SEPTEMBER 2020

After Disruption

Historical Perspectives on the Future of International Order

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Seth Center
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CONTRIBUTORS
Alexander Bick
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A Report of the CSIS Project on History and Strategy

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Center for Strategic & International Studies
1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-887-0200 | www.csis.org

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Introduction: Disruption and Order

SETH CENTER, DIRECTOR, PROJECT ON HISTORY AND STRATEGY

The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified the debate about whether world order is undergoing a fundamental change. States are reevaluating the costs and benefits of an open international system. Nationalist feelings are on the upswing across the world. Cornerstones of the post-1945 system—economic globalization, democratic governance, and U.S. leadership—face headwinds. At home, some Americans have questioned whether international institutions and the order they underpin still serve the national interest. It is far too early to proclaim the end of the American era and even less clear what would replace it. Nevertheless, the pandemic has rightly concentrated thinking about how orders are made, reformed, and replaced.

Periods of disorder like today naturally give rise to questions about how past orders came about, why they broke down, and most importantly, how they are replaced. What is the relationship between an old order and a new order? What circumstances produce the end of one order, and how do those circumstances contribute to the rise of the next order? In a period of flux, how do different visions of order get resolved? What type of actors—governments, individuals, organizations—contribute to the making of new orders? Can a failing order be rehabilitated? Whose ideas win? Does "might" always make order or can smaller actors shape the game? Does order emerge from a series of ad hoc responses to specific problems, or can a master blueprint become reality?

In this moment of contingency, the Project on History and Strategy convened a group of international historians to answer these questions and excavate the past for insights about the relationship between disorder and order. Over the course of seven workshops spanning four centuries of history, they studied the disruption-order dynamic through the lens of their deep expertise. They took an ecumenical approach examining wars, pandemics, and economic shocks. Less important than the particular sources of disruption was the fact that from disorder came an effort to remake the world. We looked not just at the post-1945 era—which is where much of the focal point of order-making in public debate now centers—nor even predominantly at events in the twentieth century. Our goal was not to provide direct lessons but to frame the types of questions that might help us understand where we are today and how we can anticipate debates about the developing future of international order and navigate toward a better world. As former UK diplomat Iain King writes in his concluding commentary, "It is the moments of disorder that so

often provide the best opportunities for reform . . . . Crises can lift us above inertia, myopia, and narrow national self-interest. They can align concerns and provide the impetus to ensure the worst can never happen again."

The insights for today emerge from the richness of the historical narratives, where the interplay of personality, power, and structure reveal the forgotten contingency at the core of order-building efforts. Several key themes emerged:

Order does not snap together like Legos in a single conference. Alexander Bick turns much of what we know about the Treaty of Westphalia on its head, reminding us that "transformations ascribed to it took place over a much longer period of time [and] in some cases remained incomplete . . . . To the extent that Westphalia helped to transform international affairs, it did so as a catalyst in a multidimensional process that unfolded over several centuries and included other seismic shifts such as the decline of feudalism, the Reformation, the French Revolution, and industrialization." A common theme of the essays is that a prolonged and dynamic process, rather than some specific conference, creates order.

Disruption opens windows for diverse actors to shape order. Glenda Sluga reminds us that men who sought to build a "balance of power" through the Concert of Europe were not the only shapers of international order after Napoleon's defeat. "In the blush of its novelty," she observes, "peacemaking involved hundreds of European onlookers, negotiators, and 'influencers,' many of whom leapt at any opportunity to have a voice." Bankers, entrepreneurs, and exceptional women empowered by money, title, and networks "embraced the possibility of an international politics."

Ordering is not always architecture: practical problem solving can produce order. Andrew Ehrhardt demonstrates that international efforts to confront the pandemics of the nineteenth century contributed to a new order, albeit slowly, and in response the practical challenges of limiting the spread of disease while continuing international commerce. "Though cooperation might be painfully slow to develop," he writes, "the effort to solve pressing problems through practical measures can, in turn, establish an organic ordering system, as opposed to one conceived in some 'grand design.'"

Disorder can give older ideas new life. Dan Gorman argues that the post-World War I peace settlement was anything but a fundamental break between previous and contemporary ideas. Rather the war was a "catalyst for the implementation of existing internationalist ideas, initiatives, and institutions." The ideas the new order incorporated—international law, institutionalized multilateralism, and humanitarian intervention—each had nineteenth-century roots. However, Gorman writes, "What the postwar settlement offered was a political moment in which internationalism was in the ascendant," and where advocates and policy entrepreneurs seized on a new policy window to advance their causes.

Contradictions and the seeds of future controversy are often baked into new orders. Francine McKenzie traces the often contentious efforts to build a post-war order after 1945. The necessity to build consensus among ideologically, geopolitically, and economically diverse actors forced a series of awkward compromises on the parties

as they reconciled national and internationalist impulses and debated the power and authority of multilateral organizations. A shared commitment to avoid another world war was a brittle but nevertheless sufficient foundation for a new order replete with contradictions. McKenzie concludes, "National and international outlooks coexist, compete, and are entangled. The result is messy, but not necessarily unworkable, as the past 75 years have shown."

Order requires coalition building, which empowers smaller states. Hillary Briffa identifies order-making as a moment where smaller states have the leverage to shape events. Powerful states need partners—especially when competing against a rival or alternative system to shape the order. She writes that smaller states can develop "strategies (such as neutrality or hedging) together with strategies for influence (such as multilateralism, norm entrepreneurship, and offering technical expertise) to affect the international issues that impact them most directly)."

Failing orders can be revised without major disruption. In the 1970s, nearly everyone believed the post-war order was collapsing as new challenges emerged. Daniel Sargent analyzes a series of efforts from that decade, some of which were grand and some merely improvisational, to rehabilitate or replace the existing order with something else. The grander designs, he notes, failed. However, practical efforts beginning in the Nixon administration to adjust the order to confront specific symptoms of disruption succeeded across a diverse set of challenges—from stabilizing international exchange rates and addressing balance of payments problems to recalibrating the balance of power—and led to the surprising rehabilitation of the U.S.-led order.

History suggests the contest for order-making will be long, multifaceted, and deeply influenced by how the United States and other powers deal with today's disruptions. The parties that win the wars, revitalize their economies, mitigate the crises, and provide the common vision that offers the most benefits to the most people will have the greatest leverage to shape a new order. After all, emulation is not just the sincerest form of flattery; it is the surest sign of a successful order in the making.

The appeal of democracy, free markets, and the broader international architecture designed to extend and institutionalize those ideas across the globe will largely hinge on whether the American people and their government prove worthy of emulation and capable of adaptation. If they fail, others will be waiting with ideas, programs, and visions to construct international orders in their own likeness.

Westphalia: Beyond the Myth

ALEXANDER BICK, RESEARCH SCHOLAR, HENRY A. KISSINGER INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL AFFAIRS AT JOHNS HOPKINS SAIS

If origin myths anchor contemporary experience in a singular moment of profound disruption and give form and meaning to all that follows, then certainly Westphalia is such a myth.[1] Already in the eighteenth century, the French political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau proclaimed that "the Peace of Westphalia may well remain the foundation of our political system forever."[2] Scholars of international relations largely agree, identifying the 1648 agreement as marking the beginning of the modern international system. As Henry Kissinger put it in his recent book, "What passes for order in our time was devised in Western Europe nearly four centuries ago, at a peace conference in the German region of Westphalia."[3]

The basic story goes something like this: After more than a century of religious warfare, European statesmen at Westphalia rejected the universal authority of the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Church in favor of a pluralistic system of independent states, each sovereign over its own affairs—both within a clearly defined territory and in its relationships with other states. This not only strengthened the state as the basic political unit within the international system, but it also transformed the system itself: in the absence of a single, overarching authority, the primary mechanism to ensure peace and stability was to maintain a balance of power.

Conceptually, this account has proven extremely useful. Whether in decline or newly resurgent, "Westphalian sovereignty" is central to how we understand the behavior of states and the structure of the international system. As a set of historical claims about the seventeenth century, however, this account has not held up very well.[4] Rather than

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1. I am grateful to Seth Center, Frank Gavin, Nicholas Jahr, Michael Kimmage, Nicholas Popper, and John Shovlin for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay. Responsibility for remaining errors is of course my own.

2. Quoted in Derek Croxton, *The Last Christian Peace: The Congress of Westphalia as a Baroque Event* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 4.

3. Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 2-3.

4. See, for example, Stephen Krasner, "Westphalia and All That," in *Ideas & Foreign Policy*, eds. Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) 235-264; Derek Croxton, "The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 and the Origins of Sovereignty," *The International History Review* 21, no. 3 (September 1999): 569-591; Andreas Osiander,

retreating from the historical Westphalia, as some have suggested, it may be useful instead to take a fresh look at what the conference was, what it was not, and what guidance it can still offer to scholars and policymakers wrestling with the changing nature of global order today.

The ratification of the Treaty of Münster, Gerard ter Borch (1648).

Photo by: Public Domain

The Historical Westphalia

The Peace of Westphalia was in fact three separate treaties negotiated in the Westphalian towns of Münster and Osnabrück between 1644 and 1648.[5] The principal aim of the talks was to resolve two intractable and intertwined conflicts: the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), a struggle over religion and power within the Holy Roman Empire that decimated central Europe, and the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), which pitted Europe's most powerful monarch, the Habsburg King of Spain, against his rebellious subjects in the Low Countries—and spilled into Asia and America, arguably making it the first global war. Although France and Spain continued fighting for another eleven years until the Treaty of

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"Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth," *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 251-287; and Edward Keane, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism, and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

5. While many scholars of international relations focus only on the Thirty Years' War and the two treaties signed on October 24, 1648, I follow contemporaries—as well as recent authorities like Croxton—in including as part of the Westphalian settlement the Peace of Münster between Spain and the Dutch Republic, which was signed on May 15, 1648.

the Pyrenees in 1659, Westphalia was a major diplomatic achievement that had profound implications for European politics and society.

> *The Treaty of Westphalia was in fact three separate treaties negotiated in the Westphalian towns of Münster and Osnabrück between 1643 and 1648.*

Change did not come all at once, though, and in important respects, history is far messier than the Westphalia myth implies. To cite only a few of the most significant critiques:

1. *Universalism did not end with Westphalia*. Both the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Church were under pressure long before 1648 and the idea of a universal community remained strong long after. Indeed, many participants saw Westphalia as a temporary placeholder for a comprehensive peace that would restore religious harmony—a fact reflected in the very first line of the text, "Let there be a Christian and Universal Peace." Institutionally, the Holy Roman Empire survived another 158 years and of course the Papacy is still with us today. More generally, states exercising "Westphalian sovereignty" have continued to coexist with other models of political organization in which authority and territory diverge, like the European Union, as well as with institutions like the United Nations that promote nominally universal principles.[6]

2. *Westphalia did not endorse formal equality among states*. A core tenet of the "Westphalian system" is that it replaced the rigid hierarchy among European rulers with a system of formal equality. But this too is wrong: questions of precedence prevented France and Sweden—who were allies—from ever meeting in public; in practice, delegates from the Dutch Republic and Venice were never treated as equal to those representing states led by monarchs; and no one seriously disputed the traditional claim to primacy asserted by delegates representing the Holy Roman Emperor. Westphalia advanced the institutionalization of European diplomacy begun more than two centuries earlier, but ingrained hierarchies of rank and title continued to shape its practice.[7]

3. *The balance of power did not begin at Westphalia*. This concept—like sovereignty—appears nowhere in the text of the agreements. In the decades after Westphalia, European statesmen increasingly identified the balance of power as a principal objective of foreign policy, but the practice is much older, dating at least to the wars on the Italian peninsula in the fifteenth century that helped to shape Niccolò Machiavelli's political ideas. Subsequent efforts by France and Germany to dominate Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively, indicate that other strategies have continued to appear viable to European statesmen—even if those strategies ultimately proved unsuccessful.

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6. Stephen Krasner, "Compromising Westphalia," *International Security* 20, no. 3 (Winter 1995): 115-151.
7. Garret Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971).

4. *Westphalia was not the first multilateral peace conference*. Westphalia famously inaugurated a series of diplomatic congresses that would come to play a key role in resolving major European wars. But in Westphalia, at least, there was no plenary, delegates met almost exclusively in private houses, and the negotiations themselves were all conducted bilaterally—a much older tradition that of course continues today.

The point is not that Westphalia is unimportant, but that the transformations ascribed to it took place over a much longer period of time, in some cases remained incomplete, and cannot be precisely located in a set of texts that by definition were works of political compromise. To the extent that Westphalia helped to transform international affairs, it did so as a catalyst in a multidimensional process that unfolded over several centuries and included other seismic shifts such as the decline of feudalism, the Reformation, the French Revolution, and industrialization.

Of course, this does not mean that the fate of individual states cannot change more rapidly: while Habsburg Spain limped away from Westphalia, France emerged from the conference as Europe's most powerful state. But a more historically sensitive picture of Westphalia suggests that changes to the global order itself happen far more gradually than we sometimes think.

Westphalia and the Non-western World

A fresh look at Westphalia as a historical event also may shed light on important aspects of the political geography of world order. The rise of China has in recent years led some to ask whether the Westphalian model can or should be generalized to every part of the world and, more specifically, whether East Asian polities may now be rediscovering an alternative, hierarchical vision of order that will increasingly come to shape international affairs.[8]

Often implicit in this analysis is the idea that regions or "civilizations" can be cleanly demarcated and that changes that originated in Europe were later adopted or imposed elsewhere. Kissinger, for example, noted that "the Seventeenth Century negotiators who crafted the Peace of Westphalia did not think they were laying the foundation for a globally applicable system." But, he continued later, "the Westphalian model spread around the world as the framework for state-based international order spanning multiple civilizations and regions because, as the European nations expanded, they carried the blueprint of their international order with them."[9]

Here again, the historical record raises doubts—and suggests instead a more nuanced story that has important implications for how we think about challenges to world order today.

First, the road to Westphalia was paved not just in Europe, but around the globe. Europe had for centuries been connected to Asia by dense networks of trade, and these networks only grew more important following the "voyages of discovery" to Africa and the Americas in the second half of the fifteenth century. As my own research has demonstrated, the Dutch consciously expanded the Eighty Years' War overseas in order to attack the

8. David C. Kang, "International Order in Historical East Asia: Tribute and Hierarchy Beyond Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism," *International Organization* 74, no. 1 (Winter 2020): 65-93.
9. Kissinger, *World Order*, 4, 6.

Habsburgs at the main sources of their wealth.[10] The East and West India Companies are famous for creating the first markets in tradable shares, but an important part of the strategic justification was to raise the costs of war for Spain, plow private capital into the war effort, and unify the disparate rebellious towns that, prior to the 1580s, had almost no common political or military institutions. At Westphalia itself, a key—and ultimately successful—Dutch demand was Spanish recognition of its overseas conquests.

In short, the Dutch did not become a territorial state at Westphalia and then export that model abroad. Colonial expansion played an instrumental role in warfare and state-building at home, thus helping to create one of the units that collectively constituted the "Westphalian system."

Second, and more generally, the development of the state in Europe was almost exactly coterminous with European imperialism, which operated on principles of hierarchy and divided sovereignty that were sharply at odds with core features of the Westphalian model. Empire did not precede the state in a linear process of evolution; the two emerged in tandem and have continued to coexist in an awkward, sometimes unstable relationship into the present.[11] To draw once again upon the previous example, the Dutch ruled colonies in the Caribbean, South Africa, and modern Indonesia well into the twentieth century; the islands of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao continue to have special legal status as part of the Royal Netherlands today.

The point here is that we do ourselves a disservice by measuring contemporary developments against an idealized, often highly incomplete vision of the relationship between Europe and the rest of the world, and of "Westphalian sovereignty" more generally. Rather than comparing "Western" and "Asian" models of international order, it may be more profitable to think through the ways that Westphalian arguments about state sovereignty can be used to advance the goals of revisionist powers—as both Russia and China have done in rejecting interference in their internal affairs (or the internal affairs of allies). More speculatively, it may also be worth thinking more creatively about how increased competition may give rise to new kinds of legal and political relationships between greater and lesser powers—not only in Asia, but globally.

> *It may be more profitable to think through the ways that Westphalian arguments about state sovereignty can be used to advance the goals of revisionist powers.*

10. Forthcoming as Bick, *Minutes of Empire: The Dutch West India Company and Mercantile Strategy, 1618-1648*.
11. Keane, *Beyond the Anarchical Society*. See also, Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), and Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

The Origins of Economic Statecraft

A final point concerns the relationship between state and economy in the century after Westphalia. As contemporaries immediately grasped, the staggering resources required to wage the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries required new sources of revenue and new administrative structures to manage them. This was not simply a question of more efficient taxation: among the many lessons drawn from Westphalia, and reinforced over the following decades, was that thriving trade and industry had become essential to national power.

A key piece of evidence for this was the Dutch Republic's victory over Spain in the Eighty Years' War. How could a handful of rebellious towns have defeated the Army of Flanders, the largest and best-equipped fighting force in Europe? The answer, for many observers, was to be found in the Republic's financial institutions, the ways the Dutch used military power to prevent or gain access to trade, the importance they placed on commercial provisions in diplomatic treaties, their careful mixture of free enterprise and tight regulation of key industries, and how relative religious toleration enabled the Dutch Republic to attract skilled workers and capital—including from its principal geopolitical adversaries.[12]

For many European statesmen, the major takeaway was that trade could no longer be left to the small republics while the great monarchies focused on dynastic concerns and territorial acquisition—commerce had become a matter of state. It was not simply that trade brought wealth; it was that the failure to master it risked conquest by rivals.[13]

Looking at Westphalia, many diplomatic historians—including Kissinger—have focused on Cardinal Richelieu and his application of *raison d'état* to France's strategy in the Thirty Years' War during the 1620s and 1630s. Far less attention is paid to Richelieu's successor during the 1660s and 1670s, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who worked tirelessly to centralize state authority, stimulate industry, and build Louis XIV's France into a major mercantile power.[14] Not only in France, but all across Europe, statesmen sought to master the intricacies of trade and reform institutions to better promote it. An important consequence was the birth of political economy—essentially the application of *raison d'état* to the sphere of economic life.

There are many dangers in historical analogy, but it seems appropriate to suggest two points where this story appears to converge with contemporary challenges.

First, while there is a healthy dose of idiosyncrasy in Donald Trump's economic ideas, there are deeper roots to the current angst over tariffs and trade policy. "Mercantilism" as such never existed—it is a strawman against which Adam Smith erected his theories of free trade in the 1770s. But the concept consistently reappears at moments when new

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12. Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Sophus Reinert, "Emulating Success: Contemporary Views of the Dutch Economy before 1800," in ed. Oscar Gelderblom, *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009) 19-40.
13. Istvan Hont, *The Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).
14. Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

powers emerge and faith in self-sustaining markets ebbs.[15] This was true of Germany's rise in the late nineteenth century, efforts to respond to the Great Depression in the 1930s, competition from Germany and Japan in the 1970s, and again today as the United States and Europe continue to struggle with the fallout of the 2008 financial crisis and the rise of China as a major geopolitical competitor.

> *For many European statesmen, the major takeaway was that trade could no longer be left to the small republics while the great monarchies focused on dynastic concerns and territorial acquisition—commerce had become a matter of state.*

In light of these challenges, a wave of new work is already beginning to revisit the relationship between national security and the economy. As Jennifer Harris and Jake Sullivan put it, "U.S. foreign policy makers now face a world in which power is increasingly measured and exercised in economic terms."[16] This fits within a larger argument in favor of military restraint, both in order to focus on restoring U.S. strength at home and, as much as possible, to avoid becoming entangled in costly wars abroad.

And it highlights a number of important questions. Does it make sense for discussion of economics and foreign policy to continue to be walled off from one another, or do those conversant in economics need to be brought more fully into the national security policy process—and vice versa? What industries are truly vital to national security, and what measures can the government take to more actively nurture, promote, or defend them? How do we create a broader set of metrics to evaluate trade agreements that capture not only economic efficiency, but also the anticipated impact on key sectors, domestic employment, allies or strategic partners, and competitiveness vis-à-vis key rivals? How can immigration policy be reformed to enhance national strength?

These, very roughly speaking, are some of the questions that European statesmen asked in the wake of Westphalia. They merit our attention again today.

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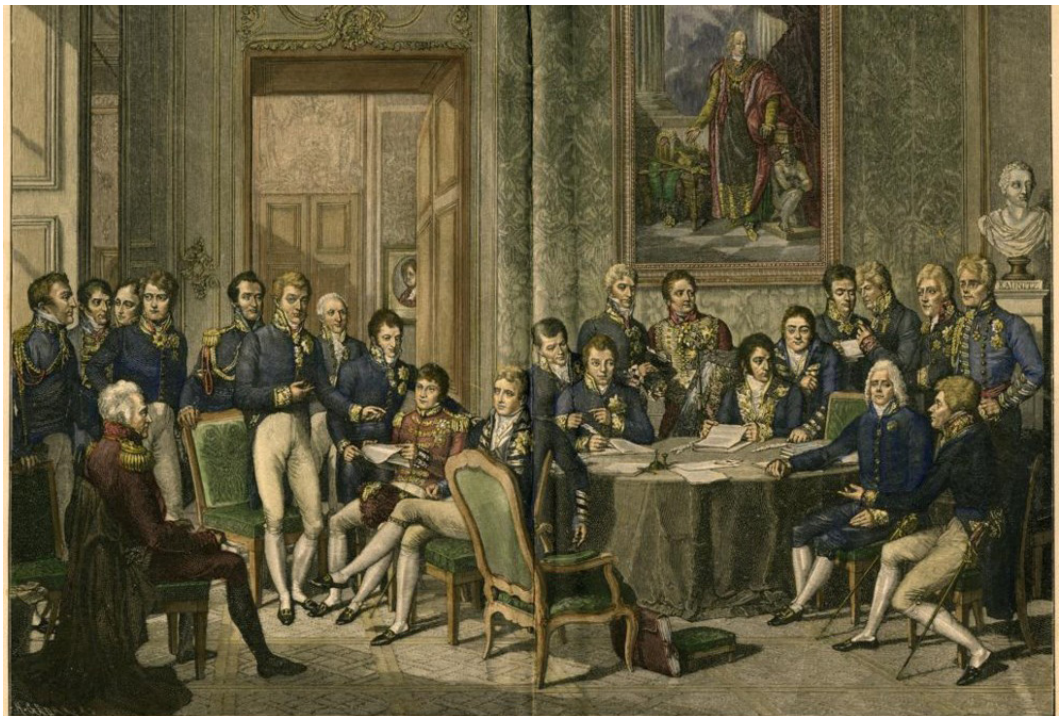
15. Philip Stern and Carl Wennerlind, *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
16. Jennifer Harris and Jake Sullivan, "America Needs a New Economic Philosophy. Foreign Policy Experts Can Help," *Foreign Policy*, February 7, 2020. See also Salman Ahmed et. al., *U.S. Foreign Policy for the Middle Class: Perspectives from Ohio* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018), along with subsequent reports on Colorado and Nebraska; and David McCormick, Charles Luftig, and James Cunningham, "Economic Might, National Security, and the Future of Statecraft," *Texas National Security Review*, May 6, 2020.

Inventing an International Order: Lessons from 200 Years Ago

GLENDA SLUGA, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL HISTORY AND ARC KATHLEEN FITZPATRICK LAUREATE FELLOW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

These days memories of the international past, like talk of a foundering international order, tend to stop around the end of the Second World War in 1945, when the U.S. state and U.S. dollar were globally ascendant. For historians of international ideas and practices, however, there are at least *two centuries* of interrupted thinking and practicing of multilateralism that are at risk of being forgotten. The existing international order is the sum of much more than mid-twentieth century alliances.

The fundamental elements of international order that still matter have deep historical roots in peacemaking at the end of the Napoleonic wars. In 1814, after decades of continental conflict, an alliance of European empires defeated French military expansionism and established the so-called "Concert of Europe." At this definitive moment, Russia, Prussia, Britain, and Austria agreed to elevate cooperation *between* states in unprecedented ways. Their efforts included heaping multilateralism, philanthropy, and rights onto the idea of a permanent or durable peace and introducing diplomacy, conferencing, and cross-border commerce as the methods of that peace. As importantly, they drew the contours of an international "politics" that drew the attention of a wider public we would now name "nonstate actors." Indeed, I want to venture that with the advantage of hindsight, this longer history helps us understand the extent of "international" thinking at stake in the fate of our present faltering international order: What counts as international politics? Who should participate? Why does it matter?



Colored engraving after a watercolor by Jean-Baptiste Isabey of the Vienna Congress, 1814-1815.

Photo by: Wikimedia Commons

What Happened 200 Years Ago?

To the extent that we still remember the Concert of Europe, it is in many minds associated with an old-fashioned "balance of power" approach to international relations. However, the men most often identified with a conservative peacemaking agenda in this period—Metternich, Tsar Alexander, Castlereagh—were fashioning a template of multilateral behavior and aims without precedent. They even knew it at the time. Austrian Foreign Minister Count Klemens von Metternich was an advocate of Immanuel Kant's argument for the importance of a society of states. Tsar Alexander, who oversaw the feudal Russian empire, promoted cooperation and conferencing as "some new European conception" in pursuit of a "federative European system," and earned the reputation of Europe's liberal savior. Even the cool by reputation British foreign secretary Lord Castlereagh warmed to the "solid good" that grew out of this "science of European government."[17]

The policy slate on which these men wrote was certainly not blank. The privileging of cooperation and peace at the end of the Napoleonic wars (like the ideals of a society of states and a federal Europe) had been rehearsed before. But in the fulcrum of postwar enthusiasm, these aspirations were now backed by three important circumstances: the

17. Castlereagh to Liverpool, Aix, October 20, 1818, ff 67-8. Ms 38566, *Liverpool Papers*, British Library.

shared experience of decades of war, a coalition campaign against French economic and political hegemony, and a new emphasis on the scientific methods of diplomacy that might render international communication and relations more dispassionate.

These methods of diplomacy, such as presenting diplomats in courts according to the date of the official notification of an ambassador's arrival at a particular embassy rather than on the credentials of military or symbolic power and using an alphabetical order for signatures, had an equalizing effect. As banal as these developments might seem, their effective point was to ensure ceremonial equality, defusing the potential for rivalry and hierarchy among the Europeans. We still rely upon versions of many of these methods today.

Conferencing was just as innovative and critical a tool. An irregular reliance on public meetings held from 1814-1822 in a range of European towns—Vienna, Aix-la Chapelle, Troppau, Ljubljana, Verona—were supported with allied and ambassadorial conferences that were still in use in the mid-nineteenth century and became the model of later international institutions.[18] The more public congresses mixed process with spectacle and sociability in relatively familiar *ancien regime* ways, but they were also sites of important structural innovations. At the famous 1814 Congress of Vienna, committees were established to focus on resolving fractious disputes or allow for discussion of transnational moral issues. In what would become a familiar scenario of modern postwar peacemaking, the committee that decided territorial borders resorted to a new kind of scientific expert, the statistician who counted populations or souls.

The committee that debated ending the slave trade was asked by its chair, Castlereagh, to consider the trade incompatible with Christian principles of universal morality and humanity and to picture a universal peace based on "the principles of natural justice and Enlightenment."[19] The committee on the free navigation of rivers, which discussed reducing multiple customs systems and taxes along cross-border European river systems, reflected on the forms of commerce that fostered cooperation and peace. Its chair, the Prussian ambassador Baron Wilhelm von Humboldt, sold free navigation as facilitating "the communications between nations . . . to render them less strangers to each other" and therefore cultivate peace.[20] In the same way, the ambassadorial conferences embedded in London and Paris became sites of continuous communication and negotiation among the European empires around questions of the slave trade, rights, trade, colonies, revolution and conflict—always structured to corral them away from the precipice of war.

Advocates for Justice and Peace

Once we widen the historical lens on the political transformations taking place in 1814, it is easier to see the expansive horizon of invention, ambitions, and expectations—as

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18. For a useful general history, see Mark Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy: War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).*

19. Geneva September 6, 1814, Lord Castlereagh to Lord Liverpool, Ms 38566, *Liverpool Papers*, British Library.

20. Wilhelm Humboldt, "*Mémoire [préparatoire] sur le travail de la Commission de la navigation," presenté par M. le Baron de Humboldt, 3 février 1815,* Annexe No.1 (730–33) *du Procès-verbale de la deuxième conférence de la commission pour la libre navigation des rivières – Vienne, Séance du 8 février 1815* (728–30), dans Comte d'Angeberg, *Le Congrès de Vienne et les traités de 1815* (avec introd. historique par M. Capefigue), 1ère Partie, Amyot, Éditeur des Archives Diplomatiques, Paris, 1863.

well as an implicit "ordering"—produced by this new conceptualization of what could happen in the space of politics between states. As important as the new diplomatic methods and expanded repertoires of transnational aims was their public context, including the question of who could participate and how. In the blush of its novelty, peacemaking involved hundreds of European onlookers, negotiators, and "influencers," many of whom leapt at any opportunity to have a voice in the context of congress conferencing. At Vienna and Aix-la-Chapelle in particular, bankers, entrepreneurs, and exceptional women empowered by money, title, and networks embraced the possibility of an international politics.

From the outset, the invention of a modern international order connected not only cross-border commerce but also political-economic justice with the objectives of enduring peace. For example, in 1814, economic actors, especially the bankers who had become essential credit providers to states during the Napoleonic wars, now petitioned peacemakers to confirm the rights of purchase, trade, and possession already given by the French to Jews in newly liberated territories. Jewish and some Christian bankers sent letters and offered money to prominent diplomats on behalf of this cause. Then there was the industrial entrepreneur-cum-utopian socialist Robert Owen, who attended the 1818 congress of Aix-la-Chapelle to warn that the technological industrial changes spreading through Europe were exacerbating economic inequality. Owen urged the peacemakers to tackle the sources of that inequality in order to ensure a durable European peace.[21]

Contrary to how historians tend to write about the importance of international orders, there is voluminous evidence that women of title and of means engaged this foundational moment with a determined sense of the issues that mattered. They exerted a crucial influence over what would become the familiar values and norms of the modern international order, from its liberal political and legal institutions (including Jewish rights) to national and religious patriotism and versions of humanitarianism referred to as philanthropy and "the politics of bandages."[22]

As the coalition against Napoleon took form and the Europeans negotiated peace, the wealthy French writer Madame de Staël stood out for her articulation and defense of what have since become familiar tenets of a *liberal* international order: national sovereignty, on the one hand, and individual rights and freedom of religion, press, and association as universal values, on the other. She was not the only spokesperson for many of these views, but she was among the most original and persistent across Europe. Deploying her cosmopolitan salon, networks, correspondence, and her publications, her influence was at least equal to that of many of the more-celebrated men identified with these events.[23]

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21. Glenda Sluga, "'Who Hold the Balance of the World?' Bankers at the Congress of Vienna, and in International History," The American Historical Review 122, no.5 (December 2017): 1403-1430.
22. Metternich to Sagan, Commothau 11/10/13 in *Clemens Metternich Wilhelmine von Sagan: Ein Briefwechsel 1813-1815* ed. Maria Ullrichova (Graz-Koln: Verlag Hermann Bohlaus Nachf, 1966).
23. Glenda Sluga, "Madame de Stael and the Transformation of European Politics, 1812-1817," International History Review 37, no.1 (2015): 142-166.

> *There is voluminous evidence that women of title and of means engaged this foundational moment with a determined sense of the issues that mattered.*

Staël was certainly exceptional, but she was not alone. Indeed, once we add women to this longer history of the origins of our modern international order, we encounter them influencing more than just one side of debates: Fanny Arnstein, an ennobled Viennese Jewish banker's wife, lobbied for a Prussian Germany with Jewish rights; Baron Wilhelm Humboldt's wife Karoline pushed for a Prussian Germany with no Jewish rights. Some women led with liberal thinking, and other women attempted to claim a political voice by underscoring patriotism or enforcing religious imperatives for war.[24]

The end of the Napoleonic wars, with its shift from disruption to order, opened up spaces for new ways of thinking about politics, where it could take place, and what could be on the agenda. But there were many paradoxes on offer at this foundational moment of international order. The new techniques of diplomacy and negotiation that rendered the *ancien* social landscape the antithesis of the modern made masculinity the marker of international politics and structurally marginalized women. Under the old *ancien* rules, Staël was considered one of "three great powers" alongside Britain, Prussia, and Russia.[25] Under the new rules, she was simply an illegitimate political actor and all but airbrushed out. Then there was the legacy of religious and civilizational exclusion implicated in the "European" ordering of a new international domain of political life. Of course, not everyone acquiesced to the hubris of a self-consciously "European" authority grounded in the multilateralism of a few European imperial powers: U.S. President James Monroe declared the Americas off-limits to European political intervention; the Ottoman empire maintained a cautious ambivalent distance while it could. Even the British empire was careful to insist that its own wars, colonies, or policies could not be subjected to "the science of European government."

Only Paradoxes to Offer?

What then does the long history of an international order, built on diplomacy and multilateralism, *and* the international potential of politics, have to offer at our own moment of global "disruption"? When we consider the unprecedented existential threats the world faces—not only the systemic collapse of societies under pressures of war, disease, and social and economic injustice, but also a planetary-level ecological crisis—historical lessons have their limits. Those lessons that matter, however, transcend the specificities of the international order as it was made in 1945. Even if we care less about Tsar Alexander or Lord Castlereagh or even Germaine de Staël in 1814, it is useful to remember that at stake in our contemporary moment is two centuries of investing in and adapting multilateralism, diplomacy, and the imperative of peace at moments of epochal disruption.

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24. Glenda Sluga, "Women at the Congress of Vienna," Eurozine, January 28, 2015, https://www.eurozine.com/women-at-the-congress-of-vienna/.
25. Sluga, "Madame de Stael and the Transformation of European Politics, 1812-1817."

Of course, the ambitions expressed in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars for an enduring peace failed. Nevertheless, the efforts of peacemakers 200 years ago—the structures, methods, and ideals embedded in that diplomatic multilateral moment—have echoed through the major episodes of nineteenth and twentieth-century war and peace, for better or for worse. The peacemaking process that ended the First World War copied the diplomatic methods of the Concert of Europe in the interests of a "scientific" approach. The commercial and economic justice agendas and humanitarian appeals of 1814 found echoes in the expanded political agendas of 1919 and particularly 1945—from the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to the World Bank and the post-Second World War 1945 emphasis on "human rights."[26] Even the 1814 slavery committee's compromise—balancing the wishes of humanity with the interests and rights of independent powers to delay universal abolition—echoed persistently cynical trends in international politics.

At each moment of international reinvention, we hear too the voices of public engagement sounding out a wider horizon of expectations. In 1919, as in 1945, large groups of women as much as men and colonial subjects as much as European citizens sought influence and demanded social and economic rights in international peacemaking "congress" settings. Ultimately, the gender and cultural racial hierarchies entrenched in the international order since 1814 were only redressed much later in the twentieth century. But the methods that the Europeans had given the world 200 years earlier became the means by which those who had been marginalized could claim their equal status.

> *The efforts of peacemakers 200 years ago—the structures, methods, and ideals embedded in that diplomatic multilateral moment—have echoed through the major episodes of nineteenth and twentieth-century war and peace, for better or for worse.*

We learn from this forgotten 200-year-old history the political paradoxes of our international order and its limitations as well as its possibilities, including the short-lived promise of such moments—whether 1814, or 1919, or 1945. At each moment of opportunity, a window briefly opened was soon closed. At each moment, the world was repeatedly left with the shell of ambition and expectation. What about now? Taking a longer, wider, view gives us a richer language and understanding; it also provokes us to ask not only the question of what an international order is for, but also who should shape it.

26. Glenda Sluga, "The Beginning(s) and End(s) of the International Order," E-International Relations, May 22, 2017, https://www.e-ir.info/2017/05/22/the-beginnings-and-ends-of-the-international-order/.

Disease and International Order: Lessons from the Nineteenth Century

ANDREW EHRHARDT, POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW, KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced fundamental reconsiderations about the nature of international order. Despite the pandemic's global reach—to date, the virus has spread to every continent but Antarctica—a majority of states initially reacted with protectionist measures. Governments sealed their borders and immobilized their populations, hoping to thwart the transmission of the disease. In time, accusations of incompetence and malice flowed between the two leading powers in the international system, China and the United States, leading to recriminations, further deterioration in bilateral relations, and questions about which of these powers, if any, was intent to take on a leadership role.

A bevy of experts, writing from the United States and Europe, predicted a retreat from globalization in favor of individual states increasing their capacity for self-reliance, especially in matters pertaining to manufacturing, agriculture, and health.[27] To some degree, their predictions have been supported by subsequent events. The World Health Organization, in existence since 1948 and with its own checkered record on pandemics, has become a pawn of propaganda. President Donald Trump, after earlier calling the global body a "puppet of China," announced in late May that the United States would be leaving the organization and dragging with it the institution's largest source of funding.[28]

But while the lurch towards protectionism and nationalist narratives has disturbed certain assumptions about the international system, a view of past pandemics reveals that the spread of disease often forces protectionist impulses. The history of disease and diplomacy in the nineteenth century, however, also points towards another tendency—namely, that the global nature of modern disease requires coordinated global responses.

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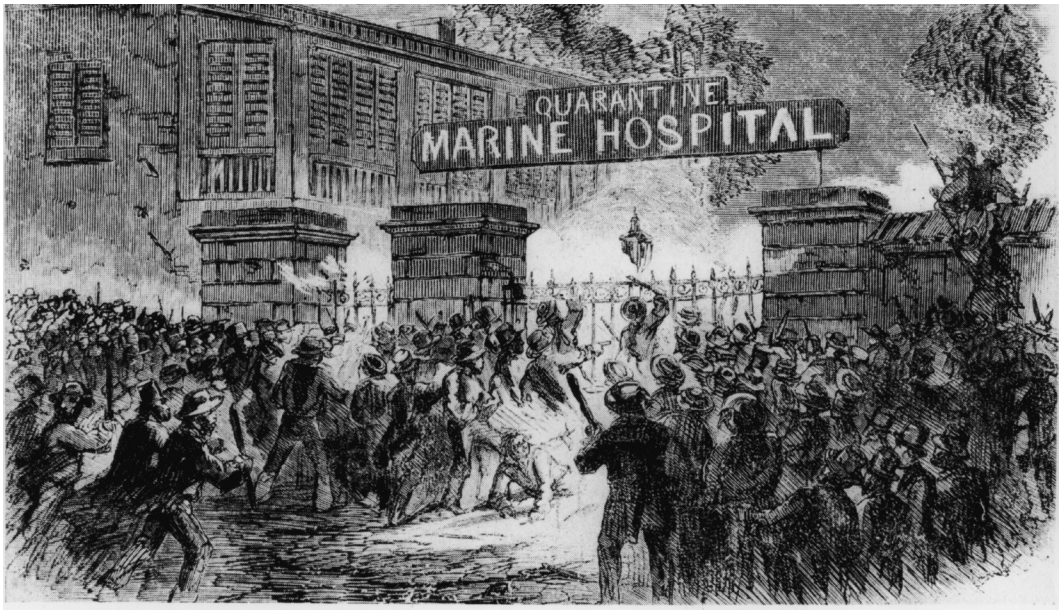
27. For one example, see John Allen et al., "How the World Will Look After the Coronavirus Pandemic," *Foreign Policy*, March 20, 2020.
28. "Coronavirus: Trump accuses WHO of being a 'puppet of China,'" BBC News, May 19, 2020; Pien Huang, "WHO's Measured Reaction to Trump's Pledge to Cut U.S. Ties to The Agency," NPR News, June 1, 2020.

Though cooperation might be painfully slow to develop, the effort to solve pressing problems through practical measures can, in turn, establish an organic ordering system, as opposed to one conceived in some "grand design." Thus, for states interested in shaping the international order, the moment can prove to be one of opportunity, when a country's own domestic and international initiatives related to public health can have an important bearing on the structure and function of the international system going forward.

Looking Back

In the nineteenth century, as in preceding periods, disease was more frequent and more deadly than anything experienced in the modern day. From its first reported outbreak in 1817, cholera, in particular, periodically swept across trade routes linking India, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. When pandemics arose, the preferred methods for stemming the spread was quarantine, a practice which defined the relationship between disease and diplomacy for much of modern history. It was a practice with roots in the fourteenth century, when in response to an outbreak of plague, the Great Council of Ragusa, a body overseeing the city-state situated in what is modern-day Dubrovnik, instituted a system whereby infected individuals were required to isolate themselves from the city for 30 days. Italian city-states adopted similar measures, with some, such as Venice and Genoa, instituting a 40-day isolation period known as "quarantine" (from the Italian "quaranta" or "forty").[29]



From a woodcut in Harper's Weekly

THE ATTACK UPON THE QUARANTINE STATION

A mob attacking the Quarantine Marine Hospital in New York.

Photo by: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

29. Philip A. Mackowiak and Paul S. Sehdev, "The Origin of Quarantine," *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 35, no. 9 (2002): 1071–1072.

Into the nineteenth century, the practice of quarantine, though successful in stopping the spread of certain diseases, began to be viewed as a costly economic burden. When a particularly deadly outbreak of cholera struck in 1832, the strict quarantine measures put in place by the British government drew the ire of English businessmen, traders, and merchants. Many considered the disease and the national response it provoked to be a "humbug" that would destroy the country's commerce, which was then the most robust in Europe.[30] One of the major issues with quarantine regulations imposed by European countries was that, from port to port, the regulations were disparate. For example, a ship sailing from Constantinople to Marseille, as one historian has shown, was required to quarantine for 60 days compared with 34 days had it sailed to Venice.[31] These inconsistent and often arbitrary restrictions came to be seen as increasingly damaging, and a number of European governments, many of them overseeing societies that were prospering as a result of rapid increases in manufacturing and trade, began to call for a more unified approach to addressing outbreaks of disease.

> *When pandemics arose, the preferred methods for stemming the spread was quarantine, a practice which defined the relationship between disease and diplomacy for much of modern history.*

The 1830s marked the first concerted push by European states to standardize quarantine regulations among countries with ports along the Mediterranean. French and British leaders led the way, with the former suggesting that governments decide "in concert" on a uniform system.[32] British officials were in agreement, noting that at present, the inconsistent system created "an ample field for fanciful fear and caprice."[33] Though the effort in the 1830s stalled, it set an important precedent for coordinated international responses to the spread of disease. Governments began to see it as in their economic interest to cooperate in the establishment of a wider system of regulation.

After another outbreak of cholera in the late 1840s, the French government, once again leading the initiative for international cooperation, hosted the first International Sanitary Conference in Paris in 1851. For over six months, medical and diplomatic representatives from 12 countries exchanged ideas on the ways to standardize quarantine measures

30. J.C. McDonald, "The History of Quarantine in Britain during the 19th Century," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 25, no. 1 (1951): 22-44.
31. João Rangel de Almeida, "Epidemic Opportunities: Panic, Quarantines, and the 1851 International Sanitary Conference," ed. Robert Peckham, *Empires of Panic: Epidemics and Colonial Anxieties* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 63.
32. Louis-Mathieu Molé to Earl Granville, July 14, 1838, in *Correspondence Relative to the Contagion of Plague and the Quarantine Regulations of Foreign Countries, 1836-1843* (London: T.R. Harrison, 1843), 88-89; see also Louis-Mathieu Molé to Earl Granville, July 2, 1838, 79-80.
33. Sir Henry Frederick Bouverie to Lord Glenelg, June 11, 1838, Ibid., 80-81.

related to cholera, yellow fever, and the plague. Though a landmark for modern diplomacy and international health cooperation, the national delegations failed to reach substantive agreement. In fact, it would take another 41 years and six more conferences—there were a total of 14 between 1851 and 1938—until representatives agreed on a formal convention regulating certain aspects of quarantine.[34]

There were a number of obstacles hindering international agreement. One factor in particular—and one which has modern echoes—is that governments often cast blame on rivals for the emergence and spread of disease. The fact that cholera originated in India, for example, led a number of European governments to criticize not only that country but also the United Kingdom, India's colonial ruler. At the 1894 conference, a French representative declared that the British government "has the responsibility of opposing [cholera's] exportation."[35] Moreover, as the historian Peter Baldwin has pointed out, "each nation had its favourite epidemiological whipping boy: Poles and Galicians for the Germans, Russians for the Swedes, Irish for the English, Spanish for the French, Catholics for Protestants, while . . . everybody feared the [so-called] Orient."[36]

Another of the chief obstacles to coordination was the divide between scientists on the nature and transmissibility of the diseases then prevalent. Recurring cholera pandemics remained the most widespread and deadly, yet scientists in the mid-nineteenth century continued to argue over its most essential characteristics, such as whether it was waterborne, transmitted more by land or sea, or if it could spread between individuals. The most fundamental divergence was between so-called "contagionists" and "anti-contagionists," with the former believing that disease spread through human transmission and the latter viewing poor sanitary conditions as the central determining factor.

The United Kingdom, in particular, was home to vociferous debates (often between the nation's most esteemed medical bodies) concerning the contagionist versus anti-contagionist narratives. Broadly speaking, however, the country leaned more towards the latter and as a result began instituting innovative and effective domestic initiatives that eventually set the precedent for other European countries. Between the 1850s and 70s, as quarantine measures continued to hinder the fluidity of trade, officials in the ports across the United Kingdom began to replace indiscriminate blanket quarantine measures with more targeted techniques involving the inspection of ships, isolation of sick passengers, and tracking of infected individuals. Later known as the "English system," this method of handling outbreaks of disease proved far more effective and efficient than the process of a blanket quarantine.[37] Thus, towards the end of the century, a number of European nations adopted similar techniques, thereby contributing indirectly to a wider system of pandemic response and regulation.

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34. For an overview of these conferences, see Norman Howard-Jones, *The scientific background of the International Sanitary Conferences, 1851-1938* (Geneva: The World Health Organization, 1975).
35. Quoted in Sandhya L. Polu, *Infectious Disease in India, 1892-1940: Policy-Making and the Perception of Risk* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 29.
36. Peter Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 552.
37. Krista Maglen, *The English System: Quarantine, Immigration and the Making of a Port Sanitary Zone* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); see also Baldwin, p. 151 and J.C. McDonald, "The History of Quarantine in Britain during the 19th Century," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 25, no. 1 (1951): 22-44.

The Move toward Cooperation

The last decade of the nineteenth century was a period in which nations, particularly the great powers, were increasing in strength and fomenting rivalry. As the British Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne warned in 1902, nations were now "armed to the teeth and ready to enter on hostilities at any moment."[38] Yet even with this burgeoning international competition, governments found it in their immediate interest to cooperate with one another on matters related to global health. As the sanitary conferences continued to meet peripatetically from 1851 onwards, the delegations in attendance agreed to conventions addressing a range of issues, including the standardization of quarantine measures and pledges to notify other nations when outbreaks appeared.

The alignment of views was the result of two key developments. First, scientists began to agree with one another on the origins and spread of disease. The contagionist versus anti-contagionist debates had been one of the chief stumbling blocks, yet by the end of the century it was understood that some diseases were, in fact, spread between individuals, whereas other common pandemics, such as cholera, were the result of poor sanitary regulations. Second, certain innovative measures undertaken by the United Kingdom became the model for other countries, which found it medically effective and economically efficient. Concerns over commercial disruption, in particular, led British officials to alter their methods of inspection and isolation, and the English system became the preferred practice in Europe.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the cooperative exchanges taking place during the international sanitary conferences eventually provided a foundation for the first international organizations dedicated to public health. Permanent professional bodies, it was believed, could dedicate more attention to international coordination of interlinked activities, from research into etiology and vaccinations to tracking the outbreak and spread of disease. The establishment of the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau in 1902 and the Office International d'Hygiène Publique in 1907 laid the foundation for the world's most ambitious and, until that point, most effective international organization which arose in the years after the First World War. Though the League of Nations Covenant hardly mentioned global health, the nascent organization took the subject seriously. At the second meeting of the League Council in April 1920, members sought to address the outbreak of typhus and cholera in Eastern Europe, a challenge that was exacerbated by an ongoing refugee crisis in Greece. An Epidemics Commission was established, followed by the Health Organization of the League in 1924. As the historian Charles Webster wrote of these structures, they were not designed to "supersede governments but to supplement them, to do for them all what no one of them could do for itself."[39] It was this same principle that led countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union, among others, to carry over the League's Health Organization into what was, by 1948, known as the World Health Organization.

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38. Lansdowne speaking on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in the House of Lords, February 13, 1902. See *Hansard*, House of Lords Debate, vol. 102, cols. 1172-81, February 13, 1902.
39. Charles Webster, *The League of Nations in Theory and Practice* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1933), 278.

Looking Ahead

The history of the nineteenth century shows that with outbreaks of disease on a global scale, there is often an initial push toward more nationalistic, independent approaches. Indeed, as far back as the fourteenth century, the relationship between disease and diplomacy was defined, to a large extent, by the presence of quarantines and distinctly self-interested approaches. Such was this legacy, that as late as 1885, the Italian foreign minister lamented the arbitrary and inconsistent system of quarantines within Mediterranean ports as one of "complete anarchy."[40] Moreover, accusations of malintent or incompetence, disagreements over scientific facts and analysis, and divergences in prescriptive solutions have tended to be more of the norm than anomaly.

Crucially, however, governments often recognize, in the words of the French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, a "unification of the globe by disease."[41] In other words, the global nature of disease can—and in most cases *should*—lead to responses that require global coordination. Pandemics thus force an internationalist impulse which can, in turn, lead to ordering mechanisms between states. These might come in the form of interstate regulations (such as those relating to quarantine which were adopted at the end of the nineteenth century), pledges to immediately notify neighboring states of outbreaks, efforts to coordinate tracking of infected individuals, or commitments to share medical and epidemiological research.

The reality that modern disease, as well as modern commerce and trade, requires a degree of international cooperation leads to another important characteristic of international order—namely, that order can be the result of immediate necessity as opposed to long-term vision. In other words, an ordering system can be established as a result of shared needs or interests between nation-states, as opposed to the transformative ideas of one state in particular. For France and Britain in the late 1830s, the push to standardize quarantine regulations was not rooted in an idealistic conception of interstate cooperation but in a practical understanding that a wider standardized system of regulation would benefit their own national interest as well as that of other nations with ports along the Mediterranean.

Closely related to this point is another—namely, that international order is often the result of arduous multilateral deliberation as opposed to individual planning or design. Here the work of diplomats must not be overlooked, as it is often these individuals who are responsible for delivering on ideas through negotiation. While Britain and France, as far back as the 1840s, may each have had in mind their own ideal solutions to the problems caused by irregulated quarantine measures across the Mediterranean, a workable system was not developed until later in the century, after decades of negotiation between governments with overlapping yet disparate national interests.

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40. Quoted in Howard-Jones, *The scientific background*, 55.

41. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, "A Concept: The Unification of the Globe by Disease (Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)," in *The Mind and Method of the Historian* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 28-83.

> *Order can be the result of immediate necessity as opposed to long-term vision.*

Finally, it is important to highlight that the methods that individual nations take up in response to an outbreak can have a great influence on the approaches that other states choose to adopt. The innovations implemented in British ports between roughly 1850 and 1870—ones that relied on more targeted systems of inspection, isolation, and tracking—eventually became the model for other European nations. This adoption by other governments of more effective and efficient approaches developed in Britain meant that the latter, somewhat indirectly, exerted a degree of influence on the structure and functionality of the European regional order, particularly as it related to health and commerce.

Ordering mechanisms related to health—such as coordinated testing, tracking, reporting, and treatment—will never *define* an international order, but it can allow those governments with the means and a degree of willingness to *shape* it in important ways. That nation-states can coordinate multilaterally on pressing international issues, either through peripatetic meetings or within international organizations, is representative of an international system which, broadly speaking, favors cooperation over competition. Importantly, governments interested in shaping the international order of the future must recognize the diplomatic opportunity that pandemics afford. Responses to the outbreak of disease, both on a domestic and international level, can sow the seeds of a cooperative international order going forward.

Portions of this work have been adapted from an article entitled "Disease and Diplomacy in the 19th Century" which appeared in War on the Rocks *on April 30, 2020.*

Cooperation, Conflict, and International Order: Lessons from the Post-WWI Settlement

DAN GORMAN, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

A global pandemic. An international order in transition. Great powers in potential decline challenged by emerging and defensive competitors. Global protests denouncing racial discrimination. The value of international organizations and cooperation under intense scrutiny. A world connected by "wireless" technology. These conditions describe our global situation today, as well as that of exactly a century ago. Indeed, the parallels between the international political situation in 1920 and 2020 are almost eerily exact. It is thus unsurprising that the historical comparison for which historians, politicians, and pundits have most often reached during our present international crisis is that of the end of World War I (WWI) and the global influenza pandemic of 1918-1919.

We do not yet know whether we are living through a similar moment of transition, but the global Covid-19 pandemic, resultant economic shock, anti-racism protests, and rising China-U.S. tensions have challenged both the globalization and nationalist visions of today's international order. We can look to the decisions made by politicians, diplomats, and activists who grappled with the disorder of a century ago for guidance, but there is as much to learn from what they did not do, and what the unintended consequences were of the decisions they took, as there is from the international order-building that took place in Paris and other venues in 1919.

Delegates at the peace conference at Versailles, including, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau (1841 - 1929), and British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour (1848 - 1930), 1919.

Photo by: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

George Kennan famously described WWI as the seminal catastrophe of the twentieth century. Seventeen million soldiers and civilians died during the war, and upwards of a third of the global population was infected during the coincident influenza pandemic. Estimates of pandemic deaths vary from 20 to 50 million people. The war caused the collapse of four empires: Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottomans. It undermined the confidence of liberal democracies, while the disillusioned postwar states of Germany, Italy, and Japan moved toward fascism and militarism. The peace settlements that followed the war created both barriers and opportunities for international cooperation that have some parallels to the current Covid-19 crisis and therefore provide us with clues as to how to reframe our present debates about the future of international order.

The International Order after WWI

A major catalyst for the construction of a new international order in 1919-1920 was the widespread conviction within the victorious Allied societies that the imbalances and insecurities of the prewar international order were largely to blame for war breaking out. It was not a foregone conclusion that WWI was or should have been a global moment of change. It presented an opportunity for change, but a reminder is in order that history represents one outcome among many alternatives possible given the various actors' interests. At war's end, both Woodrow Wilson and Vladimir Lenin wanted radical change. Britain and France preferred the status quo ante. The aggrieved powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan sought alternate fascist or imperial international orders that claimed to be new,

but which in fact resembled the nineteenth-century European imperial world based on spheres of influence, conquest, and racism.

The war highlighted a need for effective organization and diplomacy in the international system. Its global nature and ambitious peace settlements brought states into ever closer contact with each other, and wartime Allied cooperation demonstrated how effective international governance tools and forums could be to solve increasingly evident, globally interconnected problems. Munich and appeasement are the conventional World War II historical analogies trotted out during modern crises—the ostensible lesson being that one should not negotiate with aggressors. Yet its historically prior counterpart, the lesson drawn by many after WWI, was that war broke out because states had not negotiated hard enough. They "sleep-walked" toward war in 1914, in the historian Christopher Clark's description.[42] The victors were thus determined to create a single interconnected international system that encouraged cooperation and collective security to avoid another conflagration.

This vision was embodied in the postwar peace treaties. The Treaty of Versailles was unquestionably the most important postwar agreement for international institution building, but international order also depends on the system of states, sovereignty, borders, and colonial control—all of which were addressed in the rest of the seven treaties that shaped postwar international relations. Examining the causes of instability and future wars demands that we incorporate not just the infamous Article 231 disarming and punishing Germany, but also the separate peace treaties that punished other defeated powers and created new nation-states: the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1919) with Austria, the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (1919) with Bulgaria, the Treaty of Trianon (1920) with Hungary, and the Treaties of Sèvres (1920) and Lausanne (1923) with the Ottoman Empire and its successor state Turkey. These treaties collectively cemented the postwar territorial settlement along with the colonial values that underpinned international order at the time and weakened attempts at radical change.

Cooperation and Conflict after WWI

The postwar peace treaties created a multilateral and international legal framework for international cooperation. The centerpiece was the League of Nations, the world's first truly intergovernmental organization. The League was the antecedent to the United Nations, but with some very important differences. The League was based not on a charter, a binding international agreement, but rather a covenant. It gave life to Wilson's vision of "a general association of nations" based on "mutual guarantees of the political independence and territorial integrity of States, large and small equally."[43] Its basis was a mutual pledge by its members of cooperation and shared international values. When this pledge was upheld, the League worked; when it was not, it failed.

Order-making efforts after WWI were complex, consisting of three different initiatives: the expansion of international law, multilateralism centered on the League of Nations,

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42. Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper, 2013).

43. "President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points," Yale Law School's Avalon Project, XIV, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp.

and territorial change in Europe and the expansion of Western intervention abroad. The latter point reminds us that the racial hierarchies of imperialism defined the interwar international order—much as divisions between the Global North and South persist today.

> *The League was based not on a charter, a binding international agreement, but rather a covenant.*

Postwar international law expanded on precedents established in the prewar period. Institutions like the Permanent Court of International Justice provided a forum for states to settle disputes through arbitration and judicial mediation. Monetary policy was coordinated through the Bank for International Settlement, and the League's Economic and Financial Organization pioneered the practice of providing international loans to ensure international fiscal stability. The domestic prohibition of social problems such as the traffics in women, children, and narcotics was harmonized internationally based on U.S. laws that regulated "moral" offenses across state borders (such as the Comstock Law [1873] and the Mann Act [1910]). Finally, the Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928) famously prohibited war as an instrument of national policy. These measures achieved mixed results, but collectively they strengthened international cooperation as a norm in international relations which persists to this day. The Kellogg-Briand pact did not prevent WWII, of course, but it is telling that one of the crimes the Allies charged senior Nazi officials with after the war was the planning of aggressive war in contravention of international treaties.

The second initiative that emerged from WWI was institutionalized multilateralism. The various international bureaus created in the nineteenth century converged into a multilateral framework whose center was the League of Nations in Geneva. States pooled their sovereignty to address shared social, economic, and technical problems that, like today, were created by rapid technological and social change. Institutionalized multilateralism was augmented by new international think tanks created after the war, notably the Royal Institute of International Affairs (now Chatham House) and the Council on Foreign Affairs. They joined existing organizations like the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to create a policy space for the exploration and public debate of international cooperation.

Meanwhile, the war caused two great health calamities: the global influenza pandemic, which began in 1918 and whose spread worldwide was facilitated by the conditions of war, and a devastating cholera pandemic that ravaged Eastern Europe. The International Committee of the Red Cross and the League's Health Organization (the WHO's predecessor) delivered primary medical aid and supplies, as well as health information conduits between national governments. Andrew Ehrhardt's piece in this collection addresses the struggles and successes of international cooperation to deal with the 1918-1919 pandemic.

The League itself created the world's first international civil service. Big-picture international order ideas attract public attention, but the successful examples of post-WWI international

cooperation demonstrate that it is the pragmatic diplomacy of negotiation and the collaborative work of international and domestic civil servants that best provides for stability in the international order.

Technical experts play a key role in the creation and maintenance of international order. While the peacemakers at Versailles receive the lion's share of attention for the creation of the post-WWI international order, they built upon a legacy of international administration carried out by the many international bureaus formed in the later nineteenth century. After the war, it was international civil servants in the League Secretariat that performed the day-to-day work of international multilateralism.[44] Diplomatic immunity, impartiality, public information, professionalization, and institutional loyalty were established as principles of international civil service. This is one of the League's lasting legacies, as demonstrated by the fact that many international civil servants at the League transitioned to similar roles in the new United Nations after 1945.

Figures such as the Dutch social worker Karen Jeppe were important forerunners to today's international aid workers.

Photo by: Creative Commons

The third development that emerged from WWI was a growing tolerance for these multilateral institutions to intervene in domestic affairs in cases of humanitarian crises. WWI introduced two horrors that are still with us: genocide or mass ethnic cleansing, and the mass displacement of refugees on a global scale. Armenia was the first site of international humanitarian activism after the war. An informal coalition of U.S., British, Dutch, and other aid workers provided relief to widows, orphans, and others displaced by the Armenian genocide. The League repatriated prisoners of war, refugees, and displaced persons (including a young Vladimir Nabokov) through the innovation of the international "Nansen Passport."

The institutionalized multilateralism that encouraged international cooperation in humanitarian crisis response proved a broken reed when it came to enforcing the spirit of collective security. For example, the League's minorities system was created to protect minority populations, but not only did it lack enforcement mechanisms, it ironically underwrote German expansionism because the largest national minorities in interwar Europe were Germans. Hitler could thus use the minorities question as a fig leaf to annex Austria in 1938. The League's other security apparatus—sanctions and disarmament—depended on expulsion from the international fold as a punishment, which was only effective on states that wished to remain in the international fold. Japan, Germany, and

44. See for instance Karen Gram-Skjoldager, Haakon A. Ikonomou, and Torsten Kahlert, eds., *Organizing the 20th Century World: International Organization and the Emergence of International Public Administration, 1920-1960s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

Italy called the League's bluff, deciding that the potential gains of aggression outweighed the costs of being sanctioned. Ultimately, the power of multilateral institutions to shape behavior depends on the value of inclusion in them and the impact of punishment expected for breaking the rules.

Contemporary Impact and Lessons

The post-WWI international order provides four comparable lessons for our present circumstances. To begin with, the peace settlement after WWI did not constitute a fundamental break between the past and present, as is sometimes suggested, but was rather a catalyst for the implementation of existing internationalist ideas, initiatives, and institutions. International law, institutionalized multilateralism, and humanitarian intervention were not new ideas after all—each in their modern iterations had deep nineteenth-century roots. What the postwar settlement offered was a political moment in which internationalism was in the ascendant.

This atmosphere of possibility explains the first lesson we can draw from the post-WWI period, namely that **crises give "ideas entrepreneurs" an outsized influence on shaping international order.** Wilson drew international order ideas from the "Inquiry," an informal academic advisory board under Colonel Edward House's direction. The British delegation's postwar proposals at Versailles were shaped in part by imperial federalists like Philip Kerr (Prime Minister David Lloyd George's private secretary at the negotiations and later British Ambassador to Washington as Lord Lothian). U.S. Secretary of State Frank Kellogg drew on ideas from the Outlawry of War movement, the social reformer Jane Addams, Columbia professor and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace research director James Shotwell, and others for what became the Kellogg-Briand Pact. "Scholarly entrepreneurs" continue to revisit older international order ideas today. Kantian ideas of a democratic "zone of peace" are a perennial favorite.

Of course, these ideas were not fully developed until the breakout of WWII demonstrated their need for enforcement. They shared space with old colonialist habits, vengeance against the defeated, and American reluctance to give up sovereignty. Responsible policymakers today should expect fringe ideas to compete with traditional ones in times of crisis and for the desired radical change to be elusive in the first attempt.

This leads to the second lesson we must keep in mind: **international crises are an opportunity but are not destined to make large scale, structural changes to the international order.** Acting rashly can easily produce a settlement that sows the seeds of the next war. As WWI demonstrated, crises often reveal longer-standing fissures, tensions, and problems. The peacemakers at Versailles addressed the immediate crises created by the war. Unlike their more farsighted successors after WWII, however, they failed to adequately address the underlying instability of an international order predicated on maintaining a balance of power. Their peace settlement instead locked-in the advantages of status quo actors, lacked legitimacy by being negotiated behind closed doors, unduly antagonized aggrieved states that felt disrespected, and ultimately succumbed to the law of unintended consequences.

1919: A cartoon depicting the formation of the League of Nations after the First World War.

Photo by: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

The question of empire and colonial nationalism is a telling case in point. Some of the most intractable problems of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have their basis in the settlements designed to stabilize the world after WWI. Of course, colonial activists around the world took up ideas of self-determination for their own purposes, which had the impact of destabilizing the Western-oriented international order that those ideas were supposed to uphold. New state borders created to end the war themselves became causes of later wars. The League of Nations Mandates System perpetuated colonial rule in the Middle East, Africa, and Oceania, while colonial subjects from Egypt to India took up arms against their imperial rulers once it became clear that self-determination only applied to those societies paternalistically declared by the Allied powers to be "civilized." In short, when we contemplate opportunities to craft an international order, we must be humble; for every United Nations charter in history, there are many more Versailles settlements.

Third, **while nationalist tensions help account for both WWI and our present international crisis, both periods ironically demonstrate the reality of shared problems and international connections.** The moments of transition in the international order in 1919-1920 and today reveal that global interconnectivity is not a tap that is turned on or off, but rather a condition of globality that expands and contracts. International cooperation and conflict are not mutually exclusive but in fact interconnected—they happen at the same time, often between the same actors. The British writer Norman Angell declared in *The Great Illusion* (1910) that international war had become irrational because the world was too interconnected. The outbreak of WWI four years later proved Angell wrong in the short run of course, but in other ways Angell was correct. Internationalism is here to stay. The interconnectivity that marks our global lives cannot be "unwound" without immense human sacrifice. More importantly, we are bound together by global problems whether we wish to be or not: the United States may withdraw from the WHO, but it cannot withdraw its citizens from communicable diseases.

As we consider historical analogies, it is worth noting that there are worrying parallels between the challenge to the international order posed by the defeated (Germany), aggrieved (Italy and Japan), and pariah (Soviet Union) states after WWI and China's situation today. Like the interwar Soviet Union, China jealously guards its internal political system while simultaneously craving international recognition as a great power.

It is not a coincidence that Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, the Chinese Communist Party's leading founders, were inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution and Marxist ideas that spread in China during the May Fourth Movement in 1919. There are also echoes of a century ago in China's thin-skinned response to criticisms over its handling of the Covid-19 outbreak. Beijing has vociferously denounced the (unfair) label of Covid-19 as the "Chinese" flu by Donald Trump and others. That blaming tactic recalls the "Spanish" prefix attached to the 1918 flu; it did not originate there, but other countries could blame Spain because it was first reported by the uniquely uncensored Spanish press.

These observations highlight the temptingly adversarial mindsets that global challenges can elicit. That said, it is always worth reminding that **the war metaphor commonly applied to the Covid-19 crisis is counter-productive, and it can lead us to make decisions we may later regret.** We can no more conduct a war on a virus than we can on hunger, poverty, or drugs. These are biological or social problems, not enemies to "defeat," and they are best addressed through cooperation, not conflict. The ubiquity of the war metaphor in public discourse over Covid-19 demonstrates how our political discourse remains locked in a world war "analogy trap." Historical analogies can provide us with guidance from the past and inspiration for how to respond to current challenges, but they can also prove a drag on innovation.

International orders constructed in a defensive manner—to prevent war rather than encourage cooperation—do not provide security. The seven WWI peace treaties fundamentally changed the map of Europe and laid the foundations for the postwar international order, but the challenges faced by peacemakers were simply too immense to address in a systemic fashion. What emerged was a postwar international system that gave rise to both conflict and cooperation. The lesson we can draw from this history is that while conflict cannot be avoided, it can be contained. The successful initiatives of international cooperation that emerged from WWI were the result of women and men who rejected the language of conflict and turned, if sometimes naively, to the constructive work of cultivating common transnational interests. That these initiatives persevered throughout the dark decades of nationalist conflict in the 1930s and 1940s reminds us that international cooperation in response to the shared challenge of Covid-19 and an international system in transition is possible. We do not face a binary decision between cooperation and conflict. Politicians failed their publics in negotiating flawed peace settlements after WWI that encouraged nationalist rivalries and "beggar thy neighbor" economics. In contrast, individuals, experts, civil society activists, and bureaucrats built bridges across national and cultural borders. Let us hope the voices of the latter and not the former guide us forward in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Creating a Global Order: Lessons from the Second World War and the Establishment of the UN System

FRANCINE MCKENZIE, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

The secretary general of the United Nations has described the Covid-19 pandemic as the most serious global crisis since the Second World War. It is also a sharp test of the global order that was constructed during and immediately after the war. International organizations were at the heart of this order, with the UN at its center, surrounded by specialist organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Health Organization (WHO), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) which gather information, develop plans and policies to address global challenges, build support for internationalist norms, create space to facilitate multilateral cooperation, and guard against threats to the collective well-being of all people. While there has been ongoing debate about the viability and sustainability of the UN system for over a decade, the pandemic has elicited sharp denunciations and strong endorsements of the WHO; these arguments for and against are applicable to the entire global order.

The recent announcement of the United States' withdrawal from the WHO brings this debate to a critical juncture: how can the global order continue to function if members, especially those that play leadership roles, quit these organizations? Predictions that the global order is on the verge of collapse rest on the belief that the United States created the UN system and that its leadership and support have been essential to maintaining the order since the end of the Second World War. But this is only one historical interpretation. Another plausible explanation is that U.S. leadership was one of many factors that led to the creation of the UN system and that the legitimacy and operation of the order did not depend solely on the backing of the greatest powers but also on far-reaching endorsement by smaller powers and widespread support for internationalism outside of government.

Revisiting how the UN system was established also recasts our understanding of why the global order is under strain today. The UN system contains built-in tensions and contradictions that help explain why international organizations are criticized for both overreaching and falling short. Dissecting how the post-1945 global order was established helps us to better understand current challenges and criticism and think about its future.

A Historical Dissection of the Establishment of the UN System

No single cause explains how or why the postwar order was created; rather, multiple factors converged to bring new and old ideas about the organization and purpose of international relations to fruition, build a critical momentum behind the reconstruction of the global order, and enable governments to reach agreement despite clashing priorities, competition, and mistrust. This is not a triumphalist history and it does not end with the establishment of the United Nations system. Making the order work was an ongoing challenge because of inherent contradictions and unresolved tensions in the way people and governments thought (and think) about the world and their place in it.

> *The UN system contains built-in tensions and contradictions that help explain why international organizations are criticized for both overreaching and falling short.*

First, there was a compelling motivation among members of the united nations (the name first used for the wartime coalition of states fighting the Axis powers) to work together to wage war and plan for peace. Members understood that defeat by the Axis countries would mean the destruction of their way of life, whether communist or democratic/capitalist; the devastation of their population; and the overrunning of their territory. The united nations coalition came together not because of shared values, political compatibility, or mutual sympathy, but because their survival was interconnected. Necessity made them allies, but their unity was fragile and bounded. This was certainly the case for the leaders of the alliance: the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. Wartime photographs of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin convey the impression of relaxed familiarity and unity of purpose, but there were deep currents of mistrust that complicated military cooperation, which were evident in ongoing disputes about the opening of the second front in Europe and secrecy surrounding the development of the atomic bomb. Disagreements about the postwar world were also constant and serious, such as over the future of the British Empire and the postwar government of Poland. These disagreements stemmed from political considerations that were shaped by their respective bases of power, ideological outlooks, and security challenges and resulted in jockeying for position and advantage in their wartime relationships and in relation to the postwar world. While wartime cooperation across the united nations—and amongst its leaders—was wide-ranging and impressive, their relations were also acrimonious, competitive, and strained. The

prospect of living under the fascist version of a new world order kept the allies working together in war and for peace.

As the common threat receded, cooperation was harder to maintain. Timing and context were therefore critical to reaching decisions about the goals, priorities, and operations of the postwar order. Indeed, some of the hardest decisions were made in the depths of the crisis. In 1943, Richard Law, the minister of state in the British Foreign Office while on his way to Washington to discuss the postwar trade system with U.S. officials, observed: "People were capable at this moment of sacrificing immediate advantage for the long-term gain, but when the moment of danger was removed they would be in a different mood."[45] In the context of the war, allied governments reached agreement on difficult issues—such as the veto power of the permanent five members of the Security Council, stabilizing exchange rates, and providing relief and supporting the rehabilitation of countries devastated by the war—because the consequences of failing to work together were in plain sight.

Early planning was essential to a successful outcome because global orders don't emerge overnight. Officials across the allied governments—especially in the United States and Britain—started to develop plans long before the end of the war, and even before it was clear that the united nations would prevail. President Roosevelt himself encouraged early planning for the postwar peace; he anticipated a bleak future "unless we plan now for the better world we mean to build."[46]

Allied leaders and officials understood they had an obligation to "win the peace," a phrase repeated constantly during the war. Winning the peace for the long term required understanding the root causes of war. While fascism and Nazism were immediate causes of the war, they were also seen as symptoms of underlying conditions that destabilized the international community. Many concluded that nations and nationalism were the underlying causes of conflict, but governments were not prepared to write themselves out of existence or dramatically curtail their sovereignty. Officials dismissed proposals for world federation that would position the nation below a transcendent superstate.[47] Rather, they tried to counter extreme nationalistic thinking and check government and popular instincts to think and act to the detriment of others by creating international organizations that would entrench rules to prevent war, elicit support for internationalist norms of restraint and shared well-being, manage tensions and disagreements to prevent full-scale war, and initiate and coordinate cooperation on common problems.[48] In ideal circumstances, international organizations and their member nations would have complementary goals and would work together harmoniously, but international

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45. Informal Economic Discussions, Plenary, 1st meeting, September 20, 1943, CAB78/14, The National Archives (TNA).
46. Ernest Bevin quoted Roosevelt in his Address, International Labour Office, Emergency Committee of the Governing Body, Draft Minutes of the Fifth Session, April 20-24, 1942, CAB117/100, TNA.
47. See, for example, Henry Usborne's proposal for world government, dated June 6, 1947. Members of the Foreign Office called it "dangerous nonsense." The Plan in Outline (for World Government by 1955) and Minute sheet on Usborne's Plan for world government, FO371/67571, TNA.
48. Ikenberry describes this postwar settlement (which existed alongside the Cold War order) as "the most institutionalized" ever. G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 163.

organizations also had a mandate to restrain governments from following a narrow national course. This commitment to shared goals and individual state's interests built tension into the postwar international order.

Winning the peace also required improving conditions of life for people everywhere, such as better standards of nutrition, access to education for children, and higher wages for workers. Given the sacrifices made by soldiers and civilians, a return to the prewar status quo was not good enough. Adolf Berle, a senior planner for the U.S. Department of State, described the promise to servicemen that after the war: "the peace earned with blood and danger may have real worth in their individual lives."[49] General Sikorski, prime minister of Poland's government-in-exile, echoed this commitment: "Humanity is not shedding blood to return to old, pre-war ideas, but to new and hundredfold better conceptions."[50] No one opposed the end of malnutrition or rising standards of living, but realizing these laudable goals was anything but easy. Seemingly straight forward issues were entangled in related issues (nutrition was embroiled in agricultural production and international trade), required the introduction of controversial policies (lowering tariff barriers), or would reform existing societies (increasing the power of workers or dismantling class privilege through universal education) and were therefore caught up in political debates and processes that led to a different bottom line.

> *Given the sacrifices made by soldiers and civilians, a return to the prewar status quo was not good enough.*

Many of the ideas about the postwar order were not new. Despite the failings of the League of Nations, it provided the template for the United Nations. Indeed, the UN was an expanded version of the League of Nations, embedding what had worked well (such as social and economic work and technical assistance) and improving what had fallen short (protecting sovereign nations). We can trace the elements of the postwar peace further back. For example, the work of the Universal Races Congress in the early twentieth century, as well as W.E.B. DuBois's efforts at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, to combat racism were precursors to UNESCO. The creation of the post-World War II international order was the culmination of decades, if not centuries, of international relations practice and peace activism.

Committed leaders were also essential to building the UN system. Many studies suggest that the United States defined the aims, scope, and operations of the global order. [51] The

49. "The Uses of Victory," September 19, 1942, Berle papers, Box 65, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.
50. General Wladyslaw Sikorski, "Address at a meeting of Polish Organizations," (Chicago, Illinois, December 17, 1942), War and Peace Aims, United Nations, The Archives and Records Management Section (UN ARMS).
51. See, for example, R. Kagan, *The World America Made* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2012); S. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: the founding of the United Nations* (Westview Press, 2003); and Ikenberry, "The Settlement of 1945," in *After Victory* for examples of this line of thinking.

norms and purpose of the UN system were by and large compatible with U.S. interests and ideology. But U.S. leadership was discharged in other crucial ways, including making planning for the postwar world a wartime priority; allocating human resources to develop ideas; consulting extensively with other governments to build a critical mass of support; and organizing conferences where the structure, mandate, and operation of these organizations were hammered out. Allocating resources, providing logistical support, and cultivating multilateral cooperation were all essential elements of U.S. leadership.

Australian politician Herbert Vere Evatt, former President of the United Nations General Assembly, circa 1955.

Photo by: Central Press/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Leadership and engagement of many other countries were also essential to the creation of the postwar order. Some scholars have highlighted the importance of British involvement in the creation of the UN system; this broadens the leadership club slightly but does not challenge the view that the greatest wartime powers were primarily responsible for creating the global order. The emphasis on Anglo-American negotiations also downplays the time and importance that both governments dedicated to responding meaningfully to the concerns of other (smaller) states in order to attain far-reaching support for the postwar order. That support would not be forthcoming in a global order dominated by the greatest powers and tailored only to their interests. As Trygve Lie, Norway's foreign minister (and later the first secretary general of the UN), explained in 1942: "We are not fighting against the new German order merely to go into a new Anglo-American order."[52] Australia's minister in Washington also objected to "any undue domination of any post-war councils by a restricted group of Powers."[53]

Inclusive support required adapting some ideas and practices and creating checks and balances to great power authority—such as expanding the responsibilities of the General Assembly of the UN to offset the veto of the Permanent Five in the Security Council and permitting genuine multilateral engagement. Nor were rules rigidly applied; exceptions were made to accommodate the conditions and interests of all states. For example, the GATT allowed developing countries to use protective measures like import controls to

52. The Ambassador to the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, May 9, 1942, in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942 General, The British Commonwealth and the Far East, Volume I*, no. 94.
53. Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Roy Veatch of the Office of the Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations, 14 July 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943 General*, *Volume I*, no. 812.

support economic stability and growth. The UN system was therefore not simply an emanation of U.S. power. Pragmatism, compromise, flexibility, and inclusivity were essential in investing the UN system with legitimacy.

Although the 1940s were a high point in the history of internationalism, the UN system had critics and detractors from the outset. Across governments, there were opponents to the international organization approach to global order, in particular among people who objected to limitations on national sovereignty or to putting collective well-being on par with national interests. Champions were needed to move the project of rebuilding the global order forward within and among members of the united nations. These champions were found in senior positions in government and among people with political cachet that they translated into international statesmanship, including Jan Smuts (South Africa), who generated influential ideas about the UN; John Maynard Keynes (United Kingdom) and Harry Dexter White (United States), who developed blueprints for the IMF and the stabilization of exchange rates; and Stanley Bruce (Australia), whose arguments about the importance of social and economic work laid the groundwork for the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

There were also champions of the international option outside of government. Academics, scientists, lawyers, youth groups, business leaders, religious bodies, women's associations, and private citizens developed plans to make the world secure, harmonious, and prosperous. They acted on their own initiative and they talked, wrote, and organized about their internationalist impulses. For example, H. G. Wells was a long-time advocate of human rights, and he published extensively on rights during the war, including *The Rights of Man; or, What Are We Fighting For?* Grayson Kefauver, the dean of education at Stanford, exchanged ideas with educational experts about the role of schools, curricula, and teachers to sustain peaceful relations between peoples and nations.54 Although government officials viewed some of the ideas circulating in civil society as dangerously radical, their activism cultivated an internationalist ethos that built momentum for internationalist and rules-based approaches to international relations and justified government participation in the UN system.

Although the lessons of history are not straightforward and we must be on guard against faulty parallelism, this interpretation suggests alternative ways of thinking about the current crisis confronting the global order and how a new order might come about.

First, the design of the global order explains why international organizations are so easily faulted. Contemporary criticisms of the WHO are not new or surprising. A structural fault was built into the UN system, both between nation-state actors and international organizations and between national well-being and the collective good. From its inception, the challenge for the UN and the other specialist organizations has been to balance these competing interests. This is an unwinnable position: when an organization is proactive, coordinating members or strongly suggesting policies for national

54. For examples of his thinking, see Workshop on Education for War and Peace, "Education for War and Peace," (workshop held at Stanford University, 1942) and Grayson Kefauver, "Education an Important Factor in Achieving an Enduring Peace," (presentation to the Woman's National Democratic Club, Washington, D.C., February 7, 1944).

governments, it will be criticized for encroaching on national sovereignty; when an organization waits for member-states to give it direction, it will be criticized for being too passive or deferential. The default condition of international organizations is beleaguered.

Second, leadership is important and far-reaching support is critical. Many people believe that U.S. disengagement with and criticism of the global order is tantamount to its demise. Leaders matter to the global order, but leadership involves more than the projection of power and does not make far-reaching support optional or unimportant. Small states and middle powers supported the UN in spite of and because of great power direction. The backing of leading countries is important, but diffuse support strengthens the legitimacy of the global order and creates reinforcing pillars of support.

Third, support for the global order will never be complete and that is OK. Today, some people believe that national public health systems are best equipped to combat the spread of the Covid-19 virus, whereas others insist that cooperation and coordination across nations is essential. National and international logics are both at play—sometimes as competing options, sometimes as complementary approaches. National and international ways of thinking were also at the heart of debates about global order in the 1940s. There was not a consensus about the nature and workings of the global order then, and we shouldn't expect a consensus now. But nor do we need consensus to have a functioning global order. Compromise, pragmatism, and trade-offs have elicited far-reaching, if not always enthusiastic, buy-in. National and international outlooks coexist, compete, and are entangled. The result is messy, but not necessarily unworkable, as the past 75 years have shown.

Fourth, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The conferences at Hot Springs, Bretton Woods, and San Francisco (and too many others to name) to create the UN and the specialist international organizations in the 1940s were tentative beginnings. The UN and the other international organizations still had to achieve their goals, which was made more difficult after the war ended and the national interest/collective well-being formula was recalibrated. The start of the Cold War situated the UN system in a new context of global conflict; this was both a help and a hindrance to organizations that had to adapt while remaining committed to the prevention of war and the betterment of human life.

Fifth, it is nothing new that these processes are political. The WHO today is caught in the crossfire of deteriorating U.S.-China relations and embroiled in domestic political machinations. Likewise, the United Nations system emerged after the Second World War despite competing interests and power struggles between two superpowers. Politics inevitably complicate—even distort—the work of international organizations. Although international organizations are supposed to be apolitical, they require a sensitive political radar to navigate in a changing, sometimes volatile, geopolitical environment.

The history of the 1940s and the creation of the post-1945 global order cannot be imposed as a linear analogy that tells us what we should do today. But it can help us to determine whether and how a new and better order can be built by identifying key questions. What is the purpose of the global order? Where there are competing

priorities and visions, will there be sufficient motivation to reach a compromise that will receive widespread support? In the 1940s, the undisputed goal was to prevent another war and, even more ambitiously, to try to create a truly peaceful world. What factors impede or threaten the mission of a new global order? Without understanding the deep causes of conflict and disagreement, the global order cannot function effectively. Nonetheless, identifying those causes does not mean they can be eliminated, as was the case in the 1940s when nations remained the dominant actors in world affairs.

Is this the right time to create a new order? The papers in this series confirm that it is possible to tackle dauntingly ambitious projects like creating global order after periods of major conflicts. But these papers also show that global orders are not simply the product of a moment; they are accretions of years of experience and ideas. Nor are orders static; they evolve and adapt, although there are limits to the extent to which they can reinvent themselves. Perhaps the most important questions are where are the champions of a new global order and who will be the leaders? Given the changes and challenges to the United States' global leadership and the far-reaching mistrust of China as its possible successor, are there other ways to imagine leadership? Of one thing we can be sure: building a new global order in the aftermath of the Second World War was a fraught process with an imperfect but workable result. There is no reason to think the process will be easier or the result better today.

The Decomposition and Improvisation of International Order: Lessons from the 1970s

DANIEL J. SARGENT, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

The international order that girded the post-1945 world was briefer in duration, more limited in scope, and more fragile in configuration than is often understood. By the late 1960s, the postwar order had entered a phase of discernable crisis. Over the decade that followed, public officials, outside critics, and policy entrepreneurs competed to redefine the terms of international order. Perceiving the end of the postwar phase in world politics and the advent of a distinctive new era, these thinkers and actors contemplated the question of how "a creative world order," as Henry Kissinger called it, might be devised to secure peace and prosperity under conditions quite different from those of the early Cold War. As we confront the tangible decomposition of international order in our own times, the experience of this earlier phase offers useful insight that can guide the work of reordering.

The Improvisation of Postwar Order

We should begin by rethinking our assumptions about the sources of postwar international order. Too often we assume that the settlement that cohered after the Second World War resulted from the realization of far-sighted wartime blueprints, from the dual bursts of architectural creativity that occurred in the wartime conferences at Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods. These frameworks for economic and political order mattered, but they pointed toward a future quite different from the history that unfolded in the years after 1945. Within months of the Second World War's end, the effort to realize wartime blueprints upon a universal scale encountered significant setbacks, such as the Soviet Union's refusal to participate in the Bretton Woods institutions. These setbacks prompted novel initiatives, which created an international order quite different from what wartime planners had envisioned.

Instead of a liberal order enacted at a planetary scale—a "world America made"— what emerged from the decade of improvisation that followed V-J Day was the ad hoc order that we often call the Cold War.[55] This was not a universal settlement but a crude geometry of geopolitical blocs. Mutual hostility was the Cold War's logic, and it served an ordering function: East and West kept each other in check, and the hierarchal alliances that the superpowers built kept unruly lesser powers—like Germany and Japan—in positions of responsible subordination. The Cold War was an accidental equipoise, not the enactment of anyone's grand design, but Cold War improvisations solved many of the problems that had vexed the victorious allies in 1945: the German problem, the transatlantic trade deficit, the disinclination of the United States to uphold European security, and so on. By the mid-1950s, a more-or-less stable Cold War order had emerged in Europe, achieving a kind of symbolic consecration at the Geneva Summit of Cold War leaders in 1955.

Outside Europe, the definition of postwar international order proved a slower and more challenging process. Creating the United Nations did not resolve the problem of colonialism: Britain and France retained broad swathes of empire, and the United States became more enamored of colonial solutions as the Cold War escalated. Enshrining self-determination and sovereign statehood as general bases for political order took around 15 years, coming only with the General Assembly's passage in 1960 of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. As scholars like Adom Getachew have shown, resolving the most fundamental question of all—who gets to have a state of their own—depended upon struggle and contest, much of it violent, not upon the realization of visionary blueprints.[56]

If the process of creation was more attenuated than we often imagine, the heyday of the postwar international order was also far briefer than we often assume. Indeed, there may be a case to make that no postwar international order was ever in fact realized. But let us assume that these turning points mark its operationalization: 1958, when a general return to currency convertibility occurred, bringing the IMF online; 1960, when the United Nations passed Resolution 1514, affirming a general right to decolonization and postcolonial statehood; and 1961, when the erection of the Berlin Wall stabilized the Cold War security order in Europe. These years might be taken for the apex phase in the postwar order: the moment when an international order of sovereign nation-states, organized in a pattern of bipolar confrontation, achieved its fullest and most perfect expression.

The Decomposition of Postwar Order

By the late 1960s, leaders on both sides had adapted to the Cold War—even moving to curtail the risks of nuclear war through arms control initiatives, which began with the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963. But, over time, living with estrangement diminished the sense of urgency that had warranted making far-reaching international commitments in the first place.[57] For the United States, the escalation of the Vietnam War from 1965

55. Robert Kagan, *The World America Made* (New York: Vintage, 2013).
56. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019). Also see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chaps. 8-12.
57. For a sense of the Cold War's waning urgency in US foreign policy, see Henry Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy:*

hastened the erosion of the domestic consensus that had made Cold War internationalism possible in the first place. By the late 1960s, Congress was poised to slash U.S. troop commitments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a threat that called into question the sustainability of the commitments that had made the Cold War order.[58]

Students march with anti-war placards on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley, California, 1969.

Photo by: Archive Photos/Getty Images

The bipolar structure of global power had entered a phase of tangible decomposition. Superpower influence was waning, a dynamic that transcended the Cold War divide as that conflict mellowed. In the West, both France and West Germany challenged U.S. leadership within the alliance. Each of these allies' economies as well as that of Japan grew faster after 1945 than did the U.S. economy. The resulting change in relative economic power destabilized an international settlement that had been improvised around the dissemination of U.S. goods, capital, and military services. From the late 1960s, the dollar experienced serial balance of payment crises, which culminated in 1971-73 when the Nixon administration responded by exploding the postwar system of fixed exchange rates.

Inside the Eastern bloc, the challenges to Soviet leadership proved even more dramatic: Czechoslovakians revolted against Moscow in 1968, and Mao Zedong's China rejected

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Three Essays (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969); and Ronald Steel, *Pax Americana* (New York: Viking, 1967).
58. Daniel Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 58.

Soviet leadership of the Communist world.[59] By the late 1960s, the ordering logic of Cold War division was in appreciable crisis, not least because the sense of stability that resulted from the prospect of mutual assured destruction—the Cold War's balance of terror—dulled the existential fears that had animated earlier commitments of both protection and allegiance.

By the early 1970s, pundits and policymakers were declaring that the postwar order was collapsing. Even the Nixon administration concluded in its annual report to Congress on U.S. foreign policy—the equivalent of today's National Security Strategy documents—that "the postwar order of international relations—the configuration of power that emerged from the Second World War—is gone." Encountering such voices now is startling, for the language resembles, quite precisely, any number of jeremiads for the postwar world order that have sounded since 2016, reminding us that the decomposition of international order is not a problem for our times alone.

> *By the early 1970s, pundits and policymakers were declaring that the postwar order was collapsing.*

The Re-creation of Order

Convinced that the postwar international order was in crisis, the Nixon administration attempted to enact what I have characterized (in my own book, *A Superpower Transformed)* as a conservative solution that aimed to prolong U.S. predominance within an enduring conception of Cold War international order.[60]

Nixon's approach emphasized three interconnected elements. The first was Nixon's strategy of détente, which aimed to forge a geopolitical equilibrium favorable to the United States through the opening to China. The second was the Nixon Doctrine, an axiom for avoiding embroilment in substate conflicts in the third world. The third involved the redistribution of burdens within the West Bloc—through the devolution of military responsibilities to regional powers, such as Iran, Brazil, and Indonesia, and through the adjustment of fiscal burdens within the West, including through the dollar devaluation enacted in 1971.

In some ways, Nixon's response to the slow fade of U.S. predominance prefigured Donald Trump's. Like Trump, Nixon sought to reallocate burdens—and encourage U.S. allies to contribute more. Like Trump, Nixon sought geopolitical deals to benefit the United States. Of the two, Nixon was more successful: with broad public support, he managed in the early 1970s to orchestrate a new balance of power between the Cold

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59. For crises within the East Bloc, see Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War In The Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns In The Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle For Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2009).
60. Sargent, *Superpower Transformed*, Chap. 2.

War's major protagonists while holding together a political coalition at home that remained supportive of enduring international leadership.

Still, Nixon's strategy contained omissions and blind spots. These became more glaring as the 1970s progressed. Nixon struggled to resolve the deleterious effects that his own tactics had upon longstanding U.S. alliances in Western Europe and Northeast Asia, and his approach was insensitive to the destabilizing effects that economic globalization had upon the international economic order, especially in the aftermath of the oil crisis of 1973-74.[61]

Trilateralism

A rival approach to world order that was more focused on managing the effects of globalization emerged in the U.S. foreign policy arena in the mid-1970s. Centered on the Trilateral Commission, an informal network of intellectual, political, and business leaders that the banker David Rockefeller and the political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski founded in late 1973, Trilateralism, as we might call this alternative approach, envisioned an adaption of international order to the challenges of a new era.[62] The Trilateralists grasped that the world had changed since the 1940s, and they proposed to resolve the challenges that relationships of intensifying economic interdependence created—from reordering monetary arrangements to accommodate financial globalization to managing energy scarcity in an era of external supply shocks. Through purposeful adaptation, they hoped to make international order more collaborative—and less dependent upon U.S. predominance and resources—than it had been in the recent past.

Whereas Nixon fixated on Cold War geopolitics and prioritized the management of relations with adversaries, the Trilateralists were more concerned with relations among the capitalist democracies, which they grouped into three regional cohorts: Europe, Japan, and North America.[63] Within this Trilateral framework, they hoped that a creative revitalization of international order might be made, initially in self-conscious opposition to Nixon's governing agenda. In fact, enacting elements of the Trilateralist agenda did not require seizing the White House. During the mid-1970s, the Nixon and Ford administrations borrowed elements of the Trilateralist agenda.[64] The inception of the G-7 summits (initially as the G-5) in 1975 was an important development, making informal policy dialogue among the leaders of the advanced industrialized countries a regular diplomatic event.

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61. For a pioneering analysis of globalization's destabilizing effects, see Richard Cooper, *The Economics of Interdependence: Economic Policy in the Atlantic Community* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1968).
62. Dino Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance: Informal Elite Diplomacy, 1972-82* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
63. This trilateral framework was embedded into all of the Trilateral Commission's Task Force Reports, each of which was co-authored by one representative of each of the Trilateral regions. See http://trilateral.org/.
64. Sargent, *Superpower Transformed*, Chap. 6. For a revisionist history of the Ford administration that addresses Ford's creative legacy in foreign policy, see Yanek Mieczkowski, *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2005).

From left, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, US President Gerald Ford and French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing arrive at the town hall of Rambouillet on November 17, 1975.

Photo by: -/AFP via Getty Images

Trilateralism became a governing agenda with the election of Jimmy Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski's installation as national security adviser. For the first two years, the administration fixated on an essentially Trilateralist agenda—prioritizing the reinvigoration of alliance relationships, the pursuit of a transnational economic stimulus initiative, and the consecration of human rights as a normative creed for an interdependent world. During this phase, Carter and Brzezinski treated the Soviet Union with near contempt, regarding their superpower rival as a relic from an earlier geopolitical phase. Only as Cold War tensions reescalated in 1979 did anti-Soviet containment again become an overarching rationale for U.S. foreign policy.[65]

The Cold War reemerged, but the Trilateralist approach to world order did not disappear. Instead, Carter improvised a synthetic framework that reconciled reinvigorated anti-Soviet policies with a new commitment to the security of a globalizing world economic order. The formulation in 1979-80 of new security commitments for the Persian Gulf—whose oil exports made the region, in Brzezinski's assessment, a strategic priority on a par with Western Europe and Northeast Asia—exemplified the synthesis. Long after Carter left office, Trilateralism and the ad hoc policy coordination it prioritized remained

65. Brian Auten, *Carter's Conversion: The Hardening of American Defense Policy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008); and David Skidmore, *Reversing Course: Carter's Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, And The Failure Of Reform* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996).

the framework through which heads of state and government would resolve serial and significant challenges to international order, from the soaring U.S. dollar in the mid-1980s down to, and including, the Great Recession of 2008/9.[66]

The New International Economic Order

Not all of the re-envisioning of international order that occurred during the 1970s achieved such durable effects. Far more oppositional than Trilateralism—and far less influential—was the critique of the postwar order that the Group of 77 developing countries (the G-77) debuted at the General Assembly of the United Nations in April 1974.[67] Taking inspiration from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the G-77's proposal for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) proposed to redistribute income from countries that consumed primary commodities—from bananas to bauxite—to countries that produced those commodities. What the G-77 sought was to transform the United Nations into an arbiter of commodity prices: a global planning agency for world trade. Predictably, the NIEO generated significant opposition in the West. In the end, the G-77's ambitious concept for remaking the international economy failed. The concept was always implausible, having been predicated upon the improbable assumption that the rich countries could be persuaded to transfer responsibility for international economic governance from institutions they dominated—the IMF and the GATT—to the majoritarian United Nations, where the third world countries held sway.

The NIEO's failure contrasts with the successes of Nixon's reformism, which aimed to preserve a U.S.-centered international order through the orchestration of a new geopolitical equilibrium, and the achievements of Trilateralism, which sought to cultivate new modes of collaboration among the industrial democracies. Neither Nixon nor the Trilateralists achieved all they sought, but both approaches contributed to the creative remaking of international order. The advocates of the NIEO, who envisioned a bold remaking of the architecture for international order, in contrast, achieved little. They lacked the power to impose an authoritative remaking of international order upon the world's dominant states. Unlike the architects of order who built at Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks, they strived for radical change in a moment that was less propitious to grand designs than 1944-45 had been.

Implications for Our Times

The solutions that decisionmakers improvised and enacted during earlier phases of international disorder do not provide blueprints for the remaking of international order in our times, when the international order inherited from the Cold War is fraying in diverse respects. Like their predecessors in the immediate post-World War II phase, policymakers in the 1970s improvised transient solutions in response to the problems of their own times. Often, they failed to accomplish what they themselves intended—their efforts

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66. I have characterized Carter's adoption of tough anti-Soviet policies in 1979/80 not as a reversion to an earlier approach but as an assimilation of Cold War and Trilateral priorities. See *Superpower Transformed*, Chap. 9.
67. Long sparse, scholarship on the NIEO has begun to proliferate. For an incisive early perspective, see Stephen D. Krasner, *Structural Conflict: The Third World Against Global Liberalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). For new directions, see *Humanity* 6, no. 1, special issue on the NIEO.

instead yielding unintended and even ironic effects. And yet, their experience may offer suggestive lessons on how to approach the work of reordering in an era of instability and decay. I recommend five. The first lesson is historical; the rest are more general.

My first concluding lesson: **beware of the temptation to #MIOGA** or "Make International Order Great Again," which is the MAGA adaptation of choice for the liberal internationalist crowd. The problem is that the past #MIOGA recalls is an illusion: whatever international order cohered after 1945 was far briefer than today's liberal internationalists tend to perceive. To move forward, we must recalibrate the assumption that the United States during World War II forged a framework for order that endured until the unthinkable rise of Donald Trump.

This leads into my second concluding point: The reality is that wartime blueprints did not provide such a framework; the international order that *did* cohere after 1945 resulted more from improvisation and adaptation to unanticipated setbacks, especially the U.S.-Soviet estrangement, than to self-conscious and far-sighted design. **World order isn't architecture; it's improvisation.** If policymakers fixate upon the work of grand design and strive to emulate the achievement of Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods the likeliest results will be frustration and failure—not least because opportunities for self-conscious architecture come only with the ends of major wars but also because identifying wartime institutions as the basis for postwar international order overstates the significance of these initiatives. To the extent that any interlude of stable international order cohered in the postwar phase, it did so as the ironic result of policy adaptation to unanticipated developments: the deterioration of superpower relations and the formation of rigid Cold War alliance systems. Efforts to build grand institutional mansions for enacting postwar order achieved little, much as Franklin Roosevelt had feared would be the case. Instead, the most orderly phase in postwar international life was arguably the period that spanned from Stalin's death in 1953 to Nixon's demise in 1974—a period when the ordering logic of Cold War division passed through its long solstice phase.[68]

> *To move forward, we must recalibrate the assumption that the United States during World War II forged a framework for order that endured until the unthinkable rise of Donald Trump.*

A third lesson follows naturally: **confrontation can generate cohesion.** After 1945, the most powerful force shaping the project of world ordering was the Cold War conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Superpower estrangement had especially

68. For a classic characterization of the high Cold War as a phase of international stability, see John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security* 10, no. 4 (1986): 99–142. On U.S. hegemony as a source of systemic stability during this phase, see Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

salutary effects within the United States, animating the Congress to commit political capital and taxpayer dollars to some vision of the international common good. Beyond U.S. domestic politics, the estrangement between the superpowers facilitated the orchestration of common purpose within the Western bloc, encouraging the United States to commit to Europe and the Europeans to commit to collective purposes. This point has obvious resonance today: one plausible silver lining of the deterioration in U.S.-China relations that observers have already labeled Cold War 2.0 could be a recommitment of the world's democracies to shared purposes and—even better—shared values.

Next, an operational insight from the 1970s: **focus on tangible problems, not grand principles.** During the phase of decomposition that I have surveyed in this brief essay—the decade of the 1970s—grand efforts to remake the international order faltered. The failures included not only the NIEO but also more practical efforts to design a Bretton Woods 2.0 in the aftermath of the breakdown of fixed exchange rates. The successes that occurred during the 1970s resulted, in contrast, from efforts to resolve more practical disagreements: how exchange rate stability should be sustained in the absence of a gold-dollar exchange standard, for example, or how the balance of payments deficits resulting from a quick quadrupling of oil prices should be managed. Over time, the experience of the 1970s suggests international collaboration on tangible and specific problems can become a basis upon which new problems can be engaged. This point has implications for our contemporary foreign policy debates: the revitalization of liberal international order might be an interesting abstract proposition, but it is too vague and incoherent an objective to have much resonance in the policy arena.

Finally, and more optimistically**, renewal sometimes comes by surprise.** Here I will note that the pessimism of the 1970s—a phase when international order was broadly understood to be in decay—gave way in the 1980s to a phase of renewed optimism, in which globalization appeared less a source of disruption, as it seems today, than a frontier of possibilities, which governments strived to manage through ad hoc collaboration, along the kinds of institutional lines that the Trilateralists had sketched out. The shift in mood that occurred in the 1980s may be difficult to explain, but it should remind us not only that dawns do break but also that renewals can surprise. After all, few diplomats who found themselves at loggerheads with human rights activists in the early 1970s would have predicted that the promotion of human rights would in time become a source of renewed vitality for U.S. foreign policy. If the pursuit of international order is to be a creative endeavor, we should be open to similar surprises in our own times, including—I will suggest—to the prospect that controlling the deleterious advance and effects of anthropogenic climate change might yet become a basis for reinvigorated world order.

Returning to our point of departure, we might reflect again upon the idea of "postwar order." The term implies that the history of international order resembles the evolutionary theory of punctuated equilibrium—all phases of stability, disrupted by catastrophes. Both the commonplace description of our contemporary order as a legacy of the Second World War and the landmarks that historians deploy to organize the past—1648, 1714, 1815, and 1919—imply that international orders cohere after major

wars, into which decaying orders must ultimately collapse. From the vantage of 2020, this is an unsettling perspective. The manifest dilemmas of our own times, we might easily conclude, will not yield to the stability of renewed international order until we have passed through the trials of another great crisis.

But this would be too bleak. Take a closer look at historical experience, as we have done here, and the quest for international order appears not as a chain of terrible reckonings but as a work in perpetual progress, an incremental project that advances when states cooperate to resolve tangible and practical problems. This should be reassuring. If international order results from meaningful progress on practical dilemmas, rather than from cycles of demolition and rebuilding, there is no reason to await catastrophe. Instead, striving for progress on practical dilemmas from climate change to biosecurity may suffice to advance the project of international order, in our times as much as in the past.

Small States and the Challenges of the International Order

HILLARY BRIFFA, LECTURER IN DEFENSE STUDIES, KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

When major powers clash or grow more competitive, the historical record shows that small states are the first to be buffeted by the actions of their larger counterparts. The question of what small states can do when the international order begins to creak has sparked renewed interest in recent years. Even for those small states with an established strategic culture, such as Singapore, there is no escaping the dilemmas that such a scenario creates. At the May 2019 International Institute for Strategic Studies' Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia's premier defense summit, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong dedicated his keynote speech to stressing the necessity of stable relations between the United States and China, together with something of a plea about the role of small states in the world order. "Unfortunately, when the lines start to get drawn everybody asks, 'Are you my friend or not my friend?'" he reflected, "and that makes it difficult for the small countries. We must expect sometimes to be asked these questions, and the answer is, 'Well, I am friends with you, but I have many friends and that is the way the world has to be.' If it were not, I think it would be a much unhappier world."[69]

Small states do not set the international agenda. This means that if the fears of a breakdown of the rules-based order are well-founded, it will have profound implications for their security. Thus, these actors must look within their own armory—at the tactics and strategies available to them, within certain bounds—and consider how much leverage they can exert within the context in which they operate. Successful small state strategies tend to be time-specific and tightly bounded by circumstances; when the paradigm shifts, they must adapt accordingly.

What is the role of small states in the international order? Can small states do anything more than move swiftly to avoid being trampled when elephants collide? Some insight into these questions can be offered by tracing the development of autonomous small state

69. Lee Hsien Loong, "Keynote Address," (The IISS Shangri-La Dialouge, Singapore, May.31, 2019), https://www.iiss.org/-/media/files/shangri-la-dialogue/2019/speeches/keynote-address--lee-hsien-loong-prime-minister-of-singapore--provisional.ashx.

strategies in the changing international order since the end of the Second World War. This paper will address three specific strategies within that vast subject: first, neutrality to circumvent conflict; second, strategic hedging and the vision of a "third" way of operating when caught in the midst of great power competition; and third, the harnessing of multilateralism to bind great power behavior and secure the national interest.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in a substantive debate about what constitutes a small state, and indeed a definitional consensus remains the holy grail of the discipline. Let us stipulate that what distinguishes small states from their greater counterparts are a number of existing vulnerabilities that become more prominent as physical/population size decreases: smaller and weaker economies are more exposed to fluctuations in the global markets; tiny populations have limited strategic capabilities for self-preservation in war; and many small states are situated in high-risk locations, with infrastructure that has less insurance against the extreme effects of climate.

Small states, therefore, face a different set of problems when compared with their larger counterparts, both in relation to the nature of problems (such as the extent of their reliance on trade with other states) and in possible solutions (such as limited human resources). As a result, the governments of small states adopt a different set of behaviors than larger states, and these influence the way their democratic systems, public administration, and economic systems function. In turn, these influence their room for foreign policy maneuver and the ability for small states to achieve their desired goals in international affairs.

These vulnerabilities do not dictate the power of a state, and "small" as a modifier should be taken quite literally; a state small in size and/or population can compensate for these vulnerabilities by leveraging other resources, making them small powers rather than weak states.[70] The strategies discussed forthwith should therefore be understood as small state efforts to act as small powers, rather than weak states, in the international order.

Small States and Neutrality

It was not until the formation of the United Nations in the immediate postwar era that the status and security of small states as equal sovereign actors began to be studied as key ingredients to a stable international order. In the nineteenth century, for example, essentially all except Austria, Prussia, Russia, Great Britain, and France—the countries that comprised the Concert of Europe—would have been considered small states and objects of an international order designed to preserve dominance for the members of the Concert.

In that context, a small state's power to influence international affairs depended almost entirely on its contribution to balancing and bandwagoning efforts. A major source of small state vulnerability is their inability to defend themselves alone against greater powers; they must combine resources, often by joining alliances, to safeguard their

70. Academics such as Handel distinguish between two understandings of the term "small state": that of a geographically limited territorial entity, versus a state which perceives itself to be limited by its size. The latter category, which he calls a "weak state," considers itself unable to exert any significant influence; conversely, a "small power" is identified by Handel as "a small political entity, powerful enough to influence world politics." Michael Handel, Weak States in the *International System* (London: Cass and Company, 1981).

political and economic survival. Alternatively, they can "bandwagon" together with medium-sized powers to keep a large, threatening power in check.

Yet balancing and bandwagoning pose dilemmas for small states. Accepting the protection of a middle or great power may leave them vulnerable to penetration or subjugation by the protector, or even increasingly vulnerable to their patron's adversaries. Bandwagoning requires a high level of trust because it enhances the power of the actor that leads the parade. A hallmark of small state foreign policy in the twentieth century has therefore been the pursuit of a third path.

Instead of taking a side, many small states in modern times have chosen to remain neutral to better sustain their autonomy. Because neutrality often places limitations on the ability to increase military capabilities (long considered the foundation of national security), this strategy appears to fly in the face of the logic of the defense of state sovereignty. Yet neutrality can actually enable small states to better safeguard their sovereignty and limited resources by staying out of conflict entirely. Annette Baker Fox's pioneering study of World War II diplomacy demonstrated how small states of that era—Sweden, Turkey, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Switzerland—were all able to navigate the turbulence precisely because they remained neutral (a successful foreign policy orientation ascribed to the diplomatic efforts of their governments).[71] At the same time, as the Belgian historical experience shows, small state neutrality is not just an internal matter: larger counterparts in the international system may always exert their power to challenge the sovereign decision of a small state to remain neutral. Neutrality is therefore only a viable strategy to the extent that the order-making powers of the day acquiesce.

> *Instead of taking a side, many small states in modern times have chosen to remain neutral to better sustain their autonomy.*

Despite this drawback, neutrality remains a useful posture to serve the security interests of new and relatively weak states in the international system. Domestically, decisionmaking elites can avoid the charge that they are tools of one international faction or another, while maintaining the added value of freedom of action and flexibility for the practicing state. It is also a particularly attractive option for small states located in the vicinity of hostile neighbors or rising regional powers. A prime example is Finland, whose strategic calculus is influenced by a long history of insecurity on the border of an enormous, dangerous neighbor to its East and a hegemon demanding influence from the West. Opting for a policy of neutrality and military non-alignment allows Finland to retain its room for maneuver without alienating Russia.

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71. Annette Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959).

Neutrality can also increase influence. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is located in Vienna precisely because Austria was neutral. Likewise, the European headquarters of the United Nations is in Switzerland. Hence, a neutral posture may allow small states to take on additional roles or assume an increased importance in the international system than they may have otherwise been afforded. However, in a world characterized by state sovereignty within powerful institutions, the membership of a number of small neutral states—including Finland, Malta, and Austria—in the European Union has raised serious questions about the continuing legitimacy of their neutral foreign policy stance. As many EU states move to ramp up their collective security through hard power (and not just political and economic cooperation) small neutral member states may be prompted to decide between membership and neutrality.

Small States in the Middle: Seeking a "Third" Way in the Postwar International Order

By the 1960s, various processes of imperial decline and decolonization ushered in many new states, accompanied by a period of newfound interest in the role of these states and how they would fit into the international order. The Cold War posed a classic dilemma for small states; there were opportunities to benefit as superpowers competed for allegiance, but the previously described risks still remained. This led to an attempt by small states to extricate themselves from the chessboard of the Cold War through the Non-Aligned Movement.

Non-alignment, a foreign policy orientation that was widely adopted by small states during the Cold War period, is a rejection of the system of competitive groupings established around the East-West confrontation zones in the post-1945 bipolar system. During the Cold War, non-alignment meant specifically a refusal to ally exclusively with the Americans or the Soviets rather than general neutrality; India, for instance, was a non-aligned state yet engaged in three wars with Pakistan during the Cold War.[72] In other words, non-aligned states were not passive observers of international relations but sought to wield influence by explicitly rejecting the concepts of great power domination and constraining blocs. More generally, non-alignment has served as an assertion of the independence of the state, hence its clear attraction to those new members of the system produced by the decolonization process.

The Non-Aligned Movement reflected the shared values, as outlined by Fidel Castro in the 1979 Havana Declaration, to ensure "the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their "struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics."[73] The forum is a visible manifestation of a prevailing, alternative worldview; it was not just a talking shop, but developed policy proposals to actively reshape the international order in a more equitable manner.

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72. Radovan Vukadinovic, "Small States and the Policy of Non-Alignment," in *Small States in International Relations*, ed. A. Schou and O. Brundtland (New York: Wiley Interscience, 1971), 106.
73. Priscilla Roberts, *The Cold War: Interpreting Conflict through Primary Documents* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2018).

Heads of state and government and foreign ministers pose for the group photo opportunity at the 12th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Durban 02 September.

Photo by: KAREL PRINSLOO/AFP via Getty Images

Most notable was the effort by the NAM to revise the global political economy by replacing the Bretton Woods System—that favored the great powers that had designed it—with a New International Economic Order (NIEO) that would reconfigure existing structures and processes to favor central planning over free markets, creating, in theory, more equitable terms of trade and development assistance to remedy the poverty in the global South. However, lack of political will meant that the project failed to materialize, and the Washington Consensus and neoliberal economic globalization gained ground. The refusal of developed states to implement the NIEO resolutions, together with the lack of relative influence of the South in world politics, calls into question the capacity for small states to realize their world-shaping visions in practice.

Small States and Strategic Hedging

The height of the Cold War is also a particularly interesting time to examine the bilateral behavior of small states. This is because the specific circumstances of this period enabled small states to practice a considerable degree of ingenuity and flexibility in their relations with the competing superpowers of the era. The small island of Malta is one such example. Capitalizing on its geostrategic location in the middle of the Mediterranean, the cost of NATO payments for the use of Maltese naval facilities was increased dramatically to ensure it would not pivot to the Soviets. Moreover, Malta signed both defense agreements with Italy and treaties of friendship with Libya. Although a risky endeavor, strategic

hedging allowed it to accrue lucrative financial assistance and guaranteed security assistance from both the East and the West throughout this period.

Strategic hedging is thus another attractive strategic approach for small states, which allows them to circumvent the potential political provocation or economic ramifications of balancing, as well as the prospective subservience of bandwagoning.[74] This is pertinent to contemporary regional dynamics in Southeast Asia, which show evidence of this approach: all Southeast Asian states must maintain economic and diplomatic ties with China; however, this does not necessarily equate to their ready acceptance of China's growing power or their outright political or military alignment with China. When assessing whether they should opt for balancing or bandwagoning with China, both options are risky. As a result, Southeast Asian countries simultaneously foster relationships with other large powers—such as the United States, Japan, Russia, and India—as a counterweight to Chinese influence.[75] Should China increase its aggression in the region or cease to abide by ASEAN's ordering principles, this strategy provides a foundation for the Southeast Asian states to respond with cooperative defensive measures against China.

The practice is of course not limited to Southeast Asia. Strategic hedging is conducive to maintaining the freedom of maneuver in areas where alliances can shift unexpectedly, as typified by the Gulf region. Oman, for instance, chooses this strategy in order to preserve its ties with other, threatening actors. Oman participates in the GCC alliance to balance the Iranian threat, while refraining from challenging Saudi authority. In this way, the smaller power can offset and minimize the threats posed by both regional powers without confronting either of them. By practicing "cooperative and competitive policies," Oman creates what Medeiros refers to as a "geopolitical insurance strategy."[76]

Allegiances in the international order are therefore more mutable than one might presume. It is evident that hedging strategies provide room for maneuver to strengthen or minimize relationships depending on the relative potential benefits. Hedging requires the navigation of ongoing strategic uncertainty, which is not ideal for long-term strategic planning, but it does sometimes allow small states to be alliance-shapers, as opposed to alliance-takers.

Small States and Multilateralism

Balancing, bandwagoning, and neutrality are useful strategies for small states to navigate an anarchic international order defined solely by the relative power of state actors. But during the late twentieth century, international order came to be defined also by a set of rules and norms that superseded power. The state is still the primary actor in international relations, and power is not irrelevant; however, the interaction of state power takes place through the practice of multilateralism and cooperation and the enjoining of international institutions in order to legitimately shape global governance.

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74. V. Jackson, "Power, trust, and network complexity: three logics of hedging in Asian security," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 14, no. 3 (2014): 331–356.
75. Brock Tessman and Wojtek Wolfe "Great Powers and Strategic Hedging: The Case of Chinese Energy Security Strategy," *International Studies Review* 13, no. 2 (2011): 216.
76. Evan Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia Pacific Stability," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2005): 164.

The 1980s rules-based order of institutions such as the European Economic Community (EEC) demonstrated how states may be willing to cede a margin of their autonomy in order to create "integrated communities" that foster economic growth and thereby reap rewards they could not accrue individually.[77] Through collective security organizations and agreements, small states can mitigate uncertainty within their region and enhance the prospects for regional cooperation. The logic behind this can be applied to global institutions as well. International organizations, systems, accords, treaties, rules, and transparency agreements represent a trade of some element of sovereignty and freedom of action in exchange for a useful benefit.

Rules and transparency are attractive to small states because they make it more difficult for great powers to impose their will through military means. Strong institutions level the playing field in an asymmetric relationship and formalize acceptable behavior. This makes the international system more predictable and navigable for the small state and allows small states to achieve their interests at lower risk and cost. Therefore, small states have a vested interest in ordering international behavior through institutions and multilateralism. Large states also have a stake in an established rules-based system on the basis that it affords them greater legitimacy, both in international relations as well as amongst their domestic populations when making consequential decisions. As Michael Barnett argues, "World Orders are created and sustained not only by great power preferences but also by changing understandings of what constitutes a legitimate international order."[78] As societies change, acceptable international relations behavior changes too. By influencing the norms of what constitutes acceptable behavior and legally binding larger actors to abide by the established rules, small states can reduce power politics.

To understand how a small state avails of this strategy, another example may be drawn from the activity of Malta at the United Nations. In 1967, Malta's permanent representative to the UN, Arvid Pardo, instigated the innovative proposal to designate the seabed, ocean floor, and sub-soil as "Common Heritage of Mankind" in order to preserve their resources for all nations. This concept arose partly on ethical grounds and partly on the realist understanding that if there were no penalty for doing so, the most developed nations would always be able to exploit these resources at the expense of developing nations.

> *Rules and transparency are attractive to small states because they make it more difficult for great powers to impose their will through military means.*

77. James Caporaso and Joseph Jupille, "Institutionalism and the European Union: Beyond International Relations and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 429–44, https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.429.

78. John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens, "Social Constructivism," in *The Globalisation of World Politics*, 4th ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 168.

This was a controversial proposal, but Pardo prevailed because several supporting factors aligned in its favor. First, he placed legal emphasis in his proposal on the "seabed," rather than the entirety of ocean space. Passing this limited proposal (albeit not as ambitious as its proponent advocated) could set the precedent for its expansion in the future. Timing was also important here: as the United States and Soviet Union competed in the space race, smaller countries sought to ensure the ocean would not become a similar battleground for superpower competition. Expertise and communication were also essential. Together with the international expert on maritime law, Elisabeth Mann Borgese, Pardo wrote the book *The New International Economic Order and the Law of the Sea*, which sought to promote the common heritage idea as an ethical concept fundamental to the new world order. This captured the support of the proponents of the NIEO, who favored distributive justice. Finally, Borgese and Pardo drew on their extensive diplomatic and academic networks to build a coalition in support of the proposal. Ideologically, Pardo's ideas gained momentum in these circles because they were buoyed by a growing spirit of anti-capitalism, a desire for equitable resource access for developing countries, and concerns surrounding ocean governance. Thus, as a result of pragmatism, long-term thinking, timing, expertise, networking, communication, and coalition-building, Pardo's proposal kickstarted the 15-year process that eventually led to the adoption, in 1982, of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

TOPSHOTS A Philippine naval personnel stands on guard during the arrival of missile destroyer USS Chung Hoon (DDG-93) before the US-Philippine joint naval military exercise entitled 'Cooperation Afloat Readiness Training' (CARAT) near the disputed Spratly islands, in Puerto Princesa on the western Philippine island of Palawan on June 28, 2011.

Photo by: NOEL CELIS/AFP via Getty Images

In 1988, Professor David Attard, judge of the International Tribunal for the Law, then built upon Pardo's principle of "Common Heritage of Mankind" in UNCLOS through a UN resolution "declaring the weather and climate to be part of the common heritage of mankind" and establishing a mechanism to enable the protection of natural resources. Both legal and political measures were proposed to address global warming and its environmental and socioeconomic ramifications. Although the Maltese initiative met formidable opposition from industrial and oil-producing states, extensive lobbying enabled Malta to bring other countries on board. This is because Malta's pitch on climate change was one that could easily be presented as benefitting the global commons. The argument made by Prime Minister Fenech Adami in his UN Plenary address on September 28, 1989, was that the Law of the Sea "contains recognition that the vastness of extra-territorial space is not so unlimited that human activity cannot cause irreparable damage to it . . . what is at stake is not at all competition between East and West, or even primarily between North and South, but the victory of order over chaos, of survival over planetary destruction."[79] By framing areas of prime concern to the national interest as vital to the national interest of all other states, Malta could create a strategic narrative that it was acting for the common good, while also amplifying its own reach.

As a result, Resolution 43/53 entitled "Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations of Mankind" was unanimously adopted on December 6, 1988, during the plenary session of the UN General Assembly. Malta's initial proposal introduced the process which led to the establishment of two international legal instruments: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol (KP), both essential precursors to the Paris Agreement on climate change of 2015.

Crucially, Malta successfully leveraged one of its only viable resources: human resources. In this respect, it was able to deploy genuinely world-leading international expertise. Support for the proposals and Professor Attard's efforts led to his appointment as senior legal adviser to Mostafa Tolba, the executive director of the UN Environment Program, as well as his election as chairman of the IPCC Legal Committee, which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008.[80] All of this demonstrates the ability of a small state to shape the international order not through might or deep pockets, but through human resources, coalition-building, framing to target the global commons, and the offering of specialized expertise.[81]

Looking to the Future

Small states can clearly play a dynamic role in the international system when specific conditions align. The way to pursue their interests is not to try to dominate, and rarely to attempt to fundamentally change the international order, but generally to find one's place within it—and to use small state security strategies (such as neutrality or hedging)

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79. Edward Fenech Adami, "General Debate," in *50 Years of Malta's Foreign Policy* (1964-2014), ed. Saviour Borg (Malta: Printit, 2015), 207.

80. Attard was presented with a copy of the award certificate, given only to those who have contributed substantially to the work of the IPCC over the years since the inception of the organization.

81. Another Maltese diplomat, Michael Zammit Cutajar, was elected chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol (2006) and vice-chair and chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (2008-2009). These were the two negotiating tracks seeking agreement on stronger international action to address climate change.

together with strategies for influence (such as multilateralism, norm entrepreneurship, and offering technical expertise) to affect the international issues that impact them most directly.

At the same time, strategic *intent* is not enough. Rather, successful small state strategies have been shown to depend on several additional circumstances, including effective leadership, timing, and a uniquely enabling international environment at the global level. In the example of Malta, the timing of the climate proposal—following the 1985 discovery of a hole in the ozone layer above Antarctica—was fortuitous, and extensive lobbying on that issue built a coalition of supporters.

Today, the rules-based system, which for half a century has suppressed predatory behavior and allowed fairly equal access for large and small states to international markets and dispute resolution measures, is increasingly being challenged. Increasing antagonism between great powers is already creating serious dilemmas for smaller international actors, and this is likely to intensify in the near future. However, the ability of small states to strategically navigate risk means that they can be expected to adapt to these changes. To return to the words of Prime Minister Lee, as he pleaded with China and the United States to reduce their escalating tensions, "we are not entirely without agency. There are many opportunities for small countries to work together to deepen economic cooperation, strengthen regional integration and build up multilateral institutions." As small states like Singapore navigate a fading rules-based order, they have several time-tested strategies in reserve.

Covid, History, and World Order

IAIN KING CBE, ADJUNCT SCHOLAR AT THE MODERN WAR INSTITUTE AT WEST POINT

A global death toll comparable to a major war. Unemployment rising faster than in the Great Depression. Government interventions affecting the daily life of people on every continent unparalleled in peacetime. Already, the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 has wrought havoc throughout the world.

But history suggests—and as the papers in this compilation have attested—the defining legacy of Covid is yet to come. What will it be?

Many commentators have already remarked how the post-Cold War order is being challenged. The United States' globally hegemonic status is no longer certain as China and Russia test and tug at the limits of international rules. Democracy, the Western economic model, and the enlightenment hope that human rights can flourish in every country have become much less assured than they were a generation ago. Covid-19 seems to have closed off the prospect that we could dismiss these trends as a mirage. The old order is under serious pressure, putting in jeopardy the relative peace and prosperity it has delivered for many years.

To understand how our international order may evolve, we must study the past because episodes like this have come before. It is the moments of disorder that so often provide the best opportunities for reform. These times allow for statecraft, creative institution building, and pioneering policy work to make good of a fleeting will for collective action. Crises can lift us above inertia, myopia, and narrow national self-interest. They can align concerns and provide the impetus to ensure the worst can never happen again.

The crises wrought by major wars have often forged a new international order and provided a degree of relative, protracted peace. Sometimes elements of the emerging order are demarcated in conferences: the Peace of Westphalia in 1648; the Congress of Vienna in 1814-5; the Treaty of Versailles in 1919; and the summits and conferences from Placentia Bay, Bretton Woods, Potsdam, and San Francisco in the 1940s. Each of these is covered in this compilation.

These histories teach us many lessons (and I urge you to read them in detail—a summary is no substitute). Most important of all, they tell us it is folly to presume a single conference can define the fate of the world. Resets to the international order don't happen like that. As the papers in this collection show, building a world order is an iterative and competitive process that plays out over many years. It is perpetual. A few conferences turn the page of history, but most are merely punctuation.

For sure, a bad treaty can lead to a weak, unstable, and ultimately short-lived order. Versailles, for example, which came after the "war to end all wars," has been justly described as a "peace to end all peace."

But the greater mistake is to believe that getting a conference right—or choreographing a clever series of them—is what makes an international order stable or successful. History shows just how much the prejudices, petty concerns, and internal politicking of a few senior individuals can set everything off course. Technology, economy, and demography interact in important and unpredictable ways and levy an even more unpredictable influence. Some of the issues at the heart of a new international order are too complex to be settled in the weeks immediately after a crisis. Some of the interests align too briefly, meaning a new consensus can only be determined in the face of a shared and existential threat. Some of the most important decisionmakers are never in the room: private sector entrepreneurs, social activists, migrants escaping turmoil and persecution, the aggrieved, and the dispossessed.

Covid-19 has infected the drive for an improved international order with urgency because it has exposed some of the failings of current arrangements and made them lethal: the spread of the disease was accelerated by international air travel, globalized markets, and doctored statistics from authoritarian regimes.

Naturally, we have confronted Covid-19 with the international order we have now and the tools of our time: national institutions of public health, private medical services, the complex media ecosystem through which people learn information that may save their lives, and international organizations such as the World Health Organization offering support where they can. As one of the essays in this booklet shows, the nineteenth century offers valuable clues as to how arrangements in that era determined the international response to a contemporary pandemic. In 2020, the cooperation between virologists and vaccine pioneers around the world has been particularly encouraging. Some of our global institutions, in particular the organizations established after World War II, have helped stave off the worst possibilities. They have tamed tensions between great powers, deescalated minor fracases on most continents, and helped reduce the poverty impact in developing countries.

In our interconnected world, we expect the economic fallout from Covid-19 to follow the virus as a new contagion. Oil-rich countries face some of the biggest shocks. Communities that rely on remittances are left to wonder how long the downturn will last. Leaders whose power flows from patronage networks may prove the least resilient when their funds are staunched. Some non-democracies look to antagonize foes abroad as a distraction from their domestic failings and to preserve the power of their regimes. The impact of this virus on societies will long outlast the disease it has inflicted on people.

Like a national arrangement of power, sometimes called the "political settlement," the international order is many things. It is norms and conventions, written and unwritten. It is taboos about unacceptable practices and expectations of how a nation should behave within the international system and react to the contraventions of others. It covers military activity between countries and the limits of military behavior within them. It spans our economic trade in goods, services, and intellectual property. It includes the organizations, institutions, alliances, and associations which are, to varying degrees, "international." And it incorporates great power competition and the means by which the combustible tensions between the most powerful nations are resolved. Hence, defining even the international order for today is like describing a complex and multifaceted piece of collective art—the creation of many human hands, in which different people see many different things and about which they draw very divergent aesthetic judgments.

We should not expect to predict the new international order any more than we can define the current one. Nor can we be certain how it will emerge. Some aspects of today's order are sure to persist: a widespread appetite for values-based U.S. leadership, the interplay between national economic and international political power, and the tension between interests and values.

We can, though, try to shape the international order. And to improve the order of the future, we must learn from the past and study how previous international orders were formed and then reformed. Even though we cannot know the upshot of the current, ongoing reformation, understanding the process is instructive (and can provide an upper-hand for those who seek it). Many lives, livelihoods, and ways of life hang on the outcome; the necessity to get it right is profound.

Covid-19 has ravaged the world. It has dispatched old certainties as fatally as it has infected hundreds of thousands of people. It has tested venerated international institutions and exposed the lethal absence of measures which could have checked this disease. The challenge for those of us who have survived this ghastly pandemic is to ensure the international system that emerges in its wake is the best it can be. We must preserve the best of today's rules-based international system and develop new approaches where the current order has shown they are needed so that people around the world are as protected as they can be from future dangers—conflict and climate change, poverty and the next pandemic—and have the best hope for achieving a good life.

About the Editors and Authors

Seth Center is senior associate and director of the History and Strategy Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Prior to joining CSIS, Dr. Center served at the National Security Council (NSC) and the U.S. Department of State. He served as director for National Security Strategy and History at the NSC from 2017-2019, where he helped conceptualize and write the 2017 National Security Strategy. Dr. Center joined the NSC staff as a historian in the fall of 2016 to document the evolution of key national security initiatives of the Obama administration including managing the China relationship, counterterrorism policy, Iran policy, and broader strategic questions. He provided historical context and lessons learned for the NSC across the 2017 presidential transition.

Emma Bates is the research associate for the Project on History and Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), where she manages program initiatives and publications and conducts research on U.S. grand strategy and national security. Previously, Emma interned with the Project on International Order and Strategy at the Brookings Institution and with the Office of Egyptian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. Prior to that, she spent three years working for universities and NGOs in Latin America and Spain. She holds a BA from Wellesley College and an M.A. in international economics and American foreign policy from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Alexander Bick is a research scholar at the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and a global fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. A trained historian, he has nearly two decades' experience in international affairs and national security policy. He served in the Obama administration on the Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State and as director for Syria at the National Security Council, where he played a lead role developing and coordinating the U.S. strategy to defeat the Islamic State. Previously, he supported former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's peace efforts around the world, including directing international election observation missions in Liberia and Libya. Alex has held research fellowships from the Scaliger Institute at Leiden University, Fulbright, and the Folger

Shakespeare Library. His first book, "Minutes of Empire: The Dutch West India Company and Mercantile Strategy, 1618-1648," is currently under review by Oxford University Press. He holds a BA in political science from the University of Chicago, an MSc in economic history and Diploma in economics from the London School of Economics, and a PhD in history from Princeton University.

Glenda Sluga is professor of international history, and ARC Kathleen Fitzpatrick Laureate Fellow at the University of Sydney. From 2020-2024, she is seconded as professor of international history and Capitalism at the European University Institute in Florence. In 2013, she was awarded a five-year Australian Research Council Laureate Fellowship, and in 2020, she is the recipient of a European Research Council Advanced Grant, overseeing a five-year research program on "Twentieth Century International Economic Thinking and the complex history of globalization." Professor Sluga's most recent book, with Patricia Clavin, is *Internationalisms, a Twentieth Century History* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). *Inventing an International Order*, a study of how an international political culture was established in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, will be published by Princeton University Press in 2021. Professor Sluga has been awarded the Max Crawford Medal by the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the inaugural Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Research Mentoring Award. She has been a visiting fellow at All Souls Oxford, the University of Vienna, Centre for History and Economics, and Charles Warren Centre, Harvard University, the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, the University of Bologna, Clare Hall, Cambridge University, Leiden University, the European University Institute, Monash University, and the ANU.

Andrew Ehrhardt is a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Grand Strategy at King's College London. His main research focus is on the British Foreign Office and the creation of the United Nations in the early 1940s.

Dan Gorman is a historian at the Balsillie School of International Affairs at the University of Waterloo, focusing on the British Empire (Nineteenth and twentieth centuries), modern Britain, and the history of global governance. His current project assesses the role of the UN as a venue for debates over decolonization from the end of WWII to the early 1960s. He has published several books, book chapters, and articles on the subject on international governance and order. He received his PhD from McMaster University, his MA from Queen's University, and his BA from St. Francis Xavier University.

Francine McKenzie is professor and chair of the Department of History at the University of Western Ontario. She is an international historian interested in international organizations, twentieth-century global trade, Canada's engagement in world affairs, and global order. Francine's recent publications include GATT and Global Order in the Postwar Era (Cambridge University Press, 2020) and edited with Laura Madokoro and David Meren, Dominion of Race: Rethinking Canada's International History (University of British Columbia Press, 2017). Her current research project examines conceptions of peace and the construction of the postwar order following the Second World War. She was the William Lyon Mackenzie King visiting professor of Canadian studies at Harvard, 2012-2013. She completed a BA and MA from the University of Toronto and received her PhD from the University of Cambridge.

Daniel Sargent is an associate professor in the Department of History and the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley, where he focuses on the history of America since 1607, international relations, political economy, human rights, and U.S. foreign relations. Previously, he was a William C. Bark National Fellow (2018-19) at The Hoover Institution at Stanford University. His most recent publication is *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). He received his PhD in history from Harvard University and his BA in history, with Double First–Class Honors from Cambridge University.

Hillary Briffa is a lecturer in Defence Studies at King's College London, working primarily with the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (the Royal College of Defence Studies and the Joint Services Command and Staff College). She previously taught at University College London, Birkbeck University of London, and Queen Mary University of London. Beyond academia, she served as Youth Ambassador for Malta to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for three years and worked at the Malta High Commission to the United Kingdom throughout Malta's tenure as Commonwealth Chair-in-Office. In 2015 she was appointed an associate fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society, and in 2016 became a recipient of the U.S. State Department's inaugural Emerging Young Leaders award. As of August 2020, she is currently one of the inaugural non-resident Hans J. Morgenthau Fellows at The Notre Dame International Security Center, studying grand strategy in its larger conceptual and historical context. Dr. Hillary Briffa is also a founding member of the Centre for Grand Strategy at King's College London, where she read for her PhD in War Studies.

Iain King CBE FRSA is an adjunct scholar at the Modern War Institute at West Point. He was recently the UK visiting fellow in CSIS's Europe Program, after serving as counsellor for defense policy and nuclear issues in the British Embassy in Washington. Previously, he was director of programs at the United Kingdom's overseas democracy promotion agency, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. He is an author of philosophy, international affairs, and fiction, and has been featured as a foreign policy analyst by several U.S. news outlets including CNN, the BBC, NBC, Defense One, *Prospect*, and the *National Interest*. King was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2013, for services to governance in Libya, Afghanistan, and Kosovo.

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1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036
202 887 0200 | **www.csis.org**