

# Globalization, deglobalization and the liberal international order

MARKUS KORNPORST AND T. V. PAUL\*

Current world politics is witnessing the simultaneous growth and decline of worldwide interconnectedness. On the one hand, continuing digital advances are facilitating ever faster and more voluminous transfers of data. Climate change is increasingly making itself felt across the globe, even in as remote a continent as Antarctica. Some epidemics, as evidenced recently and dramatically by the spread of COVID-19, develop into pandemics within a few months. On the other hand, global foreign direct investment, a key measure of global financial flows, peaked at US\$2 trillion in 2015, falling significantly to US\$1.5 trillion by 2019;<sup>1</sup> between then and 2020, at least partly owing to the COVID-19 crisis, it fell by 42 per cent. The ‘outlook remains weak’.<sup>2</sup> Authoritarian governments are increasingly curbing cross-border communication, for example by forcing temporary internet shutdowns or imposing permanent censorship on social media sites. Communities beyond the nation-state, whether the EU, the ‘West’ or even ‘visions of world community’,<sup>3</sup> are coming under severe pressure. Further examples of globalization and deglobalization processes could be offered almost indefinitely.

Until recently, an international institutional constellation often referred to as the liberal international order has fostered globalization, adapted to its dynamics, and attempted to keep major global political disturbances in check. This order, however, is in trouble. In recent years, special issues on this topic have appeared in many leading journals in the discipline of International Relations (IR), including *International Affairs* and *International Organization*.<sup>4</sup> They address the question of

\* This is an introduction to the September 2021 special issue of *International Affairs* on ‘Deglobalization? The future of the liberal international order’, guest-edited by the authors. The special issue is sponsored by the Global Research Network on Peaceful Change (GRENPEC), which consists of a number of scholars and institutions across the world who share an interest in furthering research and scholarship in this area. We thank the Fonds de recherche sur la société et la culture Québec (FRQSC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Canada (SSHRC), the James McGill Chair at McGill University and the Austrian Research Association (ÖFG) for their financial support of our work. Many thanks also to Sandra Gintsberger for her excellent research assistance.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *World investment report 2020: international production beyond the epidemic* (New York, 2020), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> UNCTAD, *Global foreign direct investment fell by 42% in 2020, outlook remains weak*, 24 Jan. 2021, <https://unctad.org/news/global-foreign-direct-investment-fell-42-2020-outlook-remains-weak>. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 4 July 2021.)

<sup>3</sup> Jens Bartelson, *Visions of world community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Jinghan Zeng, ‘Artificial intelligence and China’s authoritarian governance’, *International Affairs* 96: 6, 2020, pp. 1441–59.

<sup>4</sup> See G. John Ikenberry, Inderjeet Parmar and Doug Stokes, ‘Introduction: Ordering the world? Liberal

whether this order has the resilience to endure amid a rising number of rather vocal agents turning against it. In recent years, anti-liberal forces have gained more and more electoral support in countries as varied as the United States, Brazil, India, Turkey and Hungary. Many of them, embarking on protectionist policies and economic nationalism, have broken the supply chains that undergird economic globalization. Authoritarian rulers have strengthened their grip on power at home and embarked on increasingly hard-nosed policies abroad. These include China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin, whose countries have benefited from economic globalization, the former to a greater degree than the latter. Liberal ideals of global governance could be brushed aside even more easily, moreover, when their former chief defender, the United States, took the lead in their destruction under the Trump administration.

The purpose of this special issue of *International Affairs* is to enquire into the relationship between deglobalization and the strains on the liberal international order. We examine three sets of questions. First, where do deglobalizing processes come from? Do they originate outside the liberal international order? Or are they, *inter alia*, produced by the liberal international order itself? Second, what do deglobalizing dynamics do to the liberal international order? Does the order remain resilient under pressure? Or does it weaken, perhaps even crumble? Third, looking ahead, what are the plausible future scenarios for the international order and how might they become actuality? Are deglobalization processes likely to gain or lose momentum? Under what conditions will the liberal international order be able to cope with these forces or even actively shape globalization and deglobalization processes?

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

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

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internationalism in theory and practice', *International Affairs* 94: 1, 2018, pp. 1–5; David Lake, Lisa Martin and Thomas Risse, 'Challenges to the liberal order: reflections on international organization', *International Organization*, publ. online 8 March 2021, DOI: 10.1017/S0020818320000636, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-organization/article/challenges-to-the-liberal-order-reflections-on-international-organization/2FE0E2621F702D1DD02929526703AED3>.

## Globalization and deglobalization

Globalization, needless to say, is difficult to define, and scholarship remains a long way from any kind of consensual definition. Accordingly, we do not attempt here to come up with yet another grand definition for either globalization or deglobalization. Rather, our more modest purpose is to establish a broad framework for studying these phenomena.

Most definitions of globalization identify interconnectedness as a key characteristic. Actors increasingly connect, and socio-economic processes that used to be more confined to more narrowly delineated geographical spaces such as the state come to be more and more intertwined across wider areas. While there are great variations in the extent to which locales within a state, states and international regions are plugged into global interconnectedness, that interconnectedness makes itself felt in one shape or another almost everywhere in the world today.<sup>5</sup> This interconnectedness is multifaceted.<sup>6</sup> Take economic globalization, for example. While it is only one dimension of globalization, it encompasses the ‘integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, direct foreign investment (by corporations and multinationals), short term capital flows, international flows of workers and humanity in general, and flows of technology’.<sup>7</sup> Yet globalization is not just about economics. From a medical point of view, for instance, globalization is, among other things, the global spread of microbes, including pathogenic viruses that cause diseases such as yellow fever, influenza, AIDS and COVID-19. Social theorists, meanwhile, zoom in on the remaking of geographical imaginations of socio-political space and communities. In their reading, globalization decouples political communities from territorial boundaries,<sup>8</sup> making the concept of global citizenship a possibility.<sup>9</sup>

Even during globalization’s heyday in the aftermath of the Cold War, however, many authors cautioned that global politics was not all about increasing interconnectedness, and pointed to the existence of the opposite phenomenon. Giddens juxtaposed globalization’s ‘action at distance’ to the revival of nationalism and local identities,<sup>10</sup> Robertson the ‘universalization of particularism’ to the ‘particularization of universalism’,<sup>11</sup> and Appadurai homogenization to localization.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, ‘Global transformations: politics, economics and culture’, in Chris Pierson and Simon Tormey, eds, *Politics at the edge: the PSA yearbook 1999* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 14–28.

<sup>6</sup> Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. vi.

<sup>7</sup> Jagdish Bhagwati, *In defense of globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> John Agnew, ‘The territorial trap: the geographical assumptions of International Relations theory’, *Review of International Political Economy* 1: 1, 1994, pp. 53–80; Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: a critical introduction* (New York: St Martin’s, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> See Gerard Delanty, *Citizenship in a global age* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2000); Janet McIntyre, *Global citizenship and social movements: creating transcultural webs of meaning for the new millennium* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); Bhikhu Parekh, ‘Cosmopolitanism and global citizenship’, *Review of International Studies* 29: 1, 2003, pp. 3–17; Hans Schattle, ‘Communicating global citizenship: multiple discourses beyond the academy’, *Citizenship Studies* 9: 2, 2005, pp. 119–33.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The consequences of modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), pp. 4–5.

<sup>11</sup> Roland Robertson, *Globalization: social theory and global culture* (London: Sage, 1992), p. 100.

<sup>12</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

Barber made the point in more colloquial language, suggesting that the planet was ‘coming together’ and ‘falling apart’ at the same time.<sup>13</sup> ‘Glocalization’ remains a key term used by many authors.<sup>14</sup> More recently, Eriksen makes a similar point when he writes about scaling up and scaling down.<sup>15</sup> In short, many globalization scholars argue that even when the balance tilts towards globalization processes, there are also deglobalization processes occurring simultaneously.

Since the late 2000s, deglobalizing forces have become ever stronger. Some authors, from economists to sociologists, are now even arguing that the balance has tilted more towards deglobalization than globalization—or at least that it will do so soon. O’Rourke and Williamson have jointly and separately published a series of articles and books that juxtapose globalizing and deglobalizing epochs.<sup>16</sup> They start with the anti-global mercantilist restriction (1492–1820), continue with the first global century (1820–1913) and the anti-global retreat (1913–50), and conclude with the second global century (since 1950) and recent indications about a shift towards another global retreat. The global financial crisis of 2007–2009 sparked interest in peak finance and peak trade: that is, the question whether finance and trade, after climaxing in the mid-2000s, would steadily decline thereafter.<sup>17</sup> Van Bergeijk makes an analogy between the Great Depression of the 1930s (‘deglobalization 1.0’) and the great recession of 2007–2009 (‘deglobalization 2.0’).<sup>18</sup> Sociologists use the term in either analytical or normative fashion. For Hannerz, working at the intersection of anthropology and sociology, deglobalization is underpinned by cultural interpretations of Self versus Other.<sup>19</sup> Walden puts a positive normative spin on deglobalization. He postulates a new world economy that is embedded in society. Instead of being ruled by ‘the logic of corporate profitability’, it ensures an equitable income distribution. There are no longer any transnational corporations or global organizations.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Barber, ‘Jihad vs McWorld: globalization, tribalism and democracy’, *Atlantic* 269: 3, 1992, pp. 3–19.

<sup>14</sup> Roland Robertson, ‘Glocalization: space, time and social theory’, *Journal of International Communication* 1: 1, 1994, pp. 33–52; Zygmunt Bauman, ‘On glocalization: or globalization for some, localization for some others’, *Thesis Eleven* 54: 1, 1998, pp. 37–49; George Ritzer, ‘Rethinking globalization: glocalization/globalization and something/nothing’, *Sociological Theory* 21: 3, 2003, pp. 193–209; Victor Roudometof, *Glocalization: a critical introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘Globalization’, in Harald Wydra and Bjørn Thomassen, eds, *Handbook of political anthropology* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2018), pp. 462–76.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey G. Williamson, ‘Globalization, convergence, and history’, *Journal of Economic History* 56: 2, 1996, pp. 277–306; Kevin H. O’Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and history: the evolution of a nineteenth-century Atlantic economy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999); Jeffrey G. Williamson, ‘Winners and losers in the commodity lottery: the impact of terms of trade growth and volatility in the periphery 1870–1939’, *Journal of Development Economics* 82: 1, 2007, pp. 156–79; Kevin Hjortshøj O’Rourke, ‘Economic history and contemporary challenges to globalization’, *Journal of Economic History* 79: 2, 2019, pp. 356–82.

<sup>17</sup> Neil Dias Karunarathne, ‘The globalization–deglobalization policy conundrum’, *Modern Economy* 3: 4, 2012, pp. 373–83; Jaime Caruana, *Have we passed ‘peak finance’?* (Geneva: International Center for Monetary and Banking Studies, Bank for International Settlements, 2017); Michael Witt, ‘Deglobalization: theories, predictions, and opportunities, for international business research’, *Journal of International Business Studies* 50: 7, 2019, pp. 1053–77.

<sup>18</sup> Peter A. G. van Bergeijk, *Deglobalization 2.0: trade and openness during the Great Depression and the Great Recession* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational connections: culture, people, places* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1996), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Bello Walden, *Deglobalization: ideas for a new world economy* (London: Zed, 2008). For a somewhat similar argument, see Mahdi Elmandjra, ‘The need for a “deglobalization” of “globalization”’, in Pierson and Tormey, eds, *Politics at the edge*, pp. 29–39.

## **Globalization and the liberal international order**

Globalization does not necessarily go hand in hand with a liberal international order. What O'Rourke and Williams take to be the first global century was, of course, hardly linked to any such order. The Concert of Europe originated, among other contributory factors, as an attempt to quell domestic revolutionary forces and curb the pressures they exerted on Europe's monarchies at the time. At the same time, European states tightened their colonialist grip on Africa and Asia.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, the rise of the liberal international order since the end of the Second World War happened in conjunction with the rise of globalization.

Free trade being a pillar of the liberal international order, this order has fostered economic globalization, especially among western allies. This has been underwritten by two cherished beliefs. The first is that free trade in goods and services leaves everyone better off. The market is supposed to work a considerable amount of magic. There have been plenty of scholarly contributions about how to regulate the global market,<sup>22</sup> but post-Cold War global politics has moved in the opposite direction. The so-called 'Washington Consensus' promoted a neo-liberal economic agenda around the world. Attempts to curb such an agenda, for example through the Global Compact, the Millennium Development Goals and then the Sustainable Development Goals have, for the most part, not been legally binding and leave plenty of room for different interpretations. The second belief is that economic interdependence produces peace among states. Increasing economic interconnectedness makes waging war increasingly costly; therefore—as first suggested by Montesquieu—going to war becomes less and less compatible with means–ends calculations.<sup>23</sup> In IR, the 'commercial peace' hypothesis has been discussed from a great variety of angles.<sup>24</sup> Underpinned by these two beliefs, an unprecedented economic globalization occurred, especially in finance and trade.<sup>25</sup>

Democratization is something else that the liberal international order has purported to do irrespective of where a state is located on the globe. Democracy is expected to produce internal and external restraints on the use and abuse of power, which is held to be critical for the behaviour of democratic states towards fellow democracies.<sup>26</sup> Democracies are very unlikely to fight one another, as the

<sup>21</sup> James R. Lehning, *European colonialism since 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> See John Gerard Ruggie, 'International regimes, transactions, and change: embedded liberalism in the postwar economic order', *International Organization* 36: 2, 1982, pp. 379–415; Jude C. Hays, *Globalization and the new politics of embedded liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Richard Devetak and Richard Higgott, 'Justice unbound? Globalization, states and the transformation of the social bond', *International Affairs* 75: 3, 1999, pp. 483–98; Eric Helleiner, 'The life and times of embedded liberalism: legacies and innovations since Bretton Woods', *Review of International Political Economy* 26: 6, 2019, pp. 1112–35.

<sup>23</sup> Baron de Montesquieu, *The spirit of the laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; first publ. 1748), bk 20.

<sup>24</sup> See Erik Gartzke, Quan Li and Charles Boehmer, 'Investing in the peace: economic interdependence and international conflict', *International Organization* 55: 2, 2001, pp. 391–438; David H. Bearce, 'Grasping the commercial institutional peace', *International Studies Quarterly* 47: 3, 2003, pp. 347–70; Erik Gartzke and Oliver Westerwinter, 'The complex structure of commercial peace contrasting trade interdependence, asymmetry, and multipolarity', *Journal of Peace Research* 53: 3, 2016, pp. 325–43.

<sup>25</sup> Philip R. Lane and Gian Maria Milesi-Ferretti, 'The drivers of financial globalization', *American Economic Review* 98: 2, 2008, pp. 327–32.

<sup>26</sup> This idea was first sketched out by Kant in his work on the relations among republics: see Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995; first publ. 1795).

'democratic peace' hypothesis puts it.<sup>27</sup> The more the liberal international order evolved over time, the more democracy came to surpass other forms of government as the sole legitimate kind of rule. The 1970 UN Friendly Relations Declaration, for example, stated that 'every State has an inalienable right to choose its political, economic, social and cultural systems' (UNGA 2625 (XXV)). Such formulations have become increasingly rare since the 1990s, and not only in documents emanating from the UN. The African Union, for instance, strongly endorsed democratization in its 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

Finally, the liberal international order postulated more and more global governance in a growing number of issue areas.<sup>28</sup> These range from development to health, from environment to migration, and from science and technology to human rights—the last of these, being at the core of justificatory discourses on the liberal international order, serving as an engine of global governance. By the 1990s, the human rights field had come to exert considerable influence even in the international security realm. New rules were added to international humanitarian law, the International Criminal Court was created to enforce them, the Responsibility to Protect made it into the World Summit Declaration and from there into Security Council resolutions, and arms control treaties such as the bans on landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons followed the human-centred logic of international humanitarian law. All of these changes, although accompanied by plenty of contestation (especially by Great Powers), came to be formally institutionalized.

## Whither globalization? Whither the liberal international order?

More recently, the liberal international order has been shaken not only by a failure to steer certain globalizing forces in the intended directions, but also by the rise of deglobalization processes that buffet the pillars upon which it rests.

Economic globalization made for major economic growth rates but the liberal international order, staidly aloof of distributing wealth more equally, contributed to making its own opponents. The global export volume of trade in goods, which stood at US\$3.495 trillion in 1990, had jumped to US\$19.45 trillion by 2018. Global GDP grew from US\$84.149 trillion in 2009 to US\$142 trillion in 2019.<sup>29</sup> The richest

<sup>27</sup> See Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, 'Normative and structural causes of democratic peace, 1946–1986', *American Political Science Review* 87: 3, 1993, pp. 624–38; Bruce Russett, *Grasping the democratic peace: principles for a post-Cold War world* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Bear F. Braumoeller, 'Deadly doves: liberal nationalism and the democratic peace in the Soviet successor states', *International Studies Quarterly* 41: 3, 1997, pp. 375–402; Spencer R. Weart, *Never at war* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Christopher F. Gelpi and Michael Griesdorf, 'Winners or losers? Democracies in international crisis, 1918–94', *American Political Science Review* 95: 3, 2001, pp. 633–47; Lawrence Freedman, 'The rise and fall of Great Power wars', *International Affairs* 95: 1, 2019, pp. 101–118.

<sup>28</sup> James N. Rosenau, Ernst-Otto Czempiel and Steve Smith, eds, *Governance without government: order and change in world politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Commission on Global Governance, *Our global neighbourhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Glenda Sluga, 'Remembering 1919: international organizations and the future of international order', *International Affairs* 95: 1, 2019, pp. 25–44.

<sup>29</sup> For these estimates, see <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268750/global-gross-domestic-product-gdp/>.

economies account for two-thirds of this figure.<sup>30</sup> Within these states, however, the distribution of wealth remains extremely skewed, and the gap between rich and poor is increasing.<sup>31</sup> Populism is linked to distributional inequalities and discontent among certain sections of electorates, as for example in America's midwestern and southern states, who have lost faith in the ability of the liberal elite to offer them much economic hope.<sup>32</sup> It is very unclear whether the unequal distribution of wealth will be meaningfully addressed any time soon. Technological advances, especially in the digital realm, improve the quality of life of people around the world but also decrease the importance of labour as a factor of production, as does the rise of low-paying service industry work at the cost of traditionally secure jobs. On top of all this, the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are further widening the gap between rich and poor.

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

As for democratization, the times when scholars celebrated the latest wave of these processes have, for the time being at least, passed.<sup>34</sup> There is plenty of 'democratic recession'. Freedom House reports that 2020 was the 15th consecutive year of decline in freedom worldwide. In 2020, democratic recession was particularly pronounced: 'Nearly 75 percent of the world's population lived in a country that faced deterioration last year.' In sum, 'democracy's defenders sustained heavy new losses in their struggle against authoritarian foes, shifting the international balance in favor of tyranny'.<sup>35</sup> Scholars have shifted their attention to another global trend, labelled democratic backsliding or authoritarianization.<sup>36</sup> Numerous

<sup>30</sup> UNCTAD, *2020 e-handbook of statistics*, <https://stats.unctad.org/Handbook/EconomicTrends/Gdp.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the twenty-first century* (Cambridge: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>32</sup> Carla Norrlof, 'Is COVID-19 the end of US hegemony? Public bads, leadership failures and monetary hegemony', *International Affairs* 96: 5, 2020, pp. 1281–303; Peter Trubowitz and Peter Harris, 'The end of the American century? Slow erosion of the domestic sources of usable power', *International Affairs* 95: 3, 2019, pp. 619–40.

<sup>33</sup> UNCTAD, *World investment report 2020*.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The third wave: democratization in the late twentieth century*, vol. 4 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Keith Jaggars and Ted Robert Gurr, 'Tracking democracy's third wave with the Polity III data', *Journal of Peace Research* 32: 4, 1995, pp. 469–82.

<sup>35</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the world 2021: democracy under siege* (Washington DC, 2021), <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege>.

<sup>36</sup> Nancy Bermeo, 'On democratic backsliding', *Journal of Democracy* 27: 1, 2016, pp. 5–19; David Waldner and Ellen Lust, 'Unwelcome change: coming to terms with democratic backsliding', *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 21, 2018, pp. 93–113; Natasha Lindstaedt and Erica Frantz, *Democracies and authoritarian regimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Oliver Schlumberger and Tasha Schedler, 'Authoritarianisms and authoritarianization', in Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Bertrand Badie and Leonardo Morlino, eds, *Sage handbook of political science* (London: Sage, 2020), pp. 712–29.

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

While some globalizing forces continue to make themselves very much felt, the liberal international order's capacities to channel these forces in desired directions is decreasing markedly. Record numbers of refugees do not prompt states to meet somewhere in the middle to address the situation adequately. Although climate change is becoming increasingly obvious even without consulting complex scientific models, with exponential global warming accompanied by rising sea levels and catastrophic floods and fires, effective attempts to counter it remain elusive. Human rights field has become a major diplomatic battleground, especially at the UN Human Rights Council, and is no longer a field that exports ideas for governance in other fields. On the contrary, indeed, institutions built at the intersection of, say, the human rights and security fields—for example, the International Criminal Court—are coming under severe pressure, or even being rendered defunct, such as the principle of the Responsibility to Protect. Perhaps the decline of global governance capacities has been most visible in attempts to co-manage the COVID-19 crisis. During the early phase of the crisis, China made only late and piecemeal reports to the World Health Organization (WHO). As a result, there was a fateful delay in determining a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Even after this point, Chinese cooperation with WHO, for example to determine the origins of the virus, has remained all too limited. Needless to say, the US decision to leave the WHO, an already strained organization, in the midst of a major global crisis, did not help the search for effective responses.<sup>37</sup> Joe Biden's narrow victory in the 2020 US presidential election has raised hopes that the United States may abandon some of his predecessor's policies, yet America's 'economic retreat' predates the Trump administration and may not be fully or easily redressed.<sup>38</sup> The post-pandemic world economic order may reinforce and institutionalize some of the economic deglobalization policies that leading states, especially liberal ones, have adopted during the crisis.

<sup>37</sup> Stephanie Strobl and Markus Kornprobst, 'Co-managing global epidemics and pandemics', *Public Jurist*, April 2020, pp. 31–4; Lawrence O. Gostin, Harold Hongju Koh, Michelle Williams, et al., 'US withdrawal from WHO is unlawful and threatens global and US health and security', *Lancet* 396: 10247, pp. 293–5.

<sup>38</sup> Adam S. Posen, 'The price of nostalgia: America's self-defeating economic retreat', *Foreign Affairs* 100: 3, 2021, pp. 28–43; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., 'The rise and fall of American hegemony from Wilson to Trump', *International Affairs* 95: 1, 2019, pp. 63–80.



Taken together, the evolutionary patterns of (de)globalization and the liberal international order will have major implications for peaceful change in world politics. Globalization and the liberal international order, for all their faults, made it possible for new powers to rise peacefully. This applies especially to China and, to a limited extent, India and Brazil, along with many middle-income countries in the G20 grouping. Globalization placed them in an advantageous position to produce and market goods and services more cheaply by providing multinational corporations with platforms and outsourcing labour, especially technical personnel. With its cheap labour and aggressive trade practices, China has built the world's supply chains in a majority of consumer goods, propelling its economy to a size four times that of 1989. This is an unprecedented development: most previous rising powers had to fight their way to a correspondingly prominent status, and many failed in the attempt. Economic discrimination has been a major source of their reluctance to initiate system-changing wars.

The power transition process among the major powers could become more conflictual.<sup>39</sup> China is already flexing its muscles around the world, while Russia is becoming more aggressive towards its neighbours with the intent of re-establishing its sphere of influence. It remains to be seen whether liberal states, once rallying around the United States to nurture and protect the liberal order, will be able to do so again under President Biden. The Trump legacy of antagonizing longstanding allies, undermining America's role as protector of the liberal international order and damaging its reputation for making credible commitments, may weigh heavily. China's Belt and Road Initiative, connecting its market with Asia, Europe and Latin America, has resurrected the fears of a new form of hegemony built on the principles of *tianxia* ('all under heaven', denoting the tributary system). In recent times, China has increased its military adventurism in the South China Sea by building artificial islands and claiming huge swathes of territory, pitting it directly against the ASEAN states,<sup>40</sup> as well as stoking military crises with Taiwan, Japan and India. The suggestion by Hua Chunying, spokesperson of the foreign ministry, that China may choose to engage in 'wolf warrior diplomacy',<sup>41</sup> may very well be compatible with this assertiveness.

## Organization of the special issue

This special issue is organized into three clusters of contributions. In the first, authors enquire into the agents of globalization and deglobalization processes. They examine how hegemon, Great Powers, middle powers and networks, coping

<sup>39</sup> See also Alexandra Gheciu, 'Liberalism and peaceful change', in T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, Harold A. Trinkunas, Anders Wivel and Ralf Emmers, eds, *The Oxford handbook of peaceful change in international relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). For an earlier discussion, see Norrin Ripsman and T. V. Paul, *Globalisation and the national security state* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>40</sup> Feng Liu, 'The recalibration of Chinese assertiveness: China's responses to the Indo-Pacific challenge', *International Affairs* 96: 1, 2020, pp. 9–28; Douglas Guilfoyle, 'The rule of law and maritime security: understanding lawfare in the South China Sea', *International Affairs* 95: 5, 2019, pp. 999–1018.

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

with the pushes and pulls of globalization and deglobalization, foster and undermine the liberal international order, and how this, in turn, feeds back into globalization and deglobalization. Ripsman puts strong emphasis on the ability of Great Powers to shape international order.<sup>42</sup> He argues that while their relations changed significantly under pressure from post-Cold War globalizing forces, current tensions are not primarily a cause of deglobalization. Critically discussing the widespread assumption that orders change when challengers to a hegemon arise, Chan maps the transformation of the United States into a revisionist power.<sup>43</sup> He pays close attention to domestic politics in making this contention. Miller, focusing on the core states of the liberal international order, analyses the ways in which domestic politics leaves a mark on international politics and vice versa.<sup>44</sup> He contends that states' fostering of liberal policies abroad has, over the long term, undermined their liberalism at home. Aydin moves away from the focus on Great Powers and zooms in on middle powers.<sup>45</sup> She shows that many of these second-tier states are also experiencing an illiberal turn, thereby adding to the instability of the liberal international order. Finally, Geva and Santos analyse the rise of right-wing anti-globalist networks.<sup>46</sup> They make a case that these networks need not challenge globalization per se but certainly undermine the liberal international order.

Second, several contributions address international institutions in great depth. Owen does so from a historical perspective.<sup>47</sup> Discussing the evolution of liberalism from the eighteenth century to the present, he distinguishes different interpretations of liberalism and their manifestations in the evolving international order. He argues that current contestation among three versions of liberalism undermines the liberal international order. He endorses a dialogue between these different versions, leading to a better adaptation of the current liberal international order. Some of these adaptations—reduced capital mobility and reduced migration—would slow down globalizing forces. While Owen provides a historically sensitive account of (ideas for an) international order, Bátorá discusses how the current international order is composed.<sup>48</sup> He provides a nuanced account that alludes to different fields (or sub-orders) of this order and, equally important, the relations among them. Using the concept of interstices, he traces the ways in which new institutional forms, always bearing the imprints of previous forms, arise in these borderlands between fields. It is these interstices, he contends, that are of crucial importance for transformations of world order.

<sup>42</sup> Norrin M. Ripsman, 'Globalization, deglobalization and Great Power politics', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1317–34.

<sup>43</sup> Steve Chan, 'Challenging the liberal order: the US hegemon as a revisionist power', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1335–52.

<sup>44</sup> Benjamin Miller, 'How "making the world in its own liberal image" made the West less liberal', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1353–75.

<sup>45</sup> Umut Aydin, 'Emerging middle powers and the liberal international order', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1377–94.

<sup>46</sup> Dorit Geva and Felipe G. Santos, 'Europe's far-right educational projects and their vision for the international order', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1395–1414.

<sup>47</sup> John M. Owen, 'Two emerging international orders? China and the United States', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1415–31.

<sup>48</sup> Jozef Bátorá, 'States, interstitial organizations and the prospects for liberal international order', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1433–50.

The third section features articles that scrutinize functional fields of the world order. Coleman and Job contend that the UN's liberal peacekeeping practices are coming under pressure as non-liberal states and regional organizations get more and more involved with peacekeeping, including its funding.<sup>49</sup> Hayes and Weber caution that current deglobalizing forces put human security under threat.<sup>50</sup> Some long-time advocates of this lens, having turned inward-looking and neglecting their roles as shapers of order, have abandoned it. Lobell and Ernstsen analyse how economic nationalists arise out of opposition to globalization and how they then work towards deglobalization.<sup>51</sup> The authors compare the workings of these mechanisms in the late eighteenth century and since 1970. Brawley examines how financial globalization has created and coped with a series of crises.<sup>52</sup> He argues that recoveries have tended to be partial, generated new inequalities and therefore not made for more stability in the long run. Moving to trade, Sinha diagnoses a new global North–South divide.<sup>53</sup> Emerging powers often back existing trade rules that foster globalization, whereas major powers in the North, some losing from these rules, are increasingly turning against them and towards deglobalization. Kornprobst and Strobl discuss how past shifts towards more globalization have made it easier for certain communicable and non-communicable diseases to spread, and the generation by these shifts of instruments to cope with such spread that are often all too weak and introduced only after the passage of considerable amounts of time.<sup>54</sup> On the basis of these historical patterns, the authors discuss future scenarios for how COVID-19 is likely to affect today's international order. Money investigates migration, distinguishing different regimes within the field.<sup>55</sup> She argues that while certain globalizing forces will persist, the field of refugee movement is likely to experience significant pressures. Behera, analysing knowledge production, cautions against an epistemic colonialism that is inherent in the globalization of knowledge production.<sup>56</sup> She argues that while there are currently tendencies towards a deglobalizing epistemic parochialism, there are also opportunities to move to an epistemic pluralism instead.

Paul concludes this special issue. Discussing and linking the major themes raised by the other contributors, he makes a case for keeping deglobalizing forces

<sup>49</sup> Katharina P. Coleman and Brian L. Job, 'How Africa and China may shape UN peacekeeping beyond the liberal international order', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1451–68.

<sup>50</sup> Jarrod Hayes and Katja Weber, 'Globalization, deglobalization and human security: the case of Myanmar', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1469–88.

<sup>51</sup> Steven E. Lobell and Jordan Ernstsen, 'The liberal international trading order (LITO) in an era of shifting capabilities', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1489–1504.

<sup>52</sup> Mark R. Brawley, 'Globalization/deglobalization: lessons from liberal monetary orders', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1505–20.

<sup>53</sup> Aseema Sinha, 'Understanding the "crisis of the institution" in the liberal trade order at the WTO', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1505–20.

<sup>54</sup> Markus Kornprobst and Stephanie Strobl, 'Global health: an order struggling to keep up with globalization', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1541–58.

<sup>55</sup> Jeannette Money, 'Globalization, international mobility and the liberal international order', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1559–77.

<sup>56</sup> Navnita Chadha Behera, 'Globalization, deglobalization and knowledge production', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1579–97.

in check and re-adapting liberal order to the twenty-first century.<sup>57</sup> Paul advocates a reformed welfare state to deal with the domestic crises of liberal states, especially those arising from widening income inequalities, which are the main cause of the weakening of the liberal order internationally. In so doing, his contribution links domestic and international politics, and offers both theoretical insights and practical ideas for scholars and policy-makers alike.

<sup>57</sup> T. V. Paul, 'Globalization, deglobalization and reglobalization: adapting liberal international order', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1599–1620.