

# The Domestic Sources of Global Adhocracy

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## KEYWORDS

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Governance  
Competence  
Legitimacy  
Liberal order  
United States  
China  
Russia  
European Union  
Brazil  
India  
Arab Spring  
Capitalism  
Deregulation  
NATO  
Adhocracy  
Terrorism  
Nuclear proliferation  
Foreign policy  
Domestic challenges  
Unemployment  
Military budgets  
Putin  
Sphere of influence

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## ABSTRACT

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The article shows that (a) those who expect new global powers to rise, provoking a clash with the old one seeking to maintain its supremacy (the US), are mistaken. The US will scale back its international role, but no other power will step in to take over its functions in maintaining order. Hence an increase in global disorder. The gap will be filled to some extent by ad hoc coalitions in what is here called 'the rise of adhocracy'. (b) The reason that various powers will play a more limited international role is that they all suffer from the same domestic crisis, namely, a governing deficit due to a decline in competence and legitimacy - albeit one that takes different forms in different nations.

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Many examinations of the major near-term challenges facing the international system focus on the threats of rogue nuclear states (especially North Korea and Iran) and of unstable states (in particular, Pakistan); terrorism with a global reach; the rise of China; financial disorders (especially in the Euro zone and debts that weigh on the U.S.); and the Arab Awakening.

These disparate challenges have one key element in common: the paucity of effective and legitimate responses, a deficit that is due to a domestic disorder. The main crisis facing all the major international actors is not financial, nor economic, nor military, but institutional, and centres

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around governance. Those in power are losing both competence (their ability to govern) and legitimacy (the public sense that their regime is a fair one). If this domestic crisis continues to evolve, the main effect is likely to be a further increase in the global governing deficit, an increase in anarchy and adhocracy rather than changes in which one superpower maintains the global order or another is seeking to modify its rules. Concretely this means that as some powers reduce their contributions to the prevention of genocide, foreign aid, peacekeeping troops, the securing of free passages in the water ways, the enforcement of the Westphalian norm and the NPT, the maintenance of the transnational financial system, and the protection of the global environment, others will not pick up all of the slack. There will be fewer Libyas (in which NATO engaged in an armed humanitarian intervention in 2011) and more Syrias (in which no armed intervention took place, despite the large-scale of killing of civilians by the regime). This speaks to a general trend; exceptions are to be expected. For instance, China may continue to increase its contributions to the IMF at a greater rate than the West reduces its contributions. However, the overarching trends, as we shall see, point to a lower investment of political and economic capital in sustaining the global order and not merely by the U.S.

Before I proceed to support this thesis with an overview of the domestic political conditions of the main international actors, I outline a model of governance that I use in the following examination as a sort of measuring rod to assess the various domestic institutional structures. The model draws on the image of nuclear energy. If it is well-contained, in a strong vessel, nuclear energy can be a source of low-cost, 'green', and reliable energy (although it still will not be risk-free and not without side effects). However, if the containing vessel is weakened and the nuclear forces are unfettered, they can wreak great damage both locally and transnationally. The same holds for capitalism. To argue that it must be well-contained by strong government regulations and supported by strong normative briefs is not to argue against capitalism per se, or to favor another economic system, such as a communist kind of command and control system. Instead the argument points to the negative consequences that follow when extensive deregulation and libertarian ideologies prevail and capitalism is unfettered.

The nature of the forces that weaken the sociological vessel that contains capitalism differs from one country to another, both in source and velocity. However, these forces exhibit several similar attributes. The decline in competence and legitimacy feed into one another. As governments fail to deliver the public and private goods they are expected to provide, they are considered less legitimate by the public, and the fact that they lose legitimacy is one factor that diminishes their ability to govern, i.e. their competence. The main underlying cause of the widespread loss of competence and legitimacy reflects the fact that technological developments (especially of arms, most recently in cyberspace) and economic developments (for instance, hedge funds) unfold much more rapidly than the adaptation of the political and ideational institutions that are to contain them.

This trend is revealed in gross violation of the social contract (which entails that the government will provide a basic and rising basket of goods and services to everyone, even if the elites gain a much larger share – see Rawls 1971); a fusion of the economic and political centres of power (resulting in increased ‘capture’ of the political system by economic interests – see Stigler 1971; see also Posner 1974); a decline in the values that favour deferred gratification, which undergirds saving and hard work (the ‘Protestant’ ethic), leading to a quest for short-term benefits even if they undermine the assets in the longer run; a high level of illegal and legalized corruption (well above the level political scientists consider tolerable); increased following for anti-governance (libertarian) ideas; and an increase in loss of identity due to globalization, immigration, and transnational cultural flows<sup>1</sup>.

The preceding lines may be understood to imply that the main cause of the crisis lies with the political actors, the elected officials, the civil servants, the regulators. However, their weakness, as we shall see, reflects to a significant extent the increased political power of economic actors and parallel changes in the ideational realm.

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<sup>1</sup> In sharp contrast, Fareed Zakaria (2008: 18) writes, ‘Today’s relative calm has a deep structural basis. Across the world, economics is trumping politics. What Wall Street analysts call “political risk” has been almost nonexistent. Wars, coups, and terrorism have lost much of their ability to derail markets more than temporarily... This is not the first time that political tumult and economic growth have come together’.

Because this article deals with trends, it is important to specify the baseline. To suggest that competence and legitimacy of governing institutions have declined requires specification: Compared to what prior condition? For instance, to suggest that legalized corruption in the U.S. increased may hold true if one compares 2010 to 2000 but not necessarily to 1850. The following discussion uses 1990, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR, as its baseline.

## **1. The U.S.: unfettered capitalism, IR decline**

Since 1990, the U.S. has greatly unfettered capitalism. Gradually it slashed regulations and repealed laws that set limits on the marketplace in general, and on financial institutions in particular. These changes in law and public administration have been accompanied by the rise of libertarian ideologies broadly understood that have legitimated the unfettering of capitalism<sup>2</sup>. In 2011, two-thirds (64 percent) of Americans polled ranked the government as the biggest threat to the future of the country (Brooks 2011).

A major change in legislation involved the repeal in 1999 of the Glass-Steagall Act – a 1933 law that granted the Federal Reserve stronger regulatory powers over national banks and prevented commercial banks from taking the kind of risks investment banks were allowed to incur. In 2007, the Supreme Court ruling in *Watters v. Wachovia Bank* in effect prevented individual states from regulating mortgage lenders, while the federal ones leaned towards deregulation. Both significant changes were strongly favoured and supported by the private sector, in particular by financial institutions.

An incident that took place in 1998 illustrates many of the other unfettering acts, and is worthy of a drama writer. Beginning in May of that year, the head of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Brooksley Born, faced off against Alan Greenspan (then chairman of the Federal Reserve), Robert Rubin (then Treasury Secretary), Lawrence Summers (then Deputy Secretary of the Treasury), and Arthur Levitt (then chairman of the

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<sup>2</sup> The rise of libertarian ideology refers not to the number of people who formally consider themselves libertarians or who are even familiar with this term, but the number of those who hold that less government and less regulation and freer markets are values they rank highly.

SEC) – all considered titans of the financial world – over her insistence that eroding regulations would lead to disaster. Her warnings not only went unheeded, but she was harshly criticized for not understanding that the market will regulate itself; that the CEOs of businesses were much savvier than government officials.

In the same period, regulatory agencies, most especially the SEC, basically did not carry out their duties, given the unfettering climate. To illustrate: a study published in 2011 found 51 cases over the preceding fifteen years in which nineteen Wall Street firms broke anti-fraud laws they had previously promised not to break. These firms include Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan Chase, and Bank of America. When faced with these multiple violations, the SEC reached another settlement (often entailing rather modest financial penalties imposed only on the firms, not the executives) and extracted another promise to obey the law, rather than bringing contempt charges in court. Despite the fact that corporations were found to engage in criminal acts, for instance hiring people to forge thousands of signatures, ‘not only has nobody gone to jail, but there haven’t even been any criminal prosecutions’ (Cheney 2011).

Previously enacted fettering laws were diluted in this time period. To illustrate: in 2001, Enron Corporation and its accounting firm Arthur Andersen were revealed to have used highly irregular accounting practices, leading to major losses to the investing public and their employees. In response to this and other such revelations, Congress passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. However, its provisions were soon weakened, and then diluted, and then further watered down. For example, the Act’s ‘whistleblower’ protection provision has been significantly undermined by federal judges who have held that an employee who has expressed concern to management about SEC rule violations has not engaged in protected conduct unless the alleged violations indicate fraud against the shareholders<sup>3</sup>. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act was further weakened by the passage of the Dodd-Frank Act, which exempted companies with under \$75 million in market capitalization from the Sarbanes-Oxley Act’s Section 404(b) requirement that companies’ independent auditors attest to and report on the management’s assessment.

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<sup>3</sup> *Walton v. Nova Information Systems and Bancorp*, 2005-SOX-107, at 3 (March 29, 2006).

The U.S. is usually not listed among the high corruption nations. It ranks 24<sup>th</sup> out of 182 nations (Transparency International 2011). However, this is due to the fact that in the U.S., the use of money by private interests to deeply affect public policy has been legalized. Limitations on the amount of funds corporations and rich individuals can grant to political campaigns, established in the 2002 McCain-Feingold Act and previously by other measures, were in effect eliminated through several key court decisions. In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled in *Federal Election Commission v. Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc.* that corporations could not be banned from paying for ads from the corporate treasury in the months leading up to an election so long as the ads were ‘issue ads’ and did not expressly advocate a particular candidate. Three years later, the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* enabled corporations to spend unlimited funds on political campaign ads.

To quickly review well-known facts: the financial crisis that ensued in 2008 led to a massive transfer of wealth from taxpayers to financial institutions and their shareholders and executives. Brokerage houses, banks, and insurance companies were bailed out, but millions of individuals lost their jobs and homes, often because they were sold mortgages the sellers knew the homeowners could not afford.

The governing class has sought to cut social safety networks, including unemployment benefits, Medicare, and even Social Security (moves supported by segments of the Democratic Party and not just the GOP), and no major job creation drive has been launched. Taxes, in effect, continue to favor corporations and those of means whose income from capital is taxed at a much lower rate than income from employment, and while the nominal rates are considerable, the effective rates are low.

By the end of 2011 there was a widespread sense of malice in the American public. 69 percent believed the U.S. was going in the wrong direction (Hart and McInturff 2011). The public held its political institutions in very low regard. The approval rating of Congress was at a historic low, in the single digits. Populist movements rose in the form of the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, reflecting the failure of the political system to respond effectively to protest, and thus absorb it.

By the end of 2011, the United States had a high level of debt, high level of unemployment, low economic growth, a still largely unfettered form of capitalism, and a widespread sense of alienation. As a direct result there were considerable declines in the political and economic capital available for international actions.

In concrete terms, said declines were reflected in a reduction in the funds available for foreign policy (especially for foreign aid and the budget of the State Department, but even for the military) in order to pay down the debt. This 'leaner' posture was officially spelled out in a new military strategy unveiled by the Obama Administration on January 5, 2012.

The decline in economic and political capital available for international actions was also reflected in a strong inclination to avoid new overseas involvement (for instance in Syria), in the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan (and Germany), in the end of nation-building drives and consideration of a Marshall Plan for the Middle East, in the retreat from costly Counter-Insurgency (COIN) in favour of much less costly Counter-Terrorism (CT), and in the opposition to the positioning of large conventional forces in favour of 'offshore balancing' that draws on drones, bombers, missiles, Special Forces, and mainly native forces. The U.S. has also sought to rely more on NATO and other allies ('burden sharing' and 'leading from behind') despite the fact that these allies have very limited resources dedicated to undergirding the international order. Lastly, the U.S. is leaving nations that struggled with the effects of the nearly global financial crisis, especially those in the Euro zone, to fend on their own.

The net effect of all these changes is to reduce the American resources and power available to support the rise of democratic regimes and the liberal rule-based international order.

## **2. China: rising domestic challenges, not a new global power**

Several leading observers hold that China's polity is functioning much better than Western regimes. It is said to provide for high economic growth while the growth in the West is sluggish. Francis Fukuyama (2011) described the opening years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as 'a dramatic reversal of fortune in the relative prestige of different political and economic models', with the U.S.

yielding the high ground to a Chinese model that ‘adapts quickly, making difficult decisions and implementing them effectively’. Pointing to the polarization of American politics, Fukuyama (2011) adds: ‘Democracy in America may have an inherent legitimacy that the Chinese system lacks, but it will not be much of a model to anyone if the government is divided against itself and cannot govern’. Nations in the third world are said to have been won over by the Chinese model and consequently moved away from the Western one, as Stefan Halper argues in *The Beijing Consensus* (2010).<sup>4</sup> Some even argue that the West should emulate China in this regard. Former president of SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Andy Stern (2011) described China’s ‘superior economic model’ and calls on America to learn from it. Observers point to China’s ability to make major decisions and implement them on matters ranging from the development of high-speed rail, to the building of major science and technology centres, to the promotion of solar projects.

Actually, China’s economic growth is slowing down. It faces significant challenges as a result of its major environmental problems (which are on their way to causing serious illnesses in large segments of the population due to very high levels of air pollution, as well as greatly increasing the potential for ecological disasters – Millman, Tang and Perera 2008). China’s political institutions have not been able to deal effectively with these environmental problems, which are in part the result of capitalism that is indifferent to these concerns and benefits from being allowed to largely ignore them.

China’s aging population also poses a risk for its continued economic growth. While China was previously concerned about having too many children to support, the success of its ‘one-child’ policy in reducing the population means that it now faces the opposite problem: in years to come it may be difficult for younger generations to support China’s rapidly aging population. The percentage of elderly in China is expected to roughly triple by the year 2050 (Kaneda 2006).

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<sup>4</sup> Although Halper challenges the term ‘model’ (see his opening remarks in his 2010 debate with Susan Shirk, Director of the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, *The Economist*, August 4, 2010, <http://www.economist.com/debate/days/view/553>), his arguments support the basic point (see Halper 2010). See also Bremmer 2010.



Another challenge to the regime stems from the rise of inequality, as much of the affluence is concentrated in the limited groups in the major cities, while less than half of rural households have tap water, more than half still use wood-burning stoves to cook, and almost 90 percent do not have flush toilets (China Labour Bulletin 2009). In addition, widespread and alienating corruption undermines the legitimacy of the regime. Local bureaucrats ignore instructions from the central government. China's political institutions have been unable to deal effectively with any of these problems or absorb political protest, a failure that is reflected in growing alienation, unrest, demonstrations, and riots. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences estimates that China experienced over 180,000 demonstrations, protests, or riots in 2010 alone (Hanstad 2011).

Many expect China to play an increasing role as a regional power, and to be well on its way to becoming a global power, one that may contest – and according to some, supplant – the USA (see Jacques 2009; Rachman 2011). Elizabeth Economy (2010: 142) argues that 'Beijing has launched a "go out" strategy designed to remake global norms and institutions'. Barry Buzan (2004: 71) notes that 'China is currently the most fashionable potential superpower and the one whose degree of alienation from the dominant international society makes it the most obvious political challenger'. A recent study (Pew Research Center 2011) shows that in 15 of 22 nations surveyed, the majority of the public believes that China either already has or eventually will replace the United States as the world's leading superpower.

In contrast, I join those who hold that China is likely to be preoccupied with its rising internal difficulties, which its political institutions have not been able to effectively treat. Moreover, as China pushes to increase its regional role, as highlighted by its claim to include much of the South China Sea in its Exclusive Economic Zone, China generates considerable opposition from other nations in the area, including Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and even Burma. There are no indications that these nations are about to accept China as a new regional hegemon. China has often reached a compromise in such conflicts in recent decades and settled them via negotiations or other peaceful mechanisms. For example, China reached an agreement with Japan for a joint hydrocarbon project in disputed waterways and successfully negotiated with Vietnam a maritime boundary in the Gulf

of Tonkin that divides the body of water fairly equally between them (Cohen and Van Dyke 2010; see also Shambaugh 2005). (One should, however, expect that China will strongly seek to secure its ability to purchase and transport to its mainland the raw material and energy on which its economic growth – and domestic peace – depends.)

So far China has shown little interest in or capacity for playing a global role. It has recently increased somewhat the amounts of funds it allots to humanitarian aid and disaster relief, and it contributes more to the IMF. However, these increases came from a very low level, and continue to be rather limited. They do not bespeak of a nation that is about to become a major contributor to the international order.

China's history of involvement with the UN similarly demonstrates that it has not tried to obstruct UN peacekeeping efforts in recent years. While in the 1990s China 'expressed considerable concern over the West's "new interventionism" in Kosovo and Iraq, China's actual position [was] far more nuanced and pragmatic' (International Crisis Group 2009). Despite its opposition to the Gulf War, China refrained from vetoing Resolution 678, which authorized the use of all necessary means to restore peace and security after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and China also contributed police to peacemaking efforts in Kosovo despite its initial opposition to intervention there.

China has often voted 'absent' when the UN Security Council acted in ways that differed from its views rather than exercising its veto. Indeed, the PRC has used its veto power exceedingly sparingly when compared with the U.S. As of December 2008, the PRC had exercised its veto power only six times, while the United States had done so over 80 times (Global Policy Forum). China also worked hard to qualify as a member of the WTO that is based on free trade principles and has abided by its rulings in several key trade disputes (e.g. China recently revoked its wind power subsidy, which provided grants to wind turbine manufacturers as long as they purchased key parts in China, when the U.S. disputed the subsidy at the WTO).

All said and done, China has demonstrated little ambition to replace the U.S. as a power that undergirds the existing global rules, nor has it sought to reformulate them.

### **3. The EU: internal flaws, weak IR player**

The political difficulties in continental Europe (UK's development parallels America's to a large extent) differ significantly from one nation to another, although many nations reveal signs of a government whose competence is limited (reflected in the fragmentation of parties, and governments that must face frequent elections because of their instability) and whose legitimacy is declining. The factors that are involved on the national level often reflect policy and ideational conflicts about globalization (especially the outsourcing of jobs), austerity measures, low economic growth, and issues raised by immigration. There is a wide sense of disenchantment among most European voters with their national governments. These frustrations have led to the rise of right-wing movements and parties in many European countries, as the prevailing institutions have been unable to react effectively to protest and absorb it.

In addition, the institutional crisis in Europe reflects a major design flaw on the collective transnational level, that of the EU, especially that of the Euro zone. The EU was created as a top-down project, not as an expression of a popular social movement of the kind that nation-building or women's rights or environmental movements have often involved. Initially, the EU mainly involved an increase in trade among nations and harmonization of laws, moves that either benefited most nations or entailed changes that were limited in scope. However, over the decades, new treaties and administrative measures undertaken by the EU Commission vastly expanded the unification measures, including free movement of people (which led to a massive movement of workers from low-wage countries to higher-wage ones) and movement of immigrants allowed into the EU via nations with lax border controls into those that sought to limit immigration. Finally, seventeen nations moved to monetary union (by sharing one currency, the Euro) without forming a fiscal union. This led to a situation in which countries that generated a large deficit and debt had to be bailed out by nations that had shown more financial restraint. This situation led the latter nations to demand major austerity measures from those bailed out, leading to gross alienation towards the EU on both sides. Support for the EU fell from a two-thirds majority to less than one-third. Net public support for the EU reached an apex of 62 percent in 1991; it fluctuated within a 10-

percentage-point range of roughly 30-40 percent in the following decade. By 2010, net support was only 31 percent (Eurobarometer Surveys 2004-2010). The disaffection with the EU further intensified following the financial crisis triggered by Greece. Moving toward a fiscal union will extend this elitist approach and the popular resentment it generates because it will empower select EU officials to make and enforce decisions on the seventeen member nations, whose people have not given their consent to these decisions. That is, the EU lacks a political union and the shared ethos that could support such a fiscal union and the sacrifices it entails.<sup>5</sup>

The EU was once considered on its way to becoming a major global power, one that could compete with – or ‘balance’ – the U.S. (see Kupchan 2003; see also Khanna 2008). However, the EU members found it very difficult to come to a shared understanding as to the kind of international role the EU was to play. It hence greatly limited the power and role of the person charged with speaking for the EU on international matters, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (a mouthful settled on after the originally planned EU Foreign Minister was deemed to sound too powerful), and deliberately chose a weak personality to fill this role, Catherine Ashton.

The institutional crisis, the inability to deal with the economic malaise of most EU members, and especially of the Euro zone, and various ideational developments led EU members to cut their military budgets and forces, then reduce them some more, and slash them again. As a result, the roles the shrinking European military could play overseas were rather limited. How hollow the EU forces are became clear during the one intervention initiated by EU members (not the EU per se): the 2011 intervention in Libya. Out of 28 NATO members, only fourteen committed military assets, and just eight were prepared to fly ground-attack sorties (The Economist 2011). Moreover, NATO’s European members were highly dependent on the American military help to keep going. The United States provided about three-quarters of the aerial tankers, without which the NATO strike fighters, mostly flying from bases in Italy, could not have reached their targets and returned to base. The U.S. also provided most of the cruise missiles that degraded Colonel Qaddafi’s air defenses. When

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<sup>5</sup> For more discussion, see Etzioni 2011.

stocks of precision-guided weapons held by European forces ran low after only a couple of months, America had to provide the fresh supplies. And few attack missions were flown without American electronic warfare aircraft operating above as ‘guardian angels’ (The Economist 2011). NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen admitted, ‘the operation has made visible that the Europeans lack a number of essential military capabilities’ (Westervelt 2011). Defense Secretary Gates criticized the lack of investment by European members in ‘intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets’ (The Wall Street Journal 2011). He pointed out that ‘the most advanced fighter aircraft are of little use if allies do not have the means to identify, process, and strike targets as part of an integrated campaign’ (The Wall Street Journal 2011). In short, he concluded that NATO’s European members are so weak they face ‘collective military irrelevance’ (The Wall Street Journal 2011).

On the economic front, far from contributing to the global economy, the European financial crisis was so severe that the EU threatened to slow the growth of the global economy and to trigger major financial difficulties in other nations. The EU did continue to contribute to diplomacy. For example, it sought to mitigate tensions between the U.S. and other nations, including Iran, and promoted the so-called ‘Durban Platform’, which requires participating nations, developed and developing alike, to develop a protocol by 2015 to reduce global greenhouse emissions (see Light 2011).

All in all, there is little indication that the EU will be able or inclined to pick up the slack generated by the curtailing of the U.S. global role. There are reasons to expect that the EU collectively and its members individually will add to the global governance deficit.

#### **4. Russia: a domestic/IR disconnect**

To return to the core image on which this essay draws, during the Soviet era the state “container” was so thick that it provided only for limited room for capitalist activities. Central planning, political interference, massive bureaucracies, cronyism, and corruption combined to suppress capitalism whenever and wherever it sprouted. In 1990 the “container” exploded, leaving the Russian economy largely unfettered. The government was far

too dysfunctional to provide a containing vessel and the confused ideational state did not legitimate containment.

After 1990, Russia experienced a rapid growth of capitalism. However, this growth was mainly of the robber baron type, seeking quick profits, often by exploiting special relationships with those in the political elite, and largely drawing on extraction of raw materials. Lee Wolosky, who served as the National Security Council's director for transnational threats during the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, described the entrenched plutocracy: 'The oligarchs dominate Russian public life through massive fraud and misappropriation, particularly in the oil sector... [They] enjoy enormous political power, derived from their money, media control, and direct and indirect participation in decision-making at many levels of government... The loyalty of lesser officials is routinely secured through bribes, kickbacks, and "charitable contributions".' (Wolosky 2000).

Crime and violence were rampant. In 1999 alone the Russian Prosecutor-General reported nearly 600 contract killings and 30,000 premeditated and attempted murders (BBC 1999). Alcoholism, drug abuse, and HIV reached epidemic proportions. There was a sharp fall in the size of the population. By 1998, Russia's economy was half the size it had been in 1989 (Yavlinsky 1998). In short, in the first decade the Russian political institutions were much too dysfunctional to contain capitalism, and large segments of it developed along pathological lines.

In 2000 Putin won the elections and became the president of Russia. He nationalized many of the industries that had been previously captured by robber baron capitalists. He recentralized the powers that were delegated to the provisional governors and ended the debilitating war in Chechnya. Under Putin, Russia was able to pay off its international debt and its GDP per capita grew strongly, largely due to the increase in oil prices. According to some accounts, crime was reduced.

During the same period, however, corruption, cronyism, and robber baron capitalism continued to dominate. Economic actors that limited themselves to producing consumer goods and domestic markets were given a rather free hand in both senses of the term: they could amass profits (especially if they bribed the right kind of officials) and be exempted from most regulations. Those economic elites that sought to involve themselves in

politics or affect state policies (e.g., by making contracts with foreign oil companies) were either co-opted or suppressed. Corruption continued at a very high level. In Transparency International's 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index, Russia ranked 143<sup>rd</sup> of the 183 countries and territories reviewed, placing it below Iran, Pakistan, and Colombia, and at the same level as Uganda. Law enforcement and courts were so capricious that Russia ranked 96th out of 175 on the World Bank's 2006 'ease of doing business' index, an all-time low (McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2008a). As of 2011, the government owns nearly half of all the shares of companies on the stock exchange (Schuman 2011). In the same years, Putin curtailed a good part of those democratic features that Russia previously developed, introducing a considerable measure of authoritarianism. His government prevented other political parties from effectively competing with his United Russia party and greatly curbed access of the opposition to the media, especially television. In the same period, critical journalists and human rights activists were assassinated. These institutional changes allowed Putin to govern more effectively – compared to the 1990s – but undermined the foundations of the state as a legitimate institution and containing vessel in the longer run. Putin's approval rate was around 80 percent in 2008 and nearly one-third of the country wanted to see him become president for life (McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2008b), and in early 2011 his approval rating was still around 70% (Tsvetkova 2011). However, in the wake of allegations of election rigging in favour of the United Russia Party at the end of 2011, his approval rating fell to roughly 50% and there were street protests against him and his regime (The Guardian 2011).

One might expect that a nation beset by domestic challenges and multifaceted institutional crises, a corroded containing vessel, and pathological forms of capitalism would not play much of an international role. However, Russia – much more than other former global powers that found it difficult to adjust to their diminished international role (e.g., Britain and France) – plays a considerable international role. However, it is not a major source of international order.

Russia's foreign policy does not follow one pattern. On some fronts it supports the United States, for instance it is helping the U.S. to supply its troops in Afghanistan. It agreed with the U.S. to reduce the level of nuclear

strategic armament in the new Start treaty, and participates (albeit as a junior partner) in the Global Threat Reduction Initiative and in the Cooperative Threat Reduction Initiative. In other matters it is fiercely opposed to the U.S. and NATO, especially in all matters concerning what Russia considers its sphere of influence. Hence its strong opposition to NATO's eastward expansion and the extension of membership to the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) as well as its resistance to the positioning of a missile defense close to its borders, which it called 'near abroad'. On numerous other occasions, Russia slowed down, diluted, delayed, and weakened American diplomatic efforts, most recently when the US sought to impose sanctions on Syria in 2012.

All said and done, Russia often is a source of international tensions; on many other occasions it is a difficult junior partner; and rarely is it a contributor to the international order. However, there is much less connection between the domestic competence and legitimacy of the government and its international actions than in the other nations. Russia punches above its domestic level, even if it often misdirects its punches, at least according to those who seek to uphold the prevailing international order.

## **5. India and Brazil: new powers?**

A widely held thesis is that the world is moving from a unipolar to a multipolar state, and that new powers are rising. India and Brazil top the list of the powers cited as new, in addition to China. For instance, John Kampfner (2011) heralds Brazil's economic success (it recently took over the UK as the world's sixth largest economy) as the beginning of 'the new world order'. He argues that 'the ascent to global status of not just China, but Brazil and India, followed possibly by Indonesia, Nigeria and South Africa, is in policy terms woefully under-appreciated'. Stewart Patrick (2010: 52) lists Indonesia and Turkey among the emergent powers. Stephen Walt (2011) writes that 'the American Era' is 'undermined by the rise of several key regional powers, most notably India, Turkey and Brazil.'

Many observers draw on the fact that these nations have large economies and high growth rates as the reason these nations are to be



considered rising powers. However, if one uses the term 'power' in the way it is often understood, namely the ability of one actor to make another do what the prevailing actor favours, there are few indications that any of these nations, India and Brazil included, are exercising significant power on a global level or even playing much of a power role in their respective regions. Both nations are preoccupied with domestic challenges and stresses. The Indian government faces major demands from those left behind as the standard of living of select groups has risen sharply, and it has a long way to go in cleaning up corruption. Brazil is reported to have made progress in reducing inequality, but corruption remains a major issue. The public's perception is that 'corruption has become so deep and widespread that it jeopardizes Brazil's chances of economic and social development (Geddes and Ribeiro Neto 1992: 641; see also OECD 2011).

While both Brazil and India have expressed aspirations to play the role of major powers, and are seeking permanent membership on the UN Security Council, the fact that there are few indications that such seats will be allotted to them is one more indication that although these nations may wish to be considered powers, their wishes have not been validated by others.

Several of the examples cited as evidence of the growing power of these nations are actually cases in which they refused to contribute to or undermined the rule-based international order rather than playing supportive roles or working to reformulate the order. One could refer to it as negative power, of the kind Russia employed, but this would apply only if the nation at issue was actually able to block a course of action or impose a significant change of course on other nations. However, when these new powers seek to act in such a way and fail, these acts reveal weakness rather than application of power.

For instance, in May 2010, Brazil, working with Turkey, promoted a deal with Iran, under which Iran agreed to ship 2,645 pounds of low-enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for fuel for a medical research reactor. However, the deal was widely considered an 'amateurish and ill timed' (Patrick 2010: 45) manoeuvre by Iran to stall the imposition of new UN sanctions. The deal was never implemented, nor did it succeed in halting the Security Council sanctions against Iran.

In short, so far there are few signs of significant contributions to the international order from these sources, and whatever countermoves they generated were not very consequential.

## **6. Arab Awakening: sources of demand, not supply**

The situation in the Middle East is very much in flux; however, one can safely point out that the optimistic assumptions about the rise of stable democracies, which would ally themselves with the West, are highly unrealistic. Initially, what was called the Arab Spring was viewed as a confirmation of the neoconservative thesis that the world was trending toward the establishment of democratic regimes. The thesis was cast into doubt when the liberation of Iraq did not ‘flip’ the Middle East from a host of authoritarian regimes into free ones. Indeed, the future of Iraq’s political system, and even more so that of Afghanistan, are far from clear.

In several nations, ethnic and confessional differences (among Shia and Sunni in particular) are so strong that civil strife is likely to continue or re-arise. In others (e.g., Morocco and Jordan), authoritarian governments may yield some ground to pro-democratic forces but seem set to retain their basic form of government, that of constitutional monarchies. Other Middle Eastern nations are determined to continue to suppress opposition, especially Saudi Arabia. And the military is likely to continue to play a political role in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon.

While all these observations may turn out to be overtaken by events by the time they are published, it is safe to predict that most nations in the Middle East will continue to experience considerable domestic conflict and turmoil, which will limit the competence and legitimacy of their governments. They are very likely to be a source of demand for international help in many forms (including for economic development, conflict management, and peacekeeping) rather than a new foundation for a stable global liberal order. This observation applies, only much more strongly, to Iran and Pakistan.

## **Less order and more adhocracy**

There are few indications that the domestic institutional crisis evident in all the major powers is subsiding. In effect one might argue that the opposite is the case because while there is little new supply of effective and legitimate governance, there is a growing demand for it, and hence the governance deficit is increasing rather than shrinking. The increase in demand is due to the spread of nuclear weapons (e.g., potentially to Iran and increased production in Pakistan, India, and North Korea); the rise of weapons that favor the attackers and those that strike first (especially in cyber war and in space); the continued effects of transnational terrorism; the danger of financial breakdowns; and challenges arising from climate change. Moreover, the weakening of the national governments has not led to a significant increase in the competence and legitimacy of international institutions such as the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO.

If one grants the preceding observations, if only for the sake of argument, it has major implications for the future of the international order in the foreseeable future. At issue is an often repeated thesis that we are about to face a typical confrontation between a declining power that is slow to yield and a rising new power that demands new privileges (Nye 2011: 153; see also Gilpin 1981). This pattern is said to have been encountered already among the ancient Greek states and then found in conflicts such as the Thirty Years' War and the Napoleonic Wars. It is sometimes referred to as hegemonic stability theory, which asserts that international stability is not engendered by a balance of power, but by the hegemony of one nation, and that it is when a hegemonic nation begins to decline and is challenged by an ascending power that war is likely to break out (Goldstein 2005: 107). Hence the expectation that China and the U.S. are bound to engage in major armed conflict in the future. However, Russia and the United States did not engage in hot war, as might have been predicted by this theory, but limited themselves to cold war. The decision to refrain from armed conflict was grounded in concerns about the consequences of nuclear war (see, for example, Intriligator and Brito 1985). It is hoped that this will also apply to China.

Also at issue is whether the liberal order that the U.S. is said to have promoted (Ikenberry 2011) will hold, or whether the new power, i.e. China,

will agree to abide by the rules involved (e.g. at the WTO) or will instead demand and attain major changes in these rules.

The current trend points to a decline in the international role of the U.S.<sup>6</sup>, but not a commensurate increase in the power of any other nation, leading to a net decrease in the power and resources available to support the international order. This will be reflected in the continued spread of nuclear arms; a decrease in armed interventions by big powers in the internal affairs of other nations that seek to undergird the duty to protect (that is, to prevent genocides and other humanitarian crises); a decrease in foreign aid; slow net progress (if any) on environmental issues (climate protection included); and lagging transnational regulation to prevent additional financial crises. The war against terrorism may prove to be an exception. It will mean that nations either will have to limit their missions or – if they maintain the old profile – find that their power does not suffice to implement them.

Those international actions that will be carried out are expected to be increasingly undertaken through ad hoc coalitions and agreements, with various participants imposing various restrictions on their role, rather than stable alliances and power blocks (Patrick 2010: 44-50). During the Cold War, two major camps faced each other: NATO led by the U.S. and the Warsaw Pact led by the USSR. Even these blocks saw some changes – e.g. France left NATO. However, these changes in alignment were few and far between. In contrast, since 1990 each of the following conflicts saw a different constellation of nations working together: Kosovo in 1999, in which Russia played a role (though it made an unwieldy and unpredictable partner); Operation Desert Storm in 1991 in which over 30 nations participated, including some Arab ones; the Proliferation Security Initiative, which is endorsed by over eight dozen nations around the world; Iraq in 2003, in which 30 nations originally joined the ‘coalition of the willing’, but no Arab ones; Afghanistan, which by the end of 2010 had troops from 47 countries; Libya in 2011, in which – despite its depiction as a NATO operation – NATO members Turkey and Germany did not participate, while non-NATO member Qatar did. The intervention was initiated by France, seconded by Britain, and backed by the U.S., rather than by NATO’s HQ. Attempts to deal with North Korea centred around six nation talks that included China,

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Mandelbaum (2010) makes this point with regard to the U.S.

the United States, North and South Korea, Japan, and Russia. Attempts to deal with Iran drew on the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France), but also Germany. On nonmilitary fronts, much international work was carried out by a variety of groups, including the G7, G8, and G20, rather than via established institutions such as the UN and OECD. In addition, thousands of INGOs play a role, adding to the transnational governance but also to the lack of accountability and confusion over authority and policy.

The world is said to benefit from an order based on liberal rules, such as freedom of navigation and free markets, and respect for sovereignty (see Ikenberry 2011). The U.S. is advised to invest heavily in upholding these rules so that when it does decline, it will be able to benefit from the protection they provide (Patrick 2010: 45). Each part of this key thesis deserves to be critically examined. *Has* the U.S. supported a liberal order or – a whole host of authoritarian regimes? *Did it* lead armed interventions in the internal affairs of other nations, even when not authorized by the UN, as it did in Kosovo in 1999 and in Iraq in 2003? Is it rational to expect that nations that do not share the liberal view of international order will support it because the U.S. invested more in it when it anticipated a decline in its ability to enforce the rules involved?

Even if one finds the thesis compelling that such an investment by the U.S. would pay off, one may note that actually the U.S. is adapting to its weakened status in rather different ways. In some cases it chooses to largely ignore gross violations of the rules, for instance those of free trade by China. True, the U.S. protested China's currency manipulation and filed some complaints with the WTO; however, it basically tolerated large-scale abuses of intellectual property as well as industrial espionage and trade restrictions. The same took place when North Korea and Pakistan sold technology and technical know-how regarding the making of nuclear arms and missiles to other nations. And the U.S. is trying to explain why it allowed Syria to massacre its citizens in 2011 on a much larger scale than Qaddafi did in

Libya in the same year. When the police force is weak, it prefers not to acknowledge violations and thus reveal its weakness.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, there are few signs that any nation is advancing a new set of international rules, a new foundation for the international order.<sup>8</sup> If the trends outlined above continue, no such transformations are to be expected in the foreseeable future. If one crudely divides the transnational issues into matters of security (including curbing nuclear arms, terrorism, and genocide) and all others (including economic development, democratization, promotion of human rights and climate control), one must expect that a significantly lower amount of power and resources will be available for international action that does not focus on security issues.<sup>9</sup> In that sense, the U.S. and other nations are expected to be less liberal and more realistic. There is no reason for America, or the rest of the West, to stop holding democracy and human rights as supreme values. However, they will be even less able to promote these values by military and economic means and will have to fall back on promoting them mainly through ideational means, a change that should not be considered a loss.

### **Acknowledgement:**

I am indebted to Courtney Kennedy for research assistance on this article.

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<sup>7</sup> However, the state of international rules has not deteriorated and does not seem to move toward the kind of complete anarchy depicted by Steven Weber and Bruce Jentleson (2010), who see rules and norms becoming unimportant, and fully replaced with ad hoc deals.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Leonard (2008) shows that even the right wing ideologues in China call for using prevailing international law to support China's ascendancy.

<sup>9</sup> For more discussion, see Etzioni 2007.

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