

CIRAS Discussion Paper No.84

# Competing Visions of the Global Order

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# Competing Visions of the Global Order

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## ■ I. Introduction — Order as an Essentially Contested Concept

World order today is an essentially contested concept, by which I mean we cannot agree on how to define it, and very often these differences in definition are the result of hidden policy choices that we prefer or avoid. For example, during the Peloponnesian War, both the Corinthians and the Corcyraeans made a presentation to the Athenians to persuade Athens to join their alliance. They both presented a vision of world order that reflected their particular choice of policy in the hope the Athenians would follow. The Corinthians said to the Athenians, look at the world; this is the way the world is. A power that treats its equals fairly and treats them according to the rules of the treaty will result in a far more enduring order and will receive the gratitude of the fellow city states in the system. So, do what the world suggests. The order suggests that you should reject this appeal from the Corcyraeans and stick to the treaty. In contrast, the Corcyraeans said, that is not the way the world is. The world is ruled by power. Yes, there is a treaty, and we can make a case that the treaty says you should not join our alliance, but we know that the world is governed by power, and you will be more powerful if you accept our alliance.

We know what Athens did. It took the Corcyraeans into its alliance and the Peloponnesian War began. However, the point is that both sides presented a picture of the world or their vision of world order, in essence, as an outgrowth of their preferred policy choices. Therefore, when we consider ideas of world order, we should look at world order as a heuristic device. When people present a picture of world order, very often they are saying, this is what the world is like; here are the important things; and therefore, this is what you must do.

The second thing that is most important to all of us as academics is to recognize that we are often interested in creating a model that has a name, and particularly our own name attached to it. We arrange global data to fit that model and then we tend to look at the data through the lens of that model. So, from the very beginning, we must be aware that, when someone is offering you a vision of world order, it is not entirely disinterested; it is not free of a hidden agenda. As an Australian scholar Hugh Stretton shows in *The Political Sciences: General Principles of Selection in Social Science and History* (1969), even academics are rarely completely objective. They have values that they pursue, and they make choices based on their preferences.

In contemporary international politics, there tends to be a sort of dichotomization, and a polarization of the definitions of world order has emerged—the so called “neorealists” versus the “liberal internationalists” or “constructivists.” Moreover, these competing visions of world order are often the result of policy preferences that the author would like to present as absolutely natural.

One of the reasons why I studied with Stanley Hoffmann at Harvard University and Hedley Bull at the University of Oxford is that unlike some other contemporary scholars of world politics, they made an effort to “understand”—to use the word as my friend and former student Professor Yoshihiko Nakamoto did in his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Virginia. Their goal is not to present

a model that interprets the entire world but offers a holistic understanding of history, culture, and sociology in a way that some of the original or classical realists, who were the subject of my first book, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (1986), also attempted. They are not just trying to present the background to a range of policy choices.

## ■ II. Hedley Bull's Three Ideal Types of International Society

What is order? An American hardly needs to tell a Japanese person about order. I look at your cities and I think you know all about order. It starts with a sense of safety and security in life. You want to know whether you will get home safely when you leave here. You want to be sure that, for any economic or other policy to work, promises will be kept, or agreements will be followed. In the international relations field, we say *pacta sunt servanda*. When you sign a treaty, the expectation is that you will obey it. However, in international relations every treaty has a little asterisk, which is *rebus sic stantibus*, "as things now stand." So, treaties will still be obeyed, but things may change. In any case, order requires some belief that the promises made will be kept. Finally, there has to be some reasonable stability of possessions and property. This does not necessarily mean private property, but it just means what you have today has to be true tomorrow. If it is a park today, it should be a park tomorrow, and there is some stability.

Hedley Bull's 1977 book on order in world politics has a wonderfully paradoxical title, *The Anarchical Society*. How can it be a society if it is in anarchy? How can it be anarchy if it is a society? This captures his whole argument. It is a society, but it is also anarchic; it is anarchic, but it is also a society. How is that possible? How is this antinomy possible? He contends that there are three ways to look at the world: the Hobbesian or realist perspective, the Kantian or universalist perspective, and the Grotian or internationalist tradition. I am not going to go through all of them. However, clearly, the one he prefers is the Grotian model of an international society. From a realist perspective, international politics is a state of anarchy because there is no central authority, and it is an arena of struggle and competition. Due to the lack of a central enforcement authority, none of the goals of social life can be guaranteed. The only guarantee is mutual prudence. When we have peace, it is always a respite between wars.

My old teacher, Professor Stanley Hoffmann, used to say that there is another way to look at the world. We can think about which theorists see wars as the normal state of affairs in international relations and which theorists see wars as an interruption in what is normally a troubled peace. It turns out that there are not many theorists who think it is always a war-like all against all, at least internationally. Even Hobbes thought interstate conflict could be mitigated by the existence of states that protect us at some level. However, the ideal type of realist believes that a treaty is only good as long as the people who formulate it do so in their own interests. As soon as somebody decides that it is not in their interests, the treaty has no value at all.

The other important thing to mention about the realist conception of order is that the unit of analysis is the state. It is not the individual, the wider society, or certain groups within society. It is the nation and state itself. There is an assumption that somehow the nation state always was and always will be the unit of analysis. In contrast, in the Kantian or cosmopolitan tradition, the unit of analysis is not the state but the individual woman or man. The emphasis, therefore, is on transnational social bonds; cooperation is possible because all of us will benefit. As Kant said, wars and the never-ending

preparation for wars will finally give way to what reason would have suggested from the beginning—ending the state of lawless savagery and enter into a federation of states. He thought that this would happen over the long course of history. There was certainly a sense among the 19<sup>th</sup> century liberals and cosmopolitans that this was going to happen almost automatically. Kant himself did not think that this is an ideal type. According to this vision, individuals create world order; individuals are the subject of politics, and world order will only result when individual moral autonomy is expressed in social arrangements that allow individuals to be fully and morally human.

Bull's preferred method is the third, and it is actually a sort of mixture of the two. States certainly exist, and states are really the proper focus of analysis; but their capacity for conflict is limited by their need for common rules and institutions. So, if you think of states as the units of order here, it is in the interest of states to keep the system going; therefore, they must make some common rules.

In general, we do not assassinate one another's ambassadors. We engage in trade and commerce and follow the rules of contract. When I type something into Amazon and it comes from China two days later, it is because promises are kept, because there are a range of institutions maintaining the world order. The fact that China and the United States do not agree on many other things does not prevent the computer from Lenovo arriving at my desk three days later. So, there is not a total harmony of interests, but there is not a total conflict of interests either. Trade and commerce can fuel social intercourse, but occasionally lead to conflict. This is why the Grotian conception is a little more interesting. He names it after Grotius, the Dutch jurist who wrote at the time of the Thirty Years' War in Europe. The core belief here is that the embrace of common rules to enhance trade will ultimately dampen the reasons for conflict.

### ■ III. Contemporary Models — Neorealists vs. Liberal Internationalists

In the contemporary scholarship on global order, it boils down to a dichotomy between neorealists and liberal internationalists or constructivists. What are the differences between these scholars? The neorealists, such as John Mearsheimer at the University of Chicago, and Stephen Walt at Harvard University, are wedded to power—to military power, and to a vision of the state as the repository of power in competition with other states. So, they are suspicious of arguments such as trade dampens conflict and lessens difficulties. They play down the role of international institutions and norms, and they even emphasize the moderating role of nuclear weapons in taming ideological conflict. Kenneth Waltz, who was a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and others, contend that nuclear proliferation is nothing to worry about. This group of scholars was somewhat triumphalist about the notion that the classical realists, such as George Kennan and Hans Morgenthau, worried too much about the proliferation of nuclear weapons. They do not think the issue has turned into a problem.

But, as Stanley Hoffmann wrote in 2002, when reconsidering the whole idea of whether nuclear weapons can be a force of moderation in the global order: "The sell and spread of weapons of mass destruction becomes a hugely contentious issue and efforts to slow down the spread of weapons of mass destruction and in particular nuclear weapons, especially to dangerously rogue regimes can paradoxically become new causes of violence." The concrete examples I have in mind here are obviously the case of Iran and the case of North Korea. The Iranians say they are a sovereign state, and ask why they should not have nuclear weapons like other states. The effort to prevent them from developing a nuclear capacity became hugely contentious. The Obama administration working with

the Europeans shifted the balance of gains and losses for the Iranians and persuaded them to agree to what was really a serious abridgement of their sovereign rights. That was arguably one of their achievements. However, in the case of North Korea, this policy now seems to be a source of danger and violence. So, I think the neorealists are wrong to believe that we do not have to worry about nuclear weapons at all because it will all just turn out the way the Americans and the Russians did during the Cold War. Why is this belief dangerous? Because when states miscalculate the use of nuclear weapons, hundreds of thousands of people die.

Anyway, the neorealist vision of the world order is that, in effect, nothing much has changed since the time of Thucydides. The choice remains between following treaties and being as powerful as you can be. Therefore, the assumption is that everyone still prioritizes their vision of the survival of the state. It is important to realize, however, that the survival of the state cannot be defined without reference to values and value choices. What does survival of the state mean? Let us take the case of France in 1940. In May 1940 the Nazis defeated France. The French had a choice — to surrender and become a client regime or to resist. For Marshal Pétain, the survival of the French State required surrender, creating a client regime, Vichy France. That for him was survival. Meanwhile, Charles de Gaulle, a colonel at the time, said that was not survival but the end of the French State. The survival of France meant resistance. Do not cooperate with these Nazis in any conceivable way. Thus, the meaning of the survival of the state is not objective. It is defined in terms of other values and, in the case of France in 1940, there were two very different calculations made.

Even today, we may think that survival of the state means one thing, but it is actually not a given. Kim Jong-un may define it very differently to an “offensive realist,” like John Mearsheimer. We have to bear in mind that even something that seems as basic as survival cannot be defined without reference to other value choices.

The other thing about neorealism is that it says little or next to nothing about the way changes in domestic politics and history affect foreign policy. It is not just election results that influence this, but domestic concerns, whether economic or nationalistic, clearly change the character of foreign policy goals. The classical realists understood this. George Kennan basically said at the beginning of the Cold War, contain the Soviet Union and over time this regime will change; he had confidence that any regime based on evil in human nature could not endure indefinitely. Kennan and other eminent realists, such as Raymond Aron, the author of *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (1962), were confident that to survive was to conquer. We did not have to attack the Soviet Union; we just had to prevent them from expanding relentlessly. If we did that, we could be confident in the resilience of our domestic institutions. Over time, this would be how we would win without fighting a new war. Aron thought that and even Morgenthau believed this.

Contemporary neorealists seem to preach states as if they were little tokens on a wrist in a board game. There is no functional difference between states; only their size matters. How many armies do they have, and what are they going to do with them? They do not seriously consider conflicts between military interests and political interests, say, in China, which is not a monolith any more than countries such as Japan and the United States are monoliths. There are competing interests in all states. What happens in those states clearly affects the way that state policies are made. The way a businessperson or an industrialist defines world order will differ from the way a general does and, therefore, the businessperson’s policy will be rather different from the policy of traditional military personnel. We



have to understand that international relations are not like a billiard ball game. States are not solid billiard balls.

Interestingly, not only do the neorealists have little to say about domestic politics but they also have very little to say about sub-state or transnational actors. Actors who operate across borders due to religious affiliations or conflict affiliations often do matter. The Pope is going to Myanmar and the big question is whether he will use the word, Rohingya, when he gets there. This is important because he is the spiritual and moral leader of a transnational group of people. The neorealists also have very little to say about terrorism, because for them sub-state actors are not the main story. The main story is whether they can control a state or not. They are curiously silent on the effects of globalization and the importance of cooperation. Climate change is clearly one of the big issues that all of us face, and this requires cooperation at every level of society. It will require changes in domestic policy that will have to be coordinated with international agreements. However, it certainly will not happen automatically, and of course, it will not be solved by military force.

So, I think that the classical realists who were the subject of my book were more holistic in their analysis. They understood the connections between domestic and international politics. They did not focus exclusively on military power. Kennan believed that skillful diplomacy could mitigate global conflict, as he states in *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (1951). He gave many examples where he thought a greater effort to understand the concerns of the interlocutor could actually mitigate and dampen down the conflict in the world. Morgenthau, of course, was a little more roguish, but even he said toward the end of his life, about 20 years after the publication of *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (1948) that nuclear weapons had changed the game. It was no longer possible to use weapons whose only purpose was to kill millions of people and had no real military value, in his view. Thus, neorealism is one competing vision of world order that I think deserves to be in effect rejected, because it seems stuck in a moment in the past, and focuses too exclusively on one set of factors.

Does this mean that we should adopt the alternative, liberal internationalism? Let us first step back and ask: what is the pedigree of this view? It is not just Kantian because there are two visions of liberal internationalism. One is what I call progress through pain and learning through tragedy, almost. This is a Kantian vision. Going through a series of wars, we keep banging our heads against the wall, and finally we wake up and say: let's stop beating our head against the wall, let's make a treaty and stop this. The best example of this is Europe. If I gave a lecture in 1938 and said that in 70 years, France and Germany will share a currency, their workers will move freely across borders, and a war between these two countries will be unthinkable, you would have said this man is crazy. However, the tragedy of World War II led a group of European statesmen to try a different method for settling conflict, and they moved to create a European Union. As Kant said, nothing straight can be constructed from the crooked timber of humanity. Yet, out of this crooked timber of humanity we constructed something. We now know that it is not a panacea, but it certainly solved some problems. There is a mixture of pain and enlightenment in this vision of liberal internationalism.

However, the British vision proposes a different world view. The world of Richard Cobden or even John Stuart Mill is almost painless. Commerce will pacify the world. Do not worry about it. Just keep trading. Of course, this ship ran aground during World War I very seriously. However, the residue of 19<sup>th</sup> century British liberalism and contemporary liberal internationalists remain in the belief that trade alone is a pacifying force. As we build up these networks of interdependence, states will stop



competing. Business will take over from statecraft. Commerce will leave the world inexorably post-nationalist, and cosmopolitan discussions will replace conflicts. There seems to be an element of this painlessness even in the contemporary arguments of Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane.

If you still think that this was only the view of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberals in the past, think of the people who work in the tech industries today, such as the Silicon Valley people. They too think that the state institutions are hopelessly old-fashioned. We are creating new computer codes, robots, and artificial intelligence (AI). The notion that you could use these tools to fix elections or spread bad propaganda does not occur to them easily because many of these people, particularly the Americans in Silicon Valley, have a libertarian streak and harbor anti-state regulation sentiments. They seem to have the belief that if you just leave the smart technical people to do things and politicians get out of their way, peace will follow automatically.

Again, this belief is too simplistic. It wasn't just the terrorists of 9/11/2001 who indicated this. There was a bubble economy in 1999–2000, and then the crash of 2008. As a result of these changes to the economy, the notion that progress was a glide path to a future of cosmopolitan institutions took a real hit. Also, internal conflicts that have created refugees, such as those in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the Iraq War, and the conflict in Syria, indicate that nationalism has not died. The idea that interstate conflicts would give way to freedom of commerce without any resistance was too simplistic.

Now, this issue often arises during debates about what to do with China. You are worrying about this in Japan. Americans are also worrying about this. People in Southeast Asia have always worried about this. What do we do about China? These two visions of world order suggest different policies, but it is clear that neither one of them has the answer. According to the liberal internationalists, China was supposed to liberalize as its economy grew. Economic growth would lead to political liberalization. Political liberalization would lead to greater pluralism and a more benign foreign policy; things would follow very nicely. Now this left out the fact that the Chinese Communist Party had a different idea about how to control economic growth. They saw what happened in Russia and they did not want that to happen in China. So, they took a very different path of almost state sponsored economic growth with controls exerted on the entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese people. They tried to prevent that spirit from moving over into politics. Create factories, but do not try to govern. Economic liberalization and the acceptance of trade certainly did not lead to automatic political liberalization.

It struck me as oddly insecure of the Chinese regime to imprison its own Nobel Peace Prize winner, Liu Xiaobo. If they were a little more secure about the legitimacy of their rule, I do not think they would be so worried. They perhaps believe that to not open what they consider a Pandora's box, they must keep it closed or redirect it. Maybe, they are persuaded by the neorealist suggestion that it is only military strength that matters. However, clearly China has an interest in extending trade, and they are trying to position themselves as the more responsible potential hegemon now that the United States seems to be in decline and rejecting that role. I think they are not following the script of either the neorealists or the liberal internationalists. They are creating a new path that is really very interesting.

#### **■ IV. Toward a Richer Model — Beyond Dichotomies and Oversimplification**

There are four competing values in any vision of world order: sovereignty, self-determination, self-government and human rights. Each of these four values can be defined very differently. We can define

sovereignty as complete protection from the outside, impermeability, or we can define sovereignty as a measure of control of your currency. You are not going to float it on the free market. After all, for many years we had controlled exchange rates, and this was considered an aspect of sovereignty. However, more recently, we thought that it was more efficient to allow currencies to float, and we gave up that element of sovereignty in return for better self-government.

Self-determination is another value. It is enshrined in the UN Charter, but it is not clear who is this self that is determining itself, who gets determined, and who gets to say what group of people is entitled to a state. One of the questions that has arisen when defining a global order and will do so more often in the coming years is: can we find a way to allow people to express their cultural and historical heritage that does not necessarily involve having an independent nation state? Can we revisit the choices we made in the 19th century about creating the fiction of nation equals a state, to something more like a federative polity, where there are more possibilities; for example, for the with Flemish and Belgians to coexist, or for the Catalans to coexist with Spain? It should be noted that self-determination and self-government are not the same, because sometimes self-determination requires that you trump self-government. If you took a vote of the people in Wales about how many of them want to continue to have Welsh television, a very large number would likely say no, however, the self-determination of the Welsh requires that the language is preserved. So, even these two values do not necessarily support each other all the time.

Professor Hoffmann used to say that human rights are like Ariadne's thread. Human rights in some ways can conflict with each of the values stated above, because of their universalism, and because of their focus on the individual. However, at the same time, I think human rights remind us of the choices we make and the compromises we make. What is really at stake is how do we as human beings protect our dignity, and how can we do this in ways that allow us to live peacefully with others who wish to preserve their dignity.

## ■ V. Concluding Guidelines

I am going to wrap up by running through a few guidelines. First, recognize the connection between domestic politics, culture and history, and foreign policy. Do not separate these issues. Understand that they are inexorably connected, and that one can affect the other, both in the way that you define your goals, and in the way you define your friends and enemies in the world. That is very much a product of domestic politics and culture. The history of American relations with Latin America does not end just because somebody says you are going to build a wall. The legacy of America's relations with Latin America affects everything we try to do within those parameters. If the Americans try to create new relations with Latin America without being aware of that history, they are sorely mistaken. I think that the same is true when considering how here in Japan you can recast a relationship with China that is cognizant of your joint history, but is still forward looking in a context where a Cold War type of stance does not prevent thinking about or discussing the more difficult issues.

Second, we do need to appreciate the insights of liberal internationalists on global interdependence. It is true that the world is not the same as it was in the 19th century before World War I. We do not have the colonial hierarchies that we had then or the resulting inequalities that characterized colonial rule during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, we now know that trade within the global south has expanded from around 10 percent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1990 to almost 25 percent of all

global GDP today. More of the world's consumption will happen in the global south. Interdependence is taking a different cast. It is not just about IBM having an office in London and Ireland and Japan. It is much more extensive than liberal internationalists ever imagined.

Thirdly, that means you cannot underestimate the power of states and the lingering appeal of nationalism at the same time. This is what I think the classical realists teach us very seriously. There is something about allegiance to a nation state that cannot be captured by the indifferent curves of economics. This is connected to the first point, about culture. One of the challenges that remain is finding a way for people to express their cultural heritage other than identification with a nation state, but, at the same time, we cannot deny the fact that the nation state still exists. It is not going to disappear into the web of the internet.

Then, fourthly, we need to broaden international institutions. Now that the United States is not leading internationally due to its domestic politics, there is an opportunity for middle sized states such as Japan, Australia, and the European Union states, to create international institutions that have a little more bite. There is an opportunity here to develop new institutions particularly in the areas of climate, fisheries, and the environment.

Finally, these are just two bits of advice. Avoid despair. That was the advice I gave to my students after the election last November. Karl Jaspers, the German philosopher, once said that fear and despair are moods and not insights. The French have a wonderful proverb: "Le pire n'est pas toujours certain." It is not quite the same faith that Kant expressed—that good things will always happen, but the worst is never certain. So, do not act as if it were true, and keep in mind the possibility of new alternatives, and always seek alternatives. Our teacher Stanley Hoffmann used to say, try to construct "relevant utopias."

You have some wonderful philosophers here in Japan, whose work I have been following. One of them, Kojin Karatani, talks about creating new modes of global exchange by combining Marx and Kant. This perspective is extremely learned, and is a way of thinking about alternatives that is creative and moves beyond being stuck in the same old boat. We need more of this. So, I encourage our students to do this, because the world needs alternatives if we are going to move beyond a vision of world order that is exclusively militaristic on the one hand, or boundlessly rationalistic and economic on the other. We need a bit of passion for the possibility of progress. I always take refuge in the final words of Kant. In 1793, Kant wrote an essay titled, "On the Common Saying: 'This May be True in Theory, but it does not Apply in Practice.'" This was a cliché even in 1793. In this essay, he said: "Such illusory wisdom imagines it can see further and more clearly with its mole-like gaze fixed on experience than with the eyes which were bestowed on a being designed to stand upright and scan the heavens."

So, here in Kyoto, you have so many beautiful things that allow one to scan the heavens. I think that is something to remember. We cannot rely on experience only; we have to think about other ways. Remember what Hamlet said to Horatio: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." So, there are more things in heaven and earth than we have ever dreamed of in our models of political science and world order.