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“The US-led liberal order – global management of change through coercion and elite incorporation, not an embrace of diversity or equality”

Abstract

This article argues that the biggest challenges facing the post-1945 liberal international order are to genuinely embrace ethno-racial diversity and strategies to reduce class-based inequalities. However, this is problematic because the LIO’s core foundational principles, and principal underpinning “theory” (liberal internationalism), are Eurocentric, elitist, and resistant to change. Those core principles are subliminally racialized, elitist, and imperial, and embedded in post-1945 international institutions, elite mindsets, and in American foreign policy establishment institutions seeking to incorporate emerging powers’ elites, willingly, into the US-led order. As illustration, this article considers examples that bookend the US-led system: wartime elite planning for global leadership, and the role of the UN in Korea, 1945-53, which served as the primary instrument for the creation and incorporation of (South) Korea into the US-led order; and the role of several US-state-linked initiatives in China over the past several decades, including the Ford Foundation. The article compares the contemporary and historical evidence to liberal internationalists’ claims, and those implied by the work on “ultra-imperialism” by Karl Kautsky and Antonio Gramsci’s ideas of hegemony. The article concludes that elite incorporation – by a combination of coercion, attraction, and socialisation – is the principal goal of the US-led order, not embracing diversity and moving towards genuine change felt at a mass level. Hence, we should expect domestic and international political crises to deepen.

Introduction

It is widely agreed that the US-led liberal international order is at the very least in transition if not in crisis.¹ This article raises a number of significant questions to clarify the current

¹ Emerging powers are demanding renegotiation of power within the international system, there are strong criticisms and political movements against growing inequalities, and the rise of a more ideological left-right politics, challenging domestic and global economic, commercial and military strategies: J. Vestergaard and R. Wade, ‘Establishing a new global economic council,’ *Global Policy* 3:3, September 2012, pp.257-269; D. Rothkopf, *Superclass: The global power elite and the world they are making* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008); R. Kaplinsky, *Globalization, Poverty and Inequality* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); M. Goodwin, *Right Response: Understanding and Countering Populist Extremism in Europe* (London: Chatham House, 2011); at <http://mail.oneeastmidlands.org.uk/sites/default/files/library/Right%20Response%20Chatham%20House%20Report.pdf>; accessed 20 June 2017; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/05/25/remarks-president-trump-nato-unveiling-article-5-and-berlin-wall>; 25 May, 2017; accessed 26 May 2017. Although

conjuncture in the US-led liberal international order (LIO), particularly the academic ‘theory’ (liberal internationalism) that underpins the system. The most significant question addressed is: Is liberal internationalism a legitimating ideology more than it is a description or theoretical explanation of the existing system? I explore that question by considering several specific sub-questions, the net effect of which is to provide pathways to address the main issue: how did we get here? Who built the order? What were the foundational principles in theory and practice? How has the international order’s leadership managed change within it since 1945?

I address these questions by considering detailed examples of actual practice by US and allied elite leadership groups at key moments – first in conceptualising and building the order both in WWII and immediate postwar years by exploring the creation of the South Korean state; and secondly by looking at the management of change and challenges – in particular the (re)emergence of China as a great power. Both cases are claimed by leading liberal internationalists to be primary examples of the successes of the LIO: hence, examining those cases in some detail, allows us to compare liberal internationalist rationales – which were also the stated aims of policymakers – with historical and contemporary evidence.

The overall finding is that liberal-internationalist thinking/theory is, in effect, a (unconsciously on the part of its proponents) legitimating ideology rather than an effective explanatory frame for understanding the way in which the LIO actually works. That conclusion is reached, in part, by suggesting the applicability of a rather different perspective on the operations of the LIO and US power, in particular, as better understood in a synthesised Gramscian-Kautskyian framework, explained below.

The import is that the LIO is a class-based, elitist, hegemony – strongly imbued with explicit and implicit racial and colonial-imperial assumptions - in domestic and foreign relations. At home, it helps partly explain the phenomenon of the ‘left-behind’ white working/middle class, and its economic- and status-anxious affluent voters whose salience on the Right has transformed US politics since the Reagan revolution.² Responding to the (minorities’) rights revolution of the 1960s and the loss of economic opportunity and lowering living standards

Trump’s view drew most media attention, see EU president Donald Tusk’s tweet on the day of Trump’s NATO speech. He stated that “euro-atlanticism means the free world cooperating to prevent post-west world order”; <https://twitter.com/eucopresident/status/867489575937216512>; accessed 26 May 2017

² T.B. Edsall, *The New Politics of Inequality* (New York: WW Norton, 1985).

due to technological change and global redistribution of industry,³ white working and middle class voters drifted towards the Republican party of low taxes and fiscal conservatism.⁴ This delivered little in material terms and, as inequality increased with market-freedom and stagnant real wages, ‘rust belt’ and other workers grew increasingly dissatisfied with the status quo of establishment politics, exacerbated by anxieties about ethno-racial diversity and American identity as the US moves towards a ‘majority-minority’ society in which whites are a minority.⁵ This resulted in 2016 in the election of Donald Trump on an overtly anti-conservative, and barely concealed, white identity platform at home and programme of protectionism and non-interventionism - America First – abroad.⁶

Yet, political dissatisfaction or disaffection was not confined to the political Right.⁷ Occupy Wall Street movements and groups also vented their anger at the inequalities of power, wealth and income, particularly in the wake of the Iraq war and of the 2008 financial crisis.⁸

In external policy, it helps explain the difficulties, perhaps the impossibility, in readily embracing a more diverse international order as well as the character of that very embrace.⁹ Accepting nations of the global south on an equal footing may become a strategic necessity but the process remains problematic given the racialized discourses of western power over the past several centuries, in the US fortified by the experience of the slave trade, slavery, Jim Crow, orientalist views of Asians, and others.¹⁰ Class power helps explain the strategic embrace of foreign elites as the sources of change and the agents of American influence, however diluted it may have been due to national interest considerations. Those on the apex of America’s vertical hierarchies sought to ally with and incorporate their foreign elite

³ B. Bluestone and B. Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); R. Reich, *The Work of Nations* (New York: Vintage, 1992).

⁴ K. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁵ M. King, “Aggrieved Whiteness: White Identity Politics and Modern American Racial Formation,” *Abolition Journal*, 4 May 2017; <https://abolitionjournal.org/tag/aggrieved-whiteness/>; retrieved 8 June 2017; M. Kimmel, *Angry White Men* (New York: Nation Institute, 2013); JD Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016).

⁶ Kimmel, *Angry White Men*

⁷ T. Skocpol and V. Williams, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁸ K. Crehan, *Gramsci’s Commonsense: Inequality and its Narratives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁹ It could be asserted that capitalist societies have little or no interest in embracing either ethnic diversity or reducing class inequality. I would suggest that that’s historically-contingent: reform movements in Britain and the United States, for example, have secured greater equality on several occasions, such as during the New Deal era, in the post-1945 welfare state, Great Society reforms of the 1960s. That is, these are both capitalist societies but also political democracies, however elitist they may also be.

¹⁰ M.H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

counterparts, with their full cooperation, in Korea and China.¹¹ Hence, the liberal internationalist Korean and Chinese successes must be qualified by considering the inequalities wrought by developing market-oriented societies marked by economic inequality, rising social unrest and varying degrees of political repression. Hence, in successful China and Korea, and India and other emerging powers, there remain major challenges underpinned by great power, wealth and income inequalities, the politics of which is frequently class-based but also heavily racialised and xenophobic.¹²

Why choose Korea and China as key cases? Although these are very different states, varying in global significance, and analysed at different periods of historical time, they do allow us to test out important claims made by liberal internationalists. Korea is considered as a key test at the very birth of the US-led order – at a time when we could expect the new principles embodied at the UN such as the rule of law, lessons of Nuremberg and Tokyo war crimes’ trials, of the Geneva conventions and the rights of civilians in combat zones, etc.. to be most likely to be attempted if not fully achieved. Given the fervour of anti-colonialism, and US claims to champion that cause, we could expect the behaviour of the international system’s leading power to differ sharply from that of colonial rulers in what became known as the Third World. Korea tells us a great deal about the practical application of a new international system developed by US power within an international system of rules, applicable to hegemon and others alike, a key liberal internationalist claim.

China’s integration into the US-led international system from the late 1970s also tells us a great deal about the character of the international order, especially about how significant change is managed within it and what the embrace of diversity means in practical terms. By the 1970s, the US-led order was facing challenges, of course, from West Germany and Japan, for example, the oil-producing states, not to mention the G77 demands for a new international economic order, and also recovering from the defeat in Vietnam and the legitimacy crisis following the Watergate scandal. For liberal internationalists, the integration of China is claimed to be a success story for the liberal order and China. Yet, without denying the dramatic increase in economic power, I question the character of China’s success given the

¹¹ J. Gerwitz, *Unlikely Partners: Chinese reformers, Western economists, and the Making of global China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); G. Brazinsky, *Nation Building in South Korea* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹² P. Bardhan, *Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay: Assessing the Economic Rise of China and India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); W.A. Callahan, *China: The Pessimist Nation* (Oxford: OUP, 2010); J. Traub, “Is Modi’s India Safe for Muslims?” *Foreign Policy* <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/26/narendra-modi-india-safe-for-muslims-hindu-nationalism-bjp-rss/>; accessed 26 May 2017.

high levels of turmoil within China as well as the very high levels of inequality there which is the source of major political and economic instability. China then is a test of the claim that the liberal order rewards societies as a whole whereas a Gramscian-Kautskyian counter argument would suggest that it is largely the Chinese ruling elite and its business allies who have been accommodated in the US-led international system, not the mass of ordinary Chinese.

Liberal Internationalism: theory, ideology, practice

Liberal internationalism is an ambiguous, multifaceted approach to understanding, explaining, justifying and practicing international politics. One aspect of it is as a positive theory taught in academic international relations, derived from liberalism, as applied to international affairs, explaining how the foreign policies of leading states, especially the United States and Britain, work. It is also a normative world-view, used by some of its proponents to indicate what the world ought to look like and how it might, and frequently does, work. Liberal internationalism, therefore, is also a set of policies and institutions, established practices.¹³

As an IR theory liberalism has key pillars – liberal societies are characterised by limited government, individual freedom, private property, pluralism and tolerance, progress, institutions and cooperation for peace, interdependence. As a theory of US foreign policy, which is the object of analysis here, this theory encompasses democratic values, economic interdependence, international institutions as a framework for cooperation in addressing global crises and problems and broadly promoting the general welfare. Emerging historically from the era of rising anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, with the United States and Britain in the lead, the US-led order laid claims to being opposed to colonial rule, for national and human rights, for a system of international power undergirded by rules binding hegemon and others alike. It was not promoted as a continuation of empire by other means but a new system based on universalistic principles applicable to all regardless of race, colour or history.

¹³ Perry Anderson, *American Foreign Policy and its Thinkers* (London: Verso, 2015), especially pp.159-188. The main textbooks used to teach US foreign policy agree that liberal internationalism is multifaceted, theoretical, normatively and positively, as well as a series of practically-applicable principles and institutions: M. Cox and D. Stokes, eds. *US Foreign Policy* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), pp.14-15.

For my immediate purposes, it is unnecessary to disentangle the positive from the normative, the theoretical from the practical because this framework of thought derives both from deep principles but also as a set of solutions to international problems, especially world wars. Hence, liberal internationalism is frequently referred to as Wilsonianism – after Woodrow Wilson’s internationalist programme that included formation of the League of Nations after World War I, the forerunner of the longer-lasting post-1945 United Nations system.

As a theory, I argue here that it operates as ideological legitimation even when its proponents offer reform; it justifies the status quo. In that regard it differs little overall from other theories like Marxism, for example, or Realism. But because it is the principal system of ideas and practices, and ideals, that are used to explain, implement and defend the present international status quo, I would suggest that it elides too much to be fully validated, beyond the company of its proponents. Of course, it explains aspects of the world’s functioning but its interpretation tends to be benign: crises and challenges are explained as resolvable within the system’s governing principles through socialisation, integration, assimilation.

So I use it as an amalgam to suggest that, while it is all of the above, upon reflection it serves within academia and in IR as a positive theory of how things actually are - i.e. as the opposite of ideology. It lays claim to explaining the world even if its adherents are also normative supporters of the theory. I show it is actually ideological because it elides key factors of how the liberal world order actually works and that other theories suggest better ways to explain the world.

In the next section of the article, I analyse in more depth and more critically liberal internationalist ideas and claims with a view to identifying key elements of a more viable framework to explain the LIO – a critical theory influenced by the work of Antonio Gramsci and to some extent synthesized with the work of Karl Kautsky. Offered below, however, is a brief outline of a novel approach to understanding the LIO as the principal aim of this article is to identify the weaknesses of liberal internationalism in practice with a view to opening space for subsequent theorizing. In sum, what appears missing in liberal internationalism are domestic power inequalities – class and race-based, for example – and broad attachment to (democratic) elitism, and a hierarchical approach to other powers, especially in the global south.

While Wilsonian liberal internationalism privileges a belief in the free movement of people, capital, goods and services, less well-known is its origins – at a time when ‘international relations’ was overtly understood as ‘*race relations*’ and therefore became embroiled in managing overtly-racialised imperial power after WWI.¹⁴ The Wilson administration’s role in racially-segregating the federal government had its foreign policy counterpart in a belief in a far-off eventual self-government of the colonies and opposition to a Japanese proposal for a racial equality clause in the fledgling League of Nations charter.¹⁵ The development of liberal internationalism, then, was symbiotically-bound to the necessity of Wilson’s intervention in world affairs and the institutions of both the federal executive and developing private institutions that were effectively para-state organisations, such as Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, among others. Wilsonian ‘theory’ was practical, idealistic, and ideological from the very beginning. It is also the case that, long after overt racial discourses became politically-damaging, subliminal racial thinking remained, and (unconsciously) remains, significant to liberal internationalism and affects its analyses of the politics of domestic and global demographic power-shifts.¹⁶

Nevertheless, liberal internationalists are cosmopolitans – opposed to *narrow* nationalism and trade protectionism, within a US-led international system. But its core ideas – rule of law, superiority of the western idea (however lightly worn), a rules-based institutional order open to all, in principle, are deeply embedded in US political-intellectual elite think tanks, university public policy schools, corporate media and the leaderships of both main political parties,¹⁷ the core of the white Anglo-Saxon protestant establishment.¹⁸ Importantly, however, there are influential voices in the emerging powers and regions that support the

¹⁴ R. Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015). President Wilson racially-segregated the federal government; D. King, *Separate and Unequal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Kawamura, N. (1977) “Wilsonian Idealism and Japanese Claims at the Paris Peace Conference”, *Pacific Historical Review* 66(4): 503-526.

¹⁶ J. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); F. Furedi, *The Silent War. Imperialism and the changing perception of race* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ I. Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); and I. Parmar, ‘Racial and imperial thinking in international theory and politics,’ *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18:2, 2016, pp.351-369.

¹⁸ G. Hodgson, ‘The Establishment,’ *Foreign Policy* 9 (1972-73):pp.3-40.

liberal international order by calling for internal reform to take account of the changing distribution of global power away from the west and towards the ‘rest’.¹⁹

The upshot is a broad consensus around certain core ideas: that the post-1945 rules-based world order, whatever its weaknesses, serves the world well by spreading prosperity and maintaining peace. Though it cannot continue unreformed, that US-led system draws on deep resources – economic, military, systemic, and ‘soft’ – that bestow upon it continuing strengths to contain, engage, manage, and socialize emerging powers. Charles Kupchan lists a range of problems requiring US leadership even if only within a suitably reformed international system reflecting “the real distribution of power”.²⁰

Princeton’s John Ikenberry, this school’s leading proponent, makes significant claims as well as displaying several taken-for-granted assumptions, undeveloped allusions to core powers’ violent and other connections with the periphery, and a number of significant silences. He claims, for example that the US is a fully-functioning democracy yet fails to acknowledge evidence of the power of racialised, class-based elites. For critical theorists, such as Robert Cox, Stephen Gill, and Craig Murphy,²¹ the international relations of elites across states and societies operate to reproduce extant patterns of power and manage or engineer change to the benefit of elites in a generally zero-sum game in which broad masses and lower classes lose out. This is clearly a far cry from liberal internationalist claims associated with the benefits of globalization even if ameliorative remedies for the harshest effects are proposed. Likewise, claims about the centrality of the rule of law occludes consideration of significant violations in practice. The question of imperial power is hardly addressed and there is a general Eurocentric neglect of the significance of global areas beyond the core to the ‘welfare’ and cohesion of the core itself. There is a clear link between Ikenberry’s overt theory of American democracy and its liberal-hegemonic world role. The United States, and the Western order it built, is characterized as a pluralistic, liberal, market democracy that is broadly inclusive, and tolerant of ethnic diversity. The US-built security community exhibits its leading state’s internal character – plural and, very significantly, one in which the US is

¹⁹ G. Chin and R. Thakur, “Will China change the rules of global order,” *The Washington Quarterly* 33 (4) 2010: pp.119-138; K. Mahbubhani, *The Great Convergence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013); S. Tharoor, *Pax Indica* (New Delhi: Penguin India, 2012).

²⁰ Kupchan, C. (2012) *No One’s World: The West, The Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press);

²¹ R.W. Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); S. Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Augelli and Murphy, *America’s Quest for Supremacy and the Third World*.

bound by rules.²² Yet, liberal internationalists' underlying assumptions effectively deny the findings of numerous well researched studies challenging American democracy's principal claims.²³

The western idea is a significant part of the strength of the US-led order as far as Ikenberry and Deudney, and many others, are concerned.²⁴ The West, a spectacularly successful “civilizational heritage”, was underpinned by America's New Deal liberalism, extended globally via Bretton Woods, the Marshall Plan and NATO. In effect, this vision and programme aimed to defuse domestic class conflict and the threat of war through “activist government, political democracy, and international alliance.” That system is *in principle* capable of assimilating emerging powers due to the universalism of its values and tolerance of ethnic differences, although others joining this privileged grouping should conform to its rules and accept US leadership. Western order is exclusive also because special rules apply within its zone of peace. Beyond it, conversely, other rules apply – cruder, neo-imperial and violent, although the implications of this are left unaddressed.²⁵ By drawing a line around the West, Ikenberry cuts off the rest of the world while addressing questions about the sources of world order which, empirically, lie in a symbiotic relationship between core and periphery. Yet, even within the ‘greater’ West, Japan and S. Korea were not accorded the same treatment as Western Europe.²⁶ It really was conceived and developed as a system of the west and the rest, in a zero sum game. As EU Co-President Tusk noted in a May 2017 tweet – the whole point of “euro-atlanticism” was to “prevent post-west world order”.²⁷

Yet, the claim persists that this is no empire despite America's privileged place at the top of the “hierarchical political order”, because its hegemony is built on “consent” and bounded by law. Power, which was necessary at the creation, faded away as consensual hegemony

²² Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, p.1; Ikenberry, *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), p.95; Ikenberry, “Explaining Crisis and Change in Transatlantic Relations,” in J. Anderson, GJ Ikenberry and T. Risse, eds., *The End of the West?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), p.6.

²³ See the long running series of studies by T. Dye, *Who's Running America* spanning the presidencies from Carter to Obama; and I. Parmar et al, *Elites and American Power*, special issue of *International Politics* 54, 2017; all articles available: <https://link.springer.com/search/page/2?facet-content-type=Article&facet-journal-id=41311&sortOrder=newestFirst>; retrieved 26 June 2017.

²⁴ Deudney, D. and G. John Ikenberry (1994) ‘Wither the West?’ in A. Clesse, R. Cooper and Y. Sakamoto, eds., *The International System After the Collapse of the East-West Order* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers), p.41.

²⁵ Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, p.16, fn 17.

²⁶ Hemmer, C. and P.J. Katzenstein, “Why is There No NATO in Asia?” *International Organization*, 56, 3 (summer) 2002, pp.575-607.

²⁷ Tusk's tweet on 17 May 2017, at <https://twitter.com/eucopresident/statuses/867489575937216512>; accessed 21 August 2017.

developed. This elides, of course, America's overwhelming military superiority including in and over Europe. Beyond Europe, however, Ikenberry concedes that American hegemony remained hierarchical, "with much fainter liberal characteristics",²⁸ again closing an analytical and empirical avenue that threatens the intellectual edifice of the LIO.

Ikenberry's Eurocentrism's (unconscious) racialised world view is subtly buttressed by Walter Russell Mead's exploration of the significance of superior Anglo-Saxons who win wars, build world structures, and govern efficiently due to ethno-cultural, not biological, characteristics. Mead's interpretation of Anglo-Saxonism makes it appear benign, assimilative, and universal²⁹ – scaffolding for Ikenberry's more overtly institutional analysis.

Assimilating minorities, however, is not embracing diversity – learning from other cultures and creating something new; it is maintaining conformity to the cultures of the powerful, dominant group.³⁰ Going forward, as new global powers emerge, Mead advises America to both embrace and contain them, retaining military superiority should 'rising' powers become "opponents".³¹ Mead complements other liberal-realist internationalists' prescriptions - incorporate, assimilate, mobilise emerging powers to absorb difference and produce conformity.

The liberal view is challenged by scholars who argue that the New Deal order effectively represented a political compromise for class peace and greater productivity that mainly benefitted major corporations while incorporating organised labour and thereby defanging it. The postwar settlement was a narrow one – excluding racial minorities, unskilled and unorganised labour, and women – and relied on war and a heavily militarised economy that arose with the Korean War and led directly to the Vietnam war.³² Liberal internationalists' accounts elide the class, gendered and racial bases of the order – at home and abroad. Ikenberry paints an appealing picture of a liberal order that delivered material benefits and security to all yet also casts some doubt on the system itself, especially in regard to the inequality of rewards generated by globalisation, and what might be the political consequences. The latter are regarded by Ikenberry as the greatest threats to the stability of the liberal order, laying bare a central mechanism and dynamic of the system itself –market-

²⁸ Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, p.xi; p.27.

²⁹ W.R. Mead, *God and Gold: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

³⁰ G.W. Domhoff and R. Zweigenhaft, *Diversity in the Power Elite* (Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

³¹ Mead, *God and Gold*, p.360.

³² R.J. Barnett, *Roots of War* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972).

driven class inequality exacerbated in a society in which racialized-class politics is salient.³³ Yet, Ikenberry never mentions class, race or gender, an omission central to critical theories of the making of the liberal international order.³⁴

The other key omission is the role of war and violence in order-building – not just World War II but Korea, for example, the ‘hot’ war at the birth of the order that propelled the formation of NATO, rearmament of Germany, the Japan security alliance, not to mention the US military-industrial complex.³⁵ Hence, a key case considered here is wartime planning for a new world order as well as the manner of its foundation as a direct result of military violence that violated the UN Charter, international law, the lessons of the Nuremburg and Tokyo war crimes trials, and the 1949 Geneva conventions. Wars ‘out there’ secured the core ‘over here’.³⁶

And, of course, what is referred to as benign ‘liberal internationalism’ is what Mark Mazower refers to as “imperial internationalism” – trying to maintain global hierarchy established by centuries of colonial and semi-colonial rule over what is now called the global south.³⁷

Finally, the construction of the post-war Western order was constitutive of a political-social-economic-ideological “vital center”, (opposed to Right wing nationalists and Left wing anti-imperialists) as Schlesinger terms it³⁸ – the acceptance by core forces of the ‘New Deal order’ that the price of class harmony, stability and mobility at home required the export and continuation of inequality,³⁹ and therefore military violence, on the periphery: the removal of vast quantities of raw materials required a global military basing strategy both to protect allied trade and deny it to adversaries.⁴⁰ Ikenberry accurately notes that the internal character of the leading state in the liberal order impacts on the international system it built – but I diverge from his presentation of this as the externalisation of a democratic regime. He elides the racial, class, and gendered character of American historical, economic and political

³³ Ikenberry, *Liberal Order*, p.184.

³⁴ Parmar, ‘Racial and imperial thinking’; E.B. van Apeldoorn and N. DeGraaff, *American Grand Strategy and Corporate Elite Networks* (London: Routledge, 2015).

³⁵ Jervis, R. (1980) ‘The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War,’ *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24, 4, 1980:pp.563-592

³⁶ A. Barder, *Empire Within: International Hierarchy and Its Imperial: Laboratories of Governance*. New York: Routledge, 2015).

³⁷ Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

³⁸ A.M. Schlesinger, jr., *The Vital Center* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949).

³⁹ P. von Eschen, *Race Against Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁴⁰ Parmar, ‘Racial and imperial thinking.’

development – including of Wilsonianism itself.⁴¹ His conclusion, however, is also accurate even if Ikenberry fails to recognise its significance to liberal order building and maintenance: “Access to resources and markets, socioeconomic stability, political pluralism, and American security interests – all were inextricably linked...”⁴²

The framework that may best fit the actual underlying locomotive of liberal order-building and maintenance, however, must also incorporate understanding of the ‘soft’ processes of socialisation or incorporation. Violence is a powerful tool but always and everywhere it is connected with the processes of non-violent elite socialisation and alliance building. It is one of the great strengths of Ikenberry’s analysis of international order that elite socialisation is considered so significant.⁴³

Yet, a critical view of elite socialisation in hegemony-building and perpetuation views it as incorporation/domestication into hegemonic agendas and not a reflection of a democratic and benign foreign policy.⁴⁴ In the Gramscian perspective, capitalist great powers, including the USA, are deeply unequal at home and imperialistic abroad, ultimately pursuing the interests of their ruling classes and elites, whether embedded in private, public or state-private realms.⁴⁵ Their hegemony is a combination of persuasion and coercion involving a ‘state-society complex’.⁴⁶ Admittedly, liberalism has an account of elite socialisation processes, which overlaps with Gramscian approaches. However, liberal approaches see it as relatively benign, politically-neutral or representative of democracy/popular sovereignty.

My critical approach connects Gramscian thinking with a forgotten early twentieth-century socialist theoretician of “ultraimperialism” – Karl Kautsky. According to Kautsky, in contrast to Lenin’s claim of the inevitability of inter-imperial wars of hegemony, ultra-imperialism – the tendency of national ruling classes to form international class-based alliances to jointly exploit the world’s resources⁴⁷ - leads to cooperation rather than conflict between capitalist states. Kautsky notes that inter-capitalist corporate/state cooperation could take numerous

⁴¹ D. King, *Separate and Unequal*; Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy*; Vitalis, *Black Power Politics*.

⁴² Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, p.174.

⁴³ Ikenberry, *Liberal Order*, chapter 2.

⁴⁴ R.F. Arnove, *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism* (Boston: GK Hall, 1980).

⁴⁵ E. Augelli and C. Murphy, *America’s Quest for Supremacy and the Third World* (London: Pinter, 1988); Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century*.

⁴⁶ Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), pp.258-259.

⁴⁷ V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970), p.112.

forms – such as cartel-like agreements or even the formation of a “league of states.”⁴⁸ Of course, there is a strong tradition of critical thinking by neo-Gramscians – Cox, Gill, but also other Marxists such as Kees van der Pijl⁴⁹ – that extends to the building of transnational alliances. That work, however, largely focuses on cold war era US-Western European alliances in a junior partnership with the United States. In this article, I consider two Asian states – South Korea and China – the political-cultural incorporation of which would clearly differ from the Euro-American example. On the other hand, all incorporation processes come up against strictly national interests and specific cultural differences including in the British case; hence the controversies over naval armaments in the 1920s, over the terms of the alliance after 1945, refusal by Prime minister Harold Wilson to support the US with troops in Vietnam and, later, frictions over the Falklands war.⁵⁰ The attempt at incorporating any power, great or small, is extremely difficult.

Kautsky is forgotten largely because his claim – which essentially suggested there would be no major war between capitalist great powers - was spectacularly disproved by the outbreak of the First World War.⁵¹ However, clearly there are numerous alliances and international agreements that uphold Kautsky’s approach. The European Union, for example, is a case in point – a supranational alliance among several great and smaller powers with a colonial past – which has effectively prevented war between them and generated enduring cooperation over decades. Stokes argues that American power, via the liberal international order with its panoply of multilateral organisations, perfectly exemplifies ultraimperialism given its system-maintenance role serving a range of other states – much to President Donald Trump’s pluto-populist chagrin.⁵² Kautsky’s ultraimperialism was hardly a utopia free of rivalries and wars, however, given the levels of exploitation and subordination endemic in capitalist international relations.⁵³ Yet, even critics argue that Kautsky’s idea is more applicable to the post-1945 era of liberal international order, underpinned by US hegemony and an influential web of institutions that embed western powers – NATO, IMF, World Bank, G7, among others.

⁴⁸ S.K. Holloway, “Relations among core capitalist states: The Kautsky-Lenin Debate Reconsidered,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 16 (2) June 1983; pp.321-333. The quote is from p.324.

⁴⁹ K. van der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class* (London: Verso, 2014).

⁵⁰ D. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled* (London: Routledge, 2013; first published 1991).

⁵¹ Kautsky’s support for Germany’s declaration of war drew Lenin’s wrath; see his *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974); first published 1918.

⁵² M. Wolf, ‘Trump’s pluto-populism laid bare,’ *Financial Times*, 2 May 2017.

⁵³ K. Kautsky, “Ultra-imperialism,” *Die Neue Zeit*, 11.9.1914; reprinted by the Marxist Internet Archive; <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1914/09/ultra-imp.htm>; accessed 21 August 2017.

Indeed, since 1989 it could be argued that ultraimperialism spans virtually the world,⁵⁴ although I argue that in the case of China, the process began in the late 1970s. Of course, Kautsky is clear that the pattern of international capitalist alliances is subject to change along with the uneven development of power and economy. Therefore, we would expect tensions within the system of relationships, despite shared interests, placing great strain on institutions amid muscle-flexing among certain states that feel unduly constrained by the international system. Hence, the current tensions between the Trump administration, China, Germany, the EU, NATO, for example. Whether this represents the breakdown of the post-1945 order or its recalibration remains to be seen.

Kautsky is therefore useful in our understanding of the liberal international order in two ways: first, to suggest that war, despite other tensions, is not inevitable between great powers, but for reasons rather different from those suggested by liberal internationalism's egalitarian and benign ideas about interdependence; and secondly, that great powers, aiming to jointly promote their power against others at home or abroad, build alliances with their elite foreign counterparts where they already hold power or, by extension, where such a nascent elite might be fostered. Such is the case in the Korean and China instances discussed below though in neither case is there any suggestion that one state controls another – it is that their ruling elites hold shared interests even if that means their enrichment at the expense of the broad mass of their own people. This challenges Leninist,⁵⁵ Realist and liberal conceptions of the international order – the system is imperial but not necessarily doomed to perpetual war, and neither is it benignly liberal. This is international 'high' (class) politics – cooperation for shared narrow self-interest but resting on unstable social and political foundations.

Wartime planning for a postwar US-led order

Ikenberry's benign interpretation of the US-led order is read back into the 1939-45 activities of elite planners of the postwar order. Developing the "Grand Area" concept, State Department and Council on Foreign Relations planners identified the world zones the US "required" without having radically to reform its economy, an area encompassing practically the whole world.⁵⁶ The key point elided is that it was to cohere that imperial 'grand area' that so much of the institutional architecture of Western power was built – the IMF and World

⁵⁴ M. Thomas, "Empires and War," <http://www.workersliberty.org/files/ultra.pdf>; accessed 21 August 2017.

⁵⁵ Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

⁵⁶ Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, p.173.

Bank, United Nations, as well as the Marshall Plan, GATT, and NATO;⁵⁷ and the inter- relations between the grand area's regions were never envisaged as being in any sense equal – but with flows of raw materials towards Western reconstruction and social peace, and finished industrial goods in the other. The postwar settlement at home that coalesced, as Hogan argues,⁵⁸ around hi-tech capital intensive industries, international finance, and organised skilled labour, was located within an international settlement that secured broad corporate interests under the auspices of an interventionist state. And, in that regard, the United States' military capacity to police flows of goods across the world was at the very least a part of the reason that the United States acquired “forward bases in Asia and Europe”.⁵⁹ As policy-makers such as Henry Stimson and John J. McCloy noted: American and Western well-being relied on “open markets, access to raw materials, and the rehabilitation of much –if not all – of Eurasia along liberal capitalist lines”.⁶⁰

CFR and State Department wartime planning therefore was driven above all by a vision of US elite global-imperial leadership, strongly supported by Britain's ruling elites, via an international order of organisations and relationships.⁶¹ In concert with Britain's elites, the aim was to resurrect European great powers including by restoring shattered colonial trading, economic and financial linkages. Indeed, the Marshall Plan viewed European reconstruction in that global context.⁶² The UN was envisaged as a key international agency for American imperial-internationalism, at least in its earliest days,⁶³ and as its role in the making of South Korea shows, it remains the official basis of America's role in that country today. Finally, the building of a hegemonic multilateral order indicates the significance of a Gramsci-Kautskyian synthesis.

The United Nations and Korea

The manner of America's division, military occupation, founding of and war for the Republic of Korea is highly instructive as to the character of the new world order that the superpower sought to build and of its actual conduct as opposed to publicly-stated claims. Observable

⁵⁷ L. Shoup and W. Minter, *Imperial Brain Trust* (New York: Monthly Review, 1977).

⁵⁸ M.J. Hogan, “Corporatism: a positive appraisal,” *Diplomatic History* 10 (10) 4, 1986; pp.363-372.

⁵⁹ M. Leffler, ‘The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48,’ *The American Historical Review* 89 (2) April 1984.

⁶⁰ Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, p.174.

⁶¹ Inderjeet Parmar, *Special Interests, the State and the Anglo-American Alliance, 1939-1945* (London: Frank Cass, 1995); Parmar, *Think Tanks and Power in Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004).

⁶² Parmar, *Foundations*, p.151.

⁶³ Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*.

behaviour fell far short of the tenets of the rule of law, human rights, the rights of civilians, and the due process of national and international law. The building and consolidation of a Korean ruling elite and its admittedly narrow but important civil societal base – critical friends/friendly critics – undermines liberal explanations and supports the Gramsci-Kautskyian perspective.

The United States, shortly after detonating two atomic bombs over Japan in August 1945, divided the Korean peninsula at the 38th parallel, with the Soviet Union offered the northern sector and the US the southern. At that time, the Soviet Union chose not to take control of the entire peninsula despite American forces' unreadiness to effect an occupation. Upon occupying southern Korea, however, the US declared it 'semi-hostile' territory and applied military law, using Japanese-colonial laws and police methods, reinforcing the National Police and bringing in the extreme right-wing, anti-communist Syngman Rhee, who had been absent from the country for decades, as putative leader to head the fight against the popularly-established Peoples Committees that had declared a provisional government.⁶⁴

In brief, popular uprisings for an independent unified Korean government led to massive repression even before the outbreak of the (civil) war. 100,000 people were killed in the violence up to June 1950 when the war broke out. Thereafter, the United States, operating even before the UN had passed a security council resolution authorising military action, waged a military campaign against North Korea of rare ferocity. Obliteration or saturation bombing led to millions of deaths. The American mission in Korea was formally represented under the banner of the UN but the UN had little or no voice in the 'police action'.⁶⁵

The creation of South Korea as a separate independent state resulted from extreme external US pressure on the UN Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) which was authorised to hold national elections in the whole of Korea (i.e., north and south) by the United Nations.⁶⁶ The US effectively forced UNTCOK to go ahead with elections in the south against the will of the majority of people in the south, apart from Syngman Rhee's conservative party and the National Police, the two most extreme right-wing organisations in southern Korea. All other organisations from across the political-ideological spectrum –

⁶⁴ B. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War* (2 vols) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981/1990).

⁶⁵ Parmar, 'Racial and imperial thinking.'

⁶⁶ The UNTCOK papers in the UN archives in New York show, among other things, the near-total lack of legitimacy of foreign occupation and of any elections that were planned by US military government.

labour organisations, farmers, women, students, youth, etc... - had opposed elections on the basis that right-wing violence had made free and fair elections a virtual impossibility. Hence, the declaration of UNTCOK that elections were fairly held in south Korea was used as a pretext by the US in the UN to win recognition of the ROK as a sovereign state. UNTCOK had observed a mere 2% of polling stations during the 1948 elections.⁶⁷ It was after that the north declared itself a sovereign state as the DPRK. The very creation of South Korea then was a violation of agreements at the UN and between the US and Soviet Union, and other agreements.⁶⁸

American military violence has been characterised as ‘military orientalism’ (Barkawi and Stanski 2012),⁶⁹ racist attitudes about the character of Koreans and Chinese, their general inferiority.⁷⁰ According to Bruce Cumings, Anglo-American atrocities ran up to 6:1 higher than those carried out by North Korean and Chinese troops.⁷¹ Reginald Thompson, the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Korea, noted that US marines considered Koreans apes, not humans, and rained death on them on an unprecedented scale. It was machines versus men, warfare reminiscent of colonial-era wars, with liberal use of napalm, obliteration bombing by B-52s, that inflicted “holocausts of death”, eliminating distinctions between combatants and civilians.⁷²

General MacArthur ordered relentless bombing to create “ ‘a wilderness of scorched earth...’ ” North Korea was carpet bombed for 3 years, with 635,000 tons of bombs dropped (half that dropped on Germany in WWII, and more than in the entire Pacific theatre, 1941-45); and 32,000 tons of napalm. Massive casualties resulted - leading to between 2.5-4 million Korean deaths; 900,000-1 million Chinese; 54,000 US; and nearly 700 UK deaths.⁷³ Almost from the

⁶⁷ S-0684, Box 2, File 1, UNTCOK Papers, UN Archives, New York.

⁶⁸ UNTCOK Papers 1947-48 catalogue right-wing repression and violence, the control of UNTCOK by the US Military Government, and the anti-communist framing of Korean conditions by commanding US General Hodge, and detailed violation of election laws, intimidation and murder. The forces of repression were policing the elections. See also, interview with Harding Bancroft, UN Political Affairs officer in the State Department, UN Oral History Project, UN archives.

⁶⁹ T. Barkawi and K. Stanski, eds., *Orientalism and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁷⁰ S-0684, Box 2, File 1, UNTCOK papers.

⁷¹ Journalist James Cameron reported atrocities committed by South Korean troops at a concentration camp in Pusan: "I had seen Belsen, but this was worse. This terrible mob of men - convicted of nothing, un-tried, South Koreans in South Korea, suspected of being 'unreliable'" had been starved and chained while US officers took photographs." When Cameron took the report to UNTCOK, he was told: "Most disturbing, yes; but remember these are Asian people, with different standards of behavior" Halliday and Cumings (1988, 92, 146).

⁷² R. Thompson, *Cry Korea* (London: MacDonald, 1951).

⁷³ Halliday, J. and B. Cumings, *Korea: The Unknown War* (London: Viking Press, 1990), p.201, p.115.

very beginning of the War, Truman and MacArthur threatened atomic warfare.⁷⁴ MacArthur advocated dropping twenty small atomic bombs across Korea to create a no-man's land between South Korea and China. There was a general belief that Asians were weak and could not possibly stand up to hi-tech, relentless American firepower; but also a feeling of humiliation among military and civilian leaders that the weakest 'communist satellite' – North Korea – was beating the US. US military operations cost around \$70 billion. A small largely rural country saw between 40-90% of all urban areas destroyed; even after just a few months, North Korea had no targets of any worth to bomb.⁷⁵

Military orientalism prolonged the war and increased casualties.⁷⁶ It also created the main barrier to ending hostilities by preventing an agreement on the return of prisoners of war. As this was defined as a war between races and cultures as much as between freedom and slavery, barbarism and the rule of law, there was a desire from Truman and military commanders on the ground to make Asians pay for their resistance.⁷⁷ Hence, in violation of the Geneva Conventions on compulsory and swift return of enemy prisoners of war, the Anglo-Americans demanded all prisoners be 'screened' to see if they wished to return to North Korea or China, prolonging the war.⁷⁸ The veil of 'voluntary repatriation' allowed the torture and punishment of Chinese and North Koreans in prison camps run by Syngman Rhee and KMT forces, leading to thousands of killings, as reported by numerous press agencies, the International Commission of the Red Cross, and British, Canadian and US troops who had policed the PoW camps.⁷⁹ Anglo-American allegations of torture of Western troops in

⁷⁴ Truman ordered Strategic Air Command to despatch atomic bombs to the Far East (November 30 1950); and authorised dummy runs from waters off North Korea; Halliday and Cumings (1988, 123-124).

⁷⁵ Parmar, 'Racial and imperial thinking.'

⁷⁶ "As soon as those North Koreans see an American uniform...they'll run like hell," was the general belief; R.A. Gugeler, *Army Historical Series: Combat Actions in Korea 3* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1970). Military historian, Walter Karig, called Korea an example of "Indian warfare" because the foe "scorns all rules of civilized warfare"; B. Cumings, 'Occurrence at Nogun-Ri Bridge,' *Critical Asian Studies* 33 (4), 2000. The War's racist character was clear to State Department officers at the UN; see Harding Bancroft's oral history interview.

⁷⁷ J. Dower, *War Without Mercy* (New York: WW Norton, 2000).

⁷⁸ W. Burchett and A. Winnington, *Koje Unscreened* (Peking, 1953).

⁷⁹ "AP: U.S. Allowed Korean Massacre in 1950," <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/ap-us-allowed-korean-massacre-in-1950/>; accessed 15 November 2013. For more on the 138 massacres by US forces, see D.C. Kim, "Forgotten war, forgotten massacres – The Korean War (1950-53) as licensed mass killing," *Journal of Genocide Research* 6 (4) 2004; pp.523-544.

Chinese and North Korean camps were undermined by later US army studies of released US PoWs who reported generally good treatment rather than torture.⁸⁰

After the cease-fire of 1953, the US helped build a repressive state with consistently high levels of military and economic aid that sustained a dictatorial regime headed by Rhee until his overthrow by popular rebellion in 1960. Simultaneously, but at a highly restricted level in contrast to aid for police and military institutions, training, arms, etc..., was laid the social basis of a narrow elite democracy, or at least a 'liberal' leadership – a modernising elite - sector in a para-statist civil society (state-sanctioned/approved/permitted), working within the system – friendly critics or critical friends of the regime.⁸¹ In effect, this was an elite that was fostered for a period in the future when repression and dictatorship became unsustainable in a radical-nationalist populace with leftist tendencies and a desire to reunify the country. Indeed, by the 1980s, as popular unrest grew, US strategy shifted towards 'democracy promotion' (actually, the initial move in this direction began with the end of the Vietnam War) as the basis of 'stability'.⁸²

Yet, up to the 1970s, South Korea remained economically backward while North Korea outstripped it in terms of economic growth and living standards. The Vietnam War changed the equation significantly. In return for the deployment of a cumulative total of 300,000 troops, South Korea received without-strings aid of billions of dollars from 1965-1973. It was the massive boost from war contracts and to consumer goods production for export that South Korea's economy grew and raised living standards and, indirectly, fed the demand for political freedoms. War, therefore, played a fundamental role in the making and remaking of modern Korea.⁸³

However, in the only book-length analysis of the US role in building 'civil society' and South Korean 'democracy', Brazinsky argues that, despite decades-long support for an unpopular repressive regime, the US would have preferred to build democracy but for the intervention of the cold war and therefore the Soviet threat. A stable alliance took precedence over democracy. Brazinsky separates US support for repression from support for Korean civil

⁸⁰ Kincead (1959). Over twenty Americans chose to live in China; not a single soldier tried to escape; large numbers collaborated with their captors.

⁸¹ Brazinsky, *Nation Building in South Korea* (Durham, NC: UNC Press, 2007).

⁸² R. Pee, *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁸³ Charles Armstrong, 'America's Korea, Korea's Vietnam,' *Critical Asian Studies* 33, 4, 2001:

society construction, the making of the social basis for attenuated democracy, a liberal social sector. In line with liberalism/liberal internationalism, Brazinsky fails to appreciate the combined/complex character of regime-formation, in which there are roles for both coercion and consent, violence and reform, exclusion and inclusion.

In addition, Brazinsky either ignores, misses, or misunderstands the role of race and racism as isolated incidents beyond the essential fabric of American attitudes, or within dominant liberal thinking. Yet, evidence indicates race and racism as fundamental both to the construction of American society, economy and polity, and its foreign policy.⁸⁴ Koreans were viewed as a backward people, dependent, requiring massive cultural transformation to ready them for modernity and civilisation, as semi-humans whose lives were cheap.⁸⁵ Such attitudes were embedded within the military leadership as well as in Asian studies programmes that were funded to comprehend “the Asian mind” in readiness for America’s civilising mission. General Douglas MacArthur believed that Asians understood only one thing – violence; and that the Pacific Ocean was an “Anglo-Saxon lake”.⁸⁶

In this respect, MacArthur, President Truman, and secretary of state Dean Acheson, among others, expressed essentially the outlook lauded as superior by Mead in *God and Gold* (2007) in which he celebrates the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons in those very terms – as builders of peace, the global conditions for capitalism, the international institutions of order. Modernisation theory, the secular distillation of this creed in the cold war, demanded an elite and elite networks for moulding leadership and strategies for western-style economic and political development. Although Brazinsky examines numerous initiatives to modernise Korea and build a civilian elite to lead it, he fails to see its exclusive, statist and elitist character or to comprehend the linkage of repression of radicals with the processes of elite socialisation in ‘civil society’ programmes. Given this, more research is required to critically examine the historical record. Yet, the Gramsci-Kautsky synthesis may provide a better explanation of elite-elite relations in postwar order-building and the fostering of a Korean ruling elite and a broadly supportive civil society sector.

The Challenge of China

⁸⁴ Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy*; King, *Separate and Unequal*.

⁸⁵ B. Cumings, “American orientalism at war in Korea and the United States,” in T. Barkawi and K. Stanski, eds., *Orientalism and War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁸⁶ Parmar, ‘Racial and imperial thinking.’

Research on the role of China studies and other programmes, on the other hand, in the long-term shift towards the gradual integration of China into the US-led order is more advanced.⁸⁷ It permits understanding of the ways in which US hegemony operated especially at a time of relative weakness – in the wake of the Vietnam War, the OPEC crisis, and demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) from the global south. In effect, China was prised away, quite willingly after Mao, from its revolutionary role in world politics, along with several other so-called middle class global south nations – such as India, Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, among others – via loans and investments and incorporated into the dominant order to the point where China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the 1990s. NIEO demands, in effect, were gutted by a strategy of divide and rule and partial incorporation.⁸⁸ The key point, however, is that what appeared to be a solution to a problem in the 1970s planted the seeds of later political-economic (and related legitimacy) problems most significantly in accelerating the process of deindustrialisation in the United States,⁸⁹ the drift of white working and middle classes to the subliminally-racialised and gendered messages of the Republican party in the wake of the 1960s ‘rights revolution’ – the construction of the “angry white male”⁹⁰ that helped Ronald Reagan to office and aided the rightward shift of the GOP and the sharpening of partisan politics. It is the disappointment with the mainstream GOP leadership that Donald Trump harnessed to win the presidency in 2016 on a message that overtly challenged the US-led international order.⁹¹ Trump’s approach also appears to threaten the carefully-crafted Sino-US relationship.⁹²

⁸⁷ Tie Han (1997) *The Ford Foundation and Chinese Studies 1950-1979*, phd dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison; David Finkelstein, Reflections on China, September 22, 1975, Ford Foundation Archives, Report 004080

⁸⁸ H. Sklar, *Trilateralism* (Boston: South End Press, 1980); J. Bair, “Taking aim at the NIEO,” in P. Mirowski and D. Plehwe, eds., *The Road From Mont Pelerin. The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp.347-385; Philip S. Golub, “From the New International Economic Order to the G20,” *Third World Quarterly* 34, 6, 2013, pp.1000-1015

⁸⁹ David H. Autor, David Dorn, and Gordon H. Hanson, “The China Shock: Learning from Labor Market Adjustment to Large Changes in Trade,” Working Paper 21906 (Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research, January 2016), www.nber.org/papers/w21906. The authors estimate that China’s opening up between 1991-2007 caused the loss of over two million American manufacturing jobs; and China’s trade surplus probably accounts for almost three million US manufacturing jobs.

⁹⁰ FR Lynch and WR Beer, “You ain’t the right color, pal”, *Policy Review*, Winter 1990, Issue 51; Kimmel, *Angry White Men*.

⁹¹ Kimmel, *Angry White Men*; Joyce C. Kaufman, “The US perspective on NATO under Trump,” *International Affairs* 93:2 (2017), pp.251-266.

⁹² R. Foot, “Power transitions and great power management: three decades of China-Japan-US relations,” *The Pacific Review* (published online March 2017).

Liberal arguments reject Realist predictions of inevitable military conflict between ‘rising’ and ‘declining’ powers and suggest that Sino-US conflict is avoidable through dual strategies of “containment” through security alliances – of which the US has many and China only one, with North Korea – and integration through a variety of means including diplomatic, commercial, and other.⁹³ Basically, the strategy seemed to be one of making China another pillar of the US-led order, although not so powerful as to be a threat to the hegemon.⁹⁴ Yet again, liberal approaches elide the hierarchical and unequal character of Chinese society and in practice commend elite-to-elite cooperation to largely maintain an apparently stable but unequal system. But the hegemony in China of the Party-state and other elites attached to a growing private market-oriented sector, is almost inherently unstable due to massive change wrought by industrialisation, urbanisation and mass migration.⁹⁵ It is perhaps unsurprising then that Chinese elites proactively sought assistance from foreign, especially American agencies, to learn about the world and to help manage China’s transformation into a more outward looking state, society and economy. After all, the United States had spawned the modern corporate foundation, and concomitant extensions of federal and state powers precisely in lockstep with its own transformations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and elite visions of eventual global leadership.⁹⁶

A Gramscian-Kautskyian approach perhaps better aligns or echoes what President Xi Jinping argued is “a new type of great power relationship” between the US and China.⁹⁷ This strongly suggests that there are both push and pull factors in the relationship of the two great powers and therefore many shared interests at the regional and global levels. It is too early to argue that the two economies are truly interdependent, as equals, but it is clear that there are many linkages and bi-directional co-dependencies. China’s ownership of US debt and dollars, its role after the 2008 financial meltdown to assist recovery, American direct investment in China, the sheer numbers of students criss-crossing the Pacific, reliance on each other’s export markets – and a shared interest in cooperation on nuclear tensions over North and

⁹³ JS Nye, *Is the American Century Over?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015); C. Layne, “The US Foreign Policy Establishment and Grand Strategy,” *International Politics* (published online May 2017), for an alternative view.

⁹⁴ Bresnan, “China,” p.3; *The Ford Foundation’s Program in China. Discussion paper*, September 1997 Board of Trustees’ meeting, p.9; Report 013610

⁹⁵ Bardhan, *Awakening Giants*

⁹⁶ Parmar, *Foundations*.

⁹⁷ President Xi Jinping’s declaration is echoed in Rudy deLeon and Yang Jiemian, eds., *US-China Relations. Toward a New Model of Major Power Relationship*, an initiative of the Center for American Progress and the China-US Exchange Foundation, February 2014

South Korea – all indicate high levels of shared interests.⁹⁸ Add to this the increasing number of American foundations, think tanks, university branches and scholarly and other exchanges, there is a depth to their interaction over several decades after the death of Mao that appears durable and lasting.⁹⁹

At the core of the relationship of the two powers appear to be powerful elite knowledge networks, closely aligned with their respective states, which facilitated the rapprochement after Mao, and helped to effect transformational change in key areas of Chinese society. In particular, the development of so-called market socialism was certainly assisted by American economists teaching in China, the development of US-trained Chinese PhDs returning and establishing university programmes in ‘modern economics’ that focused on market relations and the price mechanism, and by think tanks within and of the party-state.¹⁰⁰ Economic reform was not spontaneous but well organised and led from the top, even if progress is not linear, reflecting uncertainties and political opposition to the westernisation of China, especially among the ‘new left’.¹⁰¹ Yet, the direction of travel and the distance already travelled is clear – and in part became clearer when President Xi stepped forward at the World Economic Forum at Davos in 2017 and declared that China would defend and promote globalisation should President Trump’s America ‘retreat’ from its hegemonic role.¹⁰² Similar declarations were made following President Trump’s decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Accord.¹⁰³

The United States has a record of exporting economists and transplantation of economic thinking and ideas to transform states, although China is a qualitatively different ‘project’ when compared with the impact of the ‘Chicago Boys’ in Chile and the so-called ‘Beautiful Berkeley Boys’ in Indonesia.¹⁰⁴ The latter were relatively weak, dependent states in contrast

⁹⁸ Carnegie Council, “The Strategic Importance of U.S.-China Trade Ties,” 3 June 2016; at https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/ethics_online/0106; accessed 2 June 2017.

⁹⁹ Center for American Progress, “U.S.-China Relations,” February 2014.

¹⁰⁰ *The Ford Foundation and China* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1991); J. Gewirtz, *Unlikely Partners. Chinese Reformers, Western Economists, and the Making of Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

¹⁰¹ Gewirtz, p.4, pp.10-11.

¹⁰² “Xi Jinping delivers robust defence of globalisation at Davos,” (London) *Financial Times*, 17 January 2017.

¹⁰³ “China and EU offer sharp contrast with US on climate change,” (London) *Financial Times*, 1 June 2017.

¹⁰⁴ Parmar, Foundations; J.G. Valdes, *Pinochet’s Economists: The Chicago School in Chile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); B. Simpson, *Economists With Guns* (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 2008).

to China.¹⁰⁵ The willingness of Chinese party elites to invite American (and other foreign) ideas and methods, duly adapted, is the key point here though. China sought transformative ideas, training and strategies and has transformed its economy as a result and its dependence on the global market and US-rules based system that enabled that transformation.¹⁰⁶

Ford Foundation investments in China yielded major dividends through students and scholars who had studied modern economics abroad. In particular, the “Ford class” programme of exchange masters and doctoral research – led by influential economists like Lawrence Klein, Princeton’s Gregory Chow and others, graduated over 500 students in micro and macroeconomics, econometrics, development economics, international finance and so on.¹⁰⁷ Ford’s grants helped China’s think tanks gain access to relevant experience and expertise through collaborative research and training in applied economics, helping to build independent policy research institutes like the China Center for Economic Research and the China Center for Agricultural Policy, combining the best internationally-trained Chinese analysts with domestic scholars. The entire complex of programmes was designed to “build a field” and, once successful, Ford support focused on specific policy research projects and institutions that expanded other on-going Foundation work in China.¹⁰⁸

Equally interesting, even if change in this sector appears slower than in the economy, are the initiatives by US agencies to build ‘civil society’ in China, with funding running to over five hundred million dollars from, among others, the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. Since 2002, a further \$400 million has been invested from US sources into civil society programmes. Derided by critics as the building of ‘government-organised non-governmental organisations’ (Gongos), the more important point is to strengthen stability by experimentally releasing the tight grip of overstretched state institutions – local, regional and national – behind a programme of Small Government, Big Society.¹⁰⁹ The point is to help the state

¹⁰⁵ Gerwitz, p.9; Finkelstein, *Reflections on China*.

¹⁰⁶ Hong Liu, *1980s and Chinese Economists* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2010), pp.327-332. I would like to thank Dr Shuhong Huo for translating parts of Liu’s book for my benefit. See also G. Chow, “Teaching Economics and Studying Economic Reform in China,” *China Economic Review* 1 (2): 193-199. Klein was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania; Ross Garnaut, *The Ford Foundation Programs in China on Economics Education and Research*; Report 013807.

¹⁰⁷ Ross Garnaut, *The Ford Foundation Programs in China on Economics Education and Research*; Report 013807.

¹⁰⁸ The Ford Foundation’s Program in China: Discussion Paper, Box 721/Reel,R-9296, Report 013610:12

¹⁰⁹ M. Edin, “Re-Making the communist party-state,” *China: An International Journal*, 1, 1, 2003; KW Foster, “Associations in the embrace of an authoritarian state,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35

better manage social and political change not build an actual fully-functioning independent civil society. And in that regard there are at least some interesting similarities with United States' historical development. In the US, state-building private elite organisations promoted the formation of official state agencies and departments at federal level to manage a rapidly changing and increasingly complex society with few nationally-oriented institutions, as opposed to locally-oriented ones, reflecting parochialism.¹¹⁰ Collectively, the nascent federal agencies and their state-oriented private elites effectively constituted the new American state of the twentieth century, nourished by war and economic crisis and emerging as a superpower after World War II. China's fundamental problem is managing change with an overstretched state – and using the banner of Small Government, Big Society to release new energies to be harnessed to the stability project. American foundations have been vital to this programme, hence the criticism. Yet, the Gramsci-Kautsky formulation serves to explain this project well.

The activities in the United States of various private organizations interested in China, such as the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China, and within China itself, were effectively authorised by successive American administrations.¹¹¹ They were formally “independent of the government and yet operated with its support”, including with the CIA and other agencies. In effect, China's stable development is an American vital interest – or at least it was assumed to be until the advent of President Trump's (rhetorically) *disruptive* administration. The above activities, then, constituted a process of broadening the basis of China's state legitimacy, funded to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars from mainly private American sources. According to Spires, over 95% of all Ford Foundation funds for civil society building went to Chinese state-licensed organisations.¹¹²

The “new type of great power relationship” is being tested by the (rhetorically) unpredictable and transactional approach to global politics of the Trump administration.¹¹³ Although we have already seen disruption of the atmospherics of liberal hegemonic culture, President

(4) 2001, pp.84-109; C. Hsu, “Beyond civil society: An organizational perspective on state-NGO relations in the People's Republic of China,” *Journal of Civil Society* 6 (3), 2010, pp.259-277.

¹¹⁰ S. Skowronek, *Building a New American State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

¹¹¹ K. Smith, “The Role of Scientists in Normalizing U.S.–China Relations: 1965–1979,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*. 866 (1) 1998: 114-136

¹¹² AJ Spires, “Organizational Homophily in International Grantmaking: US-Based Foundations and their Grantees,” *Journal of Civil Society* 7:3 2011, pp.305-331.

¹¹³ M. Rapp-Hooper and A. Sullivan, “Trump's Team Has No Idea What It's Doing on China,” *Foreign Policy*, 5 April 2017.

Trump remains under pressure to retain the international security structures of the US-led order as well as its international trading regimes, even if the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement has been rejected, although several presidential candidates in 2016, including Hillary Clinton, had been opposed to it. A correction, in other words, was politically-viable. It remains to be seen however if Trump's economic nationalism, as further indicated by apparent withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, merely recalibrates the system or is a fundamental rejection of it. Up to now, it looks more like the former than the latter but only due to the virtually unremitting pressure from establishment figures within and beyond the administration.¹¹⁴

CONCLUSION

The foundational values, interests and institutions of the (Anglo) US-liberal international order, with due respect for important but not fundamental recalibrations and corrections along the way, are the sources of its current crises or at least challenges. Hierarchical, imperial and racio-civilisational thinking constitute the LIO's leaders' mentalities and power structures even if those are normally subliminally-embedded as to be unconscious deep structures themselves.¹¹⁵ The American White Anglo-Saxon Protestant establishment (Wasp) built and maintained the liberal order, in a 'competitively-cooperative' alliance with their British counterparts¹¹⁶ whose imperial and racial mentalities were hardly in conflict with their American cousins.¹¹⁷ Whatever changes occurred or were forced on US elites over time, those underlying and mainly-subliminal values remained significant in decision-making, including when nurturing new states and powers like South Korea and China.

Hence, liberal internationalism as a 'theory' or approach to world order, as it elides and skirts matters of hierarchy, race, and class, as it does in its outline understandings of American democracy, misses a critical part of the picture, of the dynamics of international power as

¹¹⁴ A. Mitrovica, "The deep state is now working for the good guys," *Al Jazeera Magazine*; <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/03/deep-state-works-good-guys-170330124521027.html>; accessed 2 June 2017; D. Haiphong, "Has Trump lost his battle with the neo-cons and neo-liberals?" *American Herald Tribune* 16 April 2017; <http://ahtribune.com/us/maga/1617-trump-neo-cons-neo-liberals.html>; accessed 2 June 2017; Z. Beauchamp, "Democrats are falling for fake news about Russia," *Vox* 19 May 2017; <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/5/19/15561842/trump-russia-louise-mensch>; accessed 2 June 2017.

¹¹⁵ R.B. Persaud, 'Frantz Fanon, race and world order,' in S. Gill and J. Mittelman, eds., *Innovation and Transformation in International Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.170-184.

¹¹⁶ D. Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-1941* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1982).

¹¹⁷ Parmar, 'Racial and imperial thinking'; Parmar, *Think Tanks and Power*; Parmar, 'Institutes of international affairs,' in D. Stone and A. Denham, eds., *Think Tank Traditions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp.19-33.

well as the dynamics of domestic power. Because of that elision, the failure to see, I suggest it is a legitimating ideology of the American ruling elite. I argue above that the LIO is better understood as a system of hierarchy, inequality, and as what Persaud calls ‘racio-civilizational’. What does that mean? It means that this system and its leaders cannot yet comprehend an order that encompasses on the basis of something approaching equality the broad mass of people – citizens – at home let alone the non-western peoples of the global south, or even their elites. That tweet from Donald Tusk is revealing and instructive because it was addressed to President Trump in simple and stark terms: “Euro-atlanticism means the free world cooperating to prevent post-west world order” – so, please “do not touch”. International alliances of elites, including with those from the emerging powers like China, are in large part attempts to manage and channel change to prevent radical power shifts, to manage world order that serves in starkly unequal ways elites and masses, in west and east. A Gramscian-Kautskyian synthesis combines consideration of domestic and international class-based imperial hegemonies and may explain the order better. However, it also offers a way out, in theory, and provides ways to assess the likelihood of avenues towards egalitarianism being taken by ruling elites. The prognosis is not positive at this point although the bases of ways forward appear to be coming into view as political strife, electoral shocks challenge the status quo.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ J. Allen and A. Parnes, *Shattered. Inside Hillary Clinton’s Doomed Campaign* (New York: Crown, 2017).