



CHAPTER 5

**THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER AND
IMPERATIVE GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS**

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Abstract

The current international order is at a critical juncture in its stability due to transformations that have affected its foundational principles, which relied on stability and balance of power. This bet has not endured in the face of changes imposed by a tense context marked by significant factors such as Innovation and technology, crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the recent aggression of the Zionist entity against Gaza. Traditional and emerging actors have emerged, leading to undeniable indicators of a gradual shift towards a new global order that aligns with and differs from the established international reality, as depicted by the traditional framework established by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, in terms of the nature and strength of its components. New non-state actors have emerged alongside classic nationalist forces, creating an active movement within centers of power and influencing decision-makers, thus altering the established map since the end of the Cold War, building upon the aforementioned, this paper will aims to explore the pressing necessity for reform the current international order and recognize its transition from the unilateral polar decided by the United Nations to a new world characterized by new polarity, whose contours are yet to be fully defined, as powerful entities such as the United States, Russia, and the soft power of China hope for dominance, While considering the risks involved in this process of transformation, precisely the void that will result from the disengagement of major classical powers from their previous interventions, in addition to the above and in order to intensely discuss the subject this paper aims to answer the following question: “Has reforming the current international order become an inevitable necessity?” Especially with the features of the current international context, the most important of which is the rise of soft powers (China) and the role of non-governmental actors as a determinant factor in drawing borders of a new international order.

Keywords

*International Order - Liberal Democracy, New World Order, Soft Power, Global Governance,
Institutional Reform, Multilateralism, Geopolitical Dynamics*

Introduction

The recent financial, economic, and political crisis demonstrates a severely outdated and discredited state of the current global order and management model. This realization is acknowledged worldwide and within different countries but is also seen as a crisis of authority. Despite this, the prevailing perception remains that this model is the only option, leading to a slow, fragile, and dangerous decline affecting numerous countries and regions worldwide. As a result, there are increasing disparities and conflicts in interests, military aggression for strategic resources, and an unacceptable risk of a large-scale global catastrophe. The urgent challenge lies in addressing imperial strategies, which are not confined to the past but continue to shape current realities. Paradoxically, the need to formulate a counter-strategy for change, rejection, and resistance is now more pressing than ever, demanding a more radical and urgent approach to development.

The goal of this paper is to give an analytic overview of the extent of necessity to making global transformations on the current world international order to preserve the peace and the stability.

Conceptual Framework

The global international order is a complex phenomenon that refers to the extensive range of institutional, economic, and political structures that effectively regulate and govern the intricate interactions between countries worldwide. To truly comprehend the profound significance of the ever-evolving global changes, one must possess a comprehensive and profound understanding of the intricate dynamics that underpin and shape this intricate order.

Order and International Order

“Several things that together display order is, in the simplest and most general sense of the term, to say that they are related to one another according to some pattern” or “discernible principle” (Lascurettes, 2021, p. 2).

“A set of interconnected units through interaction processes, characterized by interaction and interconnection among its units, and interaction is characterized by regularity that can be observed, interpreted, and predicted” (Suleiman, 2011, p. 4).

“It is a set of rules, standards, and norms that govern relations between the main active parties in the international environment” (Mazarr al, 2016, p. 24).

“A pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society” (Bull, 2002, p. 44).

The researcher proposes a definition of the international order that refers to a set of active actors and practices that govern the interaction and relationships in the international environment; it encompasses the political, economic, security, and legal frameworks that shape global cooperation, competition, and conflict. The international order aims to provide stability, predictability, and a degree of justice in international relations, guiding how states and other entities behave globally.

It is worth noting that the transition from the international order to the global order is based on the emergence of non-state actors, indicating non-governmental organizations of various types joining the international order to make it global. The researcher also refers to the international order as the prevailing pattern after the end of the Cold War.

The Liberal Democratic International Order

The liberal democratic international system is defined as “a mixture of economic openness, exchange, and multi-party administration” (Mazarr al, 2016, p. 13). Its main principles include Freeing international trade: Restricting power and regulating its use to prevent conflicts Determining deterrence in cases of unlawful use of force” (Mazarr al, 2016, p. 13). Realizing these specifications in the international community necessitate the establishment of executive institutions categorized

into specialized economic institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization) and others political-military institutions (such as the United Nations). They are also classified into official institutions (such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization) and non-official ones like economic groups such as the G20 and regional economic forums.

Global Transformations

In general, global transformations are intended to determine the quality of the main trends of the globalization process (Zamaraeva, 2014, p. 1706); the extensive and highly influential changes that have occurred in the current global order have undeniably resulted in substantial alterations in political and economic power dynamics on a scale that has never been witnessed before. These changes have been far-reaching and have profoundly impacted the world as we know it. The magnitude of these shifts cannot be overstated, as they have shaped and transformed the very fabric of our global society. The repercussions of these transformations are vast and multifaceted, with implications that reach far beyond what was previously imagined. These unprecedented developments have altered our understanding of the world and its power structures, marking a definitive turning point in history.

The Defining Attributes of the Contemporary International Order

Hegemony of the United States

Since the Second World War, the influence of the US in ordering a single self-centered power, also the post-Cold War period saw a significant shift in global power dynamics; the United States' control and influence decreased, leading to a more multipolar world order. Emerging powers like China and Russia filled the void, leveraging their economic and military strength. This shift also prompted a reevaluation of global norms and institutions. New alliances formed, and non-state actors gained prominence. The redistribution of power sparked debates on sovereignty and the role of international institutions. The world entered a new era with multiple power centers, bringing opportunities and challenges. This serves as a reminder that power is fluid and requires adaptability in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Emerging Powers and Alliances

The global system has undergone significant changes in power distribution, transitioning from the bipolar order of the Cold War era (1945 to 1989) to the subsequent unipolar order commonly referred to as the "American empire" (1989 to 2008) (Araya, 2022). Effectively by the rise of China. The current international order is characterized by the increasing number of economic blocs that impose the delegation of some sovereignty of the member states and seek a trading order to compensate for deficiencies in their economic fields. This imposes a philosophy of federal solidarity among members, allowing a balance among them, provided that everyone's performance is compelling. Examples include the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), among other blocs seeking additional power sources to offset risks that may affect them outside their regional bloc. The current global international system is defined by a state of competition between these blocs themselves to acquire greater power, which is a notable contradiction. Initially, organizations were subordinate to states, but the reverse has happened as international organizations have gained independence from their founders' will (Kamel, 2019, p. 300). Notably, the success of these blocs is not automatic, as the European Union has experienced strong tremors due to the lack of harmony among its members, such as the very tense relations between Germany and Greece and Britain's ultimately withdrawal from the Union.

Economic Globalization

Since the end of World War II, the international scene has witnessed the emergence of non-state actors with significant influence in international relations, especially in their relationships with states that have seen a reduction in the boundaries of their sovereignty in favor of these new actors. These actors include non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations, which have led to economic globalization aimed at monopolizing power after realizing the superiority of the economic factor over the political one. Evidence of this trend includes states forming economic alliances to dominate the global market (Khemis, 2014, p. 166). However, this does not mean the state's complete exclusion; its role is limited to organizational and competitive roles with peer actors.

Indicators of the Deterioration of the Current International Order

Regardless of whether the analysis implies a shift towards a new image of the international order or content with reforming some aspects, the researcher believes that the details could be of more importance given the convergence of outputs and results. The exact reasons intervene in various cases:

Global Leadership and the Decline of American Power

New strategic variables emerged that troubled American leadership, particularly the rapid rise of rival powers on several levels that disturbed the US position as a dominant power; China was the most ambitious actor that believed in the necessity of shifting towards a multipolar internationalism that makes it equivalent to the United States in terms of status and power (Regilme & James, 2020, p. 8). This aspiration stems from the realism of Chinese politics, as seen through the vision of its leader, Xi Jinping, in achieving what he calls the “Chinese Dream.” This tension has created strained relations between the two countries, with warnings from Barack Obama about the dire consequences of China’s rise and Donald Trump imposing additional tariffs on its imports, leading to technological and cyber warfare. In response, China restricted the export of raw materials for chip and solar panel manufacturing to the US and tightened the investment climate for major American companies on its territory (El-Menshaw, 2023). Despite the tension and undeclared conflict between China and America over the redistribution of power in international relations, their common interests have not been severed. They are linked by trade exchanges reflecting a foresighted strategy of relations between them and not deciding their fate in favor of overt conflict. However, this cooperation has been affected by the background of the conflict and America’s stance on issues such as the Taiwan dispute and China’s position on the Russia-Ukraine war. It is worth noting that this cooperation is subject to the background of the conflict and America’s stance on issues such as the Taiwan dispute and China’s position on the Russia-Ukraine war. While exports from China to the US reached 16.5% in 2022, US exports to China in the same year reached 7.5%. This cooperation is affected by the background of the conflict and America’s stance on issues such as the Taiwan dispute and China’s position on the Russia-Ukraine war. Imports of Chinese products to the US decreased by 24% in 2023 due to economic sanctions imposed on Chinese investment in the US, and US investment in China decreased by 9% (Jawad, 2023, p. 15). The tension in Sino-American relations was not the only factor in shaking the pyramid of the world order, as America has faced troubles related to its strategies aimed at maintaining its international status, relying on militarizing intervention beyond its borders and increasing military spending due to its involvement in long-term wars such as Afghanistan and Iraq, which increased its financial burdens beyond its resources and led to the collapse of the financial market in 2008. Paul Kennedy, a proponent of the school of imperial decline, has stated that the United States suffers from the phenomenon of imperial expansion and imbalance between its requirements represented in defense, consumption, and investment (Klaa, 2021, p. 76) casting doubt on its ability to continue occupying the top of the world. It has begun to decline, opening the door to rising competitive powers in a natural course, as history has proven.

In conclusion, the researcher believes that observing the shift in the hierarchy of the international organization is unavoidable according to the indicators of reality. However, jumping to conclusions in favor of a specific scenario would take time, as the current leadership possesses qualifications and capabilities that may allow it to continue, making it difficult to overthrow it shortly. At the same time, studies have shown that history has not recorded the sustainability of unipolarity led by a single state. Additionally, China has succeeded in intelligent and soft economic penetration in several regions worldwide through the Belt and Road Initiative, the fruits of which have become tangible. Reliable sources such as the International Monetary Fund project that the Chinese economy will surpass the American economy, with the Chinese economy reaching \$24.2 trillion compared to \$20.8 trillion for the US economy (Russia, 2020).

The Institutional Failure to Resolve International Crises

The United Nations which is considered as the supreme global institution represents debate. However, it has not been spared the issue of legitimacy, particularly concerning its main subsidiary structure, the Security Council (Erdogan, 2021, p. 54). Moreover, the world today faces an unprecedented and rampant wave of crises affecting humanitarian security in various dimensions, as noted by Barry Buzan.

This indicates the failure of its mechanisms to achieve its primary mandate entrusted to it after World War II, which is the prevention of wars and the maintenance of international peace and security, casting doubt on its credibility. These crises have affected most continents, according to UN statistics, including:

Table 1

Security Crises around the World (Compiled by the Researcher Based on the Official Website of the United Nations) (UN, 2024)

Geographical Area	Concerned Parties
<i>Middle East</i>	<i>Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine</i>
<i>Asia</i>	<i>Afghanistan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)</i>
<i>Europe</i>	<i>Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Cyprus</i>
<i>Africa</i>	<i>Libya, Western Sahara, Mali, Sudan</i>
<i>Latin America and Caribbean</i>	<i>Colombia, Haiti</i>

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and the War on Gaza

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict represents one of the oldest conflicts that have jeopardized the stability of the Islamic and Arab world. It is also one of the crises that the international order and its powers have failed to resolve, turning it into a chronic crisis that tests the credibility of all international and regional bodies through various stages, including the continuous aggression on Gaza since October 2023. The United Nations Security Council, the highest security body in the world, has failed to stop it, as all attempts have been unsuccessful due to differences in positions and sharp divisions among its members. Despite the Secretary-General's resorting to activating Article 99 of the UN Charter, the veto power held by the five permanent members prevented it (UN, 2024). The Council was unable to adopt a ceasefire resolution until March 25 of the past year, when the permanent and elected members unanimously agreed, with the United States abstaining from voting. The resolution was limited to a specific time frame, only for the duration of the month of Ramadan, half of which had passed on the day the resolution was issued.

Considering the magnitude of the security crisis in Gaza, the time taken to make this decision and its limited practical impact exposes the performance of the Security Council and raises questions about the binding nature of UN decisions and the effectiveness of the organization itself, especially since this is not the first time a resolution has been issued on this file, as evidenced by Resolution 1860 dated January 9, 2009, which was violated by the parties without consequence.

The failure to address the Palestinian issue is not only evident in mismanagement by the highest security authority in the world, the United Nations, but also in the individual international stances towards it, especially those issued by the United States, the main supporter of the occupying state, Israel, directly or by pressuring the international community through various means.

The Russian-Ukrainian war

Erupted on February 22, 2022, represents a significant threat to global security and has the potential to reshape the liberal Western dominance and its international system. This conflict is not a new development, as tensions date back to 2014 when Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula in Eastern Ukraine. Despite attempts to contain the situation through the Minsk II agreement, the conflict escalated into a full-scale war (Ducos, 2023) posing grave implications for global security.

The geographical scope of the Russian-Ukrainian war, situated in Europe, a continent that has not witnessed warfare since World War II, underscores its gravity. Moreover, the involved parties are key actors in the international system, with Russia being a global nuclear and military power. Russia justifies its intervention in Ukraine as a defensive measure, aiming to curb the expansion of

the United States through NATO's presence in Eastern Europe, particularly in the event of Ukraine or Belarus joining the alliance. This perceived threat to Russian security is a driving force behind its actions in Ukraine.

Furthermore, Russia's permanent membership in the UN Security Council and its veto power make it a significant player in international affairs. This dynamic has created a complex relationship between Russia and Western liberal democracies, as Russia's actions challenge the Western-led international order.

The Russian-Ukrainian war is a multifaceted conflict with far-reaching implications for global politics and security. It represents a clash of ideologies and interests between significant powers, underscoring the fragility of the current international order.

In a standard mechanic reaction, the Security Council turned to condemnation and denunciation, issuing a ceasefire resolution and obligating Russia to withdraw, symbolically showcasing the effectiveness of UN mechanisms on the international stage. However, Russia's lack of concern for violating the UN Charter, which prohibits member states from using force against other nations' territorial integrity and political independence, was evident. This disregard was deemed an affront to the collective conscience of the United Nations, as stated by the organization's Secretary-General (UN, 2023). Furthermore, in his speech in April 2022, he acknowledged the United Nations' failure to mediate the conflict (BBC, 2022) a statement the researcher relies on to highlight the failure of international system mechanisms in performing their fundamental duties. Indeed, the war continues unabated, with Ukraine's defence capabilities weakened, having lost 20% of its territory, despite the support it receives from NATO and Europe.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had social impacts unprecedented in scope, which were beyond even the most severe crises, such as the ones following the September 11, 2001 events. This is because, by its nature, the pandemic is intense, and it can affect profoundly the policies immediately at the level of international political relations (Jiemian, 2020, p. 22) No other recent crisis has been as disruptive and had a similar profound impact on global affairs and national governance as COVID-19. The pandemic disrupted political orders and policy-making at a global level like no other recent event in history. It set a standard for power in international relations that put the world's influent powers and institutions to the test. Foremost among them was the United States which was expected to be more engaged in international efforts to confront the crisis in solidarity with less powerful countries. However, it relinquished its international responsibilities, preferring isolation and focusing on avoiding internal economic collapse. This created a vacuum that China exploited through exceptional soft diplomacy known as "mask diplomacy," which Italy and Serbia benefited from after feeling abandoned by the European Union (Faiza, 2012, p. 567). In this way, China presented a contrasting model in managing international crises, more appealing than the Western liberal model promoted by the leadership of the international system.

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the fragility of cohesion in the international system, contrary to what was promoted by leading actors. The crisis has demonstrated a harsh primacy of nationalism over human values and higher ideals as articulated by Francis Fukuyama. Additionally, it has confirmed the ongoing division of the world into a wealthy North and a poor South, with an advanced industrial center and a marginalized periphery struggling to catch up with development trajectories. This will undoubtedly impact the future of relations at various levels: individual/state, and state/international community. It will inevitably result in a different international system in terms of values and behaviors, led by resilient states, as suggested by Henry Kissinger, former US National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, who hinted at the retreat of the United States in favor of successful states in managing this global crisis, hinting at China and its allies.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Clash of Civilizations

The United States invaded many countries in the Middle to destroy terrorist groups and spread Western liberal democratic values in this area, ostensibly under the banner of combating terrorism (Aslan, 2021); its military engagements in Iraq where around \$1.7 trillion were spent and deployed over 115,000 soldiers in a largescale war effort (Regilme & James, 2020). The result has been the creation of a corrupt government; it has been

Afghanistan represents the most protracted conflict the United States has undertaken since the Cold War. However, these interventions failed due to a fundamental lack of understanding of engaging with diverse populations. This resulted in clashes of values and identities and a failure to respect the unique characteristics of local communities. This dynamic represents an apparent clash between civilizations and peoples. Many perceive these interventions as a form of occupation, leading to heightened nationalism as local populations seek to liberate their homelands (Mearsheimer, 2020).

The Necessity of Reform

Despite its long-standing resilience against the threat of a third world war, thanks to cooperative relationships and integration adopted by some international actors, it is now clear that the international system suffers from a proven inability to fulfill its primary mission of maintaining international peace and security. The majority of security, economic, and health crises have proven insurmountable for the system due to the disparity and differences among its components. This has transitioned from the framework brought forth by Western liberal democracy, which presupposes harmony and majority cooperation among the actors within this system, to a perpetual struggle for leadership through domination and power in various forms, whether tangible or intelligent.

Continued conflict and geopolitical competition will further damage states outside the circles of global decision-making, as they will bear the repercussions and impacts on their growth and development. This will particularly burden leadership actors with additional responsibilities compared to other units of the system, especially in crisis contexts that require solidarity and fairness in resource and effort distribution.

The situation mentioned above suggests a dynamic mechanism for transforming the international order, necessitating the invention and adoption of appropriate and justified reforms to avoid the consequences of conflict and imbalanced distribution of power and influence. This involves reforming or changing the executive mechanisms of global policy, especially those responsible for the security aspect and the protection of international peace and security, embodied in the global security apparatus: The Security Council, considering its members and their powers in the matter.

In this regard, academic literature shows a divergence of opinion between supporters and opponents of the idea, although proponents prevail. However, the researcher acknowledges that it is illogical to discuss the international community's choice in the face of the proven inevitability of reform, interpreting it as a natural adaptation due to the order nature of the international order. As for the required reform, it will be linked to two levels

International Politics

- There is a call for major powers, led by the United States, to reconsider their foreign policies, emphasizing the need for greater engagement in international integration efforts and mutual reliance while moving away from narrow nationalism. It is worth noting that responding to this call is not obligatory, as foreign policy falls within the sovereign realm of states, making reform efforts somewhat weak, especially within the prevailing liberal doctrine, which the United States considers ideal and irreplaceable.
- To preserve stability, it is necessary to retreat from imposing democracy and respect the sovereignty of states in determining their foreign policies, acknowledging diversity, and accepting differences. The concept of liberal democracy is not a universal standard.

- Liberalism inherently contains elements of imperialism that transcend the boundaries of state sovereignty through financial institutions and loan conditions, necessitating a reevaluation of how to deepen the concept of genuine and sincere solidarity towards fragile states, as presumed by liberal democracy.

International Institutions

- The UN has some drawbacks which, in one way or another, prevent it from being an efficient governor of the contemporary world. This failure is most apparent with the UN and other international organizations that have not been able to change at nearly the same rate of change the world has experienced over the past decades. It has led to structural flaws, ineffective geographical representation, and over-reliance on archaic structures, especially in the United Nations and Security Council.
- The Security Council is outdated and cannot accurately represent contemporary global politics and the international order. Thus, the UN is weak in addressing modern and future challenges or new phenomena because of these weaknesses based on the organization's bureaucratic and rigid structure. Change is required to enhance the composition of the Security Council and the rest of the United Nations to better serve and respond to current issues in the contemporary world.
- There is a representational imbalance and disproportionality, with many parts of the world absent from its composition, including the Arab and Islamic world, Africa, and Latin America, despite the significant increase in member states from 51 to 193 since its establishment.
- Voting mechanisms, with the veto power restricted to five permanent members based on their victory in World War II, undermined the Council's justice, especially with the emergence of new rising powers with effective influence on the international stage, such as India and Brazil.
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- It is worth mentioning here that there are other calls for reform focusing on global economic institutions and the necessity of their governance, such as the International Monetary Fund, which has long faced opposition from the US Congress regarding its reform.

Conclusion

It is evident from the preceding discussion that the international order is heading towards change and transformation organically and comprehensively while maintaining an incomplete picture of what the future order will entail. The study has yielded several key findings. Firstly, change is an inherent feature of orders, and the persistence of a single pattern for the international order is illogical. Evolution and change occur beyond the control of the dominant powers shaping global decision-making. The failure of the current international order can be attributed not only to stark power imbalances but also to sustainable disparities in development that breed resentment and rebellion among less-developed countries.

Additionally, there is no global consensus on democratic values due to differences in historical and civilizational backgrounds. This lack of consensus has been one of the main reasons for the failure of the current order. The liberal international order, primarily championed by the United States, aimed to solidify its global dominance according to its perspective. This has prompted reactions from powers close to it, such as China and Russia, which seek to assert their power and pose renewed threats to global peace and security. Furthermore, the driving force of the international order has shifted from political factors to economic ones, as demonstrated by the comparison between China and the United States. Cultural factors also play a decisive role in shaping the future international order by fostering harmony among state actors. Considering these findings, it is imperative to acknowledge the international order's complexity and dynamism and adopt flexible and adaptive approaches to address its challenges and opportunities. Only through continuous dialogue, cooperation, and collective action can the international community navigate the complexities of the evolving global landscape and strive toward a more peaceful, prosperous, and equitable world order.

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