
The Rising (More) Nation-Centered System

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ABSTRACT:

The Liberal International Order, formed when the United States was the only great power at the end of World War II, is threatened by national populism and rising powers. The United States will have to allow some redistribution of power or war may well ensue. However, the ways to respond to rising nation-alistic populism are much less clear. This article argues that globalist ideals and institutions have progressed more rapidly than public support for them, leading to a major backlash. This is especially evident in the EU but also in the forceful promotion of human rights and democratic regimes in the Middle East. Modification in the way key elements of the Liberal International Order are introduced — regarding trade, immigration, and armed interventions — will allow for a closing of the gap between globalism and the socio-political reality.¹

The liberal international order (LIO) is challenged by populism in nations that formed and long supported that order (especially in the United States). It also faces challenges from rising powers, particularly China, and from powers that seek to restore their role in the international realm, especially Russia. Many hold that the LIO is in a crisis. Robert Kagan, for example, writes about “the twilight of the liberal world order,” which is

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starting “to weaken and fracture at the core” and may be a harbinger of a major global conflict.²

This article argues that although these observations of the LIO are valid, a new international order is evolving. I will refer to it as a Nation-Centered System (NCS) because it is nationalistic and less multilateral (and much less supranational) than the LIO. I cannot stress enough that the transition that is taking place is a relative one. Nations have long played a key role in the LIO and multilateralism will play a role in the NCS — only less so than before.

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tization, free movement of people and goods, and the quest for democratic global governance. In this way, the NCS is more similar to the pre-liberal, pre-1945 world order than it is to the order that was formed, mainly by the United States, in the wake of World War II. This scaling back, we shall see, is necessary to facilitate the attainment of higher levels of global governance. To put it in popular terms, we need to take one step back in order to take two steps forward.

This article emphasizes the challenge populism poses to the world order over the challenges posed by rising powers. The first subject has been explored less often and less extensively than the second. Moreover, while there is widespread agreement that the United States cannot maintain the kind of hegemony it had in 1945, there is little agreement on the ways to respond to populism.

The transition from the Liberal International Order to the NCS is best viewed as a special case in a general pattern of a growing gap between institutional and normative developments on the one hand, and community building on the other hand (from here on referred to as the communitarian gap). In other contexts, scholars have studied institutional and normative lag.³ Here, the opposite developments are under examination. Lacking a better term, I refer to them as premature advancements.⁴ Today,

there are indications that premature advancements at the institutional and normative level are being scaled back because supranational community building is lagging. This trend opens the door for reducing the communitarian gap and thereby lays the foundation for firm progress.

The use of the term “progress” here implies that there is a direction that the future trajectory of international order needs to take. The direction is indicated by the pressing need for more effective institutions to provide more legitimate global governance. This is needed because the world is facing a growing number of challenges that cannot be effectively handled by national governments alone. If nations

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must work together, there are basically two ways this can be achieved. One is the inter-nation mode in which nations, guarding their own sovereignty, enter into agreements with one another on policies that they will jointly follow. NAFTA, NPT, and NATO are examples in kind. Because each nation must consent to all significant changes in policy, this model is limited in the scope of international work it can carry out.

The second way for nations to cooperate is the “supranational” mode. Here unanimity is not required. Once an international organization adopts democratic procedures, recalcitrant countries can be ignored. And once the nations involved yield some authority to the governing body, which supranationality entails by definition, decisions can be made in short order by some central body. A key example is the institutions of the European Union, especially the Commission.

I will show below that the LIO involved an increase in supranational institutions. “Increase,” to reiterate, does not necessarily mean a high level, but merely higher than it was before 1945. I then will show that this increase has outpaced supranational community building and hence that of public support.

A parallel development is occurring on the normative level. The liberal elements of the LIO entail applying global normative principles that supersede national ones. The most important of these is the precept of human rights. Nations today are condemned if they do not abide by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Even nations

that used to argue that human rights are expressions of Western values are increasingly justifying their policies by arguing that they are in effect abiding by human rights standards or will become compliant as soon as their economies are developed,⁵ thus paying increased homage to the universality of these rights. The same holds for the value attached to the democratic form of government. The communist regime of East Germany called itself the German Democratic Republic, and that of North Korea — the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Both developments presume that the citizens of nations involved in supranational bodies will consider the attendant loss of national sovereignty to be legitimate. This, in turn, tends to require a measure of supranational community building. Such a development is needed because in the modern age people in many countries view their state as a community, albeit an imagined one.⁶ That is, their definition of self includes being a citizen of their nation. Unless some of this sense of community is extended to the relevant supranational entity, reducing national sovereignty will result in alienation and pushback.

The essentiality of community building in supranational governance is contested by neofunctionalists, like Ernst B. Haas, who theorized that economic and administrative integration work will engender community building. That is, according to Haas et al., as more decisions affecting more interests are moved to the supranational decision-making center, citizens' allegiances will shift from the national to the supranational level.⁷ If true, there would be no need for engaging in community building per se, as the formation of a political community would be the *result* of successful economic and administrative integration, not its precondition. I have argued in the past that the neofunctionalists underestimate the import of national identity and emotive group attachments in citizens' perceptions of political legitimacy.⁸

Hedley Bull famously distinguished between a system of states and a society of states, which is akin to what is more often referred to as an international community, and he suggested that such a community exists. In contrast, I argue that that to the extent that such a community exists, it is insufficient to support the rise in supranational governance and its normative design. I support this thesis next by studying the recent developments

of the EU and those of globalism. In both one finds a retreat to nationalism. Measures to move forward again are not yet evident.

THE EU: SUPRANATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, BUT NATIONAL COMMUNITIES

Originally, the EU, then known as the European Economic Community, was primarily a trade association that encompassed six nations. Over the decades that followed its establishment, the EU added members and expanded its missions. Initially these were focused on administrative and regulatory matters to facilitate trade, travel, and commerce among the member nations. These changes were low-key in the sense that they increased efficiency, but largely did not challenge citizens' sense of national identity.⁹ The EU Commission also invented a sage way to manage missions across borders by not forcing all nations to adhere to the same standards, instead setting minimal standards for all nations to follow. In addition, many small measures were introduced "under the radar" — by being buried in complex legal documents, for instance.¹⁰

Over time, the level and scope of integrated activities expanded. In 1985, several of the member states signed the Schengen Agreement, which lifted border checks and allowed for the free movement of people among member states. The introduction of the European Economic and Monetary Union in the early 1990s marked another significant expansion of EU-wide governance. Under the EMU, 12 of the member states adopted a common currency (and monetary policy), which necessitated the establishment of the European Central Bank and new regulations on national budgets, such as setting a permissible level of deficit and minimum budget allocation to R&D.

Further, following the massive immigration from Asia and Africa, since 2005, the EU formed a policy that required each member nation to accept a given number of the refugees.

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Furthermore, the EU, in effect, required some nations to slow down their economies to offset others that were overheating. Germans strongly objected to taxing themselves to bail out the Greeks, over the last decade. Even more contentiously, the absence of border controls facilitated large population flows both within and into the EU. The French were upset by the large numbers of Poles who moved to work in France, referred to as the problem of the Polish Plumber, after 1985. Though they opted out of Schengen, the British were nonetheless troubled by the large number of workers from Baltic countries and by new immigrants and asylum seekers. Anger directed at immigrants animated UKIP nationalists' push for Brexit — UKIP's spokesperson Nigel Farage campaigned with a poster depicting an endless line of refugees and the words "BREAKING POINT." Brexit advocates found themselves unified under the banner of "Leave: we want our country back."

In addition to challenges posed by the EU itself, rulings by European courts made millions of EU citizens feel that their moral sensibilities and national independence were violated. To give one example: a 2013 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights on prison sentencing in the UK culminated in cries that the court had encroached on the nation's right to decide how to protect its citizens. In *Vinter v. The United Kingdom*, the court declared the practice of mandatory life sentences for convicted murderers a human rights violation under the law because to deny opportunity for release constitutes inhumane treatment, according to the ECHR's judgment.¹¹ Without recourse to an appeals process, the UK was compelled to comply with the decision by granting the prospect of release for the incarcerated. Conservative and Labour MPs alike felt the court had usurped Parliament's purview.¹²

While the EU was founded like a typical inter-nation organization, by a treaty that requires unanimous agreement by all members, thus protecting their sovereignty, successor treaties replaced unanimous decision-making with qualified majority voting (QMV) in more and more areas of EU governance. The Treaties of Amsterdam (1999), Nice (2003), and Lisbon (2009) extended QMV into border security standards, immigration, public health, financial assistance, and dozens of other areas.¹³ These changes contributed to the sense of sovereignty loss.

The result of all these developments has been growing disaffection. Its most obvious expression has been the British vote to leave the EU. Other nations that also actively have contemplated leaving include Greece, France, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Populist nationalism rose in many member nations. In Austria, Norbert Hofer
 nearly won the 2016 presidential election under the banner of the FPÖ, a party whose first leaders were former SS officers. In the 2017 Austrian parliamentary elections, the FPÖ came in third, receiving 51 of the 183 seats in the National Council. Also in 2017, a far-right party in Germany (the AfD) won seats in Parliament for the first time in over 50 years, declaring its intent to “take back our country and our people.”¹⁴ Two Eurosceptic parties garnered over half of all votes in the 2018 Italian general election. One of these parties, the League, has the slogan “Italians First.”¹⁵ In Poland and Hungary, right-wing populists did ascend to power, with Andrzej Duda winning the Polish presidency in 2015 and Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz party ruling Budapest since 2010.

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While right-wing populist candidates were fended off in the recent presidential elections of France and the Netherlands, the parties of those candidates (National Front and Dutch Party for Freedom) saw gains in their share of legislative seats on the national and European levels. Other nationalist populist parties like Alternative for Germany, Sweden Democrats, and Golden Dawn (Greece) have similarly gained steam in their respective countries in the past decade, supported by voters who seem to view them as the defenders of national sovereignty.¹⁶

I noted from the outset that there is a growing need for supranational governance because many challenges ahead cannot be handled by each nation on its own or by inter-nation governance, which is slow and cumbersome and hence lags ever more behind what needs to be addressed. Given that the EU provides by far the most advanced form of supranational government, the critical question is why is it challenged so adamantly by populism? I suggest that for supranational government to develop it must be accompanied by supranational community building, in which people transfer the kind of commitments and involvement they have with their nation to the new regional body.

The West Germans granted the equivalent of a trillion dollars to the East Germans during the decade that followed reunification with little hesitation. “They are fellow Germans” was about all the explanation that was needed. However, the same Germans resisted granting much smaller amounts to Greece and other EU nations that were in trouble. They were not members of “the tribe.” A demonstration of the powerful communal bonds at the national level is that while millions of people are willing to die for their nation, few are willing to die for the EU, not to mention for less advanced supranational unions.

If I am correct that the EU cannot maintain its current level of policy integration, let alone expand the scope of these policies as President Macron and Chancellor Merkel were calling for in mid-2017, then the EU has two options: engage in community building or scale back the scope of its mission. Given that there are no signs that major community building

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Austria. Governments in Greece, Italy, France, and Portugal have defied the EU’s budget deficit and GDP-to-debt ratio constraints. Furthermore, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland have refused to accept the number of immigrants they are supposed to absorb according to EU policy.

In a significant manifestation of the EU scaling back, members of the EU are restoring control over their borders to limit the movement of EU citizens and immigrants. New border checks have been erected in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and

Steps taken to foster an EU-wide community include forming shared symbols (e.g., an EU flag), student exchanges (e.g., Socrates), and an EU anthem (“Ode to Joy”). These steps have only resulted in a rather thin sense of community, as indicated by various public opinion polls and by the moves to scale back the scope and level of integrated activities. A much stronger effort at community building will be needed before the EU can progress again. The steps that must be taken to build such a community are far from clear, given the powerful hold national ideals have on most of the citizens of the country involved.¹⁷

GLOBALISTS ENCOUNTER NATIONALISTS

Premature supranational advancements and the need to scale them back in order to prepare the ground for more sustainable ones, evident in the development of the EU, are also evident on the global level. The communitarian gap on this level is much less severe than it is in the EU. This not the case because there is more community building on this level, far from it, but because supranationalism is much more limited, and is found largely in the normative and not the institutional realm.

In recent years, those who favor post-national or supranational positions (although they do not use these terms) have been called, quite appropriately, “globalists,” and those who oppose such developments have been referred to as “nationalists.” The rise of populism in many democratic polities in the 2010s is often attributed to
 a nationalistic reaction to the ascent of
 globalization, whose champions hold
 many of the same positions as contemporary liberals. They favor open societies — open to the flow of goods, people, and ideas. They are universalists, who believe all people are endowed with the same *human* rights and are
 rational and deliberative, able to make their own reasoned decisions. (The fact that globalists are essentially liberal does not mean that all liberals — or even most of them — are globalists.)

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Globalization, scholars hold, is currently opposed by waves of populism that are propelled by nationalists.¹⁸ These are individuals and groups that are parochial (or particularistic), who view their commitments to their local and national communities as trumping global considerations. They are depicted as opposed to the spread of rights (“deplorable”)¹⁹ and to immigration (especially of people whose culture and ethnicity differ from the national one); as people who adhere to the traditional values of their communities and hence oppose liberalism; and as protectionists (limiting access to the markets of their nation).²⁰

Another line of analysis sees the rise of populism as being caused in part by globalization, because it undermines both local and national communities. Scholars who follow this line often draw on the studies of the rise of fascism to explain the recent rise of populism in liberal democracies. The argument runs as follows: as people moved from villages to the cities, they lost many of the social bonds that provided them with

emotional security.²¹ These social bonds had protected them from the siren calls of would-be demagogues. Once the society of communities turned into a mass society — a society composed of individuals who lost many of their social moorings²² — those individuals became susceptible to demagogues, particularly when economic conditions deteriorated. The conditions in pre-Nazi Germany are often cited.

When this analysis is applied to contemporary populism in the terms already introduced, we are said to witness a nationalist reaction to the rise of globalization.

In addition, large segments of the population are reported to have experienced job loss (because freer trade led to jobs moving to developing countries); most of those who are employed gained little increase in real income; and all involved experienced growing income insecurity and inequality, as well as a loss of dignity (associated with the loss of traditional jobs like coal mining). The same people are also found to be reacting to growing diversity due to immigration, and to cultural changes resulting from extensions of individual rights (e.g., legalization of gay marriage). The affected people view the rise of diversity both as undermining their social standing and as a loss of shared core values and habits.²³ Additionally, they feel that they are snubbed by globalist elites.²⁴ As Arlie Russell Hochschild points out,

For the Tea Party around the country, the shifting moral qualifications for the American Dream had turned them into strangers in their own land, afraid, resentful, displaced, and dismissed by the very people who were, they felt, cutting in line...Liberals were asking them to feel compassion for the downtrodden in the back of the line, the “slaves” of society. They didn’t want to; they felt downtrodden themselves.²⁵

Globalists do not ignore these communitarian causes of populism; however, they tend to view them as the pathological reactions of people seeking to hold on to the past and to traditional social structures that were discriminatory and authoritarian, and as historically indefensible in view of the unstoppable rise of globalization. They tend to see nationalists as misinformed, misled, or captured by the emotive appeals of demagogues. Moreover, globalists often view the weakening of particularistic bonds — including the weakening of commitments to local or national communities — as liberating. They draw on the work of thinkers like Peter Singer, who argues that one should treat all children as one treats one’s own,²⁶ and on the work of Martha Nussbaum (*For Love of Country*), who argues that we should view ourselves as citizens of the world.²⁷ History is

seen as a march from particularism to universalism, from close local and national communities toward a global one.

Globalists have little room for communities in their moral and philosophical vocabulary. They see people as free-standing individuals, endowed with rights by the mere fact that they are human and not because they are members of this or that community or nation. They hold that people are free (or ought to be free) to move across borders. Above all, each person ought to be free to choose their own definition of the good. This is in conflict with the sociological thesis that communities need shared moral understanding to function and for their members to flourish.

Globalists made progress on both the institutional and normative level. There is room to disagree on how far they progressed — but not that these developments greatly exceeded global community building. Several scholars — for instance, Anne-Marie Slaughter²⁸ — suggest that informal transnational networks provide a measure of the needed community. (David Singh Grewal²⁹ takes a more critical view of these networks). However, rising nationalism in many parts of the world suggests that these networks provide only for a thin community, and to curb nationalism a much thicker community will be needed. That is, one in which people will tie their identity, sense of belonging, and loyalties in part to the global community. Amartya Sen³⁰ and Kwame Anthony Appiah³¹ point out that people have complex, multi-layered identities, acting, for instance, sometimes as nationalists and sometimes as globalists, depending on the context. However, when these identities come into conflict, large segments of the population let their national identities trump the other.

The advancement of globalism is one key factor that engendered nationalist populism, and we will see that it is also opposed by rising powers. It will now have to be scaled back to allow for the communitarian gap to be narrowed, before more progress can be made.

Next, I examine the key elements of the LIO and outline the ways they are or can be scaled back as the NCS is developed. To reiterate, the

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changes are in degree, not absolutes. For example, some reduction in support for the UN, but not its termination.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE LIO AND NCS

The high normative standing of sovereignty

Among those who do spell out what the LIO includes, there are considerable differences in the elements they list and the relative weight they assign to each. G. John Ikenberry, whose work on the LIO is often cited, highlights the importance of the Westphalian normative principle for the LIO,³² a facet that he considers “foundational.”³³ This element of the LIO has two components: that no nation is to interfere in the internal affairs of another nation,³⁴ and no nation may alter borders by force.

This high normative standing accorded to national sovereignty is a major value that separates Kantian conceptions from what might be

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Most importantly, the Westphalian norm sanctifies the state and not the individual. Indeed, for centuries, until the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) modification was introduced, and to a very considerable extent even after that turning point,

the Westphalian norm left citizens at the mercy of the state. Given that a key principle of globalists and the LIO is the promotion of human rights, their liberal idealism directly conflicts with the Westphalian norm. In other words, this key element of the LIO was and is not liberal at all.

The United States and its allies sought to weaken national sovereignty by promoting the RtoP concept, which defined the conditions under which it is legitimate for foreign powers to use force to interfere in the internal affairs of other nations — for the sake of endangered individuals.³⁵ Most

nations of the world, including China and Russia, agreed to this change in the rules of the world order.³⁶ One ought to consider RtoP as a liberal correction precisely because it seeks to protect people from states, rather than protecting states from each other, or those in power in each state from internal challenges.

Many nations (and even liberals in the West), however, soured on RtoP after the United States and its allies used it to try to legitimate coercive regime changes, notably in Libya, where the result was not a democratic regime but a devastating civil war and a new breeding ground for ISIS. In Syria, the United States insisted for the first four years of the civil war that Bashar al-Assad had to go — to open the way for regime change — as a *precondition* to any negotiation on ending the civil war. (One may say that Assad could have been replaced without changing the regime. However, this is not what the United States wanted, for good reason. There was little to be gained by replacing one tyrant with another. One may argue that U.S. demands did not involve coercion, but the United States greatly ramped up its support to those fighting Assad when he refused to give up power.)

China takes the position that although it supports RtoP as it pertains to “genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity,” it insists “it is not appropriate to expand, willfully to interpret or even abuse this concept.”³⁷ The fact that Responsibility to Protect lost a good part of its legitimacy is one indication of the transition from liberal international order to Nation-Centered System. To restore this liberal element, in the future RtoP will have to be employed only to prevent gross humanitarian atrocities but not to promote regime change.³⁸ Even more expansive ideas of the responsibilities of nations — such as the obligation not to support transnational terrorists by Amitai Etzioni³⁹ and the push for recasting sovereignty as transnational responsibility by Richard Haass⁴⁰ — have merit, but the current international community is too weak to sustain them. Scaling back RtoP in order to allow it to regain momentum is an example of the dynamic much of this paper is seeking to depict.

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Abuse of RtoP is not the only reason the United States and its allies violated the Westphalian normative understanding in the name of liberal

causes. After the collapse of the USSR, Francis Fukuyama theorized that the whole world was on its way to embrace liberal democratic regimes, leading to the “end of history” in the sense that once all nations had such a regime, no more regime changes would be sought or needed.⁴¹ He also suggested that those nations that were “stuck in history” needed a push to make the change. Indeed, one of the justifications for the 2003 invasion of Iraq was the need to change the regime. Above all, forming a liberal democratic regime was used to justify the U.S. presence in Iraq — long after Saddam Hussein was captured, his regime unraveled, and no nuclear weapons were found. The same was true in Afghanistan and for insisting on regime change in Libya.

In several of these nations, coercive regime change led to civil wars, high levels of casualties, and mass displacement. Hundreds of billions of U.S. dollars have been squandered. One may argue that these are the labor pains of the birth of liberal democracy. However, by and large the result was either anarchy or a new authoritarian government. (In some cases, the new regimes are labeled “developing democracies” but they hardly qualify.⁴² Both Iraq and Afghanistan are in the process of losing many of the democratic features they acquired under American tutelage.)

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The transition toward an NCS would be benefit if the United States gave up on the promotion of liberal democracy by coercive means. This policy shift would be highly justified on moral grounds (hundreds of thousands of casualties; priority of the right to live); prudential grounds (the sacrifices do not lead to the desired results);⁴³ and

the grounds of sustainability (such a move would help mitigate opposition from rising powers and nationalists). At the same time, the promotion of liberal democracy can continue by using non-lethal means. These include public diplomacy, leadership training, cultural and educational exchanges, and increased contacts with democratic nations (through travel and trade).

Redistribution of power

It is commonplace to observe that the LIO was formed following World War II — when the United States was the only major power — and that since then the United States has invested heavily in maintaining that order. It is also widely agreed that in the decades that followed, new powers

have risen or regained some of the power they lost. The question has hence been raised whether the United States will yield some of its control over the world order to other powers. Graham Allison argues that wars ensue when old superpowers do not accommodate new rising powers.⁴⁴ At issue, though, is not only the ways the United States will conduct itself, but the capabilities and intentions of the rising powers. If the ambitions of China and Russia are limited to securing their regimes and borders, having a measure of influence over their “near abroad,” and being treated with respect, accommodation could be relatively easy to achieve. However, if they seek to dominate their regions or beyond that — to dominate the world, as some fear — accommodations by the United States may well be impossible. The question of whether there can be a peaceful transition from the LIO to an NCS without a major war depends, to a considerable extent, on the answer to these questions. Moreover, the answers may differ from one power to another, e.g., for China compared to Russia and both to Iran.

Aspiration vs. reality of world governance

The UN is treated as a (if not the) major institutional element of the LIO.⁴⁵ Ikenberry writes that one of the hallmarks of liberal internationalism is “rule-based relations enshrined in institutions such as the United Nations.”⁴⁶ Jeff Colgan and Robert Keohane note that the UN is a “key feature of the liberal order.”⁴⁷ When nations do not abide by UN resolutions, many liberals chastise them as if they broke the law. They in effect assume that the UN is akin to a democratic government, whose representatives speak for the people that elected them, and hence that people owe obedience to the laws it enacts.

Actually, drawing on facts noted previously, I suggest that this treatment of the UN is based on aspirations of what many hope the UN could be like, but not on what it is.⁴⁸ There is little that is democratic or liberal about the

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There is little that is democratic or liberal about the UN Security Council, in which the winners of the Second World War have veto power but large parts of the world — including India, Brazil, Japan, Indonesia, Germany, and Nigeria — have, in effect, no say. It is as if the United States were governed by New York, Texas, Louisiana, Rhode Island and Delaware!

UN Security Council, in which the winners of the Second World War have veto power but large parts of the world — including India, Brazil, Japan, Indonesia, Germany, and Nigeria — have, in effect, no say. It is as if the United States were governed by New York, Texas, Louisiana, Rhode Island and Delaware! It allows a handful of nations to impose UN-authorized sanctions on any nation or group of nations in the world — but all of them together cannot impose such sanctions on any of the five, who immunize themselves by their veto power.

As I see it, it takes a considerable suspension of disbelief to call the UN General Assembly “the most democratic and representative body.”⁴⁹ In it, India and Luxembourg, Nigeria and East Timor, Brazil and St. Lucia have one vote each. It is an assembly that is free to pass all kinds of resolutions because its members are aware that the Assembly has no enforcement mechanism to speak of. And there is little that is democratic about a majority vote of members that include authoritarian regimes, whose representatives do not reflect the preferences of their people. There is nothing liberal about a UN that for decades had the most brazen violators of human rights serve on and head the UN Commission on Human Rights, and continue to play a key role in the UN Human Rights Council that replaced it.⁵⁰

It follows that as long as there are no major reforms in the ways the UN is composed and acts, it ought to be viewed as an aspiration that people of the world are encouraged to seek to realize — rather than as an institution that has the standing to determine what is legal and legitimate and what is not. Nationalists have a case when they consider the UN as violating national sovereignty. There is room for legitimate questioning about the extent to which nations should mind UN resolutions until it is much more representative. It has less of a role to play in the NCS than liberals assume it played in the LIO.

A great deal of international governance is carried out through a large variety of international organizations, such as the International Labor Organization, the International Red Cross, the World Health Organization, as well as informal bodies, such as the G7, G8, and G20. They mainly work by reaching consensus among member nations — or their decisions are not binding on those nations that dissent — but not on Wilsonian principles. They could therefore find their place in the NCS without difficulty.

The world needs much stronger forms of global governance, based on liberal democratic principles. However, it is sociologically not ready to be governed the way liberal democracies are, as very little global community building has taken place (more about this below). Until it is ready, treating aspirations as if they were actualized, or as normative ramming rods, does

not make for a more liberal LIO but engenders cynicism and opposition. One way to correct this gap is to scale back these claims. This may well be a mark of the NCS.

Free trade

In spelling out the elements of the LIO, several scholars put much emphasis on free trade. Robin Niblett writes that:

At the heart of the [liberal international] order were the Bretton Woods institutions — the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank — and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which became the World Trade Organization in 1995. Underpinning all these institutions was the belief that open and transparent markets with minimal government intervention — the so-called Washington consensus — would lay the foundation for economic growth.⁵¹

And Eric Posner writes that free trade is the only one of the pillars of the post-Cold War order that is still functioning properly.⁵²

Globalists hold that trade increases the efficiency of all economies, and hence the wealth of nations. They tend to see nationalist populists, who oppose free trade, as know-nothing ignoramuses, who do not understand that free trade benefits all involved, as

.....
 it reduces the costs of consumer goods. Nationalist populists call for protecting the workers of their nation from the ill effects of free trade by imposing high tariffs on imports, among other measures, and they tend to frame advocates of free trade as unpatriotic. Both sides use the arguments for and against free trade as ideological ramming rods.

Both those who hold that free trade drives a stake into the hearts of working class people and those who believe that opposition to free trade is a major sign of ignorance, point to something that does not exist: free trade.

In addition, globalists point out that most jobs are lost due to auto-

 mation and not trade. However, between 2000 and 2015, the United States lost five million largely manufacturing (well-paying and meaningful) jobs to trade.⁵³ These job losses are an important source of nationalist populism.

The scaling back that is necessary regarding trade is mainly a rhetorical one. Both those who hold that free trade drives a stake into the hearts of working class people and those who believe that opposition to free trade is a major sign of ignorance, point to something that does not exist: free trade.

To support the preceding proposition, I will quickly review points others have made: first, that there never was free trade because there are strong national barriers on the movement of labor, highlighted by the recent issues raised by mass immigration. Second, the flow of trade is affected by numerous actions of national governments, even if they are not controlling the flow of capital, directly setting exchange rates, or limiting imports. Changes in the level of taxation, the size of the deficit, investment in research and development, subsidies, and terms of credit provided by the government all affect trade. Trade is also limited to protect national security (e.g., bans on the sale of certain high-tech items and many weapons), to ensure food and drug safety, to pressure nations to democratize (e.g., the embargo against Cuba), to prevent the development of nuclear weapons (e.g., sanctions against trade with North Korea and Iran), to protect endangered species and archeological sites, and to discourage child labor. A side agreement of NAFTA, the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC), requires the three countries to enforce labor protections, including the freedom of association and the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike, and certain “technical labor standards,” such as compensation in cases of illness.

To favor discussion not colored by ideology, one ought to refer to less
 versus more managed trade — “freer”
To favor discussion not trade as responsible economists do —
colored by ideology, one but not to “free trade.” It also follows
ought to refer to less versus that calls for making some changes
more managed trade — in the ways trade is managed can be
“freer” trade as responsible considered in the transition to an
economists do — but not to NCS, without this leading to the end
“free trade.” of liberalism.⁵⁴ Indeed, such changes
 were often made in the past during
 the period considered to be the golden
 days of the LIO. In this way, the popu-
 list opposition to transnational trade may be mitigated. As for the rising
 powers, they seem to have no reason to object in principle (as opposed to
 in specific terms) to somewhat more managed trade, or to trade managed
 with goals other than only maximizing efficiency.

In short, trade never was, and is extremely unlikely to be in the foreseeable future, “free.” It is managed to varying degrees. Rising powers have no case against somewhat more managed trade, given that they manage it much more than the United States. The additional level at which trade needs to be managed depends to a great extent on measures such as Trade

Adjustment Assistance, though it may have to be expanded to become Technology Adjustment Assistance given that automation is a major source of disruptive change. If sufficient funds can be provided to ensure that those who are displaced due to trade or automation either are retrained for different jobs (jobs that pay and provide benefits and meaning similar to those they lost), or they are hired to carry out public jobs, then little additional trade management will be needed.⁵⁵

To summarize, trade was never as liberal as globalists imply. Managing it somewhat more (if TAA is not adequate), as part of the transition to NCS, should help mitigate nationalist populism and be supported by rising powers.

Free movement of people

Globalists favor the free movement of people across national borders. They strongly support the Schengen Agreement, which removes border controls between many European nations. They strongly supported Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, when she opened the doors to more than a million refugees. And they view Trump's call for building a wall on the Mexican border and restriction on immigration from Muslim-majority countries as typical right-wing, xenophobic, reactionary, nationalist policies.⁵⁶

Actually, there is a tension between open-ended immigration, especially of people from different cultures, and sustaining communities. Communities benefit from a measure of stability, continuity, and a core of shared values. Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt views mass immigration as the trigger that set off populism in many nations. He concludes that it is possible to have moderate levels of immigration from "morally different ethnic groups" — so long as they are seen to be assimilating into the host culture — but high levels of immigration from countries with different moral values, without successful assimilation, will trigger a backlash.⁵⁷ Haidt suggests that immigration policies ought to take into account three factors: the percentage of foreign-born residents at any given time; the degree of moral difference between the incoming group and the members of the host society; and the extent to which assimilation is being achieved. Globalists do not approve of this approach. They embrace a libertarian perspective toward immigration, and the "core principle of libertarianism," as Jacob Hornberger writes, "is that freedom entails the right to live your life anyway you want, so long as your conduct is peaceful." Thus, "There is only one libertarian position on immigration, and that position is open immigration or open borders."⁵⁸

One may suggest that the idea of open borders is just a theoretical position, that nobody truly believes in unlimited immigration. However, this position describes what took place in the EU, when several nations joined the Schengen Agreement, which allows free movement of people across national borders. Though the UK opted out of the Schengen Agreement, the resentment around migration fueled the push for Brexit.⁵⁹ Such free flows of people are viewed as endangering national values and communities and are not sustainable.

In effect, scaling back the liberal flow of people, as part of the transition to an NCS, is already taking place. All the countries involved — even those that are highly favorable to immigration, such as Australia and Canada — limit the number of immigrants they receive each year and favor some kinds of immigrants over others. We have already seen that all the European nations involved have limited immigration, some very drastically. I am not arguing that these limitations are just, set on the right level, or grant morally appropriate preference to some immigrants over others. I simply note that the communitarian gap has not sustained the previous higher levels of immigration. Accelerating the integration of immigrants into the host societies may allow another increase in immigration in the future. Meanwhile, nationalist populism is forcing immigration to be scaled back.

Freedom of navigation: liberal and consensual

In many ways, freedom of navigation is a quintessential liberal element of the LIO. It seeks to ensure that people of all nations will be able to move about freely on the seven seas. The United States undergirded

Above all, China (and other rising powers) would suffer much more than the United States if the flow of goods was interrupted, because they are much more dependent on such flows than the United States or its allies.

..... this freedom through frequent freedom of navigation assertions that pushed back against limitations on travel by friend and foe alike.⁶⁰ There seems to be no reason this element could not be readily incorporated into the NCS. (Various statements have been made about China seeking to limit freedom of navigation. To the extent that these refer to China's call for an Air Defense Identification Zone over the South China Sea, many other nations have similar zones, and no plane can approach within several hundred miles of the United States without identifying itself.⁶¹)

Above all, China (and other rising powers) would suffer much more than the United States if the flow of goods was interrupted, because they are much more dependent on such flows than the United States or its allies. Populists have shown little interest in this subject. In short, one should expect smooth sailing for freedom of navigation in the NCS.

CONCLUSION

The Liberal International Order, forged by the United States at the end of World War II, is challenged by nationalist populism and rising powers, raising concerns that anarchy may follow and liberal values such as free trade, free movement of people, and freedom of navigation will be undermined. This article suggests that the order is being transformed rather than ending. One adaptation is some sharing of power, as the United States is no longer as hegemonic as it was in 1945 when the foundations for this order were first set. In other areas, the LIO has prematurely advanced in the much-needed direction of more supranational governance. As long as people hold their nation to be their main political community — until supranational communities develop on a regional and one day global level — high respect for national sovereignty will have to continue to be the basis of the international order.⁶²

This, in turn, requires some limits on the movement of goods and of people, though not of navigation. Another important adaptation entails promoting human rights and democratic regimes only by non-lethal means, while coercive regime change (a rather illiberal form of action) is avoided. That is, the transition from an LIO to NCS and its consecutive adaptation to the sociological reality has already taken place. It must be expected to be reconstructed once supranational communities develop. How this can be achieved is a complex subject that is not addressed within the confines of this article.

This article has a sub-text that should be openly addressed. It assumes that in revising the existing world order, the preferences of nationalist populists and rising powers should be taken into account. One cannot ignore that the worldwide distribution of power has changed since 1945, or that premature globalist advancements are one reason nationalist populism is rising and endangering liberalism. Moreover, as long as the future promotion of liberal values is limited to non-lethal means, respect for national sovereignty and the promotion of liberalism can find a place in the new international order — more centered on nation-states, once transnational community building allows for an expansion of globalism. *f*

ENDNOTES

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