Civilisations, states, and world order
Where are we?
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A DOC Research Institute report for the 17th Rhodes Forum

By
Richard Higgott

With contributions by Amitav Acharya, Jiahong Chen, Anthony Milner, Kira Preobrazhenskaya, N Selin Senocak, Luk Van Langenhove, and Maya Janik
The DOC Research Institute has produced a remarkably timely report to alert humanity that a new world is emerging. Our previous paradigms may no longer operate in this new world. The revival of ancient civilisations, like the Chinese, Indian, and Islamic civilisations, has introduced a new global dynamic. The contest is no longer primarily economic or political. There is a new dimension of history, philosophy, culture and mythology that will also resurface and drive world history. Those who want to get a glimpse of this new challenging and complex world should read this report carefully.

*Kishore Mahbubani, Distinguished Fellow at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore and the author of Has the West Lost it?*

The world is witnessing ever intensifying strategic competition between the United States and China and this has multifaceted implications for the international order. Many are so pessimistic as to predict a new Cold War between the two giants. This report, sponsored by the DOC Research Institute, provides fresh, in-depth, and thought-provoking views on Sino-US relations, among other critical issues affecting the trajectory of the evolving world order. It also highlights the roles played by civilisational states in managing great power competition and restoring a new equilibrium in world affairs. A very fascinating read.

*Minghao Zhao, Senior Fellow at the Institute of International Studies, Peking University.*
“For twenty years, I’ve been struck by a certain void in the statements of European leaders. Listening to them, one would think people are primarily economic beings to be considered in terms of consumption, jobs, trade, and investment. This is useful, but people are cultural beings before they are economic actors. For humanity, the soul of a home is always more important than the keeping of a house. The great value of this report is that it fully accounts for this psychological and sociological reality in its analysis of international relations. I highly recommend it.

Renaud Girard, international columnist at Le Figaro; Professor of strategy at Sciences Po, Paris.

“This report correctly and convincingly points out that fundamental adjustments towards a new form of multilateralism are required in order to sustain a workable global order. The report provides a much needed holistic picture. This is necessary in order to understand that apparently regional or bilateral matters are actually global, and that things which seem to be economic are more profoundly cultural. The report offers practical advice that should be taken seriously by concerned citizens of the world, especially policymakers.

Peimin Ni, Professor, Department of Philosophy, Grand Valley State University, US.

“These vibrant and timely ideas contribute to a very open, informed, and delicate conversation, and thus demonstrate the essence of genuine dialogue. The civilisational focus of the report’s methodology allows us to understand the major forces behind emerging political, social, and cultural thinking in China, India, Russia, Turkey and elsewhere. In this way, the report equips us for a truly humane approach to overcoming the challenges of contemporary global antagonism. This kind of innovative work, previously conducted by the World Public Forum, is now realised in the activities of Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute.

Vladimir Yakunin, Chairman and Co-founder of the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute.
The Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute (DOC) is an independent platform for dialogue that brings together diverse perspectives from the developed and developing worlds in a non-confrontational and constructive spirit.

The DOC’s goals are to forge shared worldviews through dialogue and to contribute to a fair, sustainable, and peaceful world. In view of these goals, the DOC believes that globalisation should have humanity, culture, and civilisation at its heart.

The DOC addresses three key themes:

- Cultures and civilisations: Promoting understanding and cooperation among peoples, cultures, and civilisations, and encouraging harmony beyond differences.
- Economics: Examining inclusive, innovative, and just development models that work for all.
- Governance and geopolitics: Developing policy proposals for international actors and exploring new diplomatic avenues.

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Richard Higgott, Brussels, August 2019.
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From its inception in 2002, the DOC has been at the forefront of debate on major trends shaping global architecture and individual societies, with a particular focus on humanity and culture, not just economics and geopolitics. The rationale for this report has emerged from a two-pronged policy–research strategy appropriate for the contemporary juncture in global order. With the world in the midst of a unipolar–to–multipolar shift, the DOC Research Institute is looking both forwards – to where the world is headed – and backwards – to where we have come from.

One of the fundamental issues ahead is whether humanity as a collective whole can still fashion truly universal – or at least shared – principles and values to keep itself together. How can we prevent the inherent risks of a disaggregation of shared views and how can we retain commonalities among peoples, cultures, and civilisations, at both the domestic and the global level? When we think of the two most radical dividing lines across most societies, can we harmoniously combine the increasingly diverging aspirations of secularism and religion and can we find a compatible sense of belonging between global mind-sets and traditional identities? We need to profoundly rethink globalisation in a way that puts humanity at its heart, using equality and human development as a compass.

One promising phenomenon is the rise of hybridity in governance and world affairs. Across the fields of diplomacy, technology, economics, and social reform, new schemes are emerging that involve multiple actors, including both...
traditionally organised institutions and non-traditional, ‘leaderless’ bodies and networks, thus creating new checks and balances and innovative safeguards and guarantees.

This report is in line with the mission and vision of the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute to serve as something of a ‘laboratory’; as an independent platform for dialogue that brings together diverse perspectives from the developed and the developing worlds in a non-confrontational and constructive spirit. The DOC’s goals are to forge shared worldviews through dialogue and to contribute to a fair, sustainable, and peaceful world. In view of these goals, the DOC believes that globalisation should have humanity, culture, and civilisation at its heart.

For those joining us at Rhodes, we trust this report will spur our thinking, enliven our deliberations, and sharpen our policy output. Beyond the Forum, we are looking forward to continuing the discussion as it plays out across the multiple centres of a changing global order.

Jean-Christophe Bas, CEO of the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute.
Berlin, August 2019.
This report evaluates the current state of world (dis)order in a time of growing populism and nationalism. 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was meant to signal the ‘end of history’ and cement the liberal order, we must look again at where we have come from and try to suggest where we are going. The world is in transition from a US-led, partially liberal global order to one in which new and hybrid actors of both state and non-state varieties play a role in a manner distinct from the processes that have dominated since the end of World War Two.

In particular, the report focuses on the emerging debate that pits traditional politico-strategic and economic understandings of globalisation (see fig. 1) and global order against an understanding of the role of powers that have come to be known as ‘civilisation states’ or ‘state civilisations’. Such powers, most notably China, Russia, and India, seek to reshape the contemporary international order in both ideational and material terms.

The report is not simply a ‘state of play’ discussion on our thinking about world order. It is also an applied and empirical investigation of the limitations on and policy options for how to restructure the global political and economic orders and it questions whether (and how) a civilisational dialogue might assist this restructuring. The report has a strong empirical focus. Unsurprisingly, it builds its analysis of the future of world order principally, but not exclusively, around the positions and attitudes of the two major players: the US and China, as well as, albeit to a lesser extent, Russia. Moreover, the questions raised in the report are not simply of concern for scholars. They cast massive policy shadows over our understanding of, and the practices of, international order.

The report brings together a set of increasingly evident observations but does so in a unique manner. These are presented below:

i. For a number of reasons identified in the report, the liberal world order is challenged by a rising populist-nationalist zeitgeist and is under greater strain than at any time since the end of World War Two.

ii. Economic globalisation is also in trouble. It might have enhanced the integration of the global economy in the last 25 years but it has spectacularly failed to enhance socio-
political cooperation across national boundaries and signs of de-globalisation, especially declines in global trade and financial investment, are apparent.

iii. The global order is moving away from unipolarity towards a multipolar structure in which the limits on US hegemonic power are growing – a fact seemingly better understood in Beijing, Brussels, Moscow, and Delhi than in Washington.

iv. Global governance, as we have known it – collective action problem solving of trans-sovereign policy problems in multilateral institutional settings, under-written by a hegemon – is massively challenged by a growing resistance to economic openness and a US preference for bilateral, transactional economic diplomacy.

v. These strains and challenges are not simply economic and politico-strategic. They are now also culturally infused and exacerbated by the emergent polarising discourse couched in the confusing language of ‘states versus civilisations’ and fresh talk, 25 years on, of a Huntingtonian ‘clash of civilisations’.

vi. The prospects of a new Cold War are moving beyond rhetoric. They are serious and growing. They are driven especially by competition for dominance by the US and China in the areas of technology, artificial intelligence, and cyberspace.

vii. Social media and digital communication are changing both our understanding of, and the practice of, everyday politics in modern life and the modern international order. We are entering the era of ‘quantum politics’. Global communicative interaction is exhibiting a greater degree of hybridity of both actors and practices than heretofore.

viii. The health of the global order is, in large part, at the mercy of US-China strategic competition and the future structure of international order is in a process of flux.

ix. The next several decades are going to see a process of contest, adjustment, and negotiation over global
order. Whether this will lead to accommodation and cooperation rather than conflict in the conversation is yet to be determined.

x. Some green shoots of post- hegemonic cooperative endeavour can be seen in certain policy domains, like climate, and regions, like Asia, and in settings other than the traditional multilateral institutional context. But, as the report concludes, the overall prospects for the consensual reform of world order are not guaranteed and, indeed, may be diminishing.

xi. A constructive global dialogue is difficult, but not impossible. Hence activities that support and enhance dialogue across competing value systems will continue to gain in salience. The role for activities such as the DOC Rhodes Forum, among others, will thus become increasingly important.

The objective of the report is to be both descriptive and analytical and to inform and provoke thinking on the current state of the international order – this most crucial of contemporary global policy issues. The report aims to speak to a wide range of interests across the scholarly community, the world’s public and private decision-makers, the media, the educated lay public, and civil society actors interested in the rise of civilisational politics and its consequences for world affairs.
Introduction

This report aspires to inform us of the current state of international order with all its trials and tribulations and to provoke consideration of what might be done to bring justice and stability to an increasingly fractious order in need of reform. This is no small task in the context of today’s feverish debates about emerging geopolitical rivalries and the growing salience of the asserted values and norms of “civilisation states” such as Russia, India, China, and Turkey (see Rachman, 2019a). As Coker opines, we are “living in a world in which civilization is fast becoming the currency of international politics” (Coker, 2019, x). These states no longer simply acquiesce in the oft-assumed universalist aspirations of a state system widely known as the post-World War Two liberal order. The liberal order assumes the presence of nation-states underwritten by Hobbesian derived concepts of territorial sovereignty, common language and citizenry as the core of that order.

By contrast, the civilisation state’s legitimacy is derived from the acknowledgment of a distinct historically and culturally driven understanding of civilisation. A key element of contemporary civilisational politics in the US and Europe is the resurgence of identities that have lain dormant, or simply been ignored, during the long period of secular liberal hegemony following World War Two. ‘Primordial identities’ have resurfaced and the rise of civilisational politics has put into context much of what is happening in the world today. This includes the rise of a populist backlash against economic globalisation, the rise of Islamophobia, increased antisemitism, nationalist-identitarian politics, and the challenges to multiculturalism and multilateralism.

The challenge today is not simply to recognise the impact of this resurgence but to structure a reformed world order in which individuals can enjoy their lives “endowed with meaning and dignity as part of a community or collectivity”, without detriment to other individuals whose identities they do not share (Geertz, 1973). This element of the global puzzle may be termed the civilisational problematique. Coming to grips with it requires answers to three major questions that this report will address:

i. Do the values that underlie the so-called civilisation state and its implicit claims to cultural homogeneity stand in direct contradiction to the liberal secular values, often assumed to be universalised principles, espoused by many of the world’s major, contemporary nation-states?

ii. How compatible is the rise of civilisational politics with...
multilateral cooperation as a vehicle for collective action problem solving for those trans-sovereign questions in the core global policy areas of peace, security, environment, and development? Specifically, how compatible is the existing post-World War Two global architecture – notably the UN socio-political and security system and the Bretton Woods economic system – with the rise of civilisational politics? Is that architecture, to use a cliché, fit for purpose?

iii. Can a consensual convergence be reached between the ‘universal’ values and freedoms of the old order and the cultural particularisms and civilisational values inserting themselves into the debate on any reconfiguration of a new order?

The world order is beset by serious challenge and change as we approach the end of the second decade of the 21st century. Analysts identify these changes across a spectrum of seriousness, from a system in need of reform through to more apocalyptic visions of a system on the verge of collapse with the prospect of a new Cold War between the US and China on the very near horizon. If, as much recent commentary would have it, the old world order is undergoing a process of transformation, then the contours of any new order have yet to establish themselves.

If we are heading towards a Cold War between the two major powers, then the implications of such a trend are only just beginning to emerge. What is clear, however, is that the processes of change, especially in technology, are speeding up. Time is pressing and this transition process poses a series of major conceptual, analytical, and practical policy questions for both the scholar and practitioner of global affairs and public policy if we are to engage in a managed and peaceful reform of contemporary world order.

If understanding the processes in train is the prior conceptual question, the analytical question is ‘what will the structures and processes that will determine the shape of a post-liberal order look like?’ The answers to both questions for much of the post-World War Two era have traditionally been found in the theory and practice of two inter-linked problematiques: (i) globalisation (see below) and the economic problematique; and (ii) war and the geopolitical security problematique found at the interface between the policy dynamics of the contemporary global economic and security orders, firstly in the post-World
Introduction

War Two, Cold War era, and then secondly in the short-lived, post–Cold War period of unipolar US hegemony. But we are entering the age of the new ‘Great Game’[1] between the erstwhile hegemon, the rising great power (China), and to a lesser extent, the politically resilient, militarily equipped but economically diminished Russia.

This report recognises Russia’s nuclear capability, strategic location between Europe and Asia, and its desire for a multipolar world, the latter a view shared by both presidents Putin and Trump. But the report also argues that China, rather than Russia, is now the world’s number two major power and that the evolution of a new order will turn primarily on the strategic competition between China and the US. Russia is a revisionist power, indeed the revisionist power in the sense that it seeks to restructure the current order in a way that would accommodate its interests rather than to become a global superpower. China’s global strategy, by contrast, suggests that its ambition goes beyond Russia’s, with the intent to challenge the US as the dominant actor in a revised order. It is also assumed that the US and China are going to struggle to come to terms with each other over the shape of that global order. They bring different values to this debate.

We are reasonably familiar with liberal values and the domestic and historical traditions that underpin them (see Ikenberry, Wang, and Feng, 2019). What we understand less well is the degree to which these values would be deemed non-negotiable in any dialogue between the major powers. Where do their minds

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[1] The term originally refers to the political and diplomatic confrontation between British India and Russia over the domination of central Asia in the 19th century (see Hopkirk, 1990).
meet over the importance of the role of international norms and institutions? Where are they irreconcilable? Understanding these issues tends to be something of a moving feast, given the quixotic nature of US policy under the Trump Administration and the still evolving position of China under Xi Jinping. The crucial issue will be the degree to which the contest will be one of values and power – a ‘civilisational clash’ – rather than of interests and behaviour – a political contest. Interests and behaviour can be negotiated. Accommodating competing values and a changing balance of power are propositions of a different order of magnitude.

In simple terms at this stage, the US, under President Trump, is of the view that the current order greatly disadvantages it and allows others, notably China, to free-ride at the expense of the US. For China under President XI Jinping, the
issue is less with the impact of economic globalisation, which it thinks has served it well, but more with the fact it constantly has to rub up against US strategic and political, as well as economic, resistance to its growing global role.

The two presidents’ complaints about the world system are thus mirror images of each other. Mr Xi wants to change the world’s strategic order, and to do that he needs to maintain its economic order. Mr Trump wants to preserve the strategic order, and to do that he needs to change the economic order (Rachman, 2019b).

Thus ironically they each become both revisionist and status quo powers at one and the same time. The US is revisionist on trade and the international economy and status quo oriented on geopolitical security issues. China is geo-strategically revisionist and largely in favour of the status quo on the international economy.

One important theoretical-cum-analytical implication of how we understand this paradoxical situation and the resurgence of the Great Game is a diminution of the hegemony of economics, economic theory, and geopolitics as the dominant paradigms for understanding globalisation and international relations in the current era. The erstwhile stuff of globalisation, geopolitical security, and wealth creation – what Jacob Viner (1948) called the pursuit of “power and plenty” – are necessary but not sufficient explanations in their own right. International relations – especially since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and the rising era of populism, nationalism, and identity politics – is much messier to cope with than any single economic or political paradigmatic explanation can describe.

We need to add a third component to our analytical toolbox. We must now bring back disciplines marginalised in the heyday of neoliberalism and the unbridled market-led view of the world. In addition to economics and geopolitics, analysis also needs to include insights from psychology, anthropology, sociology, law, and the humanities in what the report labels the civilisational problematique. These insights are articulated in parts three and four of this report.

At the level of ideas and philosophy on the one hand and policy and practice on the other, the 21st century’s new Great Game will now be contested across this much wider threefold paradigmatic domain of economics, politics and security, and culture and society. Empirically, the Great Game will develop around the emergence of a new Eurasia-centred world, built on the fusion of Europe and China into
what Bruno Maçães (2018, p. 9) calls a “supercontinent”. It will interact with the Atlantic world that has predominated for the last three centuries under British and then American suzerainty.

Along with the US, the contemporary game locks China, Russia, India, Japan, and Europe into what is shaping up to be an epic contest. The United States, in alliance with India, Japan, and Europe remains the key player, notwithstanding President Trump’s transactional approach to foreign policy. The US now embraces a ‘competitive strategic rivalry’ approach towards China. Middle Eastern rivals, Saudi Arabia and Iran, are also key and highly unpredictable players in this game too. They vie for big power favour, competing to position themselves as key nodes in global energy and infrastructure networks.

So, this process is not simply a great power politico-economic struggle. It is becoming increasingly complicated by how we see great powers. Put simply as a question, are some of the key new players states, civilisations, or in the words of Gideon Rachman (2019a) “civilization-states?” All this nomenclature is replete with semantic ambiguity but what can be said is that they are countries “... that claim to represent not just a historic territory, or a particular language or ethnic group but a distinctive civilization” (Ibid). Samuel Huntington defined a civilisation as “… the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species” (Huntington, 1993). To the extent possible, this report aspires to provide clarity to this conundrum. But in so doing it will resist the currently fashionable attempt to instantiate a ‘Clash of Civilisations 2.0’.

This report is normatively predisposed to seeing civilisational interaction as a positive dialogue but recognises that it can also be, and often is, a contest rather than a dialogue. Successful dialogues around the concept of civilisation are powerful instruments that can bring peoples together. Conducted badly they can polarise, generate conflict, and push peoples apart. The nature and lasting influence of language is important here. A current problem for us, as Coker (2019, p. 5) points out, is that once you have read Huntington the idea of the ‘clash’ sticks with you. It gives rise to what Nossal (2019) calls the language of “clashism”, in which the discussion of civilisational dialogue is invariably “challenge oriented” and “survivalist” in tone and in which civilisations are depicted as enduring, incommensurable, non-cooperative, and competitive.

Nossal’s point can be illustrated in the language of the current US president.
As he tweeted early in his term:

“The West will never be broken. Our values will prevail. Our people will thrive. And our civilisation will triumph”.
(@realDonaldTrump, 6 July 2017).

Further, his Director of Policy Planning at the State Department, Kiron Skinner, described competition with China as “a fight with a really different civilisation and a different ideology”. This was contrasted with the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union, which she characterised as a “fight within the Western Family”. Skinner said it was the first time the US had faced a “great power competitor that is not Caucasian” (see Washington Post, 4 May 2019). The idea of civilisation is now more politically salient than at any time since Huntington wrote his Foreign Affairs article and book (1993 and 1996) and ‘clashism’ invariably makes culture the fault line between states and a driving force in world politics.

The increasing use of Huntingtonian language – or more precisely, that of the originator of the idea of civilisational ‘clashism’, Bernard Lewis – is, of course, not unique to the US. Civilisational discourse has been advanced in other major countries such as India, Russia, and China. Vladimir Putin articulated the idea of Russia as a ‘state–civilisation’ under challenge from globalisation as early as 2012 and China has had a conception of itself as a civilisation for several millennia. More generally, it has been picked up and extensively used by right-wing – and some left-wing – populists across Europe and Asia.

We need to distinguish between two understandings of civilisation. Civilisations (plural) should be seen as both sites(locations) of agency and civilisation (singular) as a generative force which contributes to the development of institutional and normative frameworks of international society. Civilisation (singular) can also be seen as a set of cultural practices while civilisations (plural) can be seen as an empirical description of peoples with shared histories and traditions. But both meanings are increasingly political and ‘strategically deployed’ concepts in contemporary international relations. States appropriate the concept to flag their great power status – or aspirations – and resist the ubiquity of universal liberal values in the discussion of the structure of global order (see O’Hagan, 2018). While the contest between the US and China is the focus of this report, we should not minimise the degree to which Western articulations of civilisational
identity are also to be found as central to its antagonistic relationship with Islam, where according to O’Hagan, “narratives of irreconcilability” prevail.

The report has four main substantive parts. Part one provides a conceptual and contextual understanding of the history of the post-World War Two liberal order. Part two looks at the challenges international order faces but rather than bog the reader down in the conceptual literature of international relations scholarship, the analysis is presented through an empirical discussion of the changing nature of the US-China relationship. This makes sense given the centrality of this relationship to any discussion of how international order will develop over the short-to-long term. Part three examines what we might call the new actors, aspirations, and pressures standing in opposition to traditional understandings of liberal order. It provides short discussions of the history and underlying philosophies of what we are now commonly coming to call civilisation states; notably China, Russia, India, and Turkey. Part four examines the prospects for civilisational dialogue as a vehicle for reforming world order. It asks whether the liberalism-civilisational standoff can be peacefully negotiated.

The report concludes with a series of ten propositions, or analytical judgments, on what the future might hold and offers one massive provocation. It asks what the future prospects for Asia taking the leadership reins from the US might be.
1.1. Conceptual deck-clearing:
Culture, values, and civilisation

The scholarly community freely uses, often in contradictory fashion, a range of concepts and terms that are not settled in their understanding. Indeed, many of these terms are what social scientists call ‘essentially contested concepts’. Moreover, it is often assumed that the policy community, both public and private, will understand these concepts when they often do not; and indeed when there is no good reason why they should. This is a lacuna that needs to addressed.
A role for a think tank report such as this is less to invent new concepts rather than to make the conceptual academic literature receivable in clear fashion by the policy community, and indeed, the wider educated lay community. In effect, the task of think tanks is to act as go-betweens or brokers of the complex and at times convoluted concepts of the academic community and the need for the policy community to comprehend the implications of the scholarly work (see Stone, 1997), given that academic theorising frequently casts important policy shadows. The purpose of part one is to bring the academic work on world orders out of the academic shadows into the public policy light.

What follows is a clarification of some essentially contested concepts – notably ‘world order’, which, notwithstanding some semantic differences, is used interchangeably with ‘global order’ and ‘international order’; ‘civilisation’ and ‘civilisations’; ‘culture’, ‘cultural relations’, and ‘cultural dialogues’. By the end of the report we will have a workable meaning of a ‘dialogue of civilisations’ that we can use to explain its centrality to a reform process for world order.

As a consequence, the report is normative, descriptive, and analytical. Normatively, the project will take a positive and advocacy-oriented position on civilisational dialogue – that it is a good thing which should be pursued. It will develop a meaningful utility for our other concepts as modes of agency (i.e., practical action) to identify an agreed set of norms, principles, and rules for a new, reformed world order.

One key working assumption of the report will be that some of the core elements of the currently troubled liberal world order – especially universal commitments to collective action problem solving, negotiated through multilateral institutional processes and practices and acceptable levels of openness – must and will remain central to any new order. At the same time, however, a way to accommodate new demands for participation with non-universal civilisational norms by the other rising actors must be found.

The concept of culture always presents a problem for both scholars and practitioners of international relations. The impact of cultural diversity on international politics is not well understood. In particular, the growing influences of non-Western powers, ethno nationalism and religiously inspired violence give a lie to our traditional assumptions that cultures are tightly integrated, neatly bounded, clearly differentiated and causally powerful as an explanatory factor in how civilisations work. Or, at least, that is the conclusion
we have drawn from recent historical observation; for example, Brexit, ‘Making America Great Again’, and the re-assertion of Confucian nationalism in China. The current debate about civilisation states is telling us that we need to recognise that shared ideas shape the interests and practices of states as much as material forces. This might be well understood in constructivist academic scholarship (see Wendt, 1999 and Reus-Smit, 2018), but it is something new for us to think about in the applied public policy domain in a post neoliberal era.

The operating tool of cultural analysis is the idea of ‘shared meaning’: that is, norms, values, and principles that make action in international relations understandable, noting that norms, values, and principles can never be perfectly defined or universally agreed. Identifying universal values has always been a problematic enterprise. One of the earliest, and failed, attempts came from US President Woodrow Wilson in his programme for the League of Nations. Some value propositions – notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including a number of human, civil, social, and economic rights – were later to be adopted, albeit in a non-legal binding way, by the UN in 1948 and then, between 1966 and 1976, were incorporated into the International Bill of Rights built on the post-colonial pan-African and pan-Asian spirit of idealism of the time. But this was always a strained relationship given that rights were very much a European conception while order was much the greater African and Asian priority.

At the height of the Cold War, the themes of order and stability took precedence in the developing world over those of liberty, rights, and accountability (see Higgott, 1993). The Bangkok Declaration of 1993 saw Asian states, led by Singapore and China, stress second and third generation rights of sovereign equality, fraternity, and basic needs (see the discussion in Srinivasan, Mayall, and Pulipaka, 2019).

In the search for global order of the kind addressed in this report, there is always a tension between the pursuit of material economic and politico-security goals on the one hand and moral and cultural-normative values on the other. For much of the post-World War Two era, liberal states implicitly – and often explicitly – imposed a liberal values-based conditionality on their relationships with the emerging world. Alternative values, based on concepts such as Confucianism, Hinduism, or other spiritual beliefs stressing societal obligations had invariably been assumed to be non-universalist for the purposes of creating a Western understanding of world order.
If we are to bring about a reform of world order this asymmetric relationship between Western and non-Western value systems has to be addressed (Acharya, n.d). Specifically, through Western lenses we need to move to identify how rights-based order might satisfactorily deal with non-Western notions of moral obligation, and conversely, how Asian values, which privilege such obligations, might address issues of rights – notably political and human rights – of a liberal variety. This is a fundamental task; indeed, a major challenge for humanity in the foreseeable future. Are there fundamental and irresolvable differences of values or is the difference merely an age-old issue of power politics in international relations that could, with appropriate will and skill, be negotiated? This is a key question for the future.

To make sense of the conversation over the relationship between states and civilisations we need to be clear on the
distinctions that exist. If values are defined as principles or standards of behaviour, then by extension, they represent judgments about what is important in life. This implies, among other things, the existence of right and wrong. It also implies the existence of choice between them. Choosing right over wrong and good over bad amounts to moral or ethical behaviour. As such, it contrasts with what we often understand by modern, post–Westphalian, international relations as the practice of statecraft, where the essence of statecraft is making choices of a non-values based variety. Values, as ethical or moral principles, are seemingly less central to modern day Western foreign policy decisions than was, rhetorically at least, the case in the past.

Again by contrast, collective self-perceptions, enduring habits, precepts, and customary ways of doing business, derived from the history and culture of a people, as part three illustrates, offer a clearer way of understanding the policy actions of countries such as China and India with long historical or civilisational traditions. National character and tradition remain important to foreign policy choices. Their organic roots are to be found in the very fibre of society. China’s ‘century of national humiliation’ seems to infuse the national project over the long term, even in the face of questions of immediate material gain or loss.

History, philosophy, culture and mythology – the ingredients of our civilisational problematique – are more significant in modern day international relations than much of the economistic materialist-driven explication of post–Cold War globalisation assumed. At the risk of simplification, and as a heuristic device only, we can see Chinese and Indian international relations and diplomacy, for example, functioning within a framework drawn from their own unique philosophical and cultural traditions, while Western international relations and diplomacy can be said to operate within a framework built upon pillars provided by a mix of Greek philosophy, Roman classics, the New Testament, and later Renaissance thinking.

“History, philosophy, culture and mythology – the ingredients of our civilisational problematique – are more significant in modern day international relations than much of the economistic materialist-driven explication of post–Cold War globalisation assumed.”
1.2. Liberal order and beyond: The argument in brief

The initial argument is relatively simple. The post-World War Two order, often referred to as a liberal international order – created at the 1945 Yalta conference between the US, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union and underwritten by the US acting as what Lisa Martin (2004) calls a “self-binding hegemon” – is over. While the US remains the major global power, we are nevertheless entering an era driven by the growing salience and interests of other great and rising powers. This is leading to a situation in which combative global geopolitics and geo-economics are reasserting themselves. But this reading needs to be put into perspective. The liberal international order was never as liberal nor indeed as global as many of its strongest boosters (see quintessentially Ikenberry, 2011) would have us believe.

We are now confronted by two competing schools of thought, captured in the ubiquitous language of *globalism versus nationalism*. Herein lies the major problem of understanding, and indeed governing, the modern world order. This malaise can be captured in point form:

i. The priorities of the erstwhile hegemon (the US) have changed and the (re) emergence of great powers (especially China) is leading to a contest in the international order unprecedented since the height of the Cold War between the US and the former Soviet Union.

ii. This contest is reflected in the return of geopolitics and geo-economics in the foreign policies of major powers. Modern day geo-economics goes beyond initial understandings of economic statecraft (Blackwill and Harris, 2016) through to economic warfare (Higgott, 2019).

iii. A lack of understanding of the *relationship* between economics and security in modern international relations limits comprehension of the complexity of modern world order.
iv. In addition, we live in an era of increasing populism and nationalism in which populist leaders directly link the interests of their states to identitarian and cultural politics, further complicating the relationship between economics and security.

v. Increasingly the great powers “securitise” (Buzan, et al., 1998) their economic and cultural politics. This is powerfully illustrated in Donald Trump’s current discursive strategy of directly defining the need for economic protectionism and controlling immigration as national security issues.

The contours of a liberal order and its changes have been captured in a vast body of literature on the subject (see inter alia Ikenberry, 2011, 2017 and 2018; Nye, 2017; Luce, 2017). But three things are now clear:

i. The past was historically misinterpreted. There is now a strong revisionist literature that identifies the limitations of liberal international order theorising (see inter alia Ferguson and Zakaria 2017; Kagan, 2017a and 2017b and 2018; Flockhart, 2017).

ii. To the extent that a liberal order existed, any lingering assumption that it might be reinstated in its original form at some future date – implicitly post-Trump – is increasingly problematic.

iii. Notwithstanding the virtues of many elements of liberal order (Deudney and Ikenberry, 2018), if it is to survive even in a reformed manner, we need new theory and practice for a new era that takes account of two key factors:

a. Initial historical misreadings of the scale of acceptance of liberal order and

“

We have come to recognise that the wisest and most effective way to protect our national interests is through international co-operation — that is to say, through united effort for the attainment of common goals.

US Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr, closing address at Bretton Woods Conference, July 22, 1944

In shorthand here, as Acharya (2017a) would have it, the liberal international order was in effect only ever an American world order (AWO) with add-ons and spill-overs.
the competing ways in which scholars and practitioners deal with the increasingly “multiplex” nature of order must be corrected (Acharya, 2017b).

b. The dramatically changing global political and economic balances, in not only the politico-security-economic problematique but also the cultural-civilisational problematique, must be accommodated in any reform process. Simply, China’s economic and political might must be recognised as much as managed.

Much of this is now well understood and this report will not reinvent the wheel but rather try to add some new analytical spokes to it. Specifically, it will suggest why a contest between globalism and liberalism on the one hand and cultural or civilisational nationalism on the other need not, nor should not, be inevitable. Part four will suggest that reform and accommodation, difficult as they are, should not be impossible.

But here, the report briefly reviews earlier efforts to probe the relationship between security, economics, and culture in the global order before examining how the interdependence between geo-economics, geopolitics, and culture matters if we are to understand the emerging post-liberal global order. Today, we must grapple with a transformation of the principles, norms, and institutions that have sustained global order in the past, and how such transformations impact great power competition worldwide. Four linked questions are in need of consideration:

i. To what extent is the nature of international order, and indeed international politics in general, a consequence of the post–World War Two rise and decline of American hegemony? Or is it the result of deeper, longer term structural factors such as economic globalisation and the changing nature of international production, as seen in the shift

“We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength.”

Donald Trump, inaugural presidential address January 20 2017 (cited in Wolf, 2019)
from industrial manufacturing towards the technology and artificial intelligence (AI) industries?

ii. To what degree do the principles and norms that underpinned the post–World War Two economic and political orders have continued relevance today? For sure, they supported US power. But at the same time they also assisted the maintenance of a global equilibrium in times of stress such as the Cold War. They have also, constraints notwithstanding, provided space for the rise of China as a global actor.

iii. Are the extant principles, norms, and institutions capable of accommodating change in a time of the new global actors such as China and other emerging powers? Are they, or can they be, if not supportive of, at least neutral in terms of their impact upon great power competition?

iv. Are these principles, norms, and institutions capable of supporting at best a dialogue, or at least a minimum contested peaceful negotiation between Western and non-Western ‘civilisations’?

The answers to these questions are not only historically contingent but also contemporarily relevant. They are a guide to how liberal principles, norms, and institutions might play a continuing role in any new structures of world order. The best way to understand this is empirically. Hence, part two examines the evolving relationship between the Western powers and the civilisation states through a case study of US–Chinese relations.

By way of background, recall that during the Cold War, America’s main great power competitor (the Soviet Union) was an outsider to both a liberal international political order and an international economic system which was primarily confined to the Atlantic world and parts of the East Asian rim. The Soviet Union did not constitute a serious economic competitor to the United States, and the economic relevance of the Soviet bloc was dwarfed by comparison with that of the Western, US–led bloc. There was a marked absence of economic interaction between the Soviet and American superpowers and their respective spheres of influence.

Against this backdrop, the liberal international order, as its boosters noted, served the interests of the United States (and its Western allies) well in competition with the Soviet outsider (see, Ikenberry, 2011). US global geopolitical and security
interests, checking Soviet power, appeared to be in sync with an order that excluded the managed economies of the Soviet Union and its satellites while at the same time strengthening economic and political ties between the United States and its key European and East Asian allies.

There was, equally during this period, also an absence of inter-cultural or civilisational dialogue. The superiority of liberal values – *inter alia*, a market economy, democracy, religious toleration, freedom of speech, and artistic licence – were simply assumed to be superior by their champions. With the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union these assumptions were declared victorious, clearing the way for a progressive, if short-lived, globalisation of a US-led liberal market based economic order and a liberal politico-cultural order. This was deemed to be as much the result of so-called Western – principally US – “soft power” (Nye, 2004) as military hard power. Economic globalisation consolidated Central and Eastern Europe, Central and South Asia, Southeast Asia, parts of the Middle East, and Russia and China were progressively integrated into the global economic order.

Closer integration of these regions, especially East Asia, into the global economy has also brought with it, unsurprisingly and not unreasonably, a political interest in securing a greater share in the control of that order. China and Russia especially have begun to reassert their spheres of influence and push back against the US (see Mead, 2014; Grygiel and Mitchell, 2017). In such a context, scholars and practitioners of international relations alike must grapple with the (re)emergence of the relationship between great power competition and the increasing global economic interdependence that has underpinned globalisation. Are these twin processes – increased geopolitical and strategic competition on the one hand and increased economic interdependence on the other – inevitably antithetical to one another in the current era? Part two addresses this question empirically through an examination of the contemporary US–China relationship. Prior to that, however, we need to understand the manner in which the international economic order, and particularly the international trade regime, has changed. This needs to be explained theoretically to fully understand it.
1.3. A little bit of economic theory: Towards a new mercantilism

The period since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008 has seen a strengthening backlash against economic globalisation that is a major factor in the overall challenge to liberal international order. This has not happened in a theoretical vacuum. Particularly, we are seeing significant changes in the economic theory of international trade. These need an explanation.

Historically, few areas of economics have traditionally secured as much agreement as the theory of comparative advantage developed by David Riccardo in his Principles of Political Economy and Taxation in 1817. He developed a positive-sum understanding of the gains from trade that overcame the prevailing mercantilist negative-sum orthodoxy that had underwritten the trade policy of the post-Westphalian states system in the 17th and 18th centuries. Put simply, Riccardo showed that while not all countries can have an absolute advantage, all countries by definition must have a comparative advantage (see the essays in Evenett, 2017).

Despite a large consensus to this day on the core principles of comparative advantage, the enhanced efforts of international organisations to halt protectionism and fight off economic nationalism have struggled as the backlash against globalisation has grown. Negative-sum understandings of the economic theory of trade, especially for dispossessed workers in the US, have returned. The key question now is whether the principles of comparative advantage remain relevant for us today when trade in services – at 70% of world trade – exceeds that of trade in goods and when ideas and data flow freely and digital services are provided remotely? Comparative advantage as a state-based theory of trade has suffered from the denationalisation of trade and the de-location (‘off-shoring’) of manufacturing from the G7 countries – especially the US – to the fastest developing countries – notably China – and the development of global value chains (see Deardoff, 2017 and Baldwin, 2016).

Comparative advantage also becomes a more challenged theory for high-wage developed countries in a world where large developing countries (China and India) can manufacture almost anything and offer almost any service while still paying lower wages than the developed countries. This situation, as Paul Samuelson (2004) noted, becomes increasingly acute if these large developing countries are also able to capture an increasing share of the “advanced industries” such as IT and AI. These new consequences of international
trade are not without political and strategic considerations, which become as important as an economist’s traditional concerns with welfare benefits from trade.

These changes and the poorly understood assumptions of international trade theory have played into the hands of populist politicians (Lowrey, 2018). Those blue-collar working communities of developed countries – most vocally in the US and France – who have been displaced blame globalisation, and especially free trade, for their plight. And indeed, employment in manufacturing in the US has fallen by 25% since 2001 (see Kucik, 2019). The solution, it is argued in the new protectionist rhetoric, is increased tariffs.
But what is ignored by the populist approach to international economics are six key consequences of such a policy:

i. Tariffs are a tax on imports. They usually raise prices for consumers (Amiti, Redding, and Weinstein, 2019).

ii. Protecting a few narrow industries, such as steel, can have wider massive negative consequences in which those on limited incomes are affected disproportionately (see Rajan, 2019).

iii. Tariffs also put jobs at risks in cognate industries and sectors that often have more employees than those in the protected industries (say, steel).

iv. It is not low tariffs that explain dramatic industry closures in
the manufacturing sectors of mature economies. Manufacturing jobs are on the decline globally first and foremost as a result of automation and productivity growth.

v. Global ability to produce is outpacing growth in demand.

vi. Tariffs make it harder to do business abroad. States targeted by tariffs, especially China, targeted by the US, invariably retaliate.

The costs of globalisation to politically significant local labour markets were largely ignored between 1980 and 2008. While free trade indeed generated massive global welfare gains it invariably did (and does) so with uneven distributional effects. This, as is now recognised, has provided the ammunition for advocates of the worst kinds of populist protectionism on both the left and right.

As a consequence, economic and trade policy discourse has changed and is changing, especially in the US, with spillover effects on those countries caught in the crossfire of US protectionist strategy. The difficulty with this type of discourse is that it is not conducive to the development of cooperative dialogues over how we might engage in the reform of the world order.
In short we are entering the era of “the new global mercantilism” (Hufner, 2018), the core elements of which are: (i) strong use of tariffs and other protectionist instruments; (ii) growing state interventionism such as subsidies for inefficient industries and sectors; and (iii) the creation of an air of surprise and uncertainty as deliberate elements of national strategy towards competitors, and indeed partners, in the international economy.

The new mercantilism carries with it both domestic and international considerations. The theoretical economic argument of the anti-free trade position is at times just plain wrong. But its populist advocates understand something that many members of the cosmopolitan political elites of Western countries did not, and maybe still don’t: there is a profound dissatisfaction among large swathes of the populations of national communities in OECD countries with the liberal international economic order.
Part 2
International order, the US-China relationship, and Europe in context

“The paradox of our global situation ... [is that] ... the biggest threat to the liberal international order is not from a non-liberal society like China but from a liberal society like the United States of America.

(Kishore Mahbubani, The Munk Debate, 2019).

Is Kishore Mahbubani correct or merely being his provocative self? A closer look at the relationship between the two states should tell us. The change in the bilateral relationship between the US and China offers us a crucial insight into the generic strains on the erstwhile global liberal order. But what is it about the changing
nature of the relationship between these two superpowers that has put it at the core of the debate over future world order? And by extension, is a new, elongated Cold War to control the shape of any new order, as many pundits increasingly think, inevitable?

2.1. The big picture: Ideology or interest in the new ‘Great Game’?

As a prior question we should ask to whom or what do we ascribe the rapid deterioration in the relationship between these two powers? For example, is the explanation structural? That is, is it an outcome of the inevitably anarchic and competitive nature of international economic and political relations? Or should we look for explanations in the behaviour
of agents? Is the pending breakdown the result simply of Trumpian aggression confronted by similar aggression from Xi Jinping and his newfound determination to reassert China’s greatness?

As with Trump, then so with Xi, the policy positions adopted are built on the back of trends that were in train prior to the accession to power of either of them. Both are amplifiers rather than originators of their respective policy positions. Similarly, the unravelling of liberal order and the rise of great power competition also predate both of them, even though they have both surely exacerbated it. Given their respective position as hegemon and challenger, and China’s unprecedented dramatic growth, structuralists, not unreasonably, would have us understand that the growing conflict between these two powers was inevitable. If that is indeed the case, then the prospects for a reformed international order arising from a peaceful dialogue between these two powers becomes increasingly problematic.

In contrast to the Cold War era, China, as America’s main geopolitical competitor now, is engaging vigorously with capitalism and market economics both at home and internationally in a way that the Soviet Union never did. China is likely to feel insecure in a system dominated by liberal values that put pressure on the Communist Party’s domestic authority. Similarly, China’s resistance to such values will ensure that the US, in turn, is likely to resist any significant moves to accommodate China. The relationship is not simply about trade imbalances and economic competition; it is also a geopolitico-security and ideological contest bordering on an existential struggle for both parties. They are not negotiating a set of behaviours and practices so much as their positions in the balance of power in the global order. The atmospherics and discourse of the relations might also suggest that neither side is in any immediate hurry to secure a new equilibrium in the relationship.

Xi Jinping’s January 2017 Davos speech; the first of many espousing much of the rhetoric and some of the key practices
of globalisation. But at the same time as it supports key elements of the current liberal order, China is also mounting a challenge to it.

China’s strategy of selective economic engagement and integration has seen the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the development of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its growing economic partnerships in Africa and Latin America, as well as a taking of the ideational challenge to the US via its economic model (the Beijing Consensus) and a forward leaning cultural diplomacy – as in the global spread of Confucius Institutes, of which there are some 400 in the US and over 1,000 worldwide. Its aim is to not to dismantle
the world order but rather to remake it to better reflect its own interests.

Observing China’s policy towards globalisation and the liberal order helps us to put recent changes in US policy into perspective. It allows us to focus on a bigger question than simply the quixotic foreign policy behaviour of the current US president. His approach to international order – resisting multilateral institutional collective action problem solving approaches to cooperation in favour of rhetorically nationalist and practically bilateralist transactionalism – needs to be contextualised. The real question is not ‘is Trump simply a destructive spoiler?’ but rather, given the rise of China, ‘are the liberal order and US security interests inevitably parting ways?’ Does a liberal order that served the interests of the US in the second half of the 20th century so well no longer do so now?

Much ink, but fortunately little blood – to-date at least – has been spilled over the nature of the contemporary and increasingly fractious US-China relationship. But what might have started as fairly traditional recourse to a protectionist trade agenda is steadily, and rapidly, morphing into a wider battle between the US and China across the whole spectrum of economic and politico-strategic relations, and especially the battle for technological ascendancy in the 21st century (Edel and Brands, 2019). We are witnessing not simply a rhetorical securitization of US economic policy discourse but a more intense economic and political response to economic globalism in general, and the ascendancy of China as a rival global economic power in particular.

The Trump Administration increasingly utilises ‘economic warfare’. Trade policy in the US was seen for a long time as a quasi-preserved specialist domain with its own epistemic discourse. This has changed in the current era, where expert knowledge, when not directly rejected or belittled, is less valued (see Nicholls, 2017). We are now in an era in which international trade policy, for so long underpinned by comparative advantage and a belief in the welfare-enhancing nature of trade openness, is under challenge (see Irwin, 2017).

The backlash against globalisation has seen a major policy shift, most importantly but not only in US policy. An open liberal
International order, the US-China relationship, and Europe in context

The economic system is now characterised by the Trump Administration as a license for others to cheat in their economic relationship with the US. Current US international economic policy should be interpreted through the discursive lenses of an aggressive and pro-active – as opposed to defensive and reactive – set of activities and practices with no constraints short of war. International economic policy – from the tariff to the weaponisation of the US dollar (Fleming, 2019) – is now at the leading edge of US foreign relations.

Current US strategy in trade policy under the Trump Administration offers a counter-veiling argument to the notion that democracies will invariably prefer, à la Joseph Nye (2004), a soft power diplomatic approach. The preference is now to challenge longstanding commitments to multilateral collective action in the global trade regime with a preference for a strategy based as much on threat as reward. The evidence is in and President Trump clearly has a longstanding mercantilist view of trade, with little or no commitment to multilateral institutionalism.

Moreover, the communication and technological revolutions have had a profound effect on the development of a securitized international economic policy under the current administration. The populist communicative skills of Donald Trump, armed with the weaponry of digital social media, especially Twitter, make the discourse of economic warfare much easier to prosecute today. Current strategy and policy harnesses the discursive instruments, tools, and practices short of war to secure the enhancement of national objectives: what Mahnken et al. call “… the coercive use of non-military instruments to alter adversary behaviour” (2018, p. 3).

The change in the use of language over the last decade makes the prospect of a dialogue over world order more difficult. At its broadest, the language of geopolitics and economic statecraft (see Blackwill and Harris, 2016) sees a linguistic coincidence of US discourse with the post-Soviet discourse that the US is so keen to criticise. To illustrate, Mahnken et al. (2018, p. 10) identify what they see as key themes in the Russian narrative. Four of the six characteristics they identify in Russian discourse – (i) ‘we are special’; (ii) ‘the country is threatened’; (iii) there is a ‘sacred mission’; and (iv) ‘victory is assured’ – find resonance in the Trumpian international economic playbook, which stresses:

i. The residual myth of American ‘exceptionalism’ (‘we are special’);
ii. That the US is disadvantaged by the cheating and free riding behaviour of its major trading partners.
partners (‘the country is threatened’);

iii. The presidential mission is to ‘Make America Great Again’ (MAGA as ‘a sacred mission’);

iv. In the economic domain, this has meant a turn to aggressive and unilateral protectionist measures addressed to competitors and allies alike and based on the premise that, in Trump’s own words, ‘trade wars are easy’ (‘victory is assured’).

The analogy permits two further discursive comparisons. Firstly, Vladimir Putin believes Russia was betrayed after the Cold War by the West’s support for the ‘colour’ revolutions in regional neighbours and the eastward expansion of NATO. This sense of betrayal is mirrored in the current US president’s belief that European allies have been free riders on US largesse in both the security domain (NATO) and the economic domain, as shown by trade imbalances. If Trump’s resentments reflect core elements of his worldview, then they lend themselves to explaining his policy responses: bilateralism; transactionalism; aggressive competition; and punishment and retaliation rather than cooperation and multilateralism. Why is this comparison important for this report? If it is accurate, it suggests the prospects of a cooperative discourse on

the future of international order between the US, Russia, and China are slight.

In addition, observation of Trump’s attitudes towards the US’ European allies – for example, his position on Brexit and his suggestions to President Macron that France leave the EU – also suggests a further willingness to sow international division.

Secondly, the MAGA discourse mirrors both Vladimir Putin’s and Xi Jinping’s emphasis on enhancing respect for Russia and China globally after years of humiliation. This theme – the need to be respected – is to be found in much presidential rhetoric in all three countries. It militates against a dialogue of civilisations.
The genie is out of the bottle: Towards new world order or disorder?

China has stood up. It will never again tolerate being bullied by any nation. Xi Jinping

Political discourse
Reference to civilisational exceptionalism, claim to cultural supremacy

Challenging Western dominance and its claim to universality of liberal values

Demanding a revision of the current order

Using soft power instruments

Selective use of the current order’s rules and institutions

Military buildup

Creating alternative forms and blocs of cooperation

The West will never be broken. Our values will prevail. Our civilisation will triumph. Donald Trump

Tryimg to uphold the current order

Trade pressure

Politico-cultural battle

Military buildup

Hedging against the rise of emerging states

CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

CIVILIZATION STATES – REVISIONIST STATES?

DEFENDING THE STATUS QUO

WESTERN STATES – STATUS QUO STATES?

CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

External drivers

Internal drivers

Constructive forces
Demanding more equality and justice
Multilateralism in politics and trade

FORCES WITHIN THE WEST

Populist movements; nationalist leaders; civil society; businesses

Destructive forces
e.g., Trump
‘Illiberal’ governance
Reversion to protectionism
Unilateral practices
2.2. Beyond protectionism: The new economic warfare

Why is President Trump so convinced the US can live and prosper in a global trade regime without rules? His answer came via Twitter:

“... trade wars are good, and easy to win. Example, when we are down $100 billion with a certain country and they get cute, don’t trade anymore – we win big. It’s easy!” (@Donald Trump, 2 March 2018)

The US trade deficit with China exists because China exports four times more to the US than vice versa. But the US deficit on goods trade with China turns into a surplus when services – 70% of US GDP – are taken into account (see Tyson and Lund, 2019). And, as economists have pointed out ad nauseum, the US deficit is largely home-grown on the back of tax cuts, low savings, and high spending (see Irwin, 2019). To be fair to Trump, strategies of engagement pursued by previous administrations – Bush, Clinton, Bush, and Obama – have not seen China become the open political economy that such strategies were expected to lead to after China had been welcomed into the WTO. Previous administrations, as Campbell and Ratner (2018) note, had always over estimated a US ability to steer China in the direction it wanted. Indeed, it was always a brave assumption that the Chinese economic model would converge on a Western one.

Is the strategy adopted since President Trump came to office the right one? That is, to what extent is an aggressive nationalist and transactionalist bilateral strategy securing adjustment, as opposed to simply fuelling growing ill-will and competitiveness between the two powers, with all the attendant negative consequences for the wider geostrategic relationship? As John Mearsheimer (2006) has argued, China will rise but is unlikely to rise peacefully.

US strategy is thus one of trying to disrupt China’s rise across the major policy domains – especially security, economy, and technology – rather than to simply secure a deal that lowers the temperature in the economic domain. This strategy can now be documented in a number of official and semi-official venues. In the broadest geostrategic context, the

[2] This section draws in part on Higgott (2019), to whom the copyright belongs.
US *National Defense Strategy* of January 2018 argued that the US no longer enjoys unprecedented superiority and identified combating long-term competition with China and Russia across the policy spectrum, by all means short of war, as a strategic priority.
The discriminatory practices identified by the US as central to China’s economic model are not without foundation and include, *inter alia*: (i) unfair foreign ownership restrictions; (ii) non transparent and discriminatory licensing systems and review processes; (iii) theft of IPR; and (iv) restrictions on joint venture partners’ abilities to protect their intellectual property (USTR, 2018). In addition, China, as part of its strategy for technology transfer, gives targeted government support for its outward investment regime in key ‘encouraged’ industries (especially IT and AI) and investment acquisitions, e.g., for manufacturing capacity, power generation, and high-speed rail.

US objections to these practices are but one element in a process by which it would like to see a progressive de-coupling of China from the global economic order. The real US targets are China’s unique model of capitalism and its extensive and deep global supply chains. China, because of its infrastructural and industrial base and the sheer size of its educated workforce, is central to most of the world’s major global manufacturing supply chains. No other country can match it.

Nor indeed can the US match China’s economic ambition, reflected in the BRI and the AIIB, which the US has been keen to thwart, albeit unsuccessfule, either by pressuring would-be participants or confronting Chinese economic diplomacy in bodies such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the IMF, and the G20 (Aiyar, 2015). For all its problems and criticisms (see Dorsey, 2018), the BRI is a grand vision of economic diplomacy aimed at shifting the focus from the Asia-Pacific to Eurasia; a process that could help China readjust the geopolitical balance.

Taken together, these activities have three negative effects for the US: (i) they threaten the competitiveness of US industries in strategic sectors; (ii) they undermine US abilities to lead and sustain innovation; and (iii) China also gains from cyber intrusions (USTR, 2018). China argues that US complaints are exaggerated. It argues it is in compliance with both the norms and practices of the WTO; especially with regards to intellectual property. With regards to technology transfer, it argues that this is a logical part of an industrial development strategy with a strong pedigree in the history of the now developed countries. Furthermore, the Chinese government argues its involvement is diminishing overtime as it becomes more market focused.

The battle for control of the new technologies, especially AI and robotisation, is said to be leading to a ‘new Cold War’. This may not be the appropriate metaphor – yet – but the clash between
the world’s two major powers could be even more damaging than the original Cold War. If the end of the first Cold War kick-started a surge in global economic integration, the beginning of any new Cold War between the world’s two largest economies could have the reverse effect. It could produce division and fragmentation in, and disrupt the operation of, the global economy. Both the global trade and financial system could unravel. Any ensuing geopolitical tensions would also damage technological innovation as technology transfers and cooperation – hidden beneath the oft-exaggerated justifications of ‘national security concerns’ – decline.

The US battle to curb China’s dominance of global supply chains, a strategy geared not only towards bringing manufacturing back to the US but towards weakening China as a competitive global economic actor, is a battle that will probably fail given the breadth, depth, and level of integration of the global supply chain economy and China’s centrality to it. Attempts to disrupt supply chains could impact the US as much as China. It is unlikely the US can damage China without damaging itself (Wolf, 2018). To date, China has not resorted to a massive reaction to US trade policy, although signs suggest the economic war between the US and China is just getting started.

However, trade war, using the traditional instrument of economic warfare – the tariff – is not the most important issue. The game has changed. The major game is now technology. The US now wants more than simply the balanced trade relationship that Trump was demanding at the beginning of his administration. The US wants to restrict Chinese acquisition of US technology, as well as see major changes in Chinese domestic policy, notably an end to domestic subsidies and other protective activities such as patent and technology acquisition from foreign partners in return for contracts.

The US Chamber of Commerce and the American Chamber of Commerce in China, in a joint publication of Priority Recommendations for US–China Trade Negotiations (2019), see the systematic violation of intellectual property rights, forced technology transfer, and direct state intervention into the economy as
more important than trade imbalances. Other US institutional actors are even more alarmed. The FBI argues that “...economic aggression is positioning China to supplant the United States as the world’s superpower” (cited in Wyne, 2019).

Prudent analysis should perhaps treat such judgments with caution. Notwithstanding closing gaps, Washington’s advantages over China remain substantial. They range from the structural advantages of geography and demography through to current material superiority in the economic and security domains, growing energy self-sufficiency, a set of global alliances, and even still, a technology lead. And while some scholars argue that the US unipolar advantage remains intact (see Brooks and Wolforth, 2016), the days are over when both sides could insist that trade and investment was territory that could be kept separate from strategic rivalry and political contest.

The contest is no longer economic. It is becoming increasingly politically overt and ideological. Present Danger: China (CPDC). In its opening statement the CPDC noted: “... as with the Soviet Union in the past, communist China represents an existential and ideological threat to the United States – one that requires a new American consensus regarding the policies and priorities required to defeat this threat.” The US, if it is not to lose the ideas battle with China, must create its “own informational war” (see presentdangerchina.org).

Similarly, Gideon Rachman (2019b) also argues that the US is losing the ideas battle with China as it turns a blind eye to the growing abuse of traditionally understood universal Western values of freedom and democracy. As Daniel Drezner bleakly notes in Foreign Affairs, “... the Trump administration has unilaterally surrendered the set of ideas that guided U.S. policymakers for decades. ... Although a future president might sound better on these issues, both allies and rivals will remember the current moment. The seeds of doubt have been planted” (Drezner, 2019a).
But US policy does not currently reflect a strategy underpinned by its ideals, rather than by a set of instrumental practices identifying China as a ‘strategic competitor’. But as Brands and Cooper (2019) argue, the current approach to China lacks clear strategic definition beyond its tough punitive discourse of competition and rivalry and an assumption of a non-benign accommodation on the part of China. The current posture is not aimed at a renewed accommodation between the US and China in the short-to-medium term future. Indeed, the US rhetoric of economic warfare from Trump and his spokespersons suggests the opposite – a new and ongoing struggle.

US policy is no longer ambiguous and a consensus around an adversarial approach towards China is gaining support among the wider US populace. Indeed, aggressive approaches to contain China’s technological advance are one of the few policy areas that have secured a strong bipartisan consensus in Washington (Wike and Devlin, 2018). In short, Trump’s tariff war is not an end in and of itself. It is the beginning of a new age of wide strategic competition, much of it hidden in the cyber domain. It will not be resolved simply by the Chinese purchase of increased amounts of US soybeans. Attitudes on both sides of the Pacific are hardening and Trump’s China policy is one of the few things that secures him some bilateral approval across the US.

Aggressive bilateralism might not be lowering the US trade deficit but it seems to have had some symbolic political payoffs for President Trump, who has made it clear that he does not want the US to anchor the multilateral trade regime in particular, or indeed the international order more generally. The abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on day one of his administration was a first and significant sign of that, as was his withdrawal of the US from the Paris Climate Agreement and subsequent acts such as the withdrawal from UNESCO, the denunciation of the ICC, and the slow strangulation of the WTO appellate arrangements in dispute settlement. The benefits gained from these policies are more superficial than real. Indeed, it can be argued that Trump has squandered his best chips; even minus the bluster and atavistic rhetoric.

The limits of an aggressive bilateral transactionalist strategy have been spelled out again and again – especially the strategy’s assumptions that retaliation from the always economically smaller counterparty is unlikely and holds little or no consequence for the US. This is not always so. As we saw with the carefully structured Chinese retaliation to the initial
US tariff hike, the Chinese were able to hit directly at Trump’s own supporters, rather than indiscriminately at other sectors of the US economy. The containment of China, to use the lexicon of the Cold War, is unlikely, although a more moderate policy of cooperative competition in the economic and technology domains will remain elusive while China resists all but minimal domestic economic reform and Donald Trump remains president of the US.

What we have yet to see is a Chinese response that goes beyond trying to resolve the current dispute by trade concessions. Wider reforms and concessions beyond trade will be required. But even if the Chinese buy more from the US, open more sectors of their economy to US investment, and improve their laws on intellectual property, it is unlikely that the US trade balance will improve. Nor will it impede the drive by China for dominance in the technology industries.

2.3. The EU: Life after the ‘existential’ crisis?

China, of course is not the only country, or group of countries, in the sights of the Trump Administration’s international economic policy. Nationalist, anti-globalist, and anti-institutionalist sentiments are also extended to allies. Indeed, some of President Trump’s choicest critiques of trade policy have been saved for Europe and notably Germany, even to the extent of describing Europe as “…almost as bad as China” (Politi, 2018). Foreign car imports have been argued by Trump and his Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross to represent a threat to American national security, thus offering the opportunity to respond with tariffs.

Notwithstanding the size and depth of the economic and politico-security partnership (Hamilton and Quinlan, 2019) and people-to-people links, the negative impact of Trump’s rhetoric and practice on transatlantic relations should not be underestimated (see Bond, 2018). Positive European views of the US are dipping dramatically as the EU finds itself – keeping in mind that Europe does €400 billion trade with China a year – caught in the middle of the US–China standoff.

At the 2019 Munich Security Conference, Angela Merkel noted, “If we’re serious about the transatlantic partnership, it’s
not very easy for me as German Chancellor to read … that the American Department of Commerce apparently considers German and European cars to be a threat to the national security of the United States of America” (Merkel, 2019). She tartly noted, “The biggest BMW factory is in South Carolina, not in Bavaria.” She fails to see why BMWs from Bavaria are a greater security risk than those from South Carolina! Europe also explicitly rejects Trumpian attitudes to multilateralism. Indeed, France and Germany have recently launched *The Alliance to Support Multilateralism* (Democracy Without Borders, 2019). But in contrast to the old Cold War, few states want to pick sides between the US and China.

The effect of the US president’s anti-European rhetoric has been different to that of the anti-China campaign. The latter has generated a growing bipartisanship on China competition. The former has undermined traditional US bipartisanship on Europe. As of 2018, only 47% of Republicans, as opposed to 78% of Democrats, still favour the NATO alliance (Pew, 2018).

The question for this report is to ask to what degree the EU is combatting what it calls its “existential crisis” (EU, 2016) and the role that it might play in helping reform the international institutional order, especially to mitigate the standoff between the US and China (see Simon, 2019). There are five elements to the crisis: the Greek debt crisis; irregular arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers from wars in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq; heightened terrorism in major European cities; Brexit;
and the growth of populist identitarian politics throughout large parts of Europe that have rocked the European project over the last few years. This is well recognised (see European Political Strategy Centre, 2019). What is less well understood is the effect that this existential crisis has had on the EU’s ability to play a positive role in the stabilisation of international order, which is the concern of this report.

The EU should be a major player but currently engages in little more than what we might call the politics of ‘muddling through’ in the face of US policy, over which it has little or no impact. The classic recent example of EU vulnerability to external pressure is the impotence it showed in the face of Trump’s unilateral withdrawal from the Iran agreement and the pressure that the US put on the EU to conform to its sanctions policy. This has characterised not only the EU response to its own crises but also to the worsening state of the international order over the last five years. Moreover, this could be simply the first act in which the US forces Europe to come into line with its policies towards China and Russia.

The EU currently lacks a strategy and risks becoming a pawn in the new ‘Great Game’, or as the European Council on Foreign Relations suggests, even the “chessboard on which great powers compete” (ECFR, 2019). The EU does not think like the other geopolitical powers and currently has an underdeveloped voice in the debate over world order.

The new leadership of the European Commission following the May 2019 elections offers an opportunity to reaffirm its traditionally strong commitment to multilateralism and collective action problem solving. Can this happen? Can the EU’s history of sharing sovereignty be used to support the wider multilateral endeavour in this time of crisis? Any answer will be as variegated as multilateralism itself is variegated according to issue area. Multilateral activities in the domains of climate change and sustainable development – evinced by Paris and the Conference of Parties (COP) – operate differently from in the domains of trade, as in the WTO.

Even at a more immediate level, scope for US cooperation with Europe – and Japan –
to bring about change in China’s policies, such as its forced technology transfers should, but does not, exist. The difficulty of securing joined-up cooperation stems not from the unwillingness of its allies to cooperate with the US but from the US insistence on pursuing its own approach. Europe and Japan have effectively been given a ‘take it or leave it’ approach to cooperation rather than the opportunity to develop a collective strategy. For example, the EU-Japan-US initiative developed by Japan in 2017 to coordinate legal action against China at the WTO on things like technology transfer has taken second place to US direct bilateral action against China.

Europe and Japan have worked hard to coordinate their trade strategy but they are both concerned not to get caught in the crossfire of an exacerbating, long, wide, and deep US–China conflict which is now about more than just trade imbalances. In what amounts to a sign of the times, both appear as concerned not to alienate China as the US. As a strategy to avoid choosing sides, calls for a Europe–Pacific partnership in the face of US policy will continue to grow.

On close inspection, the foundations for a common approach by Europe and Asia in support of a sound, rules-based multilateral trade regime exists in the surprisingly strong similarities of philosophy and practical policy approaches towards trade regulation found in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) on the one hand and Europe’s recent agreement with Canada (CETA) on the other (see Wang, 2019). Rather than be passive recipients of US bullying, the two regions of the world that represent 31% of global GDP and 40% of global trade, as Laidi et al. (2019) note, could send out an important message in support of multilateral principles.
2.4. From rules-based order to ‘fight club’?

What was once known as the global rules-based order might now be better called “Fight Club” (Hartcher, 2019). As former Australian PM Kevin Rudd points out, “Trump’s tough trade rhetoric plays to Chinese nationalism” (Rudd, 2019). It has bolstered Xi Jinping’s hand at a time of difficulty for the Chinese economy and allowed him to make patriotic, nationalist appeals to resist US pressure with the attendant effect of hardening negotiating positions rather than encouraging dialogue. Even if a trade deal with the US is possible, some Chinese leaders are now asking, ‘why bother?’ As Rudd notes,

The Trump Administration has made it clear that it has embarked on a more adversarial position toward China. Perhaps it’s better, in China’s view, to cut its losses now and get ready for the next Cold War. ... The bottom line is that nationalism is not just a factor in Trump’s America. It’s now a big factor in Xi Jinping’s China as well, reinforced through the prism of Chinese history. In most of its dealings with America over the last 100 years, China has seen itself as weak. Today, in Beijing’s view, China is weak no longer (Rudd, 2019).

The depth, breadth, and difficulty inherent in the contemporary US-China relationship, and to a lesser extent China’s relationship with other partners such as Europe, do not lend themselves to the prospect of a serious dialogue on how to fix the global order. Expectations of Cold War are rising. Some argue both sides are increasingly “… looking for a fight” (see Hartcher, 2019).

One major problem is policy on the US side is short-termism. Driven by recognition that it can do China real economic damage in the short term (1–5 years), the US under President Trump seems less concerned with the longer-term implications. The idea that things can be resolved with the US coming out on top is by no means certain, given that in the longer run at least three things are likely to happen;

i. China will, later if not sooner, replace the markets and suppliers that have been lost in the US.

ii. Trust in the US, as both an economic and political partner, will continue to decline; including for many of its allies and long-standing partners.

iii. The Chinese, surprised that they have suddenly become an enemy, will become increasingly unnerved by US policy. In all probability the effects of this will be twofold:
a. China will raise the rhetorical offensive to match that of the US. Indeed, this is already occurring as Xi Jinping makes increasingly regular public reference to China’s not succumbing to US “bullying” (Zhou, 2019).

b. We should expect to see Russia and China drawing closer together to consolidate the geo-economic and geo-political concept of Eurasia. But greater China–Russia closeness will be on the basis of strategic pragmatism, not, as in the past, ideology. The level of economic integration is not, to date, great. But US pressure is proving an important external catalyst for closer economic cooperation. Practically, this cooperation could take place by enhanced cooperation between the Chinese BRI and Russia’s Greater Eurasian Partnership. It is also not impossible that in the longer term the two powers will move away from the use of the US Dollar for their trade transactions. Initial steps to bypass the US Dollar in their trade relationships have been taken with a mechanism for mutual settlements envisaged by 2020 (see defenseworld.net).

The effect of US policy has been to ensure that the politics of international economic policy is more important for both the US and China now than at any time since China was admitted to the WTO. It is now a core component of wider geopolitical strategy for both countries. This approach may lead us back to a style of international politics reflective of the great power rivalry of the 19th century, with the potential to create a bifurcated and mega-regionalised global order built on the equally long-standing concept of spheres of influence (see Heath, 2018). The nature of any dialogue to be conducted between the two major powers in the context of this emerging situation is yet to be determined.
Prospects for cooperation? Four scenarios for the future

**SCENARIO 1:**

**CONFLICT**

Competition or conflict between all states; ‘clash of civilisations’; anarchy; aggressive politics; a war of all against all.

Rival perceptions of cultural superiority; struggle for domination; power politics.

All-out conflict on all levels: cultural, political, economic and technological.

**SCENARIO 2:**

**BLOCISM**

Avoiding conflict through non-interference in respective spheres of interest; non-intervention and abstaining from war.

Does not address root causes; hence cannot resolve growing misunderstanding.

Simmering conflict; clash highly probable sooner or later.

**SCENARIO 3:**

**DIALOGUE BETWEEN CIVILISATION STATES**

Alliance of the ‘Rest’ against the West; mutual understanding between civilisation states; common goal of reforming the US-led order.

Various mechanisms and formats of cooperation in the political, economic and technological, and cultural spheres.

Constant standoff between the West and the ‘Rest’; simmering conflict, threatening escalation.

**SCENARIO 4:**

**GLOBAL DIALOGUE**

Global engagement; mutual understanding.

Requires concessions from the West and acceptance by the ‘Rest’ that certain elements of the old order will remain.

Cooperation through various arrangements and formats in the political, economic and technological, and cultural spheres.

Peaceful multipolar world order.
3.1. Impressions from civilisation states

The civilisation state or state civilisation is a somewhat confusing idea and for simplicity the concepts are used interchangeably. What is important is the distinction between a system built on states and system that includes states that see themselves also as civilisations.
The distinction is replete with striking socio-political variations with attendant implications for how we might reconstruct the world order. The notion of a civilisation, by implication, rejects an understanding of universal liberal truths and principles of the kind that have underpinned the understanding of world order of the major Western democracies, at least for the 70 years following the end of World War Two. For civilisations, as liberals would argue, there are no universal political truths, only particularistic civilisational truths. The case studies that follow would beg to differ and suggest that this is not how it is seen through the lenses of civilisation states.

An ability to make sense of the contradictory, and in some instances directly competitive, nature of the relationship between states and civilisations, and the degree to which these players can secure an accommodation, will determine the future of any new world order. The task is both conceptual and analytical but it will amount to little without firm empirical foundations. While it cannot be comprehensive, part three attempts to address minimal empirical needs; hence its focus on the several crucial players in the civilisational debate: China, India, Russia, Turkey, and the region of Southeast Asia. The short essays are intended to provide us with alternatives sets of lenses through which to look at the problem of world order. Their utility is the degree of variation that they inject into the conversation about global order, for so long circumscribed by what we might call ‘orthodox’ liberal thinking. Coming to terms with this variance is what makes the prospect of a dialogue of civilisations so difficult but so important.
China is engaging in a strategy of selective economic engagement and integration with globalisation. It aims not to dismantle the world order but rather remake it to reflect China’s own interests. But for China, culture is also of paramount national focus. China sees culture as an engine to initiate, lead, and balance political and economic development.

3.2.1. China’s provision of material products for the world

Since the 19th century, China has suffered both semi-feudal and semi-colonial structures. It is said that the more wounds a nation suffers, the more vitality its civilisation will have. Four decades after Deng Xiaoping’s Open Door policy began, China has made visible progress (China Daily, 2018).

Politically, as President Xi concluded at the 40-year achievement ceremony, “Adhering to the leadership of the Party and strictly administering the Party in an all-round way are the key and fundamental to the success of reform and opening up” (China Hot News, 2018).
Economically, China is integrated into the global economy and has become central to the world’s largest manufacturing supply chains. China’s share of global economic output rose from 2% in 1978 to 15% in 2015. China’s per capita gross domestic product (GDP), in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), is nearly ten times that of 40 years ago. China’s economic success can be attributed to the free market, its culturally enshrined entrepreneurial spirit, and experiences through which it has learned from other developed countries (Weijing, n.d.).

However, it has become clear over the course of 2018 that China’s unique model of capitalism and its global manufacturing supply chains have made it a target, particularly for the US. The world is thriving at the cost of the Chinese environment and Chinese labour. But this is not sustainable. The key contemporary issue from a Chinese perspective is the question of what China could contribute to a multilateral world. Does the answer lie in its civilisational approach, which suggests a non-instrumental and humanistic way of living, as opposed to the neoliberal instrumental alternative?

3.2.2. China’s contribution of cultural values to a multilateral world

Core Chinese values: Ren (仁) and ‘all-under-heaven’. In The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism, Max Weber (1958) employed a cultural perspective to explore the reason why capitalism could only have developed in the West. He argued that cultural values should be seen as the essential driver behind economic development. Since he wrote, a consensus has emerged that different cultures should be able to develop their own path of modernity. This has opened up the possibility of developing new economic models, as opposed to presuming a single dominant model should be applied universally.
Values have shaped human progress. But deeper investigation is required into what they contribute to sustainable and inclusive progress. The 18th century Enlightenment believed in an upward trajectory of human progress, which was to result in the intellectual and moral perfection of humanity. Humanitarian-moral progress now appears as a by-product of economic and technological progress. In Martin Buber’s (2006) analysis, the expansion of a purely material view of existence is at the heart of the propagation of the Ich–Es relationship – and even at the heart of relationships between human beings.

Chinese philosopher Qian Mu argues that the contribution of Chinese culture to the world is its humanistic spirit, which aims to establish the moral subject as the foundation for the creation of a collective life entity. The Confucian scholar Tu, in a powerful critique of the Enlightenment mentality – which he sees as aggressively anthropocentric, rationally instrumental, and possessively individualistic – suggests that Confucian core values like humanity, sympathy, reciprocity, civility, responsibility, public-spiritedness, and communality could offer a persuasive alternative to Western modernism. It is no longer adequate to characterise liberty, rationality, the rule of law, human rights, and the dignity of the individual as ‘universal’ values, whereas justice, righteousness, sympathy, civility, responsibility, and social solidarity are merely ‘Asian’ values (Weiming Tu, 1979, p. 9.)

The current Chinese proposal to build a community of common destiny was introduced by President Xi Jinping in November 2012. Its cultural origins are referred to as Ren and all-under-heaven theory. In ancient China, there are two theoretical approaches for the regulation of human society:

i. The moral approach. This begins with Confucius’ emphasis on humanity’s ethical subjectivity, which extends from the individual to others, and then to society.
ii. The Cosmopolitan approach. This emerges from Daoism and emphasises a cosmopolitan objectivity that extends from the Cosmos mind to social ethics and then further to individual morality. In an ideal Confucian society, human relationships are largely non-instrumental (Ames and Rosemount, 1998). As Confucius says in the *Analects*, “One who is human-hearted helps others to take their stand; wanting to realise himself, one helps others to realise themselves”.

Confucian humanity takes a loving filial relationship as its basis and aims to maximise the relational potential of things, others, and ultimately the world through Ren (仁), the highest human virtue. Ren’s personal, social, and cosmological traits constitute the essence of Chinese culture. In addition, an ancient ‘all-under-heaven’ world theory proposes investigating human issues in a holistic manner (Zhao, n.d.).

Looking forward through these distinctly Chinese lenses suggests a need to break through a closed world structure that promotes the rational agent or protected self while sacrificing the feelings and bodily existence of others. To foster an open world structure requires a new framework of cultural, political, economic, and religious analysis.

The Chinese micro and macro ideal type concepts of Ren and the all-under-heaven theory are intended to take us beyond a simply material existence and contribute to the new discourse of building a community of common destiny.

3.2.3. Putting cultural ideals into practice

Putting cultural ideals into practice is the fundamental task of humanity. Each generational model depends on the inception of a new school of thought. Classical liberal theory led to the
Considering civilisation states and regions: Actors beyond a Western liberal order

classic initial liberal economic model, which in turn led to a neoliberal ideology and the neoliberal economic paradigm, which has been found wanting. From a Chinese perspective, an inter-civilisational dialogue towards a community of common destiny offers an alternative and/or an additional theoretical framework. However, it needs a platform to be realised.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) proposed by the Chinese government is such a platform, where culture and economics can form a positive cycle for sustainable development. The BRI involves five dimensions: economics, trade, infrastructure, policy, and culture. The Chinese government has striven to look beyond material benefits and enhance the importance of a ‘civilisational identity’ that transforms immediate identities and integrates societies into a broader community of common destiny.

3.2.4. Culture as power to balance and lead development

The current world order is imperfect. In theory and in practice, people often claim that problems arise from the clash of civilisations. It is rather that human civilisation as a whole is losing its balance from the inside. Since our current problems are most commonly observed when humans cross national and civilisational boundaries, research on solutions should occur within the perspective of a wider human civilisation, whereby the ‘clash’ might be seen as more between material civilisation and spiritual civilisation, rather than between Western and Eastern civilisations.

One reason for this imbalance between civilisations is liberal theory’s limited view of human rationality and freedom. Since everyone deserves a decent life to ideally grow from biological man into a social, political, economic, cultured man, and ultimately to civilised, ecological, free, rational man, a more humanistic approach is necessary.
Considering civilisation states and regions: Actors beyond a Western liberal order

A civilisational approach, as the highest level of a humanistic approach, is a dialectical process using human rationality – i.e., freedom – to pursue life and its meaning. That said, a dialogue of civilisations implies expansion, not only in economic and political spheres but in the sphere of human cultures as well.

The Chinese value system pursues developments in balance, between freedom and responsibility, rights and obligations, individuality and community. To identify these Chinese philosophical ideas doesn’t mean they have been perfectly realised or that they only belong to China. Instead, they are unfinished ideals that call for common effort from the whole of humanity. To transform instrumental rationality into all round rationality will help balance human civilisation such that minds and hearts finally meet. Echoing president Xi’s words,

“We have a thousand reasons to get China-US relations right, and not one reason to spoil the China-US relationship” (Xi Jinping, speaking at his first meeting with Donald Trump, 6 April 2017, cited by Holland, 2017).
3.3. Civilisational discourses in Russian geopolitics

Kira Preobrazhenskaya

3.3.1. Russia as a civilisation: Between the West and the East

The nation-state is a construct that seems to ensure solidarity and public agreement are subjected to rational management and to make the realisation of certain tasks possible. The principles of the social contract, secular values, and cultural identity help describe nationhood in robust terms. The conditional limitations of a nation-state provide a number of benefits: visibility of space, culture, and ethnic composition; clarity of historical trajectories and a certainty of which values receive widespread emphasis.

By contrast, in the multifaceted system of a civilisation, we can find ourselves virtually guessing at its internal mechanisms and historical foundations: civilisations have profound roots and present a mosaic of heterogeneous fragments. Thus, definitions of civilisation tend to differ. Civilisational logic is ‘organic’ in character. Russian thinkers who articulated the origins of a theory of cultural-historical types of society always thought in this way. For Nikolay Danilevsky and Konstantin Leontiev, cultural-historical types of society, or civilisations, tend to develop in ‘biological’ cycles: birth, bloom, and extinction.3

3 Nikolay Danilevsky (1822–1885) was a Russian sociologist and culturologist. He wrote Russia and Europe, in which he looks at the differences between Slavic and German–Roman cultures. Konstantin Leontiev (1831–1891) was a Russian philosopher and publicist. His work also looked at the development of cultures and civilisations.
In Russia’s ongoing ‘Russia and Europe’ discussion, the West has always been a reference point for self-identification (see the work of Peter Chaadaev, Danilevsky, and Leontiev). It has been seen as a kind of frontier, reflected by the ‘body’ of Russian culture in formation.

At the same time, Russia perceives itself as a Eurasian civilisation. As Fyodor Dostoevsky noted, “in Europe we were Tatars and in Asia we were Europeans” (1881). Due to this inter-civilisational position – “in the west, the Catholic Church; in the far east, China; in the south, the Muslim world” (Gumilyov, 1992) – Russia has become a buffer between West and East. Kluchevskiy argues that Russia has traditionally “guarded the rear of Europe” and has been the leading Eurasian civilisation. Lev Gumilyov saw it this way: “Russia is the heiress of Turkic Khaganate and Mongolian Ulus”.

Russia has acted as both an Orthodox power, providing support to Orthodox states, and also as a natural ally of China.

In Russia’s national self-perception, the concept of non-violence appears to have been extremely important. For instance, as The Tale of Bygone Years and other historical sources illustrate, the formation of nationhood in Russia was peaceful, its Christianisation was voluntary, and the incremental advance of the Russian empire’s borders was not seen in terms of imperial expansion. Moreover, an important aspect of Russian domestic policy is the infrastructural and cultural development of all of its territories – such as state programmes for the preservation of languages and writings of smaller nations and people groups – that combine to shape the country.

[4] Lev Gumilyov (1912 – 1992) was a Soviet author of the interdisciplinary theory of civilisational and ethnic genesis, particularly noted for his work, Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of the Earth.

[5] This is how Ioannis Kapodistrias (Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1816 – 1822), became the first ruler of an independent Greece.
3.3.2. Ideological transformation in the 20th century and its influence on Russian foreign policy

After 1917, Russia, and later the USSR, began implementing a new ideological project in which national aspirations were denied in the name of universal goals like social justice and the common good. In the opinion of Immanuel Wallerstein (1995), while the 20th century saw the formation of various configurations of the liberal ideological model, the foundation of the USSR’s social ideology could be identified in the idea of a new man, freed from the ‘false’ logic of economic pragmatism and egotism and it was this that allowed the USSR to see its fraternal republics ‘acculturate’.

The experience of successful intercultural relations in the USSR is still one of its most positive factors. The peoples of the republics of the former USSR continue to be carriers of a common culture.

The decline of the USSR’s geopolitical strategy was initially marked in a December 1988 speech by Mikhail Gorbachev at the UN General Assembly, in which he proclaimed the “common interests” of humanity as the foundation of Soviet foreign policy. The subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was an event that is difficult to comprehend, even to this day, as some of the former Soviet republics started to reproduce the Western liberal model in the hope of solving their accumulated contradictions.

However, the new nation-states emerging from fragments of the former ‘Soviet civilisation’ generated new crises due to inter-ethnic fragmentation and the disintegration of long standing cultural and economic ties. For Russia, this period became a social trauma. As the former core of the USSR, it took upon itself the burden of blame for the negative outcomes of the Soviet system.
3.3.3. Russia in the 21st century: Once again between West and East

A new Russian geopolitical outlook began with Vladimir Putin’s speech at the 2007 Munich Security Conference. He identified the basis of a new multipolar geopolitical model, in which the economic potential of the new centres of global growth would be converted into political influence and strengthened multipolarity at a time when the risks of global terrorism and the challenges of NATO’s eastward movement were pressuring Russia to strengthen its armed forces.

In turn, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned of the risks of the recurrence of the “destructive nationalism of the 19th century” (2008) as the nationalist tendencies of the former republics and partners of the USSR negated some of the positive gains made in the 20th century.

"From an economic perspective, Russia has not fully realised its potential. But from the point of view of its existing cultural experience, its role may increase as points of interests converge with the emerging strategic geopolitical patterns.

The global financial crisis of 2008–2009 identified “imbalances and disproportions” (Putin, 2019) in the principal global models of the late 20th century, which seemed to correspond less and less to the economic realities of modernity. The emergence of new economies with their own interests and agendas reflects the formation of new logics and dynamics of global development.
From an economic perspective, Russia has not fully realised its potential. But from the point of view of its existing cultural experience, its role may increase as points of interests converge with the emerging strategic geopolitical patterns. This understanding is reflected in Putin’s concept of the ‘Russian world’.

Vyacheslav Nikonov argues that, “if inside our country, being Russian most often means ethno-cultural identity and outside it means citizenship, then outside the concept of what it means to be ‘Russian’ has become supra-ethnic and in a certain sense ‘civilisational’. The Russian world is poly-ethnic, multi-religious and poly-semantic. This is a global phenomenon” (2017).

In this context, the Russian language has become an important factor of economic and intercultural interaction: for the CIS countries in particular, it has infrastructural importance. To give one example, in the Middle East and North Africa, graduates from Soviet and Russian universities have ensured that the Russian language is one of the drivers of the tourism industry.

3.3.4. Civilisations in the digital age

According to Alexey Gromyko, a civilisational discourse both feeds on, and responds to, a multipolar, polychrome world view:

“...interest in this new categorisation increased as the popularity of Eurocentrism and Western centrism as a whole declined, recognising the value (if not equivalence) of different cultures, value systems, and stories as the concept of a polycentric world was asserted in the discourse and in practice” (2010).

As Gromyko stresses in the modern discussions about Russian civilisational identity, there is nothing new: “... after completing
the experiment to create a new Soviet civilisation, we returned (or rolled back?) to the algorithm of the confrontation between Westernisers and Slavophiles of a century ago” (Ibid).

Civilisations with deep histories and complex ethnic and confessional compositions in the contemporary era can find themselves at serious risk. Covering large spaces, historical perspectives, and value ‘architectures’, they can struggle to maintain their civilisational identity. In this sense, the revival of the discourse of nation–states suggests an approach to fixing social identity along the simplified lines of ethnic or confessional uniqueness, whereas “civilisational self-awareness is actualised in the presence of another... The ‘we–they’ antithesis plays a decisive role in the cultural-historical meta-experiment” (Panarin, 1995).

Taking into account the increasing virtualisation of information, it is becoming more difficult for civilisations to maintain a balance between their depth of history and the complexity of their values. As Henry Kissinger points out, “users of the internet emphasise contextualising or conceptualising meaning. They rarely interrogate history or philosophy; as a rule, they demand information relevant to their immediate practical needs” (2018). That, according to Kissinger, is how a transformation of historical knowledge and the authentic appearance of cultures and civilisations occurs: “There is the very strong likelihood that many of these ‘claimed facts’ will be recorded as ‘verified or established facts’, rendering any change in the course of analysis virtually impossible and compromising our collective understanding of our history for decades to come” (Yakunin, 2018).
3.4. States versus civilisations in the modern world order: A perspective from Turkey

N Selin Senocak

How to deal with the concepts of civilisation and culture is difficult; together they constitute a perfect case of semantic entanglement, especially for the Turkish nation. Ziya Gökalp, founding father of Turkish sociology, locates Turkish nationalism and state ideology on a civilisation-culture spectrum. His holistic definition of a culture-civilisation duality remains a key to Turkey’s socio-political construction and geopolitical orientation. He described civilisation as:

“... the sum of techniques, knowledge and methods in a society which is responding to material problems and leading people to individualism and utilitarianism. Culture, however, shapes social norms, values and identity and leads individuals into social solidarity because of its altruistic and idealistic nature ... the main reasons for the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of independence movements among minorities were culture-civilisation discordance and cultural awakening. The attempt to create an Ottoman identity (Ottoman cosmopolitanism) among different nations was a grave error, and the Islamist endeavour to form a Muslim nation was fruitless because of cultural differences among Muslim groups” (see Gökalp, 1959).

Between the 6th and 21st century, the Turks followed a Eurasian path from Central Asia to Western Europe that turned this conquering nomadic people into mobile migrants anchored in an Anatolian national territory. On the one hand, there is a vast Eurasian and Mediterranean imperial space from Central Asia to Western Europe, and on the other hand there is Asia Minor or Anatolia, which became the nation-state of Turkey in a decade.
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(1913–1923) (see Bruneau, 2015). The Turkish population has undergone several mutations but has preserved a well-defined core cultural identity throughout the process of their evolution.

The objective of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was to establish an independent, modern, secular state and to join Western civilisation. The new national identity he sought to create denied racism and embraced all ethnicities and religions. He was the first secularising reformer in the Muslim world. He remodelled the Muslim state to reflect contemporary European values. Despite the Westernisation process the Turkish socio-political system had undergone for decades, the sense of belonging or not belonging to Europe was – and is – still considered a paradox of the Turkish identity. For decades, Turkey’s accession process within the EU was intensive and highly controversial, brimming with ups and downs.

Europe’s ‘Turco-sceptic’ positioning, which has persisted for 55 years, nourished a Turkish desire to pursue a more balanced, multidimensional foreign policy instead of its traditional Western-dominated policy.

Due to its geopolitical position and cultural identity as a Muslim secular state, Turkey saw itself as a cultural bridge between the West and Muslim countries. Nevertheless, cultural misunderstanding between Turkey and the EU was always a source of tension affecting Turkey’s accession (see Senocak, 2017).
Europe’s ‘Turco-sceptic’ positioning, which has persisted for 55 years, nourished a Turkish desire to pursue a more balanced, multidimensional foreign policy instead of its traditional Western-dominated policy (see Dinc and Yetim, 2016).

The Turkish public has abandoned EU accession-related hopes in the face of rising Islamophobia and Turco-phobia and negative perceptions of Turkey in Europe (see Senocak, 2018). Especially after the coup attempt on 15 July 2016, Turkey has felt betrayed by the US and EU, marking a turning point in Turkey’s political history and its diplomatic relations with the EU and US. Turkish patriotic feelings have intensified, allowing the government to change its liberal political orientation to a more nationalistic one.

Since the Party of Justice and Development (AKP) assumed power in 2002, Turkey has progressively pursued a new foreign policy. The AKP is supported by Islamist groups wanting to become new leaders in Dar-ul-Islam (the house of Islam). For the AKP, Islam is a ‘fundamental identity’, while being Ottoman, Turkish, or Circassian are ‘subordinate identities’. The new Turkish foreign policy would therefore not be ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ as described by many scholars, but rather a new ‘Pan-Islamism’. In the context of the AKP’s role, the only allusion to the theory of Neo-Ottomanism is geographical not political (see Senocak, 2017).

The Muslim world encompasses 57 countries and 1.8 billion adherents to the faith, who comprise over 24% of the world’s population (see Pew Research, 2017). It represents an economic market potentially as important as China. This opportunity has encouraged the AKP to pursue a pragmatic, economy-based, multi-dimensional, hybrid foreign policy that could result in increasing economic ties with different regions of the world. Turkey wants to become a leading country to guide the Muslim world and views the Middle East and Africa as an indispensable hinterland.
The AKP’s vision of Turkey is that of a country that goes out of its way to defend its Muslim brothers abroad; it infuses religion with politics, and gives rise to what it sees as a long-neglected Anatolian class (see Stratfor, 2010). President Erdoğan seeks ‘to be the voice of the oppressed’ Muslim world and ward off Western powers from the Muslim backyard, all while emphasising that the established Western-dominated world order is no longer able to resolve global security problems.

Nevertheless, the gap between the AKP and Arab Islamists’ political views is important. Some of the radical Islamic political organisations are opposed to the Turkish model in the Arab world. The question of whether the AKP government has sufficient foreign policy experience and knowledge to play this leadership role effectively in the Muslim world is uncertain.

With the world’s geostrategic centre increasingly shifting to the East, the ‘Eurasianist’ perspective of Turkey now seems to go beyond ephemeral discussion and is gaining institutional and political depth (see Gurcan, 2017). Turkey’s Eurasian vision is not new: after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turks discovered their kinship with this region and began to view it as the Turkish homeland. Turkey immediately created cultural and economic ties as the leading sister country with the newly independent Turkic republics with the ambition of creating a ‘Turkic world stretching from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China’. However, during this politically and economically turbulent period, Turkey has failed to respond to the expectations of these countries, which are still living under the shadow and influence of Russia.

Since 2016, the new coalition government of AKP and MHP (the Nationalist Movement Party) has developed a pro-Eurasian and anti-Western foreign policy. After the Syrian crisis, Turkey decided to use hard-power instruments instead of soft-power policies for the security and protection of its borders, which were becoming a national security problem and creating tensions with
other Arab countries. In this regard, the new coalition, with public support, defends the need to establish a strategic axis with Russia and other Eurasian states such as Iran, China, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to oppose US and EU policies which they believe aim to undermine Turkey’s national unity.

Western civilisation is seen in Turkey to be in the midst of a significant value crisis of its own; since Turkish value systems have not been well-received for decades, Eurasia can offer a meaningful strategic alternative to Turkey as a crossroads of the civilisations and arbiter of a new global order.

Finally, for more than a decade, AKP rule in Turkey has been dominated by the civilisational approach, which treats Afro-Eurasia as a broader region that could be stretched to the widest boundaries of the Ottoman geo-cultural realm (see Ersen, 2017). Turkey’s multi-civilisational identity is a pivotal power that bridges and influences different regions, continents, religions, and civilisations. Its increasing global role, despite its conflicted domestic policy, can help create a geopolitical equilibrium for the modern world order.
India is widely regarded today as an emerging world power. It is set to become the world’s most populous country and second-largest economy after China. It has a powerful navy plying the Indian Ocean and it is exercising influence and leadership within international negotiations and organisations. Like China, India is also using civilisation to support its claim to global power status.

The Indian ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Narendra Modi often invokes the country’s traditional principles and civilisational achievements before foreign audiences. For example, in 2018, at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Modi declared:

“Oceans had an important place in Indian thinking since pre-Vedic times. Thousands of years ago, the Indus Valley Civilisation as well as Indian peninsula had maritime trade. Oceans and Varuna – the Lord of all Waters – find a prominent place in the world’s oldest books – the Vedas. In ancient Puranas, written thousands of years ago, the geographical definition of India is with reference to the seas: उर्दू यत समुद्र समुद्रसेन, meaning the land which lies to the north of the seas.”

More controversially, the Modi government has appointed a committee of scholars to provide a “holistic study of origin and evolution of Indian culture since 12,000 years before the present and its interface with other cultures of the world” (Jain and Lasseter, 2018). While this may seem innocuous, the real purpose of the committee appears to be more political: to assert that Hindu culture is more central and longer lasting than any others in India’s multicultural mosaic and to this end, to “prove” that Hindus are descended from India’s first inhabitants. Indeed, the
committee’s chairman has openly declared that his brief is to “rewrite certain aspects of ancient history” (Ibid).

India, one of the three earliest civilisations, along with Sumer and Egypt, can trace its origins back to the Indus Valley civilisation from at least the third millennium BC. Indeed, the civilisation of India, like that of China, is also one of the few continuous world civilisations. Moreover, the modern orientalist view of ancient India – as the antithesis of Greece/the West, or despotic, mystical, imperial, and other-worldly – is misleading. The Indian world order, like that of Greece, Rome, and China, was fundamentally eclectic, combining rationalism–spiritualism, realism–idealism, republicanism–monarchy, and anarchic and hierarchic orders.

For example, ancient Indian philosophy and statecraft combined elements of both idealism and realism. Kautilya, minister to the founding Mauryan emperor Chandragupta, wrote Arthashastra (The Science of Material Gain) in which he prescribes “completely practical and unsentimental” (Violatti, 2014) policies to conquer enemies, expand territory and manage empire, including through such means as war, assassination, and spying. The thoughts of Kautilya and Machiavelli share many similarities, but Kautilya predates the latter by a long stretch of history. He also makes the rules more accountable in regards to the happiness of the people. And it was Kautilya who developed one of the first systematic frameworks for an alliance, with his ‘Mandala’ theory.

Kautilya marked the highpoint of ancient realism and rationalism. But the idealism and moral statecraft of ancient India came from King Ashoka, the third emperor of the Maurya Dynasty, who ruled between 269 and 232 BC. After the Kalinga War, circa 261 BC, he pursued a policy of moral conquest and humanitarianism, called Dharma (Dhamma), or Law of Piety, or righteousness: “a sense of universality of affection for all people; an early form of humanitarianism” (Draper, 1995). Ashoka stipulated clear injunctions against cruel and inhumane punishment and that
people in neighbouring states, in return for fealty, should live without fear (Dhammika, 1993).

Yet another example of inter-civilisational ethics in ancient India comes from the *Code of Manu*, a classical and influential legal text, which provides clear injunctions against cruel treatment of combatants and civilians alike. These have close parallels with the modern principles of the Geneva Conventions concerning humanitarian treatment in war. In Manu’s *Code*, there are strict injunctions against harming civilians, as well as soldiers. Manu’s code had strong resonance in Myanmar, pre-Islamic Malaya, and Indonesia.

The Geneva Conventions stipulates that “Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed ‘hors de combat’ by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely”. (Common Article 3 relating to Non-International Armed Conflict, Geneva Convention 1949).

*Manusmriti* prescribes that: “When he (the ruler) fights with his foes in battle, let him not strike”:

“who joins the palms of his hands (in supplication)”,
“who sits down, who says ‘I am thine’”,
“who sleeps”,
“who is disarmed, who looks on without taking part in the fight”,
“whose weapons are broken”,
“one afflicted (with sorrow)”,
“who has been grievously wounded, who is in fear, nor one who has turned to flight”.  
(Bühler, 1886)
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India offers a good example of a basic truth about most civilisations: they vary in their internal homogeneity but also combine diverse and often contradictory attributes that inform their worldviews, political institutions, and foreign relations. The tendency to stereotype civilisations as ‘progressive’ or ‘backward’, ‘this-worldly’ or ‘other-worldly’, ‘rational’ or ‘spiritual’, without considering their internal differences, results in distorted understanding. Furthermore, India provides ample evidence that civilisations are not singular, but emerge, exist, and progress within a complex of civilisations that generate internal diversity within them and interconnectedness among them.

The classical Indian worldview and political order

- **Ganasanghas** (Gana: people, sanghas: assemblies) – These polities found between 600 BC and the first half of the first millennium AD, can be likened to ancient republics whose heads were not hereditary monarchs, but were clan-based oligarchies which sometimes formed a confederation.

- The origins of the state: from Buddhism came the first social contract theory of the state with the need for law and controlling authority to rule and maintain justice (Thopar, 2002, p. 149).

- **Chakravartin**: the idea of a universal emperor. The rise of the Maurya empire around 322 BC out of the conquest and merger of the Ganasanghas offers an example of India’s transition from anarchic to hierarchic system.

- **Arthasastra** (science of politics) – a veritable source of realist thought attributed to Kautilya. It provides descriptions of statehood and prescriptions of how to defeat your enemies through war, spying, alliances, and conquest.

- **Dharma** (Righteousness) – formulated by King Ashoka (268–232 BC), is a source of idealist and humanist thought stressing moral order, abstinence from war, and protection of the people from cruel and unjust rule.
The recent statements by Modi stressing India’s ancient civilisation are thus hardly unique. They resemble similar statements by the leaders from non-Western countries such as Turkey and China on their respective civilisational achievements. While to some degree these statements can be dismissed as efforts to shore up domestic positions (Dorsey, 2019b; Rachman, 2019a), they should not overshadow the more profound and broader societal values that actually exist. While the leaders of China, India, and Turkey have been accused of using civilisational discourse to bolster their hold on power and international appeal, this has to be seen in the context of their current domestic political systems and regime characteristics.

Just as some of the policies adopted by the Trump Administration on immigration, human rights, and equity – in healthcare for example – are a violation of the ethical principles of Western European civilisation, so too parading civilisation-based concepts, such as the harmony or Tianxia (‘all-under-heaven’) by leaders in China, Hindutva by Modi’s BJP in India, or the historical achievements of Islam vis-à-vis the West by Erdoğan in Turkey are politically motivated and geared to regime security goals. But this should not obscure the fact that there is plenty in Chinese, Indian, and Islamic civilisations that genuinely upholds
universal ethical principles of justice, benevolence, openness, humane governance, and representation of people’s voices.

While Western conceptions of modernity often ignore or dismiss ethical principles derived from classical civilisations of non-Western nations, this does not mean the latter do not offer genuine humanist principles and practices that can benefit the West. While civilisational ethics can be particularly toxic in the hands of populist regimes, they can also be a positive force in world politics.

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The current fears about the rise of the civilisation state further undermining the liberal international order mainly stress the unsavoury and repressive aspects of non-Western civilisations, thereby feeding into a revival of Huntington’s clash-of-civilisations’ thesis.

A careful and unbiased reading of the history of civilisations will reveal that they combine elements of universalism and particularism, tolerance and hatred, compassion and coercion. Unfortunately, the current fears about the rise of the civilisation state further undermining the liberal international order mainly stress the unsavoury and repressive aspects of non-Western civilisations, thereby feeding into a revival of Huntington’s clash-of-civilisations’ thesis, despite the fact that these civilisations provide plenty of ideas and practices that speak to a high regard for domestic and international ethics.
Southeast Asian civilisational perspectives have been largely ignored in recent years, yet they are now proving to be tenacious and may help shape an Asian vision of a new global governance order.

When new post-colonial states emerged in the region last century, some analysts highlighted civilisational and historical dynamics rather than invoke the generalisations of modernisation theory (see Higgott, 1993). Instead of bemoaning the failure of Western-style ‘constitutional government’ in 1950s Indonesia, the historian Harry Benda suggested the country was merely “adjusting ... to its own identity”, creating a so-called Guided Democracy with “a glittering palace entourage” (1964).

There was analysis as well of what ‘power’ meant in Indonesia, and how that particular understanding might influence modern political behaviour, both domestically and in foreign relations. The manner in which the region had responded to great religio-cultural systems – Hindu-Buddhism and Islam, and, especially in the case of Vietnam, Confucianism – attracted special attention, partly with an eye to predicting the ultimate impact of the Western colonial experience. Southeast Asian societies, so it was argued, were far from passive in these transmission processes. They valued autonomy, and were creative in ‘localising’ foreign influences sometimes “drain[ing]” them “of their original significance” (Lieberman, 2003).

Such early investigations, seeking to identify the civilisational character of the region, did not avoid criticism. A turning point, however, was the late 1980s – with the emergence of a unipolar world, and a new confidence in the globalisation of liberal ideas.
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as well as of communications and economies. In the words of Clifford Geertz, who had championed the interpretation of cultures in Southeast Asia, questions “rained down … on the very idea of a cultural scheme” (1973). In the study of international relations (IR) in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, as Pinar Bilgin (2007, p. 11) has pointed out, students were not encouraged to be curious about the non-West. Non-Western dynamics tended to be explained away “by superimposing ‘Western’ categories”. Wang Gungwu – Southeast Asia’s most prominent historian – complained that, far from having universal validity, “the whole language” of the discipline leads “anybody in Asia studying IR” to “an Anglo-American world view” (Kee Beng, 2015).

This worldview, as Wang observed, does not ‘match the reality’ of what has been taking place in Asia – something increasingly obvious in the second decade of the 21st century. In Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, where Western analysts once predicted religion would retreat into the private sphere, Islam has been growing in influence, claiming authority over legal and social organisation. Liberalism has been denounced, even in Malaysia’s Institute of Moderation, as the enemy of Islamic institutions and a threat to the authority of Allah and His Prophet. In Indonesia, Tim Lindsey has stressed the potential of growing numbers of “Islamic hardliners” to damage the country’s “hard-won advances towards liberalism and tolerance” (2018). The progress of Islamic law and its punishment regime in highly prosperous Brunei has received much publicity, especially among liberal critics.

As for how religion and ethnicity might influence the structure of relations between states, small Islamic groups have called for a Caliphate that would cross national borders in the region. It is also remembered that, in the immediate post-War period, some leaders had aspirations towards building a Melayu Raya or ‘Indonesia Raya’ – a ‘Greater’ Malay or Indonesian polity – that would incorporate both the British and Dutch governed island
areas of Southeast Asia. In the 1960s, there was a brief attempt by the leadership of the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia to create a ‘confederation of nations of Malay origin’ with the name ‘Maphilindo’.

It cannot be taken for granted that the current state structure of Southeast Asia will withstand any ethnic or separatist challenge, especially one reinforced by religious commitment. Even in the Buddhist countries of the mainland – Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos – religious allegiance continues to be a driver, as demonstrated in the violent Burmese opposition to the Muslim Rohingya people. Buddhism is well known to have provided cement in the task of nation-building, and China as well as India has used Buddhist appeals in building relations with ASEAN states. The religion that once enveloped the whole of Asia – from India through Southeast Asia to Japan – inculcated principles that are said to continue to influence inter-state relations to this day. The religion’s unifying potential cannot be ignored. Conversely, the division between the Buddhist mainland and the Islamic islands of Southeast Asia, which developed in more recent centuries, might yet be harnessed by religious extremists in a way that would transform the political structures and international relations of ASEAN.

Political institutions inherited from the European colonial period were almost bound to lose prestige over time, sometimes as a result of rediscovering earlier traditions. Kingship has long been a distinguishing feature of Southeast Asia. Not only do three states continue to be monarchies, but most of the other countries have leaders influenced more by authoritarian than democratic traditions. Assumptions about the unstoppable progress of liberal democracy are flawed. Without doubt, Singapore is a supremely modern state, and has remained under the control of one political party since its independence and has explicitly rejected key elements in liberal individualist ideology; sometimes citing
Confucian thinking on the balance between community, family, individual, and government.

In recent times, a striking example of the salience of civilisational drivers is the emerging configuration of Southeast Asia–China relations. This is particularly so with the contest in the South China Sea where many commentators, in the words of Robert Kaplan, assumed that Southeast Asian states would be “arrayed against China” and “dependent upon the United States for diplomatic and military backing” (2018). Things do not appear to be turning out that way. Most of the ASEAN states seek to avoid major power confrontation and eschew alliance-building. Malaysia’s Mahathir has been bargaining hard with China, that “big and powerful” state that has the capacity to “maintain peace in the region”. Mahathir and other Southeast Asian leaders appear to favour not push-back but rather a smart and patient accommodation with China (Milner, 2017).

Mahathir is relaxed about calling Malaysia a ‘small country’, invoking a long history of hierarchical relations in the region. Southeast Asian regimes of the past were concerned more about prestige than sovereignty and saw opportunities in hierarchy – especially for those with refined diplomatic skills. Equality was often not an aspiration. Also, because territory did not matter as much as people, there could be flexibility in border relations; which may well today soften tensions in the South China Sea. Another powerful norm – non-interference in a country’s internal affairs – may throw light on why the original ASEAN countries were comfortable incorporating Vietnam and other communist regimes into their expanded organisation and also why there is today a distaste for the idea of a quadrilateral – US, Japan, India, Australia – alliance based on democratic ideological principles.

Thus, the dangers of analysing the Southeast Asian order in a civilisational vacuum are obvious despite the fact that


‘sovereignty’, ‘power’ and the ‘nation-state’ have entered the conversation of the region, along with other Western international relations concepts such as ‘balancing’, ‘hedging’, and ‘bandwagoning’. There is a long history of concern, for instance, about moral balances as well as power balances and for embracing (or socialising) rather than balancing against a ‘rising power’.

To speak today of ‘rising powers’ can itself be dangerous, if it implies such states, whether in ancient Greece, 19th-century Europe, or modern Asia, have universal characteristics. The Southeast Asian experience is that China, when it possessed enormous military power in the 15th century, sent great armadas to the region without establishing an empire. Also, the propagation of Indian culture across the whole of Southeast Asia was not based on political power. It was European imperialism that understood prestige in terms of political domination.

In all areas of interaction between Southeast Asia and China, we see challenges to liberal democracy, the strengthening of religious commitment, and the operation of stubborn cultural dynamics. Whether there is a case for viewing the region as a single civilisation is another matter. It can claim, for sure, to be more than a meeting place for world civilisations. Southeast Asian communities have in general been creatively open to foreign peoples and foreign ideas and adept in negotiating hierarchies. Despite the great religious and ethnic diversity of the region, the political leadership of Southeast Asia has also been surprisingly united in promoting an organic form of regional unity, and in developing strategies to maintain Southeast Asian elbow-room, especially in these times of growing great-power rivalry.
The civilisation state

NATIONAL IDENTITY constructed on the basis of civilisational heritage

CONCENTRATED AND POPULAR POWER
- Political unity
- Emphasis on national sovereignty

DOMESTIC POLITICS

FOREIGN POLICY
- Narrative of civilisational identity at the centre of demands for world order reconstruction

IMPlications for
- Aim to regain status and role in the international arena and build a more equal world
- Rejection of Western liberal values
- Independent foreign policy
- Mechanisms to reconstruct the world order

THE CIVILISATION STATE

Characteristics
- Big historical legacy
- Specific form of economic, social, and ideological organisation
- Shared culture: unique, ancient civilisational values, practices, and social norms

Civilizational heritage
3.7. Towards Eurasia?

What can we make of these ‘civilisational tropes’ of China, Russia, Turkey, India, and Southeast Asia? They represent both unique experiences and common themes.

The report argues that China’s aim is to not to dismantle the world order but to remake it to better reflect its own interests, in which culture is an engine to initiate, encourage, balance, and lead political and economic development. Jiahong Chen’s essay offers us a perspective on how Chinese philosophical thinking would change the commonly held views about how we should approach the issues of reforming that order. Specifically, Chen offers a Chinese view of the liberal paradigm contrasted with what a civilisational approach that insists on a macro focus on humanity as a whole would look like. This is reflected in empirical terms in a strategy of selective economic engagement and integration, as per the development of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as well as taking the cultural/ideational challenge to the US via a forward-leaning cultural diplomacy and assertive expressions of the uniqueness of China’s civilisational stature.

Chen locates this strategy, and activities such as the development of the BRI, in the context of a wider philosophical discourse offering an alternative reading to much Western analysis. Most instructively, she identifies flaws in liberalism, especially its emphasis on rationality at the expense of “humanity”, as a paradigm of order, and as a major cause of modern day crises. Xi Jinping, she notes, has repeatedly stressed China’s unique history and civilisation. His view has been promoted by influential intellectuals such as Zhang Weiwei (2012), author of *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State*, who argues China owes its rise to the rejection of Western political ideas and the adoption of a model that traces its roots to Confucianism and exam-based meritocratic traditions. Chen argues that this gives Beijing a way to draw other countries into its orbit, and away from the United States.

In the second essay, without explicitly arguing it, Kira Preobrazhenskaya provides us with a historical-cum-philosophical insight into why Russia, rather than China, constitutes today’s major revisionist power towards the international order. As De Tocqueville noted as long ago as 1830, Russia, along with the US, was destined to become the other global power. He mused that they would control half the globe each. While that is not the case, Russia is and will remain a significant state in determining the future; especially close to its borders, where it is a continental power whose interests inform its policy. It has both legitimate and expansionist geostrategic
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interests, but is, at least according to President Putin, not afforded the standing it deserves. Preobrazhenskaya makes it clear that historical resentment at the collapse of the Soviet Union, political culture, and geostrategy inform Russia’s modern day practices.

Indeed, Vladimir Putin does have a strategic vision for Russia emanating from history and culture. He will be happy with nothing less than: (i) keeping and regaining strong, if not formal, control over the countries of the former Soviet Empire – which are seen as Russia’s rightful historical sphere of influence, and indeed were recognised as such by the US at Yalta in 1945 (Pentagon, 2019, vii); (ii) the recognition of Russia as a power of equal international standing to the US and China. For this to happen, Putin is keen to revise the rules of the current liberal international order.

This revision is couched in essentially zero-sum terms vis-a-vis the role of the United States. For Russia to succeed, the US’ role and influence must be diminished. And Russia’s influence under Putin has undoubtedly grown, supported by a range of hybrid activities short of formal war. But the degree to which this is the view in the wider reaches of the Russian elite and population more generally is unclear. Current Russian strategy is driven by a sense of insecurity accompanied by a
deep-seated philosophical belief in the values, indeed superiority, of Russia as a civilisation (see Pentagon, 2019). As will be explained, it is the combination of these factors that makes Russia, not China, the major revisionist power.

Senocak, in her discussion of Turkey, demonstrates how Eurasianism as a historical concept borrows elements of Kemalism, Turkish nationalism, socialism, and radical secularism. In its modern form, the Turkish variant of Eurasianism is opposed to liberal capitalism and globalisation in their pure forms and possesses a belief that Western powers want to carve up Turkey. As a consequence, Senocak persuasively argues, Turkey’s future is in alignment with Russia, Central Asia, and China.

Senocak demonstrates how Turkish international relations and its view of the international order have moved over time from being strongly pro-European to now being strongly Eurasian. Turkey’s embrace of the Eurasianist idea takes on added significance in an environment in which it, like other players in the Great Game, increasingly has infrastructure-driven continental designs of its own. While these are potentially complementary with the Chinese BRI, they are also competitive with segments of it. Turkey envisages a railroad-powered Middle Corridor that would stretch from Turkey’s European
Considering civilisation states and regions: Actors beyond a Western liberal order

Considering civilisation states and regions:

Actors beyond a Western liberal order

border across Anatolia into the Caucasus and Central Asia.

We can draw from Acharya’s discussion of India an understanding of how proponents of the civilisation-state hypothesis see the post-Westphalian nation-state system and its Western dominance as an aberration of history. In the contemporary era, intellectual supporters of Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party project India as a Hindu-based civilisation rather than a multicultural nation-state. Modi’s minister of civil aviation, Jayant Sinha, suggests that at independence, India should have embraced its own culture instead of Western concepts. Talking to the Financial Times, Sinha preached cultural particularism. “In our view, heritage precedes the state ... People feel their heritage is under siege. We have a faith-based view of the world versus the rational-scientific view” (Rachman, 2019).

Thinking beyond Modi’s rhetoric on Hindu fundamentalism, we also see an Indian vision of a much wider role found in its incursions into Central Asia as part of its Connect Central Asia strategy announced in 2012; a year prior to Xi Jinping’s first articulation of the BRI. Both leaders, significantly, announced their policies in Central Asia, Xi Jinping in the Kazakh capital of Astana and then Indian minister Shri E. Ahamed in Kyrgyzstan’s Bishkek. Prime Minister Modi became the first Indian leader to visit all five former Soviet Central Asian republics since Jawaharlal Nehru in the 1960s.

In the final essay, Milner provides us with clarity as to the centrality of both religion and culture, and especially ethnicity, in any understanding of the international relations of Southeast Asia. This is a reality that makes much Western theorising – both liberal and realist – of the practice of international relations and diplomacy in that region irrelevant. As Milner persuasively argues, religion, ethnicity, and culture are stronger drivers of Southeast Asia’s views of world order than, until recently at least, has been assumed in both the scholarly literature and practical analysis. If we eschew the civilisational dynamics (plural) at work in Southeast Asia, we fail to notice the growing opposition to liberalism as practice in the region and dismiss the enduring salience of Southeast Asian civilisational identities (plural). This enduring salience should be not be confused with the altogether more fragile salience of the statist notion of “ASEAN centrality” (see Acharya, n.d).

Perhaps more important than these individual experiences are the commonalities that we can draw from the respective behaviours identified in these small case studies. The first and
most obvious common theme is that all of them, both implicitly and explicitly, do in fact see the current world order through different lenses to those ‘liberal lenses’ through which the idea of world order has been viewed and projected for the last 70 years. Secondly, they all demonstrate that to assume that only liberal values are universal values is misleading. It is quite clear that some of the long-standing values, especially of China and India, have a longer standing historical universality of application not recognised in many liberal readings of them.

Thirdly, they are all also of the view that the old order cannot stand without substantial reform. This is the case both philosophically and geopolitically. The case studies suggest that civilisation states are not anti-universalism per se but rather that they are resistant to some of the core elements of universalism assumed by liberals for much of the post-World War Two era. Fourthly, they all give credence to the idea that the geo-regional structure of global order is not written in stone. The idea of a multipolar world built on the Americas, Europe, and Asia that was thought to be emerging in the post–Cold War era must come to terms with the emergence of further geo-regional constructions that take the idea of Eurasia more seriously than was the case for most of the post–World War Two era. Albeit in their own different ways, they each assume the inevitability of the increasing importance of Eurasia as a geographical construct every bit as significant as other geopolitical constructs such as ‘the Pacific’, ‘Asia-Pacific’, the ‘transatlantic’, or the increasingly fashionable ‘Indo-Pacific’.

Of course, the idea of Eurasia is not new. The idea was first articulated by Halford Mackinder at the British Royal Geographical Society in 1904. At that time, 9,200 kilometres of Trans-Siberian Railway were being built from Moscow to Vladivostok, intended to unite Europe and Asia as what Mackinder called “the world island.” Describing Eurasia as “the continuous landmass of Euro–Asia” that “between the ocean and the desert measures 21,000,000 square miles, or half of all of the land on the globe,” he went on to say that “the real divide between east and west is to be found in the Atlantic Ocean” (Mackinder, 1904).
115 years later, Mackinder’s words seem prophetic. In his two works on the Silk Road, Peter Frankopan (2015 and 2018) has advanced what is now becoming an intellectual argument *du jour* that the spine of Eurasia from China through to East and Central Europe is developing in such a way that it will, over time, rival and even surpass in power and influence a Europe and the West beset by crisis and challenges. Wracked by internal political and economic problems, Europe’s states, he argues, may not have the wherewithal for geopolitical battle. At a more practical level, both Russia and China, for their own different reasons, are engaged in practices geared to strengthening the concept of Eurasia. These emerging Eurasian imperatives will have implications for how global order is shaped and how other actors will need to accommodate to these developments (for discussions see Emerson, 2014 and Dorsey, 2019a).

In a recent report titled *Toward a Greater Eurasia: How to Build a Common Future*, the Astana Club (2018) warns that the Eurasian supercontinent needs to anticipate the Great Game’s risks. These include mounting tensions between the United States and China; global trade wars; arms races; escalating conflict in the greater Middle East; deteriorating relations between Russia and the West; rising chances of separatism and ethnic/religious conflict; and environmental degradation; as well as technological advances. These risks are enhanced by the fragility of the global system, with the weakening of multilateral institutions, escalating trade and cyber wars, and ecological challenges. They are risks that while perhaps not of the same magnitude as the escalating US–China standoff, carry with them every bit as much danger for fragmenting world order. The reconciliation of the interests of these civilisation-state actors are essential in any dialogue over the future of world order. This is addressed in part four below.
### THE NATION-STATE vs. THE CIVILISATION STATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nation-state</th>
<th>Civilisation state</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Idea</strong></td>
<td>17th–19th-century European phenomenon</td>
<td>21st-century global phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origins</strong></td>
<td>Established following the demise of the Holy Roman Empire</td>
<td>Rejection of the 20th-century liberal order and Western values; resurgence of primordial identities that had laid dormant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundations</strong></td>
<td>Territorial integrity, citizenship, common language</td>
<td>Collective memories of ancient civilisations; claiming unique historical legacies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mission</strong></td>
<td>Creating community with shared values</td>
<td>Correcting historical errors; demand a bigger role in the international system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Longevity</strong></td>
<td>Relatively short history; dates back to Peace of Westphalia of 1648</td>
<td>Dates back several millennia to ancient history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>Separation of powers; checks and balances</td>
<td>Power is highly centralised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sovereignty</strong></td>
<td>State sovereignty, but part of wider international community of shared values</td>
<td>State sovereignty and self-determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependency</strong></td>
<td>High levels of interdependence with other nation-states</td>
<td>Strong independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
<td>Liberal, secular, purportedly universal values</td>
<td>Cultural particularism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusion and exclusion</strong></td>
<td>High level of inclusion, e.g., granting rights to minorities</td>
<td>Exclusive, cultural, identitarian and ideological cohesion</td>
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4.1. Core questions for our age: Securing openness and cooperation

The discussion of old, new, and potential actors in shaping a new order in the previous parts of the report work from the assumption that there is no going back to an American-led world order. To say this does not mean the end of all things liberal in the international order. Rather, it implies the need for a serious conversation – or negotiation – as to the future of world order. Depending on perspective, such a conversation has maybe four ‘reformist’ questions or one fundamental transformational one. The four reformist questions are:
i. Can the core attributes of the currently struggling order – certain liberal values and a commitment to multilateral collective decision-making in some core areas of global policy – survive?

ii. Can a more regionalised, pluralist, decentred world order, offering a modicum of stability and cooperation – if that is indeed the direction of travel – work?

iii. How would we, could we, should we, manage a more fluid, less institutionalised world order?

iv. How can dialogue help us address these questions?

For liberals, and indeed non-liberals alike, these should be the key questions of our age. But the caravan moves on quickly. The answers to these questions are no longer simply ones of reform. The answers to these questions need to be seen as transformational rather than reformist. Pabst, for example, argues that the world is already moving into a “post universalist liberal” era in which soft authoritarianism and “a new global culture war is pitting conservative nationalists against liberal cosmopolitans ... [and where] ... the new pivot of geo-politics is civilization” (Pabst, 2019, p. 24).

Pabst makes a strong point, but we can and should resist ‘clash of civilizations 2.0’ readings of the current order, lest we assist them to become self-fulfilling. To see contemporary geopolitics, especially the growing US-China contest, as a battle between civilisations is currently to overstate the case. That said, there is emerging evidence that the Trump Administration is trying to develop a theme that sees Western civilisation, in the words of Kiron Skinner cited earlier, positing the US against China as the “non-Caucasian” civilisation. How we go about resolving this fundamental clash is the correct meta-theoretical-cum-philosophical question de nos jours. Its resolution must nevertheless be a practical matter as much as a philosophical one. In this context, the four reformist questions posed above remain the key ones to be addressed.

Unlike ‘liberal’ historical readings of the past order, new readings of contemporary global politics and policy will need to take account of the fact that other states are not simply passive actors.
global politics and policy will need to take account of the fact that other states are not simply passive actors. Other states, and indeed critical non-state actors and social movements, do and will play important roles in the future development of international and regional cooperation. We already see a greater degree of hybridity than at any time in the past. This section and the next section will attempt to provide some answers, or at least offer an outline of how we need to proceed.

Key elements of the liberal order can and will survive but that they must be reformed. They will survive for pragmatic reasons rather than ideological ones. They will survive because they are useful and necessary and because other actors are keen to see them survive with or without the US.

Multilateral resilience: Justin Trudeau shakes hands with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon after signing the Paris Agreement for climate change.

[6] All the original TPP signatories except the US agreed in May 2017 to revive the deal, and signed the renamed Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in March 2018.
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Liberal elements of the order will also survive because China and Russia – and indeed other so-styled civilisation states such as India and Turkey – are not merely enemies external to the international order. The rhetoric of the Chinese president is replete with support for the institutional architecture of globalisation. Yes, China – and Russia and India – exhibit characteristics of revisionist powers within that order, but they – certainly China and India – want to change it, not bring it crashing down. Rather, they want an order that accommodates their interests as much as those of the traditional Western powers. The rapprochement between China and Russia is in part explained by “… the inability to construct an inclusive world order that accommodates all major players after the Cold War” (Trenin, 2019).

The implications of the rise of the civilisational powers for traditional Western liberalism are not trivial. Competition among great powers, as this report demonstrates, has returned. Great power rivalries are unlikely to ameliorate until a new order that reflects all interests emerges. For this to happen, it may well mean liberals prioritising lower order practical goals such as the preservation and enhancement of international openness rather than the continued propagation of universal values. The crusade for liberal universalism is seriously curtailed.

From a Western perspective the maintenance of global openness might be a best-case strategy. While this might be insufficient for the traditional US foreign policy establishment, it will probably not play too badly with President Trump. But even the achievement of the goal of openness is no simple matter. Further regional encroachment will need to be resisted, be it Russia in Eastern and Central Europe or China in Asia. The US will have to live with an international order in which other powers have a role in setting the rules – especially in the newer policy domains of AI, biotechnology, and cyberspace.

But preserving openness can at least be expected to maintain some key elements of international liberalism while at the same time allowing for the assertion of a world where sovereignty is privileged (for a discussion see Rapp Hooper and Lissner, 2019, pp. 18ff). China too has an interest in openness; especially international economic openness but absent those hegemonic features that the US is keen to retain. China, along with Russia and India, is also intent on securing a more equal political order (see Xinbho, 2018)

But securing openness will still require cooperation in some core multilateral forums. Current US transactionalist and bilateral approaches to international relations, as in US policy towards the
global trade regime, are not geared to safeguarding openness in the shape of the global commons and public goods on land, sea, or in the air. In a reformist scenario, the current, largely Western dominance of global structures such as the UN Security Council, World Bank, and IMF will have to undergo (further) reform to be in line with a changing hierarchy, to include the considerations of the new economic and political players. Leadership needs to be shared more widely now.

As Joseph Nye argues (2019), it is now time for the United States to share the provision of the public goods it created after World
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War Two. Similarly, in the newer domains such as cyberspace and the digital domain where no or few legal arrangements currently exist, multilateral arrangements must be secured if we are not to witness a “digital Westphalianism” (see BBC, 2019) in which states exert controls over their own citizens, contravening the open spirit of the internet as a borderless space free from the dictates of any individual government. Russia, North Korea, Iran, and China in particular, although they are not the only states, are averse to a US-led, Western controlled coalition that has from the get-go held sway over internet governance. Moves to establish state control over the internet are, of course, already well advanced in China.

These changes will inevitably transcend the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century era of US unipolar hegemony. Uncontested US primacy will not be re-attained in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. The US has to get beyond what Stephen Walt (2019a) calls its “hegemonic hubris”. In this context, the key question will be the balance struck in the relationship between the competing values of global liberalism on the one hand and nationalist values and alternative cultural dispositions on the other; noting that challenges to liberal values are playing themselves out increasingly through the lenses of ‘civilisation states’.

Other powers, most notably China individually, and the BRICS collectively, have a view of what they think world order should look like. But this does not mean that these alternative views are axiomatically destabilising or always incapable of accommodation with liberal values. Current bilateralist US policy notwithstanding, the multilateral cooperative endeavour is not dead. Neither are the core elements of international institutional and collective approaches to policymaking and transnational administration at the global level. Indeed, they are more substantive than we often assume (see Stone and Maloney, 2019). In addition, some second-tier emerging powers are making their mark as regional leaders. Just as the larger G20 – rather than the G7/G8 – was drafted in to act as the crisis-buster in the 2008 financial crisis, other institutions are likely to face unstoppable demands for reform and widening in response to future crises.

The US remains vital to global civility and cooperation, notwithstanding the contradictory approaches adopted by the current administration. But it is not a US responsibility or duty alone to secure them. If this may have been the US’ privileged position in the past, it is no longer their exclusive role now. Perhaps the key role for liberals is not to create new liberal institutions but to defend their core values and make them fit for purpose by reform,
where necessary, in what we might call an era of post-hegemonic cooperation.

The last few years also have seen a considerable growth of activity from a range of non-traditional quarters. These include not only the extensive diplomacy of China, as per the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) with India and Pakistan admitted in 2017 and a new agenda developed at its May 2019 meeting. Similarly, we have seen the development of the Regional Cooperative Economic Partnership (RCEP), the Belt and Road Initiative, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the Europe-focused 16+1 dialogue, but also the rescue of the TPP and the continuance of the Paris environmental agreements regardless of their disavowal by the US president. Activity also includes the growth of other informal and semi-formal bodies such as the D10 dialogue, with its agenda for reconsidering the uncertainty of the US’ global role beyond traditional, ‘old West’, thinking (for a recent discussion see *The Economist*, 4–19 August 2017, pp. 45–7).

Multilateralism can also be seen to be deepening in some quarters, notably in sustainable development and climate policies. The UN has made substantial and largely successful efforts to engage with many non-state stakeholders, including multinational corporations and civil society organisations, resulting in global conferences such as the G20 transforming themselves into wider global platform events with a large number of side events and initiatives relating to the summit, with a lot of follow-up work. Multilateral activity is also growing at the sub-state/sub-national level in activities such as the climate activities of the C40 city alliances and the 2018 San Francisco Climate Action Summit.

Further, prospective reform and action can also draw on the development of strategies of ‘like-minded’ countries engaged in issue-specific coalition building around key global public policy sectors such as trade, security and the environment. This can include key players, especially the EU, China, Russia, and the BRICS, but also long-standing ‘middle powers’ such as Canada, Australia, some of the Nordic states with a history of good international citizenship (see Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, 1993), and newly designated middle powers such as South Korea and Indonesia. We should also not write off influential members in the wider domestic US foreign policy community; especially the liberal think tanks such as Brookings and the Council on Foreign Relations and others not disposed to a Trumpian view of world order but who are currently excluded from policymaking.
4.2. Creating a dialogue of civilisations: Questions of practice

A meta-narrative requires us to understand how civilisations have developed over several millennia. It is thus not surprising that the development of a global view of civilisation in the modern era will not take place overnight. The present does not offer us a holistic framework. Globally, competing groups are not easily going to establish stable and organized social relations in that larger space that we might call human civilisation. To fix the current imperfect world order would mean rebuilding the balance of civilisation as a whole, not just in parts. The enhancement of social cooperation as a basis of political cooperation requires the creation of appropriate moral narratives.

Earlier human experience in the development of moral narratives suggests how difficult it is for them to guide public policy and civic activity. To succeed, these narratives must be supplemented by multilevel governance structures that can operationalise them in tackling macro challenges. This might be the grand global aspiration implicitly present in some strands of liberal thought and liberalism has spawned the most far-reaching state system in human history to-date. But liberalism’s principal proponents have tended to forget it is an ideology, and a primarily elite-driven ideology at that. It is not the end state of human political evolution (see Deneen, 2018). As an ideology, it is also currently proving a failing political match for nationalism and realism (see Mearsheimer, 2018). Moreover, from the positions of say China and India, with several thousand years of non-liberal civilisation, liberalism as a paradigmatic road map and the foundation of Pax Americana looks severely tested.

This report assumes that the basis for change in world order is to be found in grand historical sweeps over time; indeed, a much greater time span than the current impasse we have identified between the major powers in the last several decades. Western history has developed over a 2,000-years-plus trajectory that initially privileged theology through metaphysics and science, on to an era when the motivating agents are economic and technological. Each stage has changed the way we organise ourselves and ‘do’ politics. The basis for organising the world order and relationships has changed from theological belief systems through to science and technology for advanced living, and material satisfaction and organisation of the modern secularised world. We have progressively assumed that a well-organised society will be built upon human rationality and a modern moral code. In other words, rational codes organise the social order, and meaningful
human relationships are prescribed in these codes. \textit{But perhaps it is time to consider whether we are working with a failing paradigm?}

Some would argue that we are at one of those watershed moments where how we ‘do’ politics is once again changing fundamentally. It is changing on the back of the new communicative technologies. Politics as traditionally understood is essentially a group activity, involving tribes, religious groups, nations, political parties, pressure groups, civil society organisations, etc. Change was relatively slow and basically predictable. But this traditional style of politics is becoming less salient as individuals grow in importance through access to the worldwide web, giving rise to what Armen Sarkissian (Thornhill, 2019), the President of Armenia, calls the arrival of “quantum politics”.

In quantum politics, the “the individual person becomes powerful because they have a... [personal]... tool of connectivity”. In the quantum political world, politics is faster, increasingly unpredictable, and in many instances seemingly random, where individuals can, rather like atoms, have an impact by expressing an opinion – or faking it – on the web. Specifically, social media has disrupted politics in a manner that favours the disruptors rather than traditional actors; especially in the US and Europe (see Sunstein, 2017; Higgott and Proud, 2017). Politics, Sarkissian says, exhibits quantum behaviour: giving rise to a social equivalent of Heisenberg’s ‘uncertainty principle’. In quantum politics, the virtual world is overwhelming the traditional institutions of politics and government.

If, in the preceding context, we inquire how humanity managed to perform massive acts of cooperation in the past, we can see that \textit{Homo Sapiens} extended beyond the bounds of kinship. How did we perform this trick in the past? The ability to communicate – via language – was central to cooperation. But language explains only a fraction of human cooperative capacity. Equally as important has been the development of moral narratives embedded in wider socio-cultural institutional contexts. As one insightful observer notes, Moral narratives have enabled humanity to extend their cooperative units from the family to the tribe to the village to the city-state and from there to empires and nations. We now require narratives that enable us to extend our social and political boundaries to address the global problems arising from our global economy. Our genetic and cultural evolutionary past has not yet given
us the mental resources to strive for global cooperation (Snower, 2019).

The challenges at hand, and especially the paradox of organisation and atomisation that communicative technology can bring, now would appear to exceed humanity’s capacities for cooperation. The levels at which humanity cooperates are insufficient to build a global civilisation. The evolution of humanity’s culture and morality has not kept up with technological innovation in communication and has yet to prepare us for cooperation at the global level. The current political rivalries and mal-distribution of material rewards from globalisation are also unlikely to advance the cause here.

Clearly, these are challenging tasks and how we deal with them is not straightforward. The realms of philosophy and practical politics do not interact easily. But if the nature of our metaphysical thinking is changing then so too is how we explain international relations in which the roles of networks, coalitions, and other hybrid non-traditional actors and modes of communication have become increasingly important over the last decade (see Slaughter, 2017). They will become more so, not less so, in the coming decades. A greater understanding of them and an ability to negotiate them through multiple dialogues must become central to our analytical toolkit if we are not to lapse into a new Cold War. While the US and China are the principle players in this drama, it should not and cannot be left to them alone to address the issue. There is need for some new thinking in international relations.

What is needed is some unconstrained, out of the box, innovative, and forward-looking thinking and analysis of the type not normally found in international relations – a discipline so dominated by historical rear-mirror thinking that it still leads to analysis based on two-thousand-year-old thinking of the kind that informs Graham Allison’s recent *Thucydides Trap* (2017). To say this is not denying the insights of history. It is rather to suggest that alternative thought experiments in international relations are essential. ‘Innovation’ does not ignore history but its intellectual motor is more forward than backward-looking. There is insufficient forward-looking thinking, as opposed to backward-looking thinking, going
on at the moment on the question of international order.

All too often in everyday speech, ‘innovation’ is dismissed as a management cliché, yet it has significant theoretical and applied meaning and utility in the study of organisation. Paths to innovative thought can be identified and innovation is recognised as one of the core explanations for whether organisations can successfully adapt and reform rather than fade away, be it gradually or suddenly. Sadly, innovation as a workable concept gets little or no attention among those studying and practicing international relations and diplomacy in the current world order. Yet if we are to advance a dialogue of civilisations, this lacuna in our thinking needs to be challenged.

Specifically, we need innovative ways to challenge the normalisation of the antagonistic populist and extreme nationalist discourse.

We need innovative ways to challenge the normalisation of the antagonistic populist and extreme nationalist discourse.

We must think practically but innovatively about how we do dialogue. We cannot just assume we know what we are doing when we talk about it. In the essay below, the psychologist Luk Van Langenhove identifies a central component for understanding the prospects for a dialogue of civilisations. He does so by scholar and practitioner of international relations in a time such as this should be to seek ways in which to mitigate the worst excesses of those competitive, antagonistic discourses of civilisations that lend credence to the development of ‘clashism’ or a ‘clash of civilisations 2.0’. We need a rationale for how a ‘dialogue of civilizations’ might facilitate a framework for a reformed order in a world of recognised contemporary tensions between religious and humanistic logics on the one hand and secular liberal rationality and technological revolution on the other. Can we, and if so, how might we develop an accommodation of these alternative forces driving the direction of the current world order?

In short, how can an inter-civilisational dialogue as a framework, methodology, and a set of practices be helpful for building new world order?
looking at the relationship between individuals (people) and collectives (civilisations). He explains how a dialogue of civilisations has, after all, to be an interaction between people – in effect, civilisations don’t do dialogue, people do! As a consequence, and following from Van Langenove, we then identify the all too often neglected roles and dispositions of the important individuals as influential factors in the discourses of international politics. The principal individuals in any current dialogue would be Donald Trump, Xi Jinping, and to a lesser extent, Vladimir Putin; all of whom, to a greater or lesser degree, are authoritarian personality types for whom meaningful dialogue might not be uppermost in their priorities.
4.3. Civilisational dialogue: Questions of method

Luk Van Langenhove

To talk of a ‘dialogue between civilisations’ suggests the need to foster dialogue between different civilisational cultures with the implicit aim of creating a spirit of worldwide cooperation and coexistence. The concept stands in opposition to the belief that the world is confronted with a ‘clash’ of civilisations. Implicit in the notion of an approach privileging a dialogue between civilisations is the belief that ‘dialogue’ is good and a road towards a world of mutual understanding. But this poses a number of problems. Beyond the metaphysical historical question of ‘what is a civilisation’ are more practical questions: how can civilisations engage in a ‘dialogue’? And if so, how can such dialogue be used to change a conflict situation into a cooperative one? How should one organise such dialogues? What do the social sciences and humanities have to say about this?

For social scientists, dialogue can be regarded as a specific form of conversation – the exchange of meaningful words and sentences between two or more people. Conversation is a much broader concept that refers to all verbal interactions between people regardless of whether this interaction is a direct face-to-face encounter or a remote interaction such as, for instance, between the reader of this text and its author. But dialogue is also more than that: it is a ritualised form of conversation where certain rules apply – listening to the other, allowing each speaker to unfold his/her argument and so forth.

The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) developed an analytical framework for locating psychological and social phenomena on two dimensions. In his framework, he firstly distinguishes between what is private to one person and what is part of the public realm. For example, what we think about
something is private, what we write becomes public. Secondly, we need to distinguish between what is an individual phenomenon and what is collective. For example, an individual’s capacity to calculate how much is 88 multiplied by 69 is personal. But the knowledge that 88 times 69 equals 6,072, is public knowledge. Combining these two dimensions gives a space with four quadrants, each being a space where social phenomena reside. The linkages between the four spaces are conversations, or dialogues, even.

Vygotsky’s framework:

Vygotskian thinking and theorising may be applied to our understanding of civilisations. The concept of civilisation (singular) is not uncontested and some will even question if civilisations (plural) exist. But regardless of whether they are
‘real’ or not, scholars and practitioners alike use the concept to make analytical distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’ at the level of world politics. So, civilisations do at least exist as social representations. Images of civilisations are to be found in the public and collective space in books, movies, policy briefs, and public discourse. Translated in Vygotskian terms this gives the following picture.

To start, there is the public/collective quadrant (I) that is made up of existing societal representations of civilisations and of the relations between civilisations. They reside in countless cultural and scientific works, as well as in the media, and can be appropriated by people to the private/individual quadrant (II). But people do not only passively appropriate things. They also actively transform them with personal interpretations. As such, people will construct a mixture of collective images and personal ideas – which can also be based upon personal experiences – that become a personal representation of civilisations in the private/individual quadrant (III).

The next step is to bring these personal representations back into the public realm of quadrant (IV) by talking about them. In such conversations, people will deploy what we might call ‘civilisation-speak’ as a tool for accounting and justifying their own behaviour or their opinions about world politics. In some cases, this civilisation-speak – for instance by an influential scholar such as Samuel Huntington – can change the collective images of civilisations and their relations and become conventionalised as part of the public/collective realm (quadrant I) again. Occasionally some new elements are injected into the web of conversations that not only fuel the debate but give rise to new topics that can be appropriated. Take Brexit: a couple of years ago, the word did not exist. Now it is not only a household term, but it has also created two new identity categories for UK citizens: Remainers and Brexiteers.
Civilisational dialogue as a vehicle for reforming world order: Can the liberalism-nationalism standoff be negotiated?

The upshot of the above is that ‘civilisation’ is a concept now increasingly out in the public/collective sphere that can be, and is being, appropriated by individual people and that, in reverse, individuals can contribute to new ideas or visions about civilisations which can again be appropriated by (groups of) people. Modern conceptions of social science consider the conversation between people as the so-called primary reality. That reality can be pictured as a species-wide and history-long conversation to which occasionally individuals participate. It envelops every aspect of daily life and on top of it, through those dialogues, a secondary social reality emerges: institutions and structures, including their representations. These representations also come with moral or normative prescripts. If one believes this is what the world looks like, it brings rights and duties about what to do and what to say. For instance, adhering to a ‘dialogue perspective’ brings with it the duty to be open to other cultures as well as the right to express one’s own cultural habits.

In order to advance dialogue, the ‘dialogue’ storyline must become the dominant representation of the civilisational world if we are to avoid the notion of ‘clashism’ becoming the storyline.

Thus, a potential dialogue between civilisations must be accommodating to this approach as one storyline of civilisation-speak can be used in the construction of new representations. In order to advance dialogue, the ‘dialogue’ storyline must become the dominant representation of the civilisational world if we are to avoid the notion of ‘clashism’ becoming the storyline. This can only be possible if the conditions are created for people to contribute to that endeavor by providing conversational spaces to discuss civilisations. As the philosopher of science, Rom Harré once said: the re-construction of society can start any time by anyone in a new conversation. The same holds for the civilisational realm. But civilisations do not dialogue with each other; only people engage in conversations with each other.
4.4. Shifting focus from conflict to balance

What do Van Langenhove’s very perceptive insights mean in practical terms? The current world order is clearly imperfect. Disorder is generated from the imbalance of the ethical and the material and the alienated relationships of humans with nature and society. We are doing little collectively to address this issue. Problems are not going to be solved in some meta-theoretical debate. Pietistic hopes to the contrary, the world does not work like that. But Van Langenhove offers a way to move beyond piety. A report such as this can help with our comprehension of world order and its challenges. It is limited in what it might formally recommend prescriptively. But it is not limited in a normative endeavour to privilege the ‘storyline of dialogue’ over that of ‘clashism’. Language is important here. Rather than envisage a civilisational clash with its implicitly violent connotations we should instead talk of a civilisational imbalance or disequilibrium. Such an approach allows us to shift the focus from conflict to balance and the prospects for rebalancing over time. Moreover, since our current challenges are mostly global – from superpower rivalry to securing the SDGs – and require transnational problem-solving capabilities, we should aspire to establish an understanding of civilisation as global rather than as geospatially defined or nationally constrained. This is clearly a long stretch but it would allow us to see the current polarisation between liberal universalism and state civilisations as part of a conversation within a wider whole requiring accommodation, not as a zero-sum contest in which the winner takes all. It allows us to analyse how a dialogue of civilisations could open the door for other, non-Western civilisations to engage in constructing a new order.

For a dialogue on the future of world order to develop we should perhaps start by taking off the Western, liberal tinted glasses through which the concept of world order is traditionally viewed.

For a dialogue on the future of world order to develop we should perhaps start by taking off the Western, liberal tinted glasses through which the concept of world order is traditionally viewed – as indeed it was in part one above – and put on lenses of a different hue that reflect the interests and agendas of other influential actors in contemporary international relations – similar to the case studies presented in part three. This exercise is both empirical and normative.
At the empirical level it is important to see the civilisation state not simply as a concept or idea but as a set of political-economic and cultural practices of states. The civilisation state – with men like China’s Xi Jinping, Russia’s Vladimir Putin, and India’s Narendra Modi (and even America’s Donald Trump) embracing the concept *de facto* – is likely to be at the core of the shaping of a new world order. The conclusion we should draw from this is not a positive one. Ego-driven individuals with authoritarian, and/or narcissistic tendencies are not likely to engage in cooperative dialogue unless it confirms to their own global understandings and interests.
How might accommodation over the contours of a new order be reached? The report finishes with a series of propositions on where we stand at this current stage in the search for a new global governance order. In so doing it infers a set of implicit proposals on how the current debate on the reform of that order might progress, if we are to mobilise and enhance a global dialogue essential to the success of any reform processes. Ten propositions are identified and one provocation advanced:

“Nothing lasts
5.1. Ten propositions

i. **Liberalism is in crisis, politically and philosophically**
   *The future is at stake for liberal democracy, multilateralism, and the global free trade system*

ii. **US leadership is in decline, in hard power and in ‘soft’ diplomatic terms**
   *American foreign policy assumptions are most challenged by China and its growing rapprochement with Russia*

iii. **Social media and ‘quantum politics’ are reshaping global as well as domestic politics**
   *The rise of populism demonstrates the challenges for dialogue in the digital age*

iv. **Managing cultural difference is as important as economics and security in international relations now**
   *The growth of a civilisational discourse and the related rise of populist nationalism hinders dialogue but global actors must acknowledge its prevalent role in international relations.*

v. **Restraining self-interest is key to taming globalisation**
   *Multi-level, ‘global’ identities can benefit the environment, welfare, and internationalism*

vi. **New approaches to international governance offer some cause for hope**
   *The open trade system and collective approaches to security still have support from significant states and international organisations, but hybrid actors operating organically are the key to substantiating renewed multilateralism*
vii. The US and China are the main powers, but others wield major influence

*Strong commitment to multilateral trade and collective institutional impact makes the EU something of an outlier but also a key partner for the future, not least with the SDGs in mind*

viii. Chinese ‘revisionism’ should be proactively engaged

*China is invested in the existing order and many of its reformist claims are reasonable. In contrast, Russia is less invested in that order and more aggressive towards moderated reform*

ix. Cooperative dialogue is vital to combatting revived zero-sum narratives

*Think tanks like the DOC provide essential impetus in navigating a world of ‘strong leaders’ where economic warfare and political risk-taking is undermining global trade and security*

x. The prospect of a new Cold War and the limits to dialogue are serious

*Recognising a clash of political cultures and trying to mitigate them through dialogue will help prevent an escalation of a ‘clashist’ discourse and stop ‘new Cold War’ thinking becoming embedded*
As the report has made clear, the liberal world order, and indeed liberalism as a philosophy, is in crisis. The empirical symptoms of this crisis are clear and, as discussed, include inter alia:

i. A growing disillusionment with liberal democracy as an instrument for political voice in the face of the rising populist political agenda.

ii. A growing critique of capitalism reflected in the backlash against globalisation and especially an open trade system. Rising protectionism is not simply a US–China phenomenon. The introduction of trade-distorting measures among the G20 continues to rise (see Evenett and Fritz, 2019).

iii. A growing rejection of the norms and principles of a multilateral system as a means of problem solving at the collective level.

But liberalism is not an easily and narrowly defined philosophy. Nor is it easily dismissed if its advocates are prepared to fight for it. It is not only the political philosophies of self-styled civilisation states that are interested in higher human values. This becomes clear when liberalism is understood as much as an attitude of mind or as a persuasion – rather than simply as an ideology – with a central focus on human agency, operating with economic and political rights underpinned by markets, liberal democracy, and the rule of law.

Elements of liberalism have made major inroads into authoritarian systems. China for example is not a liberal democracy, but it accepts, and has indeed flourished through, the utility of markets – especially when they can be nudged – while it resists liberal politics and a non-political legal system. By contrast, however, Russia under Putin, believes in none of them (see Aslund, 2019). This standoff is at the core of the dilemma over the reform of the global order.
The liberal dilemma was made crystal clear at the 2019 Osaka G20 summit, which showed the intensifying global battle between two political philosophies of international order: a Western-led liberal world order of largely free-market economies on one hand, and on the other hand, an alternative set of capitalist but state-directed economies led by China plus a loose, increasingly disparate but powerful collection of (semi) authoritarian-minded regimes that see the weakening of US power and the US-led global order as a good thing.

This view was captured in Vladimir Putin’s interview with the *Financial Times* in which he pronounced “liberalism obsolete” (Barber and Foy, 2019). Putin also noted that, rhetorical flourishes notwithstanding, in some quarters there is a seeming reluctance to defend liberalism; most notably by President Trump, who clearly does not understand liberalism and undermines the liberal order, thus playing into the hands of the major authoritarians.

At the meta-level, these strains, along with growing alarm over the environmental health of the globe, reflect disconnects between the human, material, political and socio-cultural dynamics currently in train in the world order and captured in the three *problematiques* – economic, geopolitical, and civilisational – identified at the beginning of the report. For an enhanced dialogue to carry meaning, it will require a closer alignment of understanding and practice across all three domains. As the report has stressed, this has become increasingly apparent, important, and at the same time, more difficult.
We are entering a post-unipolar world in which the limits on US power are becoming more visible. In the words of Stephen Walt, the Harvard security specialist, “The era of unilateralism is over—and Washington is the last to realize it” (2019a). This has been evidenced by three factors:

i. The range of US unilateral action identified in this report.

ii. That the US still thinks it can run its international policy, in both the economic and security domains, by force majeure; that is, any action short of (and for some even including) war.

iii. Continuing US assumptions, even in the face of growing evidence, that acquiescence from ally and competitor alike will be forthcoming.

For sure, no state will easily court and endure US hostility. But this is turning out to be less so the case (see Walt, 2019b). To assert a decline in US hegemony is not to deny the residual nature of US power when compared to even the most powerful actors, including China. Rather, it is to suggest that things are changing and we need to recognise this if we are not to drift into a Cold War.

Moreover, it appears that US bullying has diminishing returns. While the report demonstrates this in the US approach towards China, even smaller states respond badly to it and already, as demonstrated in the case studies in part three, we are seeing counter tendencies as states engage in coalition-building and work out ways to offset US policy. The prime example is the development of recent closer China-Russian relations. Trenin (2019) describes this as an entente short of an alliance. Given disparities in material size and wealth – Russia has an economy slightly bigger than Spain’s – it is heavily asymmetric. But it is also delicately balanced, with both states having comparable if
differing global self-images. But on core issues of policy, the two states demonstrate a close proximity of views; especially in their relationship towards the US. As Trenin notes,

Moscow and Beijing will continue to have their differences, and they are not entirely free from reciprocal phobias, but the chances of a China–Russia collision over those differences are being minimised by the US policy of dual containment. This policy, ironically, also relieves both countries’ elites of lingering suspicions that the United States might build a bond with either China or Russia at the expense of the other (Trenin, 2019).

Social media and digital communication are changing the politics of the modern order. As discussed, we are in the age of ‘quantum politics’. International order is no longer the plaything of global elites. Populists have views and these are played backwards and forwards between states and their populations, facilitated by social media, in a way that was not the case in the past.

This has specifically helped sow doubt about the steadfastness of American leadership in the contemporary international order when juxtaposed against the rise of other prominent actors with a stake in the management of the system. This, in turn, is creating a trade-off in the inherent tensions between consent and coercion and between cooperation and conflict in international relations. Dialogue will be about mitigating these tensions.
We need to focus on policies that manage tendentious and often irresponsibly provoked cultural differences. Putative containment measures that should and can be introduced must be crafted and implemented with utmost sensitivity, skill, and political savvy reflective of the delicate nature of the contemporary global discourse on order. The nationalist genie cannot be put back in the bottle so blindly trying to do so is not a useful strategy.

Nationalist sentiment is increasingly central to the foreign policy of most states, be they large (the US and China), not so small (Italy, France, the Philippines), or small but regionally influential (Hungary). In an environment of increasing polarisation, the question arises as to what kind of leadership skills – skills that might transcend national interests – are required. But the rise of populist nationalism led by authoritarian ‘strong men’ is a major constraint on enhancing international dialogue. And, note, they are all men. Dialogue that excludes representation of at least 50% of the world’s population is always going to be constrained.

The era of globalisation might have enhanced the integration of the global economy and fostered the growth of overall aggregate global welfare, but it has singularly failed to enhance distributive welfare in the developed world and advance socio-political cooperation across national boundaries. Identifying how to enhance the socio-political management of globalisation is a signal task of global dialogue. We must identify those narratives that can help form even a modicum of global identity. Those we have are worthy – for example, various declarations on human rights, the Earth Charter, and the development of norms and attitudes through soft power activities such as international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy – but they are honoured selectively and at times cynically.
The road to success will be to develop systems of thought that inculcate *multi-level identities* in citizens, from the local and national through to the global. But the prospects of this have been greatly challenged by the rapid advances in digital media and social media. Getting individuals to control self-interests and think outside of their immediate, self-selected group on social media and to engage with the ideas of wider community is becoming increasingly difficult. As Snower notes:

“Extending our circles of affiliation – through encompassing narratives, social norms, education, laws and institutions – is now our central challenge as human beings, made salient through the proliferation of our ‘problems without borders’. ... The integration of the global economy and our ever more oppressive footprint on the global environment calls for the development of moral narratives that induce us to cooperate at unprecedentedly large scales, while maintaining our sense of belonging at the small scales necessary to tackle our small-scale challenges” (Snower, 2019).

The report is sensitive to the belief that the devil, as always, will be in the details. The green shoots of alternative approaches to international governance are arising from the decline of the institutional multilateralism of the old order. The post-Paris discussion on caring for the environment demonstrates this, especially at regional and sub-regional levels in actions such as the Climate Action Summit. Notwithstanding Donald Trump’s disavowal of the Paris Agreement, reform has not stopped in the US, where sub-federal governing bodies, states, and local governments are committed to containing the negative effects of global warming.
So, following from propositions one through five requires us to acknowledge the *hybridity* of ideas, actors, and processes in international relations if we are going to incorporate and accommodate the best elements of universalist values and norms with the values of reasserted cultural particularisms. Leaving it simply to states is not sufficient. Hybridity can be seen in the proliferation of both top-down and bottom-up organisations and initiatives operating at the meso-level in international relations. Some of the better-known hybrid agents crossing the boundaries between public, private, and civil society at the international level include, *inter alia* and for illustrative purposes only: Amnesty International, Transparency International, the Global Environment Facility, the International Organization for Migration, the Bank for International Settlements, regional organisations and regional development banks through to the Mayors Cities movements and a range of non-Western actors. To the extent that these hybrid agents have an input into the decision-making process, they move us beyond the simple exclusivity of a world of sovereign states. They also bolster multilateralism as practice at a time when it is challenged at the institutional state level.

Similarly, despite the assault on economic globalisation by the populists and especially by the US, which continues to isolate itself, economic openness and multilateral economic agreements are not without their supporters. The US may be withdrawing from such agreements but others are not. The EU, Japan, and the major middle powers with large economies are very active here. Keeping the global economy open received strong support at the Osaka G20 meeting, especially from Japan, which, along with Australia and others, has ensured the viability of the renamed CPTPP. The EU has recently signed major FTAs with Mercosur and Vietnam and is in negotiations with India, Australia, and New Zealand. At the same time, the prospect of a deal between the EU and the US is declining (see Johnson, 2019).
While the US and China are clearly the principals in this game, it is too early to write off Europe as a significant player in the reform of global order. For all its self-identified existential and practical problems, Europe is not about to collapse into terminal incapacity. Indeed, notwithstanding the gains made by the extremes of European politics in the May 2019 elections, the pro-Europe centre did in fact hold and it is clear that factors such as Brexit are strengthening rather than weakening the European ideal. The EU may be less important in dollar terms but it is far more important in terms of international trade. It trades much more with China than either itself or China do with the United States (Pettener, 2019).

The EU’s commitment to a rules based system and the principal international institutions remains as strong as the US’ is faltering. This is especially the case with its commitment to the United Nations where, lest we forget, the EU collectively is the largest contributor, providing 30% of the UN’s total income and for 31% of its peacekeeping activities. It also strongly supports the UN agenda, especially the SDGs. The issue that remains is the degree to which the EU can ensure that the dialogue over world order is a multilateral one rather than simply a bilateral one between the US and China.

Economic convergence between great powers like the US and China and growing military strength of the kind that exists between the US and both China and Russia need not inevitably lead to Graeme Allison’s *Thucydides Trap* (2018). But economic convergence can lead to increased prospects for conflict and disorder and demands for revisions in the international order to reflect the legitimate interests of the rising powers. But while revisionism is complex, it is not always dangerous. There is a difference between a desire to overthrow an existing order and a desire to reform it. Schweller (2015) identifies two elements to
revisionism that allow us to make the necessary judgment: (i) the nature and extent of the power’s revisionist aims; and (ii) the risks and methods it is prepared to take to secure a revised order.

Using Schweller’s criteria allows us to distinguish between China and Russia as revisionist powers. The provocative view advanced here is that, on the basis of recent history and practice, Russia is the more aggressively revisionist and potentially more reckless power than China. China – as had been hoped and assumed following Nixon’s 1972 meeting with Mao – is not going to “be turned Western” (see Schuman, 2019 for a discussion). But nor does it want to dismantle the global economic order. Gradual pro-market reform in China over the last several decades has not diminished a Chinese wariness towards the West rooted in the history of the relationship.

Domestically, the reinforcement of traditional Chinese culture is used to inhibit the developments of unwanted ideas such as democracy. Globally, attempts to force China into a liberal mould are unlikely to succeed. But President Xi Jinping is pushing for a reformed liberal order through the development of institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), programmes such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the development of a Eurasian infrastructure network. That the Americans do not like these actions does not make them incompatible with global order.

Russia, by contrast, has not grasped the opportunities presented by globalisation in the last 30 years in the manner that China has. Chinese capitalism may be authoritarian capitalism, but it is recognisable as capitalism that has nevertheless benefitted from globalisation. Russia has not undergone a similar economic revolution to China. It seems less concerned with reforming the system or making the global economy work for itself than with re-asserting old truths and consolidating geostrategic spheres of influence and control that suit its form of what Anders Aslund
(2019) calls “crony capitalism”. Russia, more so than China, seems more dissatisfied with the current norms and international institutions. China wants a greater role in the structure of international regimes whereas Russia seems more inclined towards their retirement.

The kind of reform China is looking for can be addressed by engagement, negotiation, and a recognition of China’s legitimate demands for more equal treatment from the US on the one hand, and its own closer adherence to existing international norms and practices in bodies like the WTO on the other. But for a dialogue to take place, Washington has to learn to deal with China as it is, rather than as it would like China to be.

Indeed, Washington needs to develop a strategy which recognises any attempt to influence domestic Chinese policy and practice, as the breakdown of the trade talks in May 2019 demonstrated, is destined to failure. Unlike smaller states, China will not be looking for permission from the US for courses of action it might pursue. US bullying is turning out to be counter-productive. But we should not expect early recognition and accompanying change on the part of the US. Sadly, major concessions to China would be seen as weakness by most in Washington, rather than as a strength.

The report suggests that the DOC Research Institute is working along the right lines. It should continue to tackle, with rigour, the essential question of what a future world order might look like, while at the same time pursuing accessibility, accountability, and dialogue for all. This is particularly important at a time when the direction in the nature of international discourse is moving more towards competition and clash away from cooperation and dialogue. The report has identified two key explanatory elements to account for this trend:
Major changes in the nature of international trade have taken place. The critique of the utility of comparative advantage that has developed represents a challenge to core free trade assumptions that have underwritten globalisation, indeed international trade writ large for over 150 years. As such, an accompanying shift in the discourse and practice of international trade – from diplomacy to economic warfare – is developing.

More generally, we have seen a generic shift in the language of conflict and cooperation in an era of rising populist and nationalist zero-sum politics. This language is aggressive and exhibits a strong distaste for compromise. Political positions have polarised and hardened. Populist politicians seem averse to negotiating settlements that reflect compromise.

The report has looked at these discursive changes through both US and Chinese lenses. President Trump seems disinterested in anything that cannot be described as a victory – no matter that it might be Pyrrhic. Xi Jinping, with a combination of history and internal CCP politics in his thoughts, is determined that China will never acquiesce in any course of action that smacks of humiliation. China’s collective memory from the time of the opium wars remains too strong. A onetime editor of the Singapore Strait Times notes that the US has failed to appreciate how important this is for the Chinese leadership.

“Trump’s biggest mistake is not recognising the Chinese will never genuflect again ... politicians who think of relations between nations only in terms of transactions and deal-making just do not understand the power of national self-esteem that underpins China’s resilience” (Fong, 2019).

Of course, some issues do not lend themselves to compromise. For example, splitting the difference between Brexiteers and
Remainers in the UK was always going to prove difficult. But trade deals are always about negotiations and a mutually advantageous outcome should always be on the cards. “Getting to Yes” as Roger Fisher famously noted (1981) should always be possible. The key is to focus on the problem not personalities. But this is increasingly difficult in the era of narcissistic ‘strong leaders’.

The next decade is going to see a process of contest, adjustment, negotiation, and hopefully, more accommodation than conflict in the conversation over global order. But there is no guarantee. A move in the direction of a new Cold War will make the prospects of a dialogue increasingly difficult and unlikely; hence the importance of challenging the emergence of a new Cold War before it embeds itself in international discourse.

To date, China has challenged the US-led order only indirectly; there has been, as yet, no full frontal challenge. China is only recently beginning to articulate an alternative ideological and normative vision that contrasts with the contours of a traditional US led order. Any dialogue will be attendant on the manner in which China articulates its vision and US willingness to engage in a conversation that might incorporate at least some Chinese views into any process of reform. The continuance of the rhetoric of Cold War will kill that conversation.

If we assume that what we are seeing is actually less a quarrel amongst civilisations rather than a contest between political systems and economic models, this at least offers the prospect of a negotiated settlement in a way that civilisational ‘clashism’ does not. And, if we take Xi Jinping at his word, rather than reflect on, say, his actions in the South China Sea, civilisations are not inevitably destined to clash. At the 2019 Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilisations, the Chinese president, in a rebuke of Kiron
Skinner, said, “It is stupid to believe that one’s race and civilisation are superior to others, and it is disastrous to wilfully reshape or even replace other civilisations” (Zhen, 2019). The US-China relationship might not (yet) represent a clash of civilisations but it does represent a clash of cultures – *political cultures* – led by strong and at times unbending leaders.

Dialogue will also be challenged by the view that is now clearly articulated in the US, that the major challenge to its hegemony will come not only from any decline in its own role in the global economy but also from the growing power and political designs on the international order of revisionist states; most notably China and Russia (see Drezner, 2019). Here, the difference between the first Cold War discourse and any new one is significant. The discourse of the first Cold War was driven by the prospect of nuclear confrontation, Armageddon even. The frontlines of the new Cold War are the economy, technology, and AI.

The language of *economic* cold war is that of the weaponisation of tariffs, the Dollar, sanctions, and technology as the US looks for what Gary Hufbauer (2018) calls a “commercial divorce” from China. The question that will condition the nature of dialogue is the degree to which China’s revisionist agenda and the US’ *status quo* agenda can be jointly managed. Excessive aims will not secure a managed negotiation and compromise. But more modest, constrained aims cognisant of the other side’s interests might.

A further limitation on the prospects for dialogue that we must take into consideration is the domestic polities of the major actors. It would be dangerous to assume that sufficient domestic political will is available, especially if the direction of policy from government is our guide, to address these issues. In these days of greater digital communication and information overload, opposition to government cannot only be articulated; it can also
be ‘manufactured’. Domestic institutions, especially if they have been undermined from within, like the US State Department, can find themselves diminished in their ability to drive policy in a consistent manner. Political parties and indeed other political actors in democratic societies can undermine proposed strategies of international order from within; especially in the US, where we have seen a near total breakdown of bi-partisanship (see Musgrave, 2019).
5.2. In place of a conclusion: A provocation

Never formally articulated but implicit throughout this report has been a massive provocation. Put as a question, ‘Can/will Asia overtake the West?’ This is, of course, hardly an original suggestion. Both Kishore Mahbubani (2018) and Parag Khanna (Pettener, 2019) in their own ways have suggested we ready ourselves for a multi-polar and multi-civilisational order in which, as an accompaniment of the relative decline of the West, Asia becomes the major global actor. Khanna provides a compelling litany of rising indices: GDP, service sector growth, inter and intra-regional trade and investment growth, food and energy consumption and production, urbanisation, smart cities, and growing inter-connectivity. Of course, China, as the world’s largest economy, will be at the centre of this activity and, rather surprisingly he argues, without being hegemonic, it will cast a major shadow over the evolution of both its own Asia-Pacific regional order and the global order.

For sure, and rather awkwardly for proponents of a liberal view of world order, both the strength and appeal of China’s economic model appears to be growing at the very time that the influence of the US, especially as a soft power, cultural/civilisational actor, is under severe challenge (see French, 2019). Of course, not all characteristics of the Chinese model have wide appeal. The so-called Beijing Consensus, a model built on diri gisme and a politically closed system with the omnipresent, all-pervasive power of the Communist Party, can seem hollow at times. But elements of it can appeal. ASEAN, for example, provides a quasi-alternative experiment in a semi-rules-based order that combines elements of a Chinese model at the same time as it practices a regional institutional process of integration with a light variety of legal formalism. The ASEAN mantra is that peer pressure of the very gentle sort, without infringing on national sovereignties, is a better enforcement mechanism than the more formal EU-style Cartesian-liberal institutional dispute resolution mechanisms.

While approximations of the Chinese model, albeit to differing degrees and shapes, have support in Asia beyond China’s borders, the model is not without resistance. As one acute Asian observer notes, success must be the most attractive story and this has been China’s story of late. This story stands in contrast to the demonstrative effect of the European model over the last decade. But for Asia to lead it needs more than just economic success. While it must continue to show
its economic prowess, “Asia must also provide a story of attraction”. Asia, and especially China, says Professor Danny Quah Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, needs a better “soft-power story” if it is to have major influence on the reform of the international order (2017).

A positive Chinese input into the constructive reform of the liberal order would enhance its soft power. It is not even beyond imagination to see China support the expansion of some of the liberal elements of international economic order; especially in the trade and investment regimes. On balance, further integration into an expanded and reformed liberal order seems to be China’s currently preferred strategy to that of creating a parallel order with the primary objective of confronting liberal norms and all the aggravation that entails.

As with the role of Western intellectuals in the development of the theoretical underpinnings of the liberal order in the 20th century, we must recognise the role Asian intellectuals are having and will have in innovative future thinking in the 21st century. Their role will be to forge the theoretical and intellectual support for a vision of order in which arguments for institutional multilateral agreements could, for example, be supplemented, replaced even, by informal networks. And similarly, a duties-based social understanding could be offered as a substitute for a formal Cartesian rights-based logic of liberalism.

For this to happen, dialogue must be a two-way street with China and the US leading that dialogue but with others reflecting European, other Asian and other (e.g., African and Latin American) interests. Similarly, and in contrast to a Western liberal view, an Asian vision could also be expected to suggest that pluralism beats universalism; noting, not a little ironically that pluralism is a central tenet of liberal theory. Such arguments are, and will be, at the core of the debate between modern Western nation-states and civilisation states. Can they be mutually accommodated? This surely is the key question in the quest for a dialogue of civilisations.

Donald Trump was not the architect of the geopolitical shifts that are leading to a redesign of the globalised economic and political orders. These trends run longer and deeper than his administration; similarly, the seeds of the contest with China pre-date Trumpian international economic strategy. Indeed, the struggle between the ideology and practice of competing economic models goes back to the 19th century and traditional geopolitical
sites of contest have re-emerged to be joined by new ones – especially in the competition for technological leadership and control over digital connectivity.

For Donald Trump, the weaponisation of international economic policy is a logical outcome of an instrumental, transactional worldview in which any weapon is legitimate when it comes to securing a deal. But his new mercantilist actions offer an important wake-up call to both analysts and practitioners. His behaviour, more than anything else, has exposed the frailty and limits of the international institutional economic architecture that the US had built after World War Two.

Will the rise of the new mercantilism, and geopolitics, inevitably contribute to the decline, or collapse even, of the post-World War Two liberal rules-based system? The answer is in the balance. Conflict between the US and China, contrary to structural realist theory, is not inevitable. Policy decisions, good or bad, taken by both parties will be the principal determining factor. But for conflict not to grow something has to give on both sides. Mutual self-restraint is required. Restraint is not going to come without understanding and dialogue, and a dialogue that extends beyond simply the two major protagonists.

The purpose of dialogue is, or should be, to challenge and reform **conduct and behaviour**, hopefully leading to greater understanding and cooperation. Sadly, this is not what the two major protagonists, and especially their current leaders, appear to be looking for. One, bridling at what it sees as a loss of hegemony, wants to preserve the existing balance of power. The other, warming to an emerging great power status but convinced it does not receive the necessary international acceptance and prestige of a great power, wants change. The significance of international prestige – what Xi Jinping sees as a “reputation for power” – to China should not be underestimated (Khong, 2019).

However, we are in a situation where the emerging power’s rise has benefitted from the current international order and thus, not a little ironically, it is more solicitous of the international order’s welfare than the erstwhile hegemonic leader of that order. It should also be noted that prestige costs. While China has

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been able to support a broad global reach, this reach lacks depth. In all fields, the US is still basically stronger. Time might be on China’s side, and it prides itself on playing the long game, but that does not mean that patience is always exercised. It has been reluctant, and has been seen to be reluctant, to take on a deeper global role commensurate with its growing power. For sure, China is engaged in widespread collaborative initiatives, but unlike the US, without having any deep reserves of friendship and trust. That said, the current US administration is doing its best to deplete its longstanding reserves of trust in its global leadership; especially when contrasted with the growth of the leadership approval ratings of China.

How both states deal with this situation will be an important factor shaping the conversation between them over the next few years. Prestige for China, or more precisely the absence of any scent of humiliation in its relationship with the US, will be crucial. With a different administration in Washington this might have been easier; but conceding that others have interest and status needs is not something the Trump Administration currently does well. But as Henry Kissinger recently noted “Trump may be one of those figures in history who appears from time to time to mark the end of an era and to force it to give up its old pretences” (cited in Luce, 2018). As Kissinger went on to say, this might not be intentional. It could just be an accident.

Intentional or accidental, this is a reflection of the strategy that has been pursued by the US under President Trump. It helps explain, in this time of heightened nationalist foreign policy tension, why the current US administration is trying to address what it sees as a gap between liberal order and US economic and security interests, with all its attendant implications for the stability of the global order. It also explains why China is growing increasingly resistant to this strategy. This is, to use Kissinger’s expression, the “end of an era”. Liberalism will not alone determine the future of the human condition. Those liberal principles that might work well within a country are increasingly challenged in the international system.

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Last words

There is currently no ‘international or world community’ that can stand in unified response to the great powers. The US has turned its back on playing a leadership role in international community-building and a new order built on a Chinese, Russian, and say, Indian-led rapprochement, absent the US, will always be an incomplete and unrepresentative alternative. Grand notions of civilisation states with holistic approaches to the organisation of humanity as a whole are at worst a chimera and at best works in progress. But the world needs a new multilateralism. How this process will work out is yet to be determined.

The contours of a new multilateralism must exhibit some characteristics of the old order but with significant new refinements and additions. It is easier to say what this does not mean than what it does mean. It does not mean a continuance of the neoliberalism of the last 30 years, which generated financial instability, inequality, and enhanced climate deterioration. Alternatively, it does not mean more of the authoritarian capitalism of the kind that has developed in China and other states over the last several decades. As weak as it sounds, we need some form of ‘Goldilocks globalization’ – not too hot, not too cold, but rather just right; a ‘managed globalisation’.
Managed globalisation would reflect a liberal, as opposed to neoliberal, capitalism and a rules-based system in which Keynesians and Hayekians engage in dialogue not conflict (see Wapshott, 2011). It would recognise global trade and finance as the vehicle to not only generate aggregate global welfare overall but, at the same time, an accompanying shared prosperity and a commitment to a just society geared towards closing income gaps and supporting environmental sustainability, not the reversal of pro-climate policies. It would require

Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi, and Xi Jinping meet at the G20 Osaka Summit in June 2019. Are these the architects of the new world order?
compromises on the part of the world’s major political economies without which a stable equilibrium in global order will not reached. This goal will not be achieved unless political systems can: (i) claw back control from those narrow interests groups that directed, and benefitted almost exclusively from, globalisation in the period from the end of the Cold War to the present day; and (ii) contain the spread of the nationalist authoritarianism that has gathered momentum across all continents in recent years. This is the political task of the 21st century – it is indeed the challenge for modern humanity. But the worth of any attempt to generate a ‘dialogue of civilisations’ will be found in its ability to progress the conversation positively in these areas.
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