
Introduction: Globalization, de-globalization and the liberal international order¹

By Markus Kornprobst, Vienna School of International Studies, and T.V. Paul, McGill University

Abstract. For decades, globalization and the liberal international order evolved side by side. Recently, however, deglobalizing forces have been on the rise and the liberal international order has come to be increasingly beleaguered. The special issue '(De)globalization? The Future of the Liberal international order' examines the interconnectedness of globalization and deglobalization processes on the one hand and the trajectory of the liberal international order on the other. This introduction provides a conceptual frame for the articles to follow. It discusses globalization and deglobalization processes, compares how they have been intertwined with the liberal international order in past and present, and explores how the differences between past and present are likely to affect the future of world politics. The special issue makes three important contributions. First, we examine globalization and deglobalization processes systematically. Second, we break new ground in studying the future of international order. Third, we generate novel insights into epochal global change.

Keywords: globalization, de-globalization, liberal international order, international order, order

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Introduction

Current world politics witnesses the simultaneous growth and decline of worldwide interconnectedness. On the one hand, ongoing digital advances make for ever faster and voluminous data transfers. Climate change increasingly makes itself felt across the globe, even in as remote a continent as Antarctica. Some epidemics, recently witnessed in dramatic fashion by the spread of COVID-19, develop into pandemics within a few months. On the other hand, global foreign direct investment, a critical measure of global financial flows, peaked at US\$2 trillion in 2015, significantly decreased to US\$1.5 trillion by 2019² and, at least partly due to the COVID-19 Crisis, fell by 42 percent in 2020. The ‘outlook remains weak’.³ Authoritarian governments increasingly curb cross-border communicative flows, for example by forcing temporary internet shutdowns or permanent censorship of social media sites. Communities beyond the nation-state, be it the European Union, the ‘West’ or even ‘visions of world community’⁴ come under severe pressure. These examples of globalization and de-globalization processes could be extended almost indefinitely.

Until recently, an international institutional constellation often referred to as the liberal international order has fostered globalization, adapted to its dynamics, and attempted to keep major global political disturbances in check. This order, however, is in trouble. Special issues on this topic have appeared in many leading journals in the discipline in recent years,

² United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *World investment report 2020: international production beyond the epidemic* (New York: United Nations, 2020), p. 2.

³ <https://unctad.org/news/global-foreign-direct-investment-fell-42-2020-outlook-remains-weak>.

⁴ Jens Bartelson, *Visions of world community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

including *International Affairs*⁵ and *International Organization*⁶. They address the question of whether this order can be resilient amidst a rising number of rather vocal agents turning against it. In recent years, anti-liberal forces have gained more and more electoral support in states as varied as the United States, Brazil, India, Turkey, and Hungary. Many of them, embarking on protectionist policies and economic nationalism, have broken off supply chains that undergird economic globalization. Authoritarian rulers strengthened their grip on power at home and embarked on increasingly hard-nosed policies abroad. This includes China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin, whose countries have benefitted from economic globalization, the former more so than the latter. Liberal ideals of global governance get brushed aside even more easily, especially when its chief defender, the US, took the lead in their destruction under the Trump administration.

The purpose of this special issue is to inquire into the relationship between de-globalization and the strains on the liberal international order. We examine three sets of questions: First, where do de-globalizing processes come from? Do they originate from outside the liberal international order? Or are they, *inter alia*, produced by the liberal international order itself? Second, what do de-globalizing dynamics do to the liberal international order? Does the order remain resilient under pressure? Or does it weaken, perhaps even crumble? Third, looking ahead, what are the plausible future scenarios for the international order and how are we going to get there? Are de-globalization processes likely

⁵ See G. John Ikenberry, Inderjeet Parmar and Doug Stokes, 'Introduction: Ordering the world? Liberal internationalism in theory and practice', *International Affairs* 94: 1, 2018, pp. 1-5.

⁶ See David Lake, Lisa Martin and Thomas Risse, 'Challenges to the liberal order: reflections on international organization', *International Organization* online first, 8 March 2021.

to gain or lose momentum? Under what conditions will the liberal international order be able to cope with these forces or even actively shape globalization and de-globalization processes?

Tackling these questions, this special issue seeks to make three important contributions. First, it examines globalization and deglobalization systematically. While economists and sociologists have debated deglobalization processes for a while already, international relations scholars have been very reluctant to engage with them. Second, we embed the liberal international order in broader globalization and deglobalization processes, thus opening up new vistas for research on the future of this order. Third, the contributors, taken together, provide novel insights into the forces that drive and halt epochal changes in world politics.

The remainder of this introduction is organized into four sections. First, we discuss globalization and de-globalization processes. Second, we identify past linkages between these processes and the liberal international order. Third, we move on to present linkages and what they have to do with the turbulent times in which we live. Finally, we preview the contributions to this special issue.

Globalization and deglobalization

Globalization, needless to say, is difficult to define and scholarship is far from arriving at some kind of consensual definition. Thus, this section does not try to come up with yet another grand definition and do the same for deglobalization. Instead, its modest purpose is to establish a broad framework for studying globalization and deglobalization.

Most definitions of globalization identify interconnectedness as key characteristic of globalization. Actors increasingly connect and socio-economic processes come to be more and more intertwined that used to be more confined to more narrowly delineated geographical spaces such as the state. While there are great variations to what extent locales within a state, states and international regions are plugged into global interconnectedness, the latter makes itself felt in one shape or another almost everywhere in the world.⁷ This interconnectedness is multifaceted.⁸ Take economic globalization, for example. While being only one dimension of globalization, it encompasses the 'integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, direct foreign investment (by corporations and multinationals), short term capital flows, international flows of workers and humanity in general, and flows of technology.'⁹ Yet globalization is not just about economics. From a medical point of view, for instance, globalization is, among other things, the global spread of microbes, including pathogenic viruses that cause diseases such as yellow fever, influenza, AIDS and COVID-19. Social theorists zoom in on the re-making of geographical imaginations of socio-political space

⁷ David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, 'Global transformations: politics, economics and culture', in Chris Pierson and Simon Tormey, eds., *Politics at the edge: the PSA yearbook 1999* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000), pp. 14-28.

⁸ Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. vi.

⁹ Jagdish Bhagwati, *In defense of globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 3.

and communities. In their reading, globalization decouples political communities from territorial boundaries,¹⁰ making even imagining a global citizenship a possibility.¹¹

During globalization's heyday in the aftermath of the Cold War, however, many globalization authors already cautioned that global politics is not all about increasing interconnectedness. There is also the opposite phenomenon. Giddens juxtaposed globalization's 'action at distance' to the revival of nationalism and local identities,¹² Robertson the 'universalization of particularism' to 'particularization of universalism'¹³ and Appadurai homogenization to localization.¹⁴ Barber put it into more colloquial language: The planet is 'coming together' and 'falling apart' at the same time.¹⁵ 'Glocalization' remains a key term used by many authors.¹⁶ More recently, Eriksen makes a similar point when he writes

¹⁰ John Agnew, 'The territorial trap: the geographical assumptions of international relations theory', *Review of International Political Economy* 1: 1, 1994, pp. 53-80; Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: a critical introduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

¹¹ See Gerard Delanty, *Citizenship in a global age* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2000); Janet McIntyre, *Global citizenship and social movements: creating transcultural webs of meaning for the new millennium* (London: Routledge, 2003); Bhikhu Parekh, 'Cosmopolitanism and global citizenship', *Review of International Studies* 29: 1, 2003, pp. 3-17; Hans Schattle, 'Communicating global citizenship: multiple discourses beyond the academy', *Citizenship Studies* 9: 2, 2005, pp. 119-133.

¹² Anthony Giddens, *The consequences of modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), pp. 4-5.

¹³ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: social theory and global culture* (London: Sage, 1992), p. 100.

¹⁴ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Benjamin Barber, 'Jihad vs. McWorld: Globalization, tribalism and democracy', *Atlantic* 269: 3, 1992, pp. 3-19.

¹⁶ Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization: space, time and social theory', *Journal of International Communication* 1: 1, 1994, pp. 33-52; Zygmunt Bauman, 'On glocalization: or globalization for some, localization for some others', *Thesis Eleven* 54: 1, 1998, pp. 37-49; George Ritzer, 'Rethinking globalization: glocalization/globalization and

about scaling up and scaling down.¹⁷ In short, many globalization scholars argue that even when the balance tilts towards globalization processes, there are also de-globalization processes occurring simultaneously.

Probably starting already in the late 2000s, de-globalizing forces have become stronger and stronger. Some authors, ranging from economists to sociologists, even submit that the balance now tilts more towards de-globalization than globalization or at least will do so soon. O'Rourke and Williamson published a series of articles and books that juxtapose globalizing and deglobalizing epochs.¹⁸ They start with the anti-global mercantilist restriction (1492-1820), continue with the first global century (1820-1913) as well as the anti-global retreat (1913-1950) and conclude with the second global century (since 1950). The global financial crisis sparked interest in peak finance and peak trade, i.e., the question whether finance and trade, after climaxing in the mid-2000s, will steadily decline afterwards.¹⁹ Van Bergeijk makes

something/nothing', *Sociological Theory* 21: 3, 2003, pp. 193-209; Victor Roudometof, *Glocalization: a critical introduction* (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁷ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 'Globalization', in Harald Wydra and Bjørn Thomassen, eds., *Handbook of political anthropology* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018), pp. 462-476.

¹⁸ Jeffrey G. Williamson, 'Globalization, convergence, and history', *Journal of Economic History* 56: 2, 1996, pp. 277-306; Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and history: the evolution of a nineteenth-century Atlantic economy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999); Jeffrey G. Williamson, 'Winners and losers in the commodity lottery: The impact of terms of trade growth and volatility in the periphery 1870-1939', *Journal of Development Economics*, 82: 1, 2007, pp. 156-179; Kevin Hjortshøj O'Rourke, 'Economic history and contemporary challenges to globalization', *Journal of Economic History* 79: 2, 2019, pp. 356-382.

¹⁹ Neil Dias Karunaratne, 'The globalization-deglobalization policy conundrum', *Modern Economy*, 3: 4, 2012, pp. 373-383; Jaime Caruana, *Have we passed 'peak finance'?* (Geneva: International Center for Monetary and Banking Studies, Bank for International Settlements, 2017); Michael Witt, 'De-globalization: theories, predictions, and opportunities, for international business research', *Journal of International Business Studies* 50: 7, 2019, pp. 1053-1077.

an analogy between the great depression ('deglobalization 1.0') and our times ('deglobalization 2.0').²⁰ Sociologists use the term either in analytical or normative fashion. For Hannerz, working at the intersection of anthropology and sociology, deglobalization is underpinned by cultural interpretations of Self versus Other.²¹ Walden puts a positive normative spin on deglobalization. He postulates a new world economy that is embedded in society. Instead of being ruled by 'the logic of corporate profitability', it ensures an equitable income distribution. There are no longer any transnational corporations or global organizations.²²

Globalization and the liberal international order

Globalization does not necessarily go hand in hand with a liberal international order. What O'Rourke and Williams take to be the first global century was, of course, hardly linked to a liberal international order. The Concert of Europe originates, among other things, as an attempt to quell domestic revolutionary forces and curb the pressures they exerted on Europe's monarchies at the time. At the same time, European states tightened their colonialist grip on Africa and Asia. Yet the rise of the liberal international order since the end of the Second World War happened in conjunction with the rise of globalization.

²⁰ Peter AG Van Bergeijk, *Deglobalization 2.0: trade and openness during the great depression and the great recession* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019).

²¹ Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational connections: culture, people, places* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1996), p. 8.

²² Bello Walden, *Deglobalization: ideas for a new world economy* (London: Zed Books, 2008). For a somewhat similar argument, see Mahdi Elmandjra, 'The need for a 'deglobalization' of 'globalization'', in Chris Pierson and Simon Tormey, eds., *Politics at the edge: the PSA yearbook 1999* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000), pp. 29-39.

With free trade being a pillar of the liberal international order, this order has fostered economic globalization, especially among Western allies. This has been underwritten by two cherished beliefs: First, free trade in goods and services leaves everyone better off. The market is supposed to work a considerable amount of magic. There have been plenty of scholarly contributions about how to regulate the global market²³ but post-Cold War global politics has moved into the opposite direction. The so-called 'Washington Consensus' promoted a neoliberal economic agenda around the world. Attempts to curb such an agenda, for example the Global Compact, the Millennium Development Goals and then the Sustainable Development Goals tend not to be legally binding and leave plenty of room for different interpretations. Second, economic interdependence produces peace among states. Increasing economic interconnectedness makes waging war increasingly costly. As first suggested by Montesquieu, going to war, therefore, becomes less and less compatible with means-ends calculations.²⁴ In International Relations, the commercial peace hypothesis has been

²³ See John Gerard Ruggie, 'International regimes, transactions, and change: embedded liberalism in the postwar economic order', *International Organization* 36: 2, 1982, pp. 379-415; Jude C. Hays, *Globalization and the new politics of embedded liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Richard Devetak and Richard Higgott, 'Justice unbound? Globalization, states and the transformation of the social bond', *International Affairs* 75: 3, 1999, pp. 483-498; Eric Helleiner, 'The life and times of embedded liberalism: legacies and innovations since Bretton Woods', *Review of International Political Economy* 26: 6, 2019, pp. 1112-1135.

²⁴ Baron de Montesquieu, *The spirit of the laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), book XX.

discussed from a great variety of angles.²⁵ Underpinned by these two beliefs, an unprecedented economic globalization occurred, especially in finance and trade.²⁶

Democratization, too, is something that the liberal international order has purported to do irrespective of where a state is located on the globe. Democracy is expected to produce internal and external restraints on the use and abuse of power, which is held to be critical for the behaviour of democratic states toward fellow democracies.²⁷ Democracies are very unlikely to fight one another, as the democratic peace hypothesis puts it.²⁸ The more the liberal international order evolved over time, the more democracy came to surpass other forms of government as the solely legitimate kind of rule. The 1970 UN Friendly Relations Declaration, for example, stated that '[e]very State has an inalienable right to choose its

²⁵ See Erik Gartzke, Quan Li and Charles Boehmer, 'Investing in the peace: economic interdependence and international conflict', *International Organization* 55: 2, 2001, pp. 391-438; David H. Bearce, 'Grasping the commercial institutional peace', *International Studies Quarterly* 47: 3, 2003, pp. 347-370; Erik Gartzke and Oliver Westerwinter, 'The complex structure of commercial peace contrasting trade interdependence, asymmetry, and multipolarity', *Journal of Peace Research* 53: 3, 2016, pp. 325-343.

²⁶ Philip R. Lane and Gian Maria Milesi-Ferretti, 'The drivers of financial globalization', *American Economic Review* 98: 2, 2008, pp. 327-32.

²⁷ This was first sketched by Kant in his work on the relations among republics: Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995).

²⁸ See Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, 'Normative and structural causes of democratic peace, 1946-1986', *American Political Science Review* 87: 3, 1993, pp. 624-638; Bruce Russett, *Grasping the democratic peace: principles for a post-Cold War world* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Bear F. Braumoeller, 'Deadly doves: liberal nationalism and the democratic peace in the Soviet successor states', *International Studies Quarterly* 41: 3, 1997, pp. 375-402; Spencer R. Weart, *Never at war* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Christopher F. Gelpi and Michael Griesdorf, 'Winners or losers? Democracies in international crisis, 1918-94', *American Political Science Review* 95: 3, 2001, pp. 633-647.

political, economic, social and cultural systems' (UNGA 2625 (XXV)). Such formulations have become increasingly rare from the 1990s onwards and this does not pertain only to UN documents. The African Union, for instance, strongly endorsed democratisation in its 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

Finally, the liberal international order postulated more and more global governance in a growing number of issue areas.²⁹ This ranges from development to health, environment to migration, and science and technology to human rights. It is especially the latter, being at the core of justificatory discourses on the liberal international order, that served as an engine of global governance. By the 1990s, the human rights field had come to exert considerable influence even in the international security realm. New rules were added to international humanitarian law, the International Criminal Court was created to enforce them, the responsibility to protect made it into the World Summit Declaration and from there to Security Council Resolutions, and arms control treaties such as the bans on landmines cluster munition and nuclear weapons followed the human-centred logic of international humanitarian law. All of these changes became, although accompanied by plenty of contestation (especially by great powers), formally institutionalized.

Whither globalization, whither the liberal international order?

²⁹ James N. Rosenau, Ernst-Otto Czempiel and Steve Smith, eds., *Governance without government: order and change in world politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Commission on Global Governance, *Our global neighbourhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

More recently, the liberal international order has been shaken not only by a legacy of not having steered certain globalization forces into warranted directions but also by the rise of de-globalization processes that run counter the pillars upon which it rests.

Economic globalization made for major economic growth rates but the liberal international order, staying aloof of distributing wealth more equally, contributed to making its own opponents. The global export volume of trade in goods stood at \$3.495 trillion in 1990, jumping to \$19.45 trillion by 2018. The Global Gross Domestic Product grew from \$84.149 trillion in 2009 to \$142 trillion in 2019.³⁰ The richest economies account for two thirds of this figure.³¹ Within these states, however, the distribution of wealth remains extremely skewed and the gap between the rich and poor is increasing.³² Populism is linked to distributional inequalities and discontent among certain sections of the electorate such as in the Midwest and the Southern United States who have lost faith in the ability of the liberal elite to offer them much economic hope. It is very unclear whether the unequal distribution of wealth will be meaningfully addressed any time soon. Technological advances, especially in the digital realm, improve the quality of life of people around the world but also decrease the importance of labour as a factor of production along with the rise of low-paying service industry jobs at the cost of traditionally secure jobs. Likewise, the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 are making the gap between the rich and poor even greater.

³⁰ For these estimates, see, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268750/global-gross-domestic-product-gdp/>

³¹ <https://stats.unctad.org/Handbook/EconomicTrends/Gdp.html>.

³² Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the twenty-first century* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

With economic globalization slowing down significantly in recent years, a new set of problems awaits the liberal international order. The sharp decrease in foreign direct investment, for instance, is likely to have severe repercussions. It is expected to almost halve investment flows to Africa, Asia and Latin America.³³ Far from getting closer to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, millions of people could be thrown back to poverty. Even though the number of refugees is already at a record high, significantly more people could join the global refugee surge. Societal unrest and more authoritarian tendencies in host states could be the result. Whether the global governance mechanisms, set up by the liberal international order when it was still going strong, will be able to handle these challenges is doubtful. We will revisit this issue in greater depth below.

The times when scholars celebrated the latest wave of democratization³⁴ have, for the time being at least, passed. There is plenty of ‘democratic recession’. Freedom House reports that 2020 was the 15th consecutive year of decline of freedom worldwide. In 2020, democratic recession was particularly pronounced: ‘Nearly 75 percent of the world’s population lived in a country that faced deterioration last year.’ In sum, ‘democracy’s defenders sustained heavy new losses in their struggle against authoritarian foes, shifting the international balance in favor of tyranny.’³⁵ Scholars turn their attention to another global trend, labelled democratic

³³ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *World investment report 2020: International production beyond the epidemic* (New York: United Nations, 2020).

³⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century*, vol. 4 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Keith Jagers and Ted Robert Gurr, ‘Tracking democracy’s third wave with the Polity III data’, *Journal of Peace Research* 32: 4, 1995, pp. 469-482.

³⁵ Freedom House, *Freedom in the world 2021: democracy under siege*, available online at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege>.

back-sliding³⁶ or authoritarianization³⁷ instead. Numerous states, including China and Russia, have moved towards more authoritarianism in recent years. Equally important, democracies do not necessarily generate liberal and democratically-oriented leaders. The unequal distributional effects of economic globalization have played into the hands of populist leaders in states otherwise as different as, say, Brazil, Hungary and the United States. More and more illiberal leaders put additional pressures on the liberal international order and, in the case of those whose policies are about withdrawing into the nation-state and cutting global interconnectedness, add to de-globalization dynamics. This, in turn, feeds back into the interplay of economic globalization and the liberal international order, and it also has severe repercussions for global governance.

While some globalizing forces continue to make themselves very much felt, the liberal international order's capacities to channel these forces into warranted directions is decreasing markedly. Record numbers of refugees do not prompt states to meet somewhere in the middle to address the situation adequately. Although climate change becomes increasingly obvious even without consulting complex scientific climate change models, with exponential global warming and attendant rising sea levels and catastrophic floods and fires, effective

³⁶ Nancy Bermeo, 'On democratic backsliding' *Journal of Democracy* 27: 1, 2016, pp. 5-19; David Waldner and Ellen Lust, 'Unwelcome change: coming to terms with democratic backsliding', *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 1, 2018, pp. 93-113.

³⁷ Natasha Lindstaedt and Erica Frantz, *Democracies and authoritarian regimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Oliver Schlumberger and Tasha Schedler, *Authoritarianisms and authoritarianization*, in Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Bertrand Badie and Leonardo Morlino, eds., *Sage handbook of political science* (London: Sage, 2020), pp. 712-729.

attempts to counter it remain elusive. The human rights field has become a major diplomatic battling ground, especially at the United Nations Human Rights Council, and is no longer a field that exports ideas for governing other fields. On the very contrary, institutions built at the intersection of, say, the human rights and the security fields, are under severe pressure, for example the International Criminal Court. Or they are even defunct such as the principle of the responsibility to protect. Perhaps the decline of global governance capacities has been most visible in attempts to co-manage the COVID-19 Crisis. During the early phase of the crisis, China reported late and piecemeal to the World Health Organization (WHO). As a result, there was a fateful delay in determining a public health emergency of international concern. Even afterwards, Chinese co-operation with WHO, for example to determine the origins of the virus, has remained all too limited. Needless to say, the United States' decision to leave the WHO, an already strained organization, in the midst of dealing with a major global crisis, did not help finding effective responses to the crisis either.³⁸ The narrow victory of Joe Biden in the 2020 US elections has raised hopes for the US abandoning some of the predecessor's policies, yet its 'economic retreat' predates the Trump Administration and may not go away all that easily.³⁹ The post-pandemic world economic order may reinforce and institutionalize some of the economic deglobalization policies that leading states, especially liberal ones, have adopted during the crisis.

³⁸ Stephanie Strobl and Markus Kornprobst, 'Co-managing global epidemics and pandemics', *Public Jurist*, April Issue, 2020, 31-34; Lawrence O Gostin et al, 'US withdrawal from WHO is unlawful and threatens global and US health and security', *Lancet* 396 (10247), 293-295.

³⁹ Adam S. Posen, 'The price of nostalgia: America's self-defeating economic retreat', *Foreign Affairs* 100: 3 (May/June 2021), 28-43.

Taken together, the evolutionary patterns of (de-)globalization and the liberal international order will have major implications for peaceful change in world politics. Globalization and the liberal international order, for all their faults, made it possible for new powers to rise peacefully. This applies especially to China and, to a limited extent, India and Brazil along with many middle-income countries in the G-20 grouping. Globalization placed them in an advantageous position for the production and marketing of goods and services in cheaper fashion by providing multinational corporations platforms and outsourcing labour, especially technical personnel. With its cheap labour and aggressive trade practices, China has built the world's supply chains of a majority of consumer goods, propelling the size of its economy four times greater than it was in 1989. This is unprecedented as previous rising powers in a majority of instances had to fight their way into status prominence, many a times failing. Economic discrimination has been a major source of their disenchantment to initiate system-changing wars.

The power transition process among the major powers could become more conflictual.⁴⁰ China is already flexing its muscles around the world, while Russia is becoming more atavistic toward its neighbours. It remains to be seen whether liberal states, once rallying around the United States to nurture and protect the liberal order, will be able to do so again under President Biden. The Trump legacy of antagonizing long-standing allies, hurting America's protector role of the liberal international order and damaging its reputation for

⁴⁰ See also Alexandra Gheciu, 'Liberalism and peaceful change', in T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, Harold A. Trinkunas, Anders Wivel, and Ralf Emmers, eds., *The Oxford handbook of peaceful change in international relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). For an earlier discussion, see Norrin Ripsman and T.V. Paul, *Globalisation and the national security state* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

making credible commitments may weigh heavily. China's Belt and Road Initiative, connecting its market with Asia, Europe and Latin America has resurrected the fears of a new form of hegemony built around Taianxia (tributary system). In recent times, China has increased its military adventurism in the South China Sea by building artificial islands and claiming huge swath of territory directly pitting against ASEAN states, as well as stoking military crises with Taiwan, Japan and India. The postulate by Hua Chunying, spokesperson of the foreign ministry, for China to engage in 'wolf warrior diplomacy'⁴¹ may very well be compatible with this assertiveness.

Organization

This special issue is organized into three clusters of contributions. First, authors inquire into the agents of globalization and deglobalization processes. They examine how hegemony, great powers, middle powers and networks, coping with the pushes and pulls of globalization and deglobalization, foster and undermine the liberal international order, and how this, in turn, feeds back to globalization and deglobalization. Ripsman puts strong emphasis on the ability of great powers to shape international order. He argues that while their relations changed significantly due to post-Cold War globalizing forces, current tensions are not primarily a cause of deglobalization. Critically discussing the often used assumption that orders change when challengers to a hegemon arise, Chan traces how the United States has turned into a revisionist power. He pays close attention to domestic politics in making this contention.

⁴¹ Siegfried Wolf, 'Coronavirus: Why Beijing's "wolf warrior diplomacy" will fail,' *South Asian Democratic Forum*, 20 April 2020.

Miller, focussing on the core states of the liberal international order, analyses how domestic politics leaves a mark on international politics and vice versa. He contends that their fostering of liberal policies abroad has, over the long term, undermined their liberalism at home. Aydin moves away from the focus on great powers and zooms in on middle powers. She shows that many of these second-tier states too, experience an illiberal turn, which adds to the instability of the liberal international order. Finally, Santos and Geva analyse the rise of rightwing anti-globalist networks. They make a case that these networks need not challenge globalization per se but sure undermine the liberal international order.

Second, several contributions to this special issue address international institutions in great depth. Owen does so from a historical perspective. Discussing the evolution of liberalism from the 18th century to now, he distinguishes different liberal interpretations and their manifestations in the evolving international order. He contends that current contestation among three versions of liberalism undermine the liberal international order. He endorses a dialogue between these different versions, postulating to adapt the current liberal international order. Some of these adaptations, less capital mobility and less migration, would slow down globalizing forces. While Owen provides a historically sensitive account of (ideas for an) international order, Bátorá discusses what the current international order is made up of. He provides a nuanced account that alludes to different fields (or sub-orders) of this order and, equally important, the relations across them. Conceptualizing the latter as interstices, he traces how new institutional forms, always bearing the imprints of previous forms, arise in these borderlands between fields. It is these interstices, he contends, that are of crucial importance for transformations of world order.

The third section features articles that put functional fields of the world order under scrutiny. Coleman and Job contend that the United Nations' liberal peacekeeping practices are under pressure because non-liberal states and regional organizations get more and more involved with peacekeeping, including its funding. Hayes and Weber caution that current deglobalizing forces put human security under threat. Some long-time advocates of this lens, having turned inward-looking and neglecting their roles as shapers of order, have abandoned it. Lobell and Ernstsen analyse how economic nationalists arise out of opposition to globalization and how they then work towards deglobalization. The authors compare the workings of these mechanisms in the late 18th century and since 1970. Brawley examines how financial globalization has created and coped with a series of crises. He argues that recoveries tended to be partial, generated new inequalities, and, therefore, did not make for more stability in the long run. Moving to trade, Sinha diagnoses a new global North-South divide. Emerging powers often back existing trade rules that foster globalization whereas major powers in the North, some losing from these rules, turn increasingly against them and towards deglobalization. Kornprobst and Strobl discuss how past shifts towards more globalization have made it easier for certain communicable and non-communicable diseases to spread but have produced – oftentimes all too weak – instruments to cope with this spread only with a considerable time lag. Based on these historical patterns, the authors discuss future scenarios for how COVID-19 is likely to affect today's international order. Money investigates into the migration field, distinguishing different regimes within the field. She contends that while certain globalizing forces will persist, the refugee field is likely to experience significant pressures. Behera, analysing knowledge production, cautions against an epistemic colonialism

that is inherent in the globalization of knowledge production. She argues that while there are currently tendencies towards a deglobalizing epistemic parochialism, there are also opportunities to move to an epistemic pluralism instead.

Paul concludes this special issue. Discussing and linking the major themes raised by the other contributors, he makes a case for keeping deglobalizing forces in check and re-adapting liberal order to the 21st century. Paul advocates for a reformed welfare state to deal with the domestic crises of liberal states, especially those arising from widening income inequalities, which are the main cause of the weakening of the liberal order internationally. Doing so, his contribution crisscrosses domestic and international politics. It offers both theoretical insights and practical ideas for scholars and policy makers alike.