orders of the past have changed and transformed on numerous occasions. Here the right question is not so much whether liberalism remains a viable framework for managing the global order, but rather to inquire about the dynamics that are productive of liberalism on a global scale. To identify and assess the key dynamics producing change in liberal order, the question to be asked is not so much *whether* change will come about, but rather *how* is liberal world order continuously produced and reproduced? Answers to this question can only be arrived at through an analytical engagement with the historical and social forces underpinning the liberal world order.

Crisis, what crisis?

The process of transformation in world order is the central thematic under consideration in this book. We take seriously the arguments by both realists and liberals that the older post-1945 order is fading. For realists, the institutional order of world politics reflects the distribution of power in the international system; as power shifts from a 'greater West' to South and East Asia, we can expect governance arrangements to adapt to the new realities.

G. John Ikenberry is the most articulate analyst of the declining post-1945 order. Ikenberry (2005: 135) sees the crisis of authority in 'liberal internationalism 2.0' stemming from three different sources, each bringing into question some of the liberal features of liberal international order. The first of these is the transformation in the structure of the international system to a unipolar military order based on American dominance, while at the same time recognizing the vulnerability of this power to asymmetrical security threats (Ikenberry, 2005: 136). Second is the shifting power constellations in which non-Western states such as China and India are set to play an increasingly important role. In such an emergent constellation, Eurocentric values of individualism, secularism, and a belief in the power of science, can no longer be taken for granted (Seidman, 1983). As the so-called rising powers take up their positions as major players in the international system, alternative conceptions of order and governance will challenge established power structures and existing visions of liberal order. Third, Western and liberal ideas are challenged and in some cases rejected at the grass-roots level by popular movements expressing preferences for Islamic, Asian, and African values; even the Arab 'spring' of 2011, in which universal liberal values were etched onto placards that proclaimed 'bread, freedom, social justice', the demand is likely to be for conceptions of democracy that are compatible with Islamic political institutions.

We accept that aspects of the liberal order are in crisis, not least the inability of managed capitalism to deliver economic efficiency on the one hand without triggering morally indefensible degrees of *inequality* on the other. Yet the crisis that Ikenberry projects onto the rules and institutions of the liberal world order is at the same time a crisis of liberalism inside the US International Relations academy. As we argue below, liberal thinking in IR on world order, during the 1980s and 1990s, embraced a particular account of the scientific method, with deleterious political and ethical consequences.

A brief genealogy of liberalism illustrates how 'new' or 'neoliberalism' rose to prominence in the US IR academy after the end of the Cold War. At the outset, it is taken for granted that liberalism, like its historical alternative theory, that of Realism, is a product of an American approach to social science (Hoffmann, 1986). The traditional advocates of liberalism focused on

patterns of cooperation within the UN system, while their realist opponents examined conflict and state-based attempts to mitigate the problem of general war. By the 1980s a new generation of liberal theorists rose to prominence. Rather than studying formal international organizations, they examined informal networks or ‘regimes’ and how these intervened to alter the behaviour of actors. Yet, unlike the theories of earlier idealists of the inter-war period, this was not a theory built on visionary designs of world government, but was a theory of cooperation based on rational states operating under conditions of anarchy.³ In the long run, Keohane argued, states had an incentive to build regimes that facilitated cooperation and brought mutual benefits. Such an argument reflected fears about American decline; suddenly, regimes became tools for maintaining US hegemony by binding others into cooperative arrangements that provided significant returns to power.

In part due to the clarity of the analytics, and in part due to the enterprise of the leading theorists associated with it, the new liberalism became a large and dynamic research programme. Reflecting on this emergence, Arthur A. Stein (2008: 205) subsequently wrote:

[t]his new institutional literature, despite emphasizing self interest as realists do, despite drawing on microeconomics as realists do, and despite using game theory as realists do, was dubbed neoliberalism and neoliberal institutionalism because of its emphasis on cooperation and institutions.

These convergences enabled a rapprochement between neoliberalism and neorealism, which we argue has had a profound influence on the understanding of what constitutes the ‘liberal project’ in international relations. Although some still regarded the differences as being real and significant, others saw a shared research programme that was variously described as ‘rationalism’ by those associated with it (Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner, 1998) or the ‘neo-neo synthesis’ (Waever, 1996) by the critics.

Andrew Moravcsik (1997) has probably done more than any other theorist to promote new liberalism as a variant of liberalism that was oriented away from the normative thinking associated with the classical tradition and drawn upon by the inter-war idealists. His new liberalism was self-consciously against ‘ideology’ and for ‘empirical social science’; it is a liberalism that is driven by *homo economicus*: ‘liberal theory rests on a “bottom-up” view of politics in which the demands of individuals and societal groups are treated as analytically prior to politics...’ (Moravcsik, 1997: 516). Moravcsik’s core assumptions start with the primacy of individuals and private groups, then consider how national policies are formulated as a result of dominant groups and coalition

³ The book that charted this new course for liberalism was Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (1977).

interests, and finally examine how various state preferences are negotiated regionally and globally.

Human rights has become a field of academic research in which new liberalism has made significant inroads; previously it had been dominated by qualitative studies that traced the evolution of the regime and the extent to which human rights (and their institutions) had modified the behaviour of states (see for example Donnelly, 1989; Vincent, 1986). Exponents of new liberalism, such as Simmons (2009: 108) and Landman (2005), take a very non-normative approach to the impact of human rights on world politics. The values of actors are deemed to be irrelevant, as are wider questions to do with the mobilizing power of legitimacy. Instead, what matters is what can be measured; what can be measured is the incorporation of so-called integrity rights into domestic law. New liberal thinking brings highly sophisticated modelling into the field of human rights while at the same time generating conclusions that are little better than banal—for instance, Simmons (2009: 108) presents strong empirical evidence that ‘governments ratify when their preferences line up with the contents of the treaty’.

Outside of the North American academy, new or neoliberalism has been resoundingly criticized. Reus-Smit (2001: 574) claimed that the new liberalism was flawed because ‘it expels normative reflection and argument from the realm of legitimate social scientific inquiry; and it embraces a rationalist conception of human agency that reduces all political action to strategic interaction’. Others have deployed a historically grounded critique of how this liberal polity emerged: not simply by rational actors acting in their self-interest, but by deeply ideological commitments to private property (at home) and expropriation (abroad) (Jahn, 2009: 429).

What are the implications of this dominant strand of ‘new liberalism’ for how we think about the global order? A major weakness in the theoretical interpretations provided by Moravcsik, Keohane, and their followers, is that they tell us little about how actors acquire, contest, and possibly reject liberal values. Indeed, this form of liberalism shades into a neorealist account of world order that is also predicated on the same assumptions about actor rationality, egoism, and international anarchy as the system’s ordering principle (Keohane, 1988).

Other scholars sought to give a more structural account of liberalism. Instead of seeing state behaviour as being generated by domestic preferences, structural liberals such as Ikenberry and Deudney examined how the liberal character of international organizations was a primary determinant of international order. This enabled structural liberals to distance themselves from structural realists such as John Mearsheimer. In the case of the former, regimes and institutions played a significant role in shaping interstate patterns of cooperation, whereas for the latter, institutions only mattered when they were

closely aligned with the interests of great powers, thereby downgrading their status as explanatory variables. In Ikenberry's (2009b: 216) words, 'liberals have shown that liberal states have opportunities and incentives to build non-realist sorts of international order'.

For both kinds of American-based thinking on liberalism—domestic interest-driven or international institution-led—any challenge to the current institutional configuration becomes evidence of a 'crisis'. For this reason, we suggest neoliberalism is not well placed to explain *transforming* liberal world orders, in particular, how new sites of power regard themselves as 'Lords' of the new order (to use Anthony Pagden's metaphor) (1998).

These observations about liberal order put its alleged crisis in a new analytical light. In this volume, editors and contributors resist routine conflation of the commitments of political actors to liberal values, with a theory of liberal order in global politics. In this way, a decline in the number of functioning democracies in the world does not presage a fundamental challenge to the liberal order. Claims about liberal order's crisis tell us more about academic concerns in relation to US leadership than anything to do with the real world of distributional gains and conflicts.

In the discussion below, we draw on alternative international theories that better help us to understand those aspects of liberal order that are resilient and enduring. Such accounts draw our attention to the *practices* of liberal ordering—the patterns of activities, institutions, and performances that sustain world order. These patterns are not the result of the creation of institutions through rational design, nor are they the product of rational bargaining with a liberal hegemon, neither do they straightforwardly emerge out of liberalism as a distinctive political project based on freedom, democracy, property, and the rule of law. Instead, as will be demonstrated in this book, liberal ordering has a long and contested history in which institutionalized patterns of behaviour are both regulated and constituted.

Rethinking world order

The approach to liberal order taken in this volume is distinct from both the new liberalism associated with the study of regimes and institutions undertaken from a rationalist perspective and, albeit to a much lesser degree, from the structural liberalism associated with Ikenberry. Instead, contributors take a more sociological approach to political analysis, suggesting international institutions are greater than the sum of their parts. This means that institutions of liberal order are both *more than* and *different from* an aggregate of rational state preferences. In the place of rationalism, we advance a theory of how different institutions operate; we do so by drawing on the English School

distinction between primary and secondary institutions. Following Bull's pathbreaking account of international institutions in his 1977 work *The Anarchical Society*, Buzan (2004) defined primary institutions as 'durable and recognized patterns of shared practices rooted in values held commonly by the members of interstate societies, and embodying a mix of norms, rules and principles'. They are to be contrasted with the 'secondary institutions' that are the focal point for new liberal thought, whereby institutions are consciously designed regimes or organizations for dealing with various problems in international affairs.⁴

A sociological approach views primary institutions as being fundamental to the emergence of cooperative arrangements for dealing with common threats and shared problems. These institutions are undergirded by conventions, that is, patterned behaviour (tacit and purposive) on the part of actors constructing and being affected by liberal world orders. This way of thinking about institutions and ordering is elaborated upon in Koivisto's and Flockhart's theoretical chapters respectively. Both of these chapters, and the theoretical framing of this project overall, are informed by an account of International Relations that accepts institutions as shared practices, and indeed conceives of 'order' as a result of rule-following activity. Bull (1977) conceptualized order in terms of rules that were a precondition for societal relations to develop.⁵ In contrast to new liberalism and its thinking on rules and institutions as being regulative, Bull believed that institutions were constitutive of the elementary form of international society.

We argue that to better understand the transformation of liberal world order, international theory cannot focus solely on the declaratory norms or shared values that liberals (or their critics) debate in relation to the alleged crisis in the global order. Instead, as soon as a crisis of liberal order has been articulated in policy circles or in scholarly debates, the response should be to probe the background assumptions that enable these to come about. Such probing is neatly articulated by Vincent Pouliot (2010: 27), who contends that 'the objective ultimately is to bring the background to the foreground'. All contributors to this book have been asked to bring the background assumptions of liberal ordering to the foreground.

An important technique by which this is to be brought about is by understanding liberal ordering in its historical and sociological context. Viewing liberalism solely in terms of canonical texts, from Kant to Doyle to Fukuyama, is to distort the ways in which liberal ordering is, and has been, performed by

⁴ For Buzan's (2004) definition of primary institutions, see p. 181; for his discussion of secondary institutions, see p. 166.

⁵ For book-length accounts of the English School after Bull, see Buzan (2004), and Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami (2006).

practitioners, be they diplomats, lawyers, protesters, shareholders, traders, soldiers, or the countless number of consumers and producers connected through global markets. Alternative accounts of liberal world order are neither solely text-based nor event-driven: as Alasdair MacIntyre (2002: 23) contends: ‘there ought not to be two histories, one of political and moral *action* and one of political and moral *theorizing*, because there were not two pasts, one populated only by actions, the other only by theories’.

As we have made clear, our concern in this project is to broaden the way in which liberalism has been theorized in IR; this requires moving beyond new liberalism, with its commitment to rationalist methodologies, and embracing a deeper sociological institutionalist approach. In search of an alternative conceptualization of the liberal order we pose the following questions:

- What are the main institutions, conventions, and functions of the liberal world order?
- How do actors engage in practices that challenge, resist, and reconstruct that order?
- To what extent are contemporary articulations of liberal world order shaped and conditioned by prior framings of thought and action?

To answer these questions, we direct our attention to different ways of ‘doing’ liberal world ordering. In particular, attention is drawn to the institutionalization of three ideal-typical forms by which ideas about liberal world order historically have become embedded. Internationalism, imperialism, and integration—the three Is—each capture a dimension of past and present debates about world order.⁶ No single institutional idea can capture everything. In privileging internationalism, imperialism, and integration as ideal-types, different forms of liberal world ordering are revealed. Yet these different forms are not presented as alternatives; often they coexist, and one of the tasks that falls on our contributors is to track which of the modes of ordering is on the ascendency at the historical moment under consideration.

The ‘three Is’ are institutionalized ideas, which give liberal world order a particular structure over time. They are a discursive device that enables us to bring into the conversation those voices that are critical of liberal ordering. Think here about how debates are conducted in relation to ‘humanitarian

⁶ What we refer to as ‘institutionalized ideas’, Lynne Eden (2004: 3) describes as ‘organizational frames’. Specifically, these are: ‘Foundational understandings of the organizational mission, long-standing collective assumptions and knowledge about the world and earlier patterns of attention to problems and solutions. All of this shapes how problems are later defined and how solutions are developed. Once solutions are established as knowledge-laden routines, they enable actors in organizations to carry out new actions, but they simultaneously constrain those new actions.’

crises' and how these crises should be responded to. Often, advocates and critics claim to occupy the same liberal middle ground.⁷ In the minds of some contemporary scholars, one way to resolve this tension is to differently label liberalism in terms of the politics of 'imposition' or 'restraint' (Sørensen, 2011); such a move runs the risk of masking over the extent to which internationalism and imperialism have uneasily coexisted during the long transition from a European-dominated order to the globalized world of the contemporary system.

The basic characteristics of the three patterns of thought and practice are summarized in the table below:

Table 1.1 Institutionalized ideas of liberal world order

	Ordering principle	Primary institutions	Secondary institutions	Universal moral purpose
Internationalism	Anarchy	Sovereignty; international law; diplomacy; trade	International organizations; INGOs; rights	Progress; responsibility; reciprocity
Imperialism	Hierarchy	Legitimacy of dominion; scientific worldview; naturalizing exclusions (such as race)	Societal engineering; development of classifications such as 'race' and a hierarchy of values	Universalist view of particular values
Integration	Between anarchy and hierarchy	Global markets; global constitutionalism; functional differentiation	Global policy networks; transnational governance	Efficiency; rational institutional design

When ideas about liberal world order are going to be institutionalized they have to be taken up by actors who draw on a recognized vocabulary for comprehending the world as it appears to them. Analogous reasoning is commonplace, for example, the liberties of states being likened to the natural liberty of individuals (a recurrent theme in post-Hobbesian thinking about the international). Or the more recent historical association that liberal internationalists make between international criminals who have to be 'dealt with' (Milošević, Gaddafi, Hussein) and past dictators such as Hitler—with the inference that negotiation is weak and bound to fail. At a deeper level, the repertoire associated with political decisions rests on 'a pre-existing discourse that makes

⁷ David Rieff (2002) being a good example of the critique of liberal interventionism from an alternative (and often unacknowledged) liberal standpoint.

the claims intelligible'. This is where prior ideas, embedded through practice, affect 'the possibility and legitimacy of later ideas'.⁸ Institutionalized ideas often require formal organizations to define their scope and purpose, identify the actors, and formulate policies consistent with the background assumptions.

Let us now work through the three institutionalized ideas that are productive of liberal world order. Internationalism became institutionalized in the twentieth century although it did not originate there. As is well known from mainstream accounts of the global order after 1945, the dominant state actors in the system preserved the primary institutions of the European order—diplomacy, the balance of power, consent-based international law—while overlaying these with secondary institutions such as the United Nations and a myriad of other issue-specific regimes. This was not an order devoid of moral purposes; a liberal universalist repertoire could be heard in relation to ideas of human dignity, international responsibility, and the self-determination of peoples from colonial rule.

G. John Ikenberry's recent book *Liberal Leviathan* (2011) shows how, even at the height of internationalism, different institutionalized ideas about ordering coexisted. A central part of the argument put forward by Ikenberry is that leading states generally have two different ordering strategies—order through shared rules or through bilateral relationships—which may be employed simultaneously. Configurations of liberal international order such as empire or a hub-and-spoke form of bilateralism are less acceptable to internationalists such as Ikenberry, who clearly prefer 'a world of rules' to a system in which America 'rules the world'. Nevertheless, in the contemporary era associated with US hegemony, order through rules has been employed vis-à-vis other Western states, whereas order through relationships has been employed vis-à-vis Asian powers. Moreover, as the chapters in this volume show, the specific character of liberal order at different historical junctures has been determined by the combination and weighting of these different—yet compatible—ordering strategies.

While internationalists characterize the current order as one in which liberal hegemony provides order through the twin mechanisms of restraint and institutional co-binding, others regard the presence of a dominant hegemony as being a threat to international order. It is no coincidence that the English School of IR did not regard hegemony as a primary institution because there had never been a historical instance in which a claim to hegemony by a single great power was regarded as being acceptable to the other members of international society. Hegemony, on this reading, was antithetical to the order of sovereign states rather than being a source of its survival.⁹

⁸ Both citations from Neta C. Crawford (2006: 267).

⁹ For an outstanding account of hegemony that challenges conventional English School understandings, see Ian Clark (2011, esp. Ch. 2). For a more direct discussion, see Martin Hall and John Hobson (2010).

Objections to the idea of hegemony being compatible with international society can be supplemented with a much more hard-edged critique of hierarchical modes of ordering. This is where the institutionalized idea of imperialism enters the fray. Imperialism becomes a form of ordering when the most powerful actors in the system believe it is both right and prudent to rule over others without their consent. Instead of primary institutions being based on the rights and duties of sovereign states, where imperial ordering is dominant, there are no limits to the exercise of power politics. Yet even when imperialism reaches its crescendo, the repertoire of liberal politics does not fall silent; religion, poetry, science, art, reason, can all be invoked to enable or justify the logics of exclusion and exploitation.

The historical constitution of imperial forms of rule illustrates the way in which institutionalized ideas are modified. Through the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, raw motives of occupation and exploitation began to coexist with beliefs about the betterment of the 'natives'. Yet these beliefs had been in existence from as early as the Spanish conquest of the Americas, in which papal permission to discover lands and convert natives rested on the hope that the newly discovered peoples could become civilized. What enabled the idea of international trusteeship to become the dominant mode of liberal ordering was the manner in which secondary institutions specified the problem and defined its scope and limits. Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant specified that peoples unable 'to stand by themselves' would be placed in the Mandates system. Prior ideas about the superiority of Christian/European peoples continued to inform the League of Nations deliberations, yet the Mandates system modified imperial ordering by legitimating rule over 'backward peoples' through the principle of trusteeship. At the turn of the twentieth century, trusteeship had receded as a result of the norm of self-determination from colonial rule, although it remained part of the repertoire of the UN during times of humanitarian crises when local governance institutions had collapsed (for example, East Timor after the September 1999 vote on independence from Indonesian rule). One UN official, in the Secretary General's office, noted that the overtones of imperialism that underpin UN practice on 'international administration' were regrettable but should not be regarded as 'a decisive objection' (Mortimer, 2004).

That global governance has evolved to a level in which sovereign states, at times of crisis, can be administered by international bodies, will be no surprise to those who regard integration as the dominant pattern of thought and action in the liberal world order. Anne-Marie Slaughter (2004) has done more than any other writer to popularize the view that 'transgovernmentalism' is supplanting the older interstate order. The features of the integrated liberal world order include: networks of public servants working in collaboration to resolve the problems of cooperation across a diverse range of actors; changes in the international legal architecture that has traditionally been too constrained by old ideas

of state consent—supplanted by new judicial bodies engaged in transnational standard setting.

For advocates of global integration, what is remarkable about Western interventionism is the capacity to rebuild state structures. To many, the 2003 Iraq war illustrates the familiar pattern of interstate violence, triggering the disintegration of state–society relations, with attendant large-scale loss of life and massive displacement of populations. Yet for the new global regulators, and their supporters in academe, what matters is how international networks respond to the challenge: international judges training the Iraqi judiciary while American and other armed forces train Iraqi security forces; international bankers providing expertise in opening up markets and setting up financial institutions.

An intriguing dimension to this argument about transgovernmentalism is the more or less hidden commitment to American exceptionalism. Slaughter was, after all, one of the primary architects—with Ikenberry—of the Princeton Project’s manifesto for security in the twenty-first century. As the title of the manifesto makes clear, this is about forging liberty, not simply regulating the liberty of states and markets. This particular way of understanding liberal ordering combines integration with the other two institutional ideas of internationalism and imperialism.

What we have introduced here, and will be returning to in the chapters that follow, is the argument that the institutionalized ideas of liberal ordering embody background discourses and social conventions that tell actors ‘how to go on’. We argue that these ways of ordering are not reducible to actors’ self-understanding and proclaimed commitment to liberal values, but include pre-intentional factors such as how customs and habits shape liberal world ordering.¹⁰ Our concern is to examine liberal practices in relation to their historical meaning and political interpretation, with the clear understanding that meanings are never fixed or static but always part of a dialectical process between knowledge, value commitments, and the reality of the time (Pouliot, 2010: 63). Our understanding of history is that the present is always reality, but that history consists of a number of ‘past presents’, which each contain different narratives informed by practices of the time (Flockhart, 2010).

Plan of the book

The book starts out with chapters by G. John Ikenberry (Chapter 1) and Emanuel Adler (Chapter 2) outlining very different perspectives on the sources and implications of liberal order’s crisis. We started out asserting that G. John

¹⁰ James C. Scott (1998) quoted in Pouliot (2010).

Ikenberry's 2009 article *Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order* marked a final acknowledgement that liberal internationalism as practised since the middle of the twentieth century is at an end. Although Ikenberry in many ways approaches the crisis of liberal order differently from the perspective taken in this volume, and although his concern is with 'America and the dilemmas of liberal world order', his contribution to the debate about liberal order's crisis is of key relevance to the issues raised in this volume, and most of the following chapters engage directly or indirectly with some of the issues raised in his article. We have therefore chosen to revisit the points foregrounded by Ikenberry by reproducing the article in its full length as Chapter 1. The article/chapter speaks to many of the issues raised in this volume such as the tensions and dilemmas of liberal order, its historical origins, the role of hegemony and empire, and that liberal order is not embodied in a fixed set of principles and practices. Moreover, Ikenberry recognizes that the character and location of sovereignty can vary widely within liberal orders and has done so in its previous versions. Although not specifically developed in the chapter/article, he addresses the role of institutions as integrative forces in liberal world ordering and some of the central policy issues associated with it such as democracy, the rule of law, and free markets, all of which are questions that contributors take up in the following chapters.

The integrative force of resilient liberal practices is the focus of Chapter 2, by Emanuel Adler. Adler asks if liberal order is in crisis. He, like Ikenberry, answers in the affirmative, but where Ikenberry sees the crisis as a problem leading to difficult choices, Adler views liberal internationalism's permanent crisis as a source of renewal and transformation, and therefore as liberal order's strength. The chapter points to the need to focus on social practices to see the potential of liberal order's adaptation and renewal, and Adler suggests that although the decline of American power indeed may be seen from a narrow perspective to threaten liberal order, from a wider and deeper conceptual historical perspective, liberal practices may be why the order has not yet been replaced. Adler illustrates these arguments through two examples of liberal practices: the integrative normative-power practices of the European Union, and the comeback of nuclear disarmament. The chapter ends by suggesting that although the current crisis may be, as Ikenberry suggests, a crisis of authority, it is first and foremost a crisis of multiple modernities, where workable liberal international practices are those that manage to balance liberal practices and non-liberal practices.

Following on from the two opening chapters, the volume turns to focus on some of the many tensions and contradictions of liberal order within different temporal settings. In Chapter 3, Trine Flockhart starts by outlining a historical conceptual framework for understanding how liberal world order came to

be what it is today and how it has been imagined under different conditions and contexts across four centuries of intermingled liberal ordering practices and liberal ideas about world order. She argues that without a clear picture of how continuities and discontinuities have shaped the liberal order of today, liberal order will necessarily appear, as its critics often point out, as contradictory and inconsistent. This leads her to pose the fundamental, but often overlooked, question ‘what is “the liberal” in liberal world order?’ The chapter points to the use of narrativity and shared knowledge as necessary for constituting otherwise neutral concepts as liberal concepts. Sovereignty, the rule of law, human rights, and a number of regulative practices that are commonly regarded as liberal, are only seen as liberal because a continuous production of shared meaning has constituted them as liberal. To grasp the complex patterns of changing imaginations about liberal order and their practices, Flockhart incorporates insights from constructivist and critical thinking, as well as from historical sociology and practice theory. The object of analysis is not to find the origins of liberal order, or to provide a detailed historical excavation of either the liberal idea set or liberal practices, but to increase our understanding of the political present by imbuing the past with historical meaning and political interpretation.

Heather Rae and Chris Reus-Smit, exploring further contradictions inherent in liberal orders in Chapter 4, start by questioning the treatment of liberalism in the IR academy as essentially a coherent idea set. They point to Ikenberry, Moravcsik, and Slaughter as prominent examples of liberal International Relations theories, who in different ways treat liberalism as a relatively coherent set of ideas (although they all acknowledge liberalism’s complexity, dilemmas, and ‘jumble’ of positive and normative theoretical propositions). The result is that the leading theories of the IR academy view liberalism as a relatively straightforward set of beliefs about the individual, the state, the market, and political justice. The chapter focuses on some of liberalism’s obscured and sometimes denied contradictions and explores their implications for liberal ordering practices internationally. They do so by highlighting three tensions and contradictions: the tension between liberal ‘statism’ and liberal ‘cosmopolitanism’; between liberal ‘proceduralism’ and liberal ‘consequentialism’; between liberal ‘absolutism’ and liberal ‘toleration’. In exploring each of these contradictions, Rae and Reus-Smit consider both the deep philosophical roots of the contradictions as well as their impact on two of the liberal ordering practices identified in this volume: internationalism and imperialism. They conclude that liberal political engagement necessitates a more reflective standpoint and more historical sensibility if we are to be aware of how contradictions have shaped liberal orders in the past and most likely will continue to do so in the future.

Further, in Chapter 5, Marjo Koivisto deals with the question of hierarchy in liberal world orders. An established tradition of international theory, that of the English School, has since Hedley Bull's seminal work, taken reciprocal international society institutions such as international law as foundations of international order. Yet recent scholarship, including the works of Keene (2002) and Bain (2002), has indicated that the way that reciprocal institutions like international law have historically been practised. Koivisto illustrates how both reciprocity and hierarchies in liberal world order emerge out of the historical practices of international politics. Examples in the chapter look at the conventions of diplomacy and international law to understand the continuity, and change.

Chapter 6 by Richard Devetak engages with debates in liberal political philosophy. The chapter is inspired by Quentin Skinner's argument in *Liberty before Liberalism* (1998) that contemporary forms of liberalism have blinded us to alternative conceptions of liberty. More specifically, it seeks to recover a conception and discourse of international liberty before Kantian and Wilsonian accounts became dominant and denounced the balance of power as anathema to liberal world order. To do so, Devetak returns to English debates in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in order to excavate at least one intellectual context within which the balance of power became recognized as an indispensable ordering practice for maintaining the 'liberties of Europe'. As the spectre of 'universal monarchy' grew with the spectacular rise of France under Louis XIV, rival political discourses battled over the direction of English foreign policy, marshalling an array of confessional and state interests in an effort to preserve England as a free state and to prevent the enslavement of Europe. Though modern liberalism would pursue these aims through reformist international law and international organization, post-Restoration debates about foreign policy serve to remind us that historically the balance of power has been conceived as a vital international ordering practice in the maintenance of liberty.

The following two chapters take up the tension between imperialism and internationalism in the liberal order established by the expansion of European international society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Chapter 7, John Hobson and Martin Hall examine the validity of the post-colonial view that liberalism is inherently imperialist and culturally monist. In so doing, the chapter examines the received wisdom of IR that classical liberal international thought is committed to individual liberty and human dignity in the domestic realm and anti-imperialism and non-interventionism in the international realm. However, Hobson and Hall demonstrate that what is actually in place is a schizophrenic set of practices where interdependence, non-intervention, and anti-imperialism apply only to relations between 'civilized' states but not to the relations between 'civilized' and non-European

powers. Hobson and Hall clearly demonstrate that the relationship between liberalism and imperialism is a highly complex one, and that liberalism is neither inherently imperialist nor anti-imperialist, but that classical liberalism was inherently and consistently Eurocentric—and perhaps still is.

Hobson and Hall make an important distinction between a liberal imperialism based on paternalist Eurocentric institutionalism and liberal imperialism based on a form of ‘offensive’ scientific racism. But liberalism may also be anti-imperialist, which however does not imply tolerance as anti-imperialism denies cultural pluralism and instead emanates from either an intolerant Eurocentric institutionalism or an even more intolerant defensive scientific racism. What is interesting for contemporary liberal order is that both the imperialist and the anti-imperialist forms of Eurocentric institutionalism are widely practised in contemporary liberal institutions and hold a prominent place in contemporary liberal theorizing. The imperialist Eurocentric institutionalism, in which the liberal world has a clear duty to develop the non-European societies under the guidance/tutelage of an ‘independent’ international institution can easily be recognized in current liberal policies of, for example, the EU and UN and in the state-building practices in Iraq and Afghanistan. Also visible in contemporary theory and practice is the anti-imperialist Eurocentric institutionalism, which holds that non-Europeans are destined to follow just one path to modernization, hence relieving the need for a Western civilizing mission. The latter view is also visible in the contribution to the 2009 Millennium conference on ‘After Liberalism?’ by G. John Ikenberry, where he stated that ‘the leading states of the world system are travelling along a common pathway to modernity’.¹¹ Such a claim is disputed by the political leadership in China, who regard their brand of social or state capitalism to be an alternative to the conception of modernity that triumphed in the West.

Kimberly Hutchings, in Chapter 8, continues the inquiry into liberalism and its alleged ethnocentrism and discrimination between liberal and illiberal practices and subjects. She examines how it is possible for liberal order to be both liberal and imperial by exploring how liberal ordering and liberal subjectivity are reproduced in the international arena through the drawing of lines between legitimate and illegitimate violence. Hutchings suggests that liberal self-identities are sustained through a range of everyday practices, which continually reproduce (sometimes violent) hierarchical relations between international actors. Rather than understanding liberalism and imperialism in substantive terms as institutions or ideologies that inevitably are antithetical to one another, Hutchings suggests that we need to focus on how state and

¹¹ An argument put forward by Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry (2009/2010). Elaborated in G. John Ikenberry (2010).

non-state actors view liberalism as an institutional form, market economy, legal framework, or as a set of prescriptive values, which each depend on prior processes of self-identification as a particular kind of subject. Without a liberal self-identity, liberal practices such as beliefs in contracts, private property, free trade, international law, human rights, and representative democracy would be rendered meaningless and unworkable. The chapter points to NATO's armed humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in 1999, the invasions and occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, the articulation of the idea of 'Responsibility to Protect', and the overall UN peacekeeping and state-building strategies, as being illustrations of ways in which liberal imperialism is imposed and maintained whilst simultaneously reproducing the self-identity of liberal subjects.

As Casper Sylvest reminds us in Chapter 9, liberals are recurrently disappointed by political practice and view the international as 'a moral and political disaster'. The chapter draws on the writings of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century liberal writings to show how these, mainly British, liberals campaigned for the moralization, reform, or regulation of international relations. Like several other contributors to the volume, Sylvest finds it striking how contemporary liberal theories have lost much of their connection to the moral and normative articulations of a century or so ago. The arguments put forward by contemporary IR theorists bear only faint resemblance to those of their distant relatives of the early twentieth century, where although rationalism continues to dominate contemporary liberal visions, the meaning of both 'rational' and 'liberal' has changed significantly. Furthermore, whilst today the relationship between liberalism and democracy appears inseparable, a century and a half ago liberals were apprehensive about democracy. Liberals were devoted to the rule of law and representative government; but for many, democracy raised the spectre of the tyranny of an uneducated and potentially debased majority. Yet although the early liberal internationalist thinking was on some counts more favourably disposed to realignments in world order than we appear to be witnessing in the early twenty-first century, Sylvest's analysis concurs that liberalism in the early twentieth century was both imperialist and based on a British-dominated form of Eurocentrism.

Chris Hobson and Milja Kurki change the focus from the emphasis in previous chapters on liberal order thinking and pre-intentional practices to democracy promotion as an example of a reflexive and highly intentional ordering policy. In Chapter 10, they ask what the durability and centrality of democracy promotion tells about the nature of world order. They ask questions such as: is democracy promotion essentially based on an imperial or perhaps an integrative ordering practice and how may we explain the long-lasting qualities of democracy promotion? Kurki and Hobson are clear in their assessment of the importance of democracy promotion, arguing that the

promotion of liberal democracy plays a central role in liberal world order both as a means to bring about liberal world order and as an end in itself. A particular brand of liberal democracy has come to be regarded by liberals as: the most logical partner to capitalism; a protector of key liberal values such as property rights; limiter of the power of the state; facilitator of entrepreneurship, and the best provider and protector of individual and minority rights. In addition, democratic states are believed to behave peacefully towards each other, adhere to rule-governed behaviour, cooperate and resolve disputes without violence, and generally contribute to a more progressive, peaceful, and cooperative world order. Therefore, Kurki and Hobson maintain that democracy promotion is certainly more than a contemporary 'fad' in international politics.

Although democracy promotion as a practised policy and as an international norm has become deeply embedded in world order structures and is so closely intertwined with liberalism that it has become almost impossible to consider one without the other, deciding whether democracy promotion is an imperial ordering practice is less straightforward. Kurki and Hobson acknowledge that as democracy is a necessary component of liberal order, it has an undeniable expansionist dimension to it, but they maintain that it is debatable if democracy promotion as a practice of liberal internationalism is imperialist in its logic or consequences. They do, however, agree that democracy promotion is clearly hierarchical and involves a power-related set of practices. As such, democracy promotion is seen as an aspect of liberal 'rule' or 'governance', which itself is a function of the victory of democratic forces in major conflicts. In that sense, the success of democratic powers in the two world wars, and the liberal democratic West in the Cold War, shaped the possibilities for democracy promotion. This, of course, begs the question of what will happen if/when liberal 'rule' declines or comes to an end? Here Kurki and Hobson maintain that although there is no doubt that democracy promotion—especially following the problematic 'freedom agenda' of the Bush administration and the rise of powerful non-liberal alternatives such as Russia and China—has unsettled liberal democracy's claim as the 'default' setting for domestic constitutions in contemporary politics, democracy promotion is not on the wane, but is merely undergoing change and adapting to the problems it has recently faced.

Paul Musgrave and Daniel Nexon analyse, in Chapter 11, the complex and in many ways contingent and ambiguous interplay between liberal order and empire. Many claim that liberal order and empire are fundamentally incompatible, and indeed modern liberal internationalists see the two as incompatible organizational logics. Yet Musgrave and Nexon contend that imperial relations do exist and that the United States, on the one hand, maintains imperial relations with other political communities, whilst also rejecting

the legitimacy of empire. The solution to the resulting dilemma has been to 'democratize' imperial functions and to vest them in multilateral international organizations and ensure that they reflect as much as possible the consent of the international community. As Musgrave and Nexon argue, liberal internationalists view liberal order as built on mutually binding rules, sovereign equality, and multilateral decision making. Empires, on the other hand, make rules for others, claim exclusive sovereign prerogatives, and act unilaterally. Deploying an original framework of analysis based on ideal types of empire, Musgrave and Nexon advance the argument that imperial structures may be found embedded in at least three different variations of imperial logics in surprising settings, including intergovernmentalist liberal practices in UN peacekeeping operations and neo-trustee arrangements such as those following the NATO intervention in Kosovo and NATO's role in Afghanistan. This argument recasts the contemporary debate on the American 'empire' in a new light and shows that, despite the liberal rhetoric, empires and imperial relations still play a significant role in liberal ordering.

The spectre of imperial orders continues to haunt internationalism, as Tim Dunne argues in Chapter 12. Liberal internationalism has long been associated with interventionism. Two different sets of reasons are usually offered for this practice: liberal internationalists have enjoyed a significant power advantage, through the long period of Anglo and then American hegemony; somewhat more sympathetically, liberal internationalists are driven to intervene by moral purposes. If the rights of individuals are to be taken seriously in world politics, then internationalists understand that it is the duty of liberal states to protect basic rights when these are being abused. The chapter opens by considering how the internationalist categories of 'pluralism' and 'solidarism' have conceived of the many dilemmas associated with the practice of intervention (Wheeler, 1992): this discussion departs from the orthodox account of English School thinkers in that pluralism is reinterpreted as a category that enables intervention albeit one that resists the 'legalism' associated with more ambitious frameworks.

Pluralism is further enhanced, as a minimalist framework for conceiving the purpose of intervention, by a re-reading of the evolution of the atrocity prevention norm. Samuel Moyn, in his *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (2010), argues that interventions to prevent or halt genocide were relatively separate in their genesis from the emergence of universal human rights as a policy in the 1970s. By retracing the contemporary history of ideas about interventionism, the chapter argues that a possibility is open for separating the goal of atrocity prevention from the wider normative ambition of the human rights regime. Such a project is critically important if the responsibility to protect (R2P) framework is to generate greater resilience in the face of ongoing claims that it is a tool used by the powerful, for the powerful. The

chapter concludes by showing how pluralism offers insights into how R2P, as a policy for guiding action in extreme cases of humanitarian catastrophe, could be decoupled from the moral vision of a world in which individual rights-based governance is the only acceptable comprehensive doctrine.

Finally, in the Conclusion to the volume, Stefano Guzzini returns to the question of the irresolvable tensions at the heart of the liberal project for a world order, as well as the variety of practices it has given rise to over the last centuries. Precisely because philosophy cannot provide an answer to the question of political order, liberal proposals for world order must face an ever-changing historical setting. The modalities of ordering must be continuously renegotiated. In Guzzini's own words, 'the future liberal order is not only affected by political shifts, but by the progress of liberal thought and practice itself, which will strike a new, if temporary, balance between internationalism, imperialism, and integration'.