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Great Power Rivalry and the Weakening of Collective Hegemony: Revisiting the Relationship Between International Society and International Order

(Cambridge Review of International Affairs, forthcoming in 2020)

Abstract: As Russia-West relations hit a post-Cold War low and a sterner Western approach toward China has become more manifest, great power rivalry appears to have returned. It is often assumed that these developments will have important consequences for the durability of the so-called 'liberal international order'. This paper seeks to clarify precisely what the liberal international order is and how it relates to English School understandings of international society and international order. First will come an analysis of these concepts as they are currently understood in recent literature, with the aim of providing a more wide-reaching framework for understanding hegemony and liberal order in today's world. Then, the paper will turn to Russian and Chinese perspectives on the liberal order and the extent to which Moscow and Beijing are challenging it. Finally, it will discuss the implications that all of this holds for the conceptual relationship between international society and international order.

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Introduction

In the past half-decade, as Russia-West relations hit a post-Cold War low and a sterner Western approach toward China has become more manifest, great power rivalry appears to have returned.¹ This has naturally been accompanied by a plethora of analyses evaluating the impact of these developments on the international order. It is often taken for granted that

¹ Indeed, the 2017 US National Security Strategy moved to embrace the logic of great power conflict explicitly. See (2017) 'Trump: Russia and China "rival powers" in new security plan', *BBC News*, 18 December, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-42401170>>, accessed 11 June 2019.

since 1945 – or perhaps since 1991 – there has been some sort of ‘liberal world order’, erected by the United States, that has operated uninterrupted and is now under threat. This paper challenges that assumption. It claims, *inter alia*, that the Western attempt after the Cold War to transform the liberal international order into a liberal *world* order – that is, to render the Western-based liberal order synonymous with global international society itself – has effectively failed. It seeks to clarify precisely what the liberal international order is and how it relates to English School understandings of international society and international order.

First will come an extended analysis of these concepts as they are currently understood in recent academic literature, evaluating their shortcomings in the process with the aim of providing a more wide-reaching framework for understanding hegemony and the liberal order in today’s world. Then, the paper will turn to Russian and Chinese perspectives on the liberal order and the extent to which Moscow and Beijing are challenging it. Finally, we will discuss the implications that all of this holds for the conceptual relationship between international society and international order.

Background

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and particularly since China began its meteoric rise, the idea that the international system is becoming increasingly multipolar has gradually gained currency. This is also found in the rhetoric deployed by major powers themselves, from Beijing’s calls for a ‘democratization of international relations’ to Moscow’s visions of a more ‘polycentric world’ (Kofman 2018; Wishnick 2010, 56). Even the European Union – supposedly the world’s normative power *par excellence* – acknowledges the existence of a multipolar world in documents published by the European Commission. The attraction of multipolarity as a guiding concept for understanding today’s world is perhaps reinforced by

the continued strength of the realist tradition in the study of international relations. Indeed, Russia's deepening of its strategic partnership with China following the onset of the Ukraine crisis – itself brought on by Moscow's perception that NATO and the EU were trying to enlarge their own sphere of influence eastward at Russia's expense – represents a textbook example of balancing that would appear to vindicate the neorealist perspective.

However, structural realists also underestimated how durable American unipolarity would be. Neorealist assumptions dictate that other leading states would quickly band together to resist the hegemon's overwhelming power. Contrary to this, however, we saw Russia and China remain focused on much narrower objectives throughout the 1990s, in part designed 'to keep the international order from impinging' at a time of perceived instability and uncertainty, with the scope of their challenge only widening over the course of several decades (Rozman 2014, 197). Far from challenging the order, we have witnessed non-Western powers express a desire to play a role in upholding it. Indeed, as Marcin Kaczmarski puts it, 'Russia and China see themselves as the co-architects of the international order on a par with Western states' (Kaczmarski 2015, 134). Gideon Rose, for his part, notes that despite some examples of regional disorder, '[o]n the big-ticket items – great-power peace and global prosperity – the realist pessimists were wrong, and the liberal optimists were right' (Rose 2019). Materialist international relations theories such as neorealism are – consciously or unconsciously – blind to the world of norms and are thus unable to distinguish between power and influence. Discussions surrounding challenges to the liberal international order have proliferated since the consolidation of the Russia-West rivalry in 2014 and the votes for Brexit and Donald Trump in 2016. In each of these instances, the global balance of material power did not change overnight, but the balance of *influence* – the normative equilibrium – did.

It is true that the gradual rise of the rest has come at the expense of the relative power of the West. However, today's world remains largely unipolar, with the United States still representing the only country that can deploy comprehensive power – economic, military, diplomatic and cultural – with global reach. Even the world's second-largest economy, China, remains in many ways a mere 'partial power' (Shambaugh 2013). The story of the past decade and a half has been one of declining American normative influence more than material power. This verily began with the Iraq War, but gathered speed in 2008-9 due to the Great Recession – of which the failings of the American economic model were a central cause – culminating in the 2013-4 Ukraine crisis, which not only Russia but also China blamed on Western overreach (Lukin 2018, 52).² At the same time, Moscow and Beijing have gradually undergone a normative convergence over the course of the post-Cold War period, largely but not exclusively in response to Western foreign policy actions (Paikin et al 2019). Europe remains divided by rival normative visions, with Russia having been unable to find a way to integrate fully into Europe's Brussels- and Washington-centric economic, political and security institutions in a fashion commensurate with its desire to maintain its status as an independent great power. In particular, the clash over Ukraine has demonstrated the incompatibility – at least for now – of the EU regulatory order with that currently offered by the Russian-backed Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) (Studin 2017). This, combined with the continued survival of the communist regime in China and the advent of a more explicit Sino-American rivalry, would appear to indicate that the liberal international order – if considered to be synonymous with the *Pax Americana* – has reached the geographical limits of its expansion.

² For more on how the 2008-9 financial crisis reduced American global influence in normative terms, see Kaczmarek (2015, 116-117).

Watson's Pendulum

We find ourselves situated, therefore, in the realm of contestation over questions of international legitimacy and order, but more specifically within the rubric of an international society defined by an ontology of states. The English School of international relations naturally comes to mind, and since we are dealing with questions of hegemonic overreach, Adam Watson's pendulum appears particularly relevant (see Figure 1).

Watson's pendulum model seeks to characterize the degree of centralization present within an international order – that is, the relative amount of power and influence held by the leading hegemon at a given moment. This hegemonial authority is concerned not only with material advantages but also with standards of civilization (Watson 1997, 127). In other words, it measures both material and normative clout. The pendulum oscillates between a highly decentralized society at its leftmost extreme and a highly centralized one at its rightmost tip. Beginning at the left, one finds a society characterized by 'multiple independencies'. One could indeed claim that even a grouping of states as decentralized as this constitutes a society, as recent English School scholarship posits that there is no distinction between international system and society – in other words, there is no such thing as a pre- or non-social system, as the mere act of mutual recognition is social (Reus-Smit & Dunne 2017, 31-32). This contrasts with earlier English School accounts, which suggest that states that are 'sufficiently involved with one another' to a point where 'the volume of contacts becomes worth regulating' constitute a system, whereas a 'more intimate' level of interaction that 'goes beyond rules and institutions to shared values and assumptions' represents a society (Watson 1992, 311-318).

As the pendulum moves rightward, the degree of hegemony strengthens. Beyond the ability to limit states' foreign policy options through impersonal pressures, we move toward

‘suzerainty’, in which the hegemon exercises some influence over other states’ internal affairs even though they retain their formal independence. Continuing rightward, we reach ‘dominion’ – more of a supranational system rather than an international one – and finally ‘empire’, in which the boundaries between actors almost begin to blur, producing distinguishable but highly subordinated political entities (1997, 118-120). The pendulum metaphor is employed because a rapid swing in one direction will ultimately produce a counter-swing in the opposite direction – albeit imperfectly, as the counter-swing may not be symmetrical. For example, Napoleon’s conquests represented a decisive attempt to consolidate a European empire – a rightward swing too rapid to be stable – which resulted in the forming of a counter-coalition and the eventual establishment of a diffused hegemony at Vienna (1992, 233). But indeed, after the Napoleonic Wars, the pendulum only swung part of the way back toward multiple independencies, as the Metternich order’s balance of power was diffused but featured an organized hegemony nonetheless (Ibid., 229).

At first glance, this seems to characterize the situation we find ourselves in today, both with respect to the US-led global order as well as the European regional order with Brussels at its core. Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, we appear to have witnessed a relatively rapid rightward swing of the pendulum in both cases. NATO launched a bombing campaign outside its traditional zone of operation before the end of the 1990s with Operation Allied Force in Yugoslavia and expanded up to Russia’s border in less than 15 years. The inability of the European Union to break from its Brussels-centric model for the expansion of the European political and economic order led to a rigid clash with fledgling Russian-backed attempts at Eurasian integration, helping in 2013-14 to produce the Ukraine crisis (Studin 2019). The liberal international order promoted by the transatlantic alliance was only willing to incorporate Moscow in a seemingly subordinate

role.³ In other words, an inflexible set of norms promoted by Western powers have produced a pushback from the likes of Russia and China – a natural swing of the pendulum back to the left. The question is whether this provides an accurate description of the complex picture we are witnessing today.

International Society and International Order

According to the narrative put forward by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson in their tome *The Expansion of International Society*, one of the most well-known works in the English School canon, the international society we have today – a social realm featuring a series of norms and institutional practices between states – originated in Europe and gradually spread across the world, ultimately coming to encompass the entire globe. This proceeded in four phases, in the leadup to and then throughout modern history: crusades by European powers into Iberia and the Baltics, three centuries of exploration in which European international society also evolved, an Industrial Revolution that gave Europe the power to encompass and administer effectively the entire globe, and finally a period of decolonization that gave us the universal and global international society that we have today (Watson 1984, 32).

Bull (1977, 8) defines an international order as a ‘pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals’ of international society. The issue is that, since the onset of the Cold War, international society and international order have not maintained the same geographic scope. During the four-decade-long standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union, one could make the case that global international society was governed to a large extent by two separate, rival international orders. Now, Trine Flockhart (2016) has

³ (2019) ‘Good Read. Interview with William H. Hill, author of “No Place for Russia – European Security Institutions since 1989”’, *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 18 February, <<https://www.osce.org/magazine/412046>>, accessed 28 February 2019.

posited that we are today witnessing the emergence of a ‘multi-order world’, featuring several (potentially overlapping) regional and transregional international orders, replete with their own conceptions of power, identity, primary (informal) institutions, and secondary (formal) institutions. This suggests that, by and large, international society and international order represent two distinct phenomena in today’s world. Indeed, one could even argue that the international society that exists today – while retaining various practices and informal ‘primary’ institutions from the past – differs from the one that existed in previous centuries. European international society rested on a dual balance of power – material and societal – the latter of which was eroded by the wars of the twentieth century, driven by ‘universalizing ideologies’ such as communism, fascism and liberalism (Little 2009, 21-22). This left only a balance of material power, which itself disintegrated with the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Eric Hobsbawm (2009, 29) put it, ‘The dissolution of the USSR means that the Great Power system, which governed international relations for almost two centuries and, with obvious exceptions, exercised some control over conflicts between states, no longer exists.’

Still, one should not interpret this to mean that the post-Cold War era lacks any international society at all. As Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit put it in *The Globalization of International Society*, their recent contribution to English School scholarship, ‘rather than seeing declining sociability as a marker of systemic politics, we see conflict and contestation as integral to any international social order’ (Reus-Smit & Dunne 2017, 33). Contestation is seen not just as ‘incorporative or corrosive, but as an engine of international social development’ (Ibid., 36). The rise of liberalism with the French Revolution corresponds in many ways to the dawn of the modern international states system (see Teschke 2009). Contestation between liberal and illiberal powers defined much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It should be no surprise, therefore, that this period corresponded to the rise, spread and entrenchment of the state – governed and centralized in a

way we would recognize it today – as the unit actor in international society (Tilly 1990, 103-115). Indeed, Dunne and Reus-Smit themselves note that international society has not only expanded but also changed, with the norm of absolutism giving way to popular sovereignty in Europe in the nineteenth century and the legitimacy of empire collapsing in favour of sovereign equality in the twentieth (Reus-Smit & Dunne 2017, 29).

This view is reinforced by Ned Lebow (2008, 58 & 506), who in his ‘cultural theory’ of international relations posits that progress is defined by an increase in the complexity of the system in question. Far from representing the onset of anarchy, we should therefore think of the post-Cold War world as being characterized by increased complexity – indeed, by an *increase* in the degree of institutional and normative content present in international society rather by the absence of such content, even if that content may not be shared and legitimated by all parties at all times. That is to say, rival institutions and norms may be driving the evolution of international society rather than necessarily leading to its total collapse, even if the society that emerges from today’s contestation becomes increasingly unrecognizable. This is very much in line with Flockhart’s conception of a multi-order world.

Watson’s Pendulum Revisited

We thus find ourselves faced with the question of where on Watson’s pendulum we are situated today, and what this can tell us about the contemporary international order. The advent of unipolarity following the collapse of the Soviet Union, combined with unparalleled American influence in terms of the perceived legitimacy of its socio-political and economic model, indicate that the post-Cold War period began with a rightward swing of the pendulum toward ‘empire’. As China began its rise and Russian power returned, however, it gradually began to move back to the left. The decline of Washington’s relative influence can also be

seen through the fact that Moscow and Beijing have begun to launch institutions of their own, including the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

A notable flaw of Watson's pendulum metaphor is that it is mechanistic, assuming that any counter-swing in response to hegemonic overreach occurs automatically. This would appear to undermine the realness of state agency, which in turn would diminish the significance of normative rivalry between great powers in today's world. Moreover, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that Watson's pendulum does not take another crucial factor into account that can help us to understand the nature of the contemporary Russia-West and Sino-American confrontations. It is not merely the *degree* of hegemony exercised by the leading state that has regularly changed throughout history, but also the *character* and indeed the *content* of hegemony that have evolved, becoming progressively stronger as the centuries have gone by. This reflects Lebow's assertion that change is embodied by greater complexity and increased content in international society.

Perhaps Watson's model is not blind to this, but rather takes it into account and considers it to be unimportant, as the phenomenon of left-right pendular oscillation has continued uninterrupted. Indeed, Watson himself notes that while *ragione di stato* in the era of the Italian city-states could be employed as 'a justification of any policy', Richelieu's later concept of *raison d'état* more clearly recognized a ruler's obligations to his ruled (Watson 1992, 183). Thereafter, as the modern state began to consolidate, it had to transform its subjects into citizens to legitimate itself (Held 1995, 43-46). Unsurprisingly, this produced a rise in nationalism, which was strengthened when it became not just a political movement but indeed an official norm of international society: the right to national self-determination, recognized by the League of Nations, promoted by a rising United States and entrenched after the collapse of the Russian, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. Both within and

between actors, international society and the norms that govern it have become thicker, even if that thickness is only occasionally universal.

Moreover, hegemony in international relations has strengthened not just in terms of relative power – with each international order, bounded by two general wars, featuring a more dominant hegemon than in the preceding order – but has become more multifaceted and indeed rigid as well. The informal balance of power system designed to regulate great power relations before the French Revolution evolved into an agreed-upon mechanism in the Metternich system, jointly upheld by all leading actors. However, there was still a relative degree of flexibility in this order, as the Concert of Europe’s application of the balance of power principle often took the form of conferences, called by a great power only when it was deemed necessary. The ensuing attempt to infuse the international order with more specific content in the form of national self-determination after World War I was followed by a more clearly delineated, continually expanding body of international law and a more rigid, near-cardinal norm promoting the inviolability of states’ territorial integrity after World War II, in addition to a ‘thicker’ and more formalized institutional architecture to regulate global economic and political interactions (e.g., the World Bank, IMF, GATT/WTO and various UN bodies). Going even further, especially since the Helsinki Accords and the subsequent collapse of the eastern bloc, the hegemonic liberal West has attempted to legitimate the promotion of human rights inside other states’ borders, with some success. The range of acceptable topics to discuss at the global level has gone beyond the strictly political and international, and now includes everything from climate change to public debt to human development.

However, although the evolution of the nature of hegemony throughout modern history seems to have taken a largely unidirectional form, greater complexity in international society has brought with it the potential for greater contradiction. This is indeed precisely

what we have seen. On the one hand, in practical terms, the lines between states have continually blurred as the content and character of hegemony have strengthened. We have seen a rise not just in international integration but in international intervention as well, ranging from humanitarian missions to prevent mass atrocities to increasingly robust UN peacekeeping missions geared toward state-building (Karlsrud 2015). Sovereignty is increasingly tied to solvency, and at times even to political or ideological considerations as well, as the American-led invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime in Libya have most recently shown.

On the other hand, however, the official *legitimacy* – that is, the nominally agreed-upon norms – upheld in international society has become increasingly rigid. The legitimately recognized unit actor in today's international society, particularly since decolonization and the collapse of European empires, is the sovereign state (Jackson 1990, 17). The desire to uphold this principle partly explains why great powers are intolerant of revolutionary non-state actors or terrorist groups that challenge it outright (e.g., the so-called Islamic State/Daesh). If this norm were to be placed on Watson's pendulum, it would be situated decidedly on the left, toward the 'multiple independencies' side of the spectrum. This places it at odds not only with the increasing emergence of NGOs and corporations as transnational actors, but also with the increasing penetration of hegemonic norms into the realm of the state in a way that redefines our understanding of sovereignty, such as the reframing of sovereignty as a responsibility rather than a right as per the Responsibility to Protect doctrine or the granting of international legal personality to individuals.

This tension has been illustrated by Robert Jackson (1990, 78), who notes that – unlike in the settlement that followed World War I – the proliferation of sovereign states after World War II and decolonization was not rooted in questions of ethnonational self-determination. This can be seen to have put added stress on international society, as it has

been contended by some that ‘endless upheaval and disorder’ is already required to implement the norm of national self-determination to its fullest, seeing as the world is not composed of ‘separate, identifiable “nations”’ (Kedourie 1984, 348-349). Jackson notes that many of these states are in fact merely ‘quasi-states’, juridically sovereign, but not empowered domestically ‘to protect human rights or provide socioeconomic welfare’. They ‘are not allowed to disappear juridically’, enjoying ‘an unqualified right to exist [...] despite their domestic disorganization and illegitimacy’ (Jackson 1990, 21-24). This produces a fundamental tension, not just for the political actors themselves but indeed in the realms of norms that govern international society, as quasi-states represent

neither wholly the international ethics of rationalism nor of revolutionism but something ambiguously in between. Sovereignty can no longer postulate the good life. Instead, it is the basis of a novel claim to overcome the bad life. It is the ethic of progress within the juridical status quo: an anomalous sort of progressive conservatism (Ibid., 188).

Watson himself acknowledges that the gap between theory and reality – between behaviour and legitimacy, as it were – has been growing for centuries:

[N]ineteenth-century international society was pulled by nationalism and democracy and the growing importance of its non-European members away from the tight hegemony instituted by the Vienna settlement [that followed the Napoleonic Wars] towards a much looser attitude of mind that emphasized independence, at the same time as advances in technology and other factors were integrating the worldwide system into an ever closer economic and strategic net of involvement and interaction. The European ideas of sovereignty, independence and juridical equality, which provided the formal legitimacy of the international society of states in 1900, put that society *de jure*, that is so far as law and theory were concerned, appreciably nearer to the independencies end of the spectrum than

the operational practices of the system justified. This dichotomy between practice and theory was to grow wider in the twentieth century (Watson 1992, 275-276).

The question remains how far this gap can grow before the contradictions it engenders a crisis for international society. The nineteenth century saw great powers contend with new nationalism and civic identities, even as rulers attempted to legitimate their reign through appeals to the dynasties of the *ancien régime*; the post-war era was marked by a strengthening of the norm of independent sovereign statehood, even as the character of hegemony strengthened as the world disintegrated into two superpower blocs; and the post-Cold War era has featured rivalrous interpretations of American actions, promoting human rights and transatlantic security for some, while violating state sovereignty and consolidating American hegemony for others. What is clear is that Watson's pendulum, while able to model successfully how states or coalitions of states respond to hegemonic bids at a given moment in history, does not fully capture the complexity of how international society has evolved and where we find ourselves today.

To summarize: On the one hand, the pendulum model fails to measure the evolving character and content of hegemony – rather than simply the degree thereof – which has gradually strengthened throughout the centuries. On the other hand, it has difficulty incorporating both behaviour and legitimacy, which in any given international order can find themselves situated at opposite ends of the pendulum. It could be not just the rapidity of the pendulum's swing at any given moment but indeed the cumulative evolution of the gap between theory and practice that dictates the stability of an international order. Therefore, while perhaps being able to explain why we have seen Russia become alienated from a Euro-Atlantic security order that appeared to exclude it over the course of the post-Cold War era, it does not necessarily provide us with the big picture regarding what has come to be known as

the liberal international order. And indeed, what that order precisely embodies and encompasses is subject to significant debate.

International Society and International Order Revisited

Building on Flockhart's model of a multi-order world, Richard Sakwa (2017, 44) has recently articulated a two-level conception of the global political system, distinguishing between international society and international order (see Figure 2). The top level features global international society itself, including all its formal institutions and informal common practices, while the bottom level is the realm of the multi-order world featuring competing and occasionally overlapping international orders. States and sub-orders within this bottom level interact with one another horizontally in the 'sphere of international relations', as well as vertically with international society in the 'sphere of norms' (Ibid.). Sakwa defines the liberal international order – essentially the West and its associated norms, institutions (e.g., NATO) and power structures – as being one of several orders situated in this bottom level.⁴ His contention is that after the end of the Cold War, an attempt was made to render the liberal international order synonymous with world order itself, with the former adopting 'some sort of tutelary relationship' with international society in the process (Sakwa 2017, 42). In essence, the aim was to enlarge rather than transform the Western-led order, with the spread of liberal order being taken as equivalent to the spread of order full stop. In such a context, 'the goal was Russia's adaptation to the stringencies of an existing order' (Ibid., 18).

⁴ A clarification is in order at this point: The model advanced in this paper contends that the bottom level represents the realm of international order, broadly speaking, in contrast with the realm of international society on top. It may take the form of a multi-order world today, although it could have taken the form of a single international order in past centuries, if one zeroes in on European international society for instance. Therefore, this bottom level can contain both international orders and individual actors. Today, it contains multiple orders led by individual great powers, as well as individual states (or smaller orders) with varying degrees of connection to each of these primary orders. For example, the EU represents an international order with its own set of norms and practices but is also connected to the US-led liberal international order.

Gradually, Moscow responded to this by adopting a ‘neo-revisionist’ posture, critiquing the liberal international order horizontally but defending international society’s autonomy vertically (Ibid., 47), which has helped lead to the emergence of a multi-order world.

While not saying so explicitly himself, Sakwa lays the foundations here for an important contribution to English School theory. Unlike the Bullian definition of international order outlined above, recent English School scholarship posits a much closer relationship between international order and international society. According to Dunne and Reus-Smit (2017, 31-32), a ‘breakdown of international order is not merely a failure to realize the primary goals of the society of states; it is a failure of the rules and institutions that constitute that society’. Therefore, we can consider the evolving character of the multi-order world as having a fundamental impact on the stability of international society itself. If the various states and orders present in the multi-order world are able to develop functional relations with one another – rooted in shared understandings, agreed-upon rules, and perhaps even new interstitial architecture establishing links and governing ties between blocs – then we may see an evolution but nonetheless gradual stabilization of international society. However, if rivalry between major powers spirals out of control, then differing applications and interpretations of norms may cause the gap between behaviour and legitimacy to continue widening, hollowing out international society’s institutions and rendering them increasingly unviable.

However, Sakwa’s characterization of the liberal international order as residing exclusively within the realm of the multi-order world is a striking one. By essentially conflating the liberal international order with the American-led geopolitical bloc, Sakwa ultimately discounts the elements of the liberal order that have been embraced by Moscow and Beijing. He does note that Russian criticism of Western norms and interventionism is not designed to return the world to an era of spheres of influence and Westphalianism, claiming that ‘resistance to Western hegemony is accompanied by attempts to strengthen the

universalism represented by international society' (Sakwa 2017, 49). But a strict separation between the liberal international order and the components that form today's universal international society discounts the impact that the former has had on shaping the latter.

While it is certainly possible to argue that institutions such as the United Nations owe their creation to the entrenchment of universal, rules-based multilateralism, Bretton Woods institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO have their roots in the Western alliance but have ultimately grown to become largely universal. Although it may be worth distinguishing between the liberal international order and the rules-based *world* order rooted in international law and multilateral institutions, one cannot reduce liberal internationalism to the contemporary Atlantic Alliance and its appendages.⁵ Indeed, liberal internationalism is a longstanding tradition featuring ideas concerning how to organize the international space in a positive-sum fashion (Ikenberry 2018), even if over time our understanding of what constitutes a liberal order has become 'thicker' in its conception, incorporating elements such as a commitment to upholding human rights. While the onset of the Ukraine crisis may largely mark the end of the West's expansion and the failure to render liberal order and international society completely synonymous, the liberal order has still left its imprint on international society.

It is therefore perhaps more useful to view the liberal international order as containing both a core and a periphery, with Western states lying at its centre but other players occasionally opting into some of its components. In other words, the order does not exist solely within the lower level of Sakwa's model of the global political system, but indeed

⁵ As mentioned here, this paper distinguishes between liberal order and rules-based order. Ikenberry tends to conflate the two, claiming that liberal orders have taken different forms throughout history but by and large are open and rules-based. This paper contends that an order being rules-based is not a sufficient condition for it to be considered liberal. The current liberal international order, in addition to possessing the notable characteristic of being rooted in American leadership, is much 'thicker' than being merely rules-based, containing additional content such as a commitment to promoting democracy and human rights. See Ikenberry (2013, 23-26).

straddles between the multi-order world and today's rules-focused international society, with a foot in both. This is in line with Michael Cox's contention that any liberal order requires a 'system of state power' to underpin it (Cox 2013, 115). That system of state power may reside in Sakwa's lower level, but the order itself is not confined to it. Indeed, this reflects Dunne and Reus-Smit's contention that a close link exists between order and society, helping to explain why the rules and institutions of today's international society appear to be in crisis following disagreements over the range of legitimate great power behaviour in the cases of Kosovo, Iraq, Georgia, Libya, Ukraine and Syria. The formation of orders in Sakwa's lower level can shape the structure of international society, just as contestation and crisis in the realm of the multi-order world can have a destabilizing effect on it. What is the nature of that contestation, then, and what consequences can it have for the future of the liberal order?

Russia, China and the Liberal Order

Following the annexation of Crimea and Russia's subsequent meddling in the Donbas in 2014, Moscow accelerated its declared 'pivot to the east' (Bolt & Cross 2018, 12). This has led to a deepening of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership, in addition to Russian visions for Eurasian integration. The latter have included a focus on Central Asia and the post-Soviet space by way of the Eurasian Economic Union but have notably also pushed for supercontinent-wide integration in the form of visions of a 'Greater Eurasia' (Karaganov 2016). With the geographical limits of the West having seemingly been reached and a degree of overt hostility having emerged in Russia-West and China-West relations, questions have been raised concerning the impact this could have on the future of the liberal order. This, in turn, depends in part on what Moscow's and Beijing's intentions are, and how they view this order.

This can often be a complicated task, as multiple interpretations are possible. For instance, one view is that Russia is challenging the order outright, seeing as its demands are clearly political – it does not feel well served by an order that has in many ways failed to accord it the place it believes it deserves as an independent great power. China, on the other hand, has benefited massively from the existing order over the past several decades, and therefore only seeks to reform it rather than overthrow it (Stronski & Ng 2018). On the other hand, however, one could equally make the case that Russia, having been fully incorporated into European international society since the eighteenth century (Watson 1984, 70-71), is less alien to any order whose cultural foundations are in the West, whereas China only began to interact with the West in any meaningful sense in the nineteenth century. Russia as a declining power could never be a genuine threat to the order, whereas a rising China in theory could. And if the existing order is rooted in a commitment to formal, rules-based institutions, then the supranational EAEU – modelled on the European Union – may appear to be more in keeping with its principles than China's Belt and Road Initiative, which focuses more on bilateral infrastructure and connectivity deals. The fact that these competing views exist is evidence of the fact that the situation is complex – that the respective views held by Moscow and Beijing on the liberal order are decidedly mixed.

According to many scholars, much of Russia's international posture is compatible with the stringencies of the liberal international order. Sakwa (2017, 106) contends that Moscow is more interested in changing 'practices' rather than 'principles', guarding against double standards committed by Atlantic powers. As such, Russia should be understood more as a 'norm-enforcer' than as a 'norm-maker' (Sakwa 2011). Its foreign policy is 'tempered by an understanding of post-sovereignty trends in international politics', including support for global governance (Sakwa 2017, 132-138). In particular, the EAEU is seen by Moscow as being complementary to the EU rather than a rival to it and compliant with WTO norms

(Ibid., 147-150).⁶ Russia does not repudiate EU norms per se, it simply takes issue with the fact that its interests are seemingly not respected – as in the case of the zero-sum competition over Ukraine’s orientation in the leadup to the Maidan revolution – and that no autonomous role has been found for it within Western institutions (Ibid., 258). Its attempts to sow disunity within Europe are therefore merely tactical in nature, including, for example, its efforts to undermine unanimous support within the EU for the continuation of sanctions (Ibid., 269).

In fact, it may be not only agency but indeed structure that prevents Russia from challenging the Western-led order in its entirety. Viacheslav Morozov contends that, having colonized itself on behalf of Europe, Russia has effectively permanently placed itself into a subaltern position – in both material and discursive-normative terms – vis-à-vis its European neighbour. Therefore, in framing its demands using Western concepts, Russia ‘does not challenge the Western-dominated world order in any radical way – rather, it claims a legitimate voice in the debate about how this world order must evolve’ (Morozov 2015, 22-23). Even Russian Eurasianists have a Eurocentric frame of reference, as they are concerned primarily with separating Russia from Europe (Ibid., 90). That is to say, the country’s elite debate essentially revolves around whether Russia should be civilized ‘through mimicry or negation’ of Europe (Ibid., 157). Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that Moscow is challenging outright the legitimacy of a European- and Western-centred order that it initially sought to join, having gone so far in the early 1990s as to discuss the possibility of having NATO or UN troops and OSCE involvement in areas of the former USSR that were dealing with ethnic conflict (Tsygankov 2010, 78). Moreover, in his speeches throughout the 2000s, Vladimir Putin was careful to balance criticism of Western double standards with rhetorical support for Russia’s transition toward greater democracy and openness (Malinova 2012, 77-82), while

⁶ Some note, however, that the EAEU’s institutions are fledgling and its ability to boost trade among members is limited as its primary purpose is to advance Russia’s geo-strategic interests. See Dragneva (2018).

also indicating a preference for multilateralism rather than multipolarity as the nominal remedy to the excesses of a unipolar world (Zagorski 2008, 47). This suggests that the logic underpinning the liberal order has penetrated Russian political discourse on a systemic level, even if in a qualified manner.⁷

One could criticize Morozov's perspective by saying that it downplays the possibility that Moscow's Eurasian and Asian foreign policy vectors have become meaningful to Russia in their own right, but other scholars also note that the debate over the extent of Russia's belonging to Europe is so central to Russian political discourse that it is difficult ever to imagine it disappearing in its entirety (Neumann 1995, 210). Much of Russia's foreign policy is guided by the imperative to be recognized by the West as an 'equal and legitimate' player in international affairs (Tsygankov 2010, 1).⁸ Moreover, it has been contended that Putin brought 'an almost entirely unsentimental, nonideological, pragmatic understanding' of Russia's situation and international relations to the Kremlin when he assumed office (Lynch 2008, 177). This would seem to imply that Russia's conservative turn in the early 2010s in the leadup to and following Putin's return to the Kremlin (Lo 2015, 24-25) is more situational than profound, in turn lending further credence to the assertion that Russia's backing of Eurosceptic and populist forces abroad is more tactical than ideological.

Similarly, China also finds itself in an ambiguous position vis-à-vis the liberal order and international society. On the one hand, some are quick to point out Beijing's continued support for free trade, multilateral institutions and fighting climate change in the wake of Donald Trump's election – seemingly defending the international order that the US appears to be abandoning. But it is equally possible to contend that China pursues these aims merely

⁷ For more on the continuity of the Russian political system through the Yeltsin and Putin eras, see Wood (2018).

⁸ One scholar contends that this phenomenon traces its roots back to early contacts between Muscovy and the Holy Roman Empire. See Neumann (2012, 25).

for selfish reasons, to reduce smog levels in its cities and to secure a favourable international environment to continue its economic development. According to some, China's pursuit of economic globalization may not be to integrate with the rest of international society, but rather to pursue multipolarization, as increased economic development brings with it the ability to resist hegemony and safeguard one's independence (Moore 2005, 134-135).

However, China's aims in this regard could instead be said to be more concerned with the supposed 'democratization' of international relations and the securing of global pluralism, referring 'more to the nature of international decision making than to the distribution of material power' and often citing support for multilateralism instead of multipolarity (Ibid).

The nature and consequences of China's vision of world order are also unclear. Beijing's calls for a 'New Type of Great Power Relations' could be an indication that the Chinese Communist Party's leadership has a genuine desire to shape world order in response to American demands for China to become a more responsible international stakeholder, but these could also represent a defensive tactic by a power with few official allies engaging in a bid to get Washington to respect its core interests (Bolt & Cross 2018, 15).

Since the 1990s, China has also begun to engage with Western political concepts such as human rights and democracy, with one scholar contending that these 'have not become national aspirations, but they have become legitimate topics for legal and policy debates' (Wan 2005, 297).⁹ As such, China's opening up to and engagement with international society have generated a co-constitutive relationship (Clark 2014), expanding the range of normative discourse within the country and helping to legitimate elements of the liberal order – at least partially and rhetorically – in China's eyes.¹⁰ One notable China scholar has described the

⁹ As early as 1991, a white paper published by the Chinese government opted not to challenge the notion of human rights nor its 'universality in principle'. See Zhang (1999, 127).

¹⁰ That said, recent developments such as increased surveillance of citizens and repression of Uighurs seem to be examples of this process slowing down, at the very least. Lebow (2018, 167) writes that domestically over

country as ‘quite risk-averse and narrowly self-interested’, a ‘confused and conflicted rising power undergoing an identity crisis of significant proportions’ that continues to possess ‘contradictory attitudes’ (Shambaugh 2013, 309-317).

Again, the picture painted here is not of a country that is challenging the international status quo outright. One scholar contends that China has emerged from a period of ‘alienation’ from international society in the 1950s and 60s – a period during which it ‘did not regard or [was] perceived not to regard as binding [the] set of common rules regulating relations’ between states – and the process of de-alienation has required a change in China’s policies as well as global systemic changes (Zhang 1999, 17-58). Beijing’s transition toward a foreign policy that officially emphasizes peace and common economic prosperity has occurred thanks to its subsequent socialization into international society (Ibid., 101). As of the early 2000s, China began to acknowledge publicly that security has become a globalized phenomenon and assign ‘independent weight’ to interdependence as a foreign policy aim (Moore 2005, 135-52). This is evidence of a country that has reached some sort of accommodation with the political status quo, even if China has not fully integrated into the norms and institutions of the liberal order and will likely reject perpetual American military dominance of the South China Sea (See Kaplan 2014).

Moscow and Beijing’s partial buy-in to the liberal order combined with their challenge to the unchecked dominance of the liberal West lends credence to the notion that in international terms they are not necessarily anti-liberal in their disposition, but perhaps merely conservative. This would appear to impose limitations on the extent to which international society can fully embrace a ‘thick’ conception of liberalism. Recent attempts to describe the outcome that will flow from these limitations range from a ‘post-liberal’ world to

the past decade China appears to have retreated from its commitment to providing increasingly ‘inclusive’ and ‘tolerant’ governance.

a world featuring ‘civilizational states’.¹¹ As Matthew Horsman and Andrew Marshall (1995, 166) bluntly put it, although perhaps presciently in a 1990s decade featuring Western post-Cold War triumphalism, ‘The values and ideas that the US and its liberal capitalist allies seek to promote simply are not shared by the vast majority of the world’s population.’ If, contrary to recent developments in the English School canon, one still believes that there is utility in drawing a distinction between the systemic and the social, then one could perhaps claim that in a diverse international society of global scope, liberalism can function effectively only when applied as an *international system* – emphasizing most prominently a commitment to institutionalized, rules-based cooperation – rather than as an organizing paradigm for a *world order* that permeates the domestic sphere, featuring an inter-subjectively developed, universal commitment to liberal values such as democracy and human rights. Whether due to their material might, their sprawling geography, or cultural differences, it was always a dubious proposition that Russia and China would ever accept an effectively subordinate position within a US-led world order in perpetuity.

Toward a New Conception of Global Politics

It is common to claim that the liberal order set up by the United States in 1945 has continued uninterrupted ever since. This view is supported by the fact that international orders in modern history are usually seen as being bounded by general wars, with no such military conflagration occurring in the late 1980s and early 1990s. John Ikenberry, one of liberal internationalism’s most articulate defenders, claims for instance that with the collapse of the eastern bloc and the expansion of liberal capitalism across the globe, the ‘inside order’ simply became the ‘outside order’ (Ikenberry 2018).

¹¹ For example, Adrian Pabst (2018), Christopher Coker (2019) and Zhang Weiwei (2012).

However, the end of the Cold War did bring substantial changes, including in the realm of institutions with the creation of the EU and WTO, two organizations thought of as being strongly representative of the liberal order. Torbjørn Knutsen, who claims that every international order invariably goes through phases of hegemony, challenge and decline, suggests that 1991 marked the dawn of a new American hegemony and thus a new American-dominated order (Knutsen 1999, 261). Other scholars have noted an increased commitment to spreading liberal principles beginning in the 1990s when compared with the Cold War period, suggesting a new set of organizing principles and norms on the international scene following the USSR's collapse (Barnett 2019). And just as the interwar period was a 'twenty years' crisis' bounded by two world wars, one could contend that the period from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the onset of the Ukraine crisis represents a 'twenty-five years' crisis' bounded by two cold wars,¹² giving further credence to the notion that the events of 1989-91 inaugurated a new era.

This new era, as we have seen above, was marked by an attempt to render the liberal international order effectively synonymous with international society itself. This attempt generated pushback from the likes of Russia and China concerning questions such as when state sovereignty can legitimately be set aside and who makes the rules that govern the international order.¹³ Indeed, their resistance to perceived Western overreach has at times even succeeded in preventing the establishment of new precedents and norms (Allison 2013, 205). However, as noted above, this effort to render the spread of liberal order synonymous with the spread of order itself has left an imprint at the level of international society. And at the same time, the limited nature of the pushback from Moscow and Beijing – buying into elements of the liberal order and emphasizing their commitment to international society –

¹² Interview with Dmitry Suslov, Moscow, 11 September 2017.

¹³ Indeed, Russia has at times been more preoccupied with questions of status rather than norms – with who makes the rules rather than what those rules specifically are. See Allison (2013, 45).

suggests the need for further nuance. Therefore, rather than the two vectors – horizontal and upward vertical – put forward in Sakwa’s conception of neo-revisionism, one can in fact identify *three* vectors that characterize great-power interaction and behaviour. First, there is the horizontal vector representing contestation in the realm of the multi-order world. Second, as Sakwa notes, one also finds upward vertical defence of the autonomy of international society, undertaken by individual great powers – either alone or in concert – in opposition to perceived abuses by other great powers. But third, there are additionally instances in which all great powers collaborate, conducting what is in effect a diffused hegemony, occurring through the institutions and practices of international society and exercised *downward* onto the multi-order world (see Figure 3). Put simply, great power relations are defined by a mixture of competition and collaboration.

This enhanced version of Sakwa’s two-level model lends itself to – and can operate in tandem with – a modified form of Watson’s pendulum (see Figure 4). As noted above, horizontal contestation between actors in the multi-order world affects the pendulum’s oscillation, with Russian and Chinese resistance toward attempts at consolidating a Washington-centric global order equivalent to a leftward push in the direction of ‘multiple independencies’. Such oscillation between greater and lesser degrees of centralization around a hegemonic power occurs relatively regularly. But we have also witnessed a continual strengthening of the character and content of hegemony over the course of modern history. Therefore, one can conceive of a second, slower-moving pendulum that has – by and large – progressively moved rightward throughout history, in the direction of a strengthened character of hegemony, exercised not by one great power over others but rather by all of international society’s great powers over the international order.

The downward vertical vector is the mechanism through which this collective hegemony is exercised. Unimpeded, it applies a rightward push on this second pendulum.

However, as the realm of international order gradually transforms itself into a multi-order world in the context of an increasingly globalized, democratized and multicultural international political system, we see individual orders and actors within this multi-order world defend the autonomy of international society by way of the upward vertical vector, which exerts the opposite effect on the second pendulum – hollowing out the character and content of collective hegemony. Contrary to Sakwa's view (2017, 44), this phenomenon is therefore of a different nature from the question of polycentrism, which is litigated horizontally between actors and orders in the realm of international order.

This proposed second pendulum is of theoretical and conceptual use for three reasons. First, it provides a model that describes the actual workings of the close relationship between international society and international order posited in recent English School writings. Second, it illustrates the partial nature of the Russian and Chinese challenge to the liberal order. The order may be facing critical challenges as a result of the return of great power rivalry, but this is due not so much to a straightforward hegemonic challenge as it is to processes that have been initiated within the two-level global political system. And third, by distinguishing between what Sakwa calls the 'sphere of international relations' and the 'sphere of norms', the model proposed here incorporates agency, thus solving a problem commonly associated with Watson's pendulum. Although a state may adopt a neo-revisionist posture in response to another state's actions, the specific normative content pushed by the neo-revisionist state is not necessarily subject to those pressures. Therefore, rather than great powers themselves, it is the relationship between order and society that is subject to structural forces in the sphere of norms.

The post-Cold War era has witnessed a strengthening of both the upward *and* downward vectors.¹⁴ Discord between Western and non-Western permanent members of the UN Security Council has become particularly pronounced over questions concerning fundamental norms such as the nature of state sovereignty and regional ordering principles, evidenced by a Russia that is content to back the al-Assad regime in Syria if this provides the greatest chance of restoring order, following several examples of Western-backed regime change in the Middle East. However, Moscow and Beijing setting aside their veto in the case of the NATO intervention in Libya appears to show that non-Western great powers have also bought into humanitarian norms to a certain degree (Allison 2013, 201-203). Thus, great powers are defending their own interpretations of international society even as they collaborate in exercising a collective and diffused normative hegemony over the international order. We have seen not a complete descent into unmitigated rivalry, but nor has the liberal order become synonymous with both international order and international society themselves.

If the continued exercise of the downward vector represents a shift of the second pendulum to the right and the upward vector of resistance pushes it to the left, then their simultaneous application could halt its movement altogether. The gap between behaviour and legitimacy in international society has been progressively widening ever since the nineteenth century. Hardened by this gap, secondary powers are now challenging the liberal order horizontally while pushing their own interpretations of what a truly universal international

¹⁴ For instance, disagreement between permanent members of the UN Security Council may have become more frequent, with Russia and China exercising their vetoes more often in recent years, but the number of resolutions passed by the Council has also increased substantially. See Firestone (2018, 83). However, it should be noted that the downward vertical vector posited in this article is not limited to the functioning of the Security Council. Great powers also manage international dynamics through other formal institutions and various agreements (for example, the recently employed Normandy format in the Minsk process concerning the conflict in Ukraine). Moreover, in addition to formal (secondary) institutions, great power management is usually listed as one of the primary institutions of international society by English School scholars as well. Clark (2011, 63) notes that great powers 'must agree upon norms for their joint exercise' of hegemony, which aligns well with this article's articulation of a downward vector representing the great powers of international society infusing the international order with content through the 'sphere of norms'.

society would look like. Indeed, as Sakwa (2017, 43) notes, the aim of non-Western great powers such as Russia and China is to ‘universalize universalism’. Such actions represent evidence of how states may occasionally want to be rid of a hegemon while simultaneously wishing largely to preserve the system that took root under that hegemon’s watch.¹⁵

Conceptions have already been articulated of Russian and Chinese foreign policy that allow for the United States to set the overall parameters of global politics but nonetheless aim to constrain Washington’s influence in their own regions without offering a bona fide alternative vision of order, ranging from Tsymbursky’s ‘multi-unipolar world’ to the Chinese concept of ‘one superpower and many great powers’ (Wilson 2014, 33). Even Watson (2006, 111) notes a historical trend that ‘the structural lines and the general pattern of a system are likely to remain more or less the same when one state replaces another in the hegemonial position’.

Moscow and Beijing’s desire to defend the autonomy of international society upwards through the vertical vector is evidence of their commitment to it, as they have indeed been at least partly socialized into it. This socialization has occurred in part through their participation in the joint exercise of hegemonic power downward along the vertical vector, as well as through the liberal international order’s expansion that has left an imprint on the level of international society – a society to which they belong. The result may be that international society possesses, to a certain extent, a ‘structure of Western hegemony’ (Sakwa 2017, 43), but hegemony is rooted in both coercion and consent. Indeed, the Greek word *hegemonia* implies a degree of legitimate authority, as opposed to the word *arche* denoting the exercise of raw power (Lebow 2008, 67). The salient question going forward is how much Russia and China will be content to exercise power jointly with the West, which in turn depends on

¹⁵ For example, China seems to be focusing its long-term efforts on displacing the United States as the preponderant power in the Asia-Pacific region, but its desire to balance against Washington on a global scale appears limited. See Monteiro (2014, 142).

whether their defensive recourse to protect the autonomy of international society can be tempered by efforts to reduce the scope of horizontal contestation in the multi-order world. The answer will therefore rest in large part on the extent to which cooperation between orders is possible in this multi-order world, with profound consequences for the future of international society – a society which, despite the existence of differing values and norms, has become increasingly hegemonically thick over the centuries.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to modify models put forward by Sakwa and Watson to provide a ‘big picture’ account of where international relations are currently situated in historical terms. In doing so, it has provided a more detailed conception of how international order and society are intimately linked, as contended by Dunne and Reus-Smit. Disagreements over perceived Western overreach – from Kosovo to Iraq to Libya – have prompted Russia and China to defend the autonomy of international society, which in turn threatens to hollow out much of the content of collective great power hegemony. However, Moscow and Beijing’s commitment to international society and their buy-in to elements of the liberal order have helped to ensure the partial nature of their challenge – neo-revisionist, but not fully revisionist.¹⁶ With a strengthened upward vertical vector reducing the likelihood of great power cooperation, the question remains how to buttress the foundations of the downward vector.

As the liberal order straddles both levels – society and order – without fully encompassing either, the downward vector is exercised both through the liberal order and outside it. The various instances in which this vector is applied can be thought of as pillars

¹⁶ For more on Russian neo-revisionism, see Romanova (2018).

that allow international society to rest stably. This depends on a solid foundation – the international order – as well as on stable pillars that rely on a degree of normative agreement between major powers. Thus, continued challenges to the collective exercise of great power hegemony and unconstrained rivalrous relationships in the multi-order world could exacerbate the normative contestation we are witnessing today and produce a crisis at the level of international society. Contestation might be inherent to any political order and may help to infuse it with additional overall content, but there can be significant consequences if much of this content is not universally shared over a substantial amount of time. International society will continue to exist in the sense that social interaction will continue to occur at the international level, but this does not foreclose the possibility that many of the *contemporary* international society's norms and institutions will fail to survive.

The challenge, therefore, is to find a way to stabilize relationships between blocs in the multi-order world while strengthening the pillars on which today's international society stands. The first task could be accomplished through the development of formal and informal linkages between orders, including but not limited to new trade agreements, institutions, exchanges and fora.¹⁷ The second, for its part, relies on the liberal order becoming more flexible, finding an equilibrium between Western leadership and norm projection on the one hand and the need for pragmatism in relations with non-Western great powers on the other.¹⁸ Additionally, when it comes to the downward exercise of hegemony outside the context of the liberal order, it requires greater agreement on the nature and future of rules-based multilateralism (Tocci 2018). That said, with Russia-West and China-West tensions

¹⁷ For more, see Irvin Studin's discussion on 'interstitial tendons' (Studin 2019).

¹⁸ Lebow (2018, 68) notes that '[t]he most stable orders are those that evolve through a process of gradual change'. As such, inflexible orders can be seen to face challenges of resilience.

remaining high – on issues ranging from Ukraine and Syria to tariffs and technology – the near-term likelihood of such developments occurring currently appears to be slim.

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List of Figures:

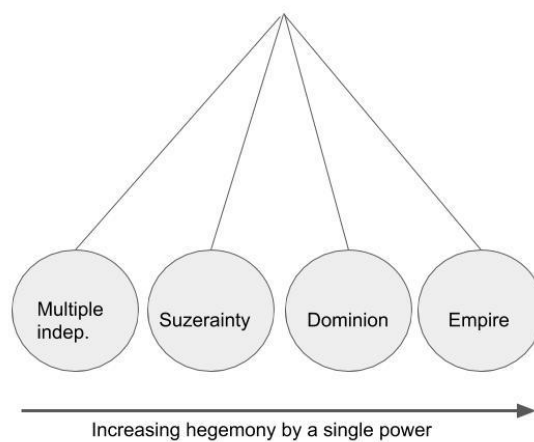


Figure 1. Watson's pendulum in the realm of international order

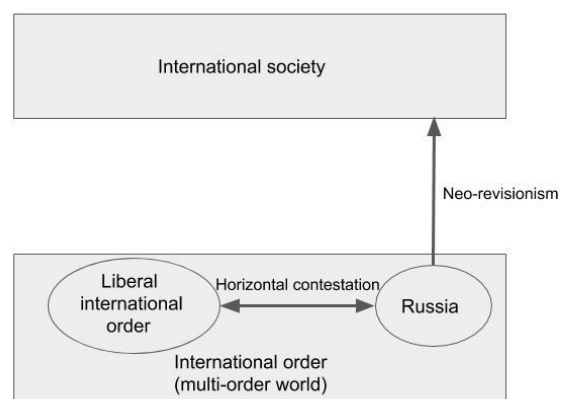


Figure 2. Sakwa's two-level conceptualization of the global political system and Russian neo-revisionism

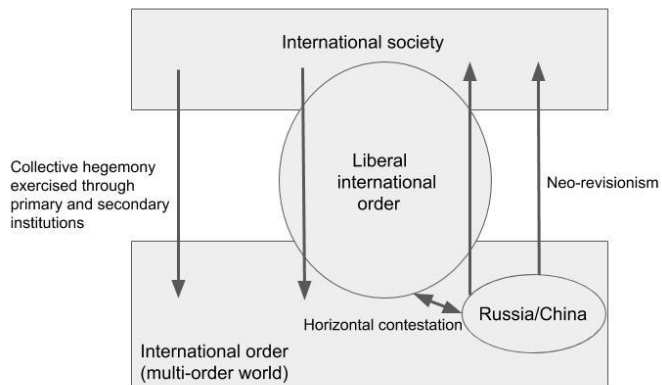


Figure 3. Revised two-level conceptualization of the global political system

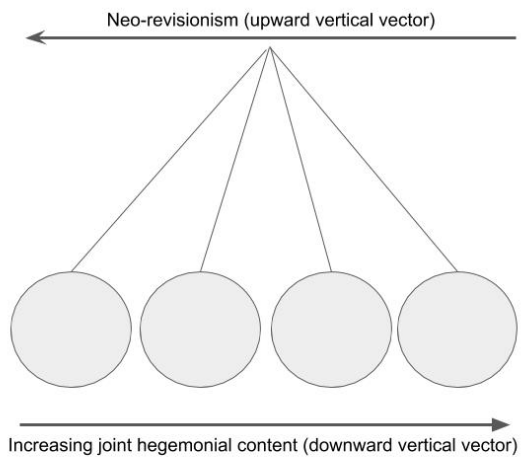


Figure 4. Second pendulum, governing the relationship between international society and international order