Gunther Hellmann (ed.)

Theorizing Global Order

The International, Culture and Governance

NORMATIVE ORDERS

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Theorizing Global Order: A Brief Introduction

Gunther Hellmann[1]

Theorizing international relations presupposes a conception of what the subject matter and its bounds are. We have to have some idea of the entity at the center of our theorizing—the 'international' and/or the 'global'; 'relations', 'systems' 'structure(s)' and/or 'order', just to name a few. Of course, *political orders* have been at the center of political theory since antiquity. However, compared to efforts at theorizing 'international relations' or 'international systems', the notion of international and/ or global 'order' has remained surprisingly undertheorized, exceptions notwithstanding.

This volume offers different contemporary perspectives on *theorizing global order*. It is the result of a lecture series organized by the Frankfurt 'Center of Excellence' 'Formation of Normative Orders'.[2] The aim of the lecture series (and the chapters in this volume) was not to offer 'a new theory' (or, for that matter, 'alternative theories') of international or global order. Rather, by shedding novel light at different dimensions of ordering international (and global) politics—both in terms of alternative ordering *perspectives* and alternative ordering *arrangements*—the volume as a whole aims at taking the double meaning of order(ing) as "fact" and "value"[3] seriously.

From a conceptual history point of view the notion of order has always carried the dual meaning of order as (more or less arbitrary) arrangement (Greek *táxis*) and order as natural and nurtured whole (*kósmos*).[4] In modern forms of IR theorizing this dual semantic has lived on in Realist (presumably purely analytical) notions of order 'in' (or 'under') 'anarchy'[5] and more

1 I am grateful to Daniel Fehrmann for his support in finalizing this manuscript.

2 On the notion of 'normative orders' see Forst and Günther, Die Herausbildung normativer Ordnungen.

3 Hurrell, *On Global Order*, 2.

4 Anter, *Die Macht der Ordnung*, 22.

5 See Kenneth Waltz's famous notion of "order without an orderer", Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 89.

or less explicitly normative forms of theorizing reaching from constitutional[6] or societal notions[7] of international order to all-encompassing notions of a juridically stabilized imperial capitalist order[8] or discursively shaped orders of truth and power in the form of practices and techniques of government extending well beyond the nation state.[9]

One of the underlying assumptions of this volume is that the theorization of 'order' entails an ordering semantic where the dual meanings of order(ing) as 'fact' *and* 'value' (or: of *táxis* and *kósmos*) are inseparably embedded even if analytical or normative dimensions may play a bigger (or lesser) role depending on epistemological preferences. This semantic of order(ing) guides our ways of theorizing order in different forms. First, 'factually' it shapes our ways of *describing* (or: making sense of) ordering arrangements (ie. how things belonging to the realm of the international are to be named and how they hang together). To order thought about the international in terms of 'system' *versus* 'state' *versus* 'the individual' may come naturally to the IR theorist *trained* (in Wittgenstein's sense[10]) to internalize a certain language game about the fundamental arrangements of 'world order'. Yet this type of '"levels' thinking"[11] may be quite problematic from other perspectives.[12] 'Normatively" the semantic of order(ing) also shapes our ways of *prescribing* how the structures, practices and arrangements in the international realm *should* be distinguished and how they should hang together when we conceive of orders in terms of their 'building'.

Second, the semantic of order(ing) also entails a temporal dimension in that it may either emphasize static or ahistorical 'structural' aspects in contrast to dynamic, events-based or historical 'processual' aspects of becoming. Theorizing order as structure tends to emphasize stability and inevitability, theorizing order(ing) as practice focuses on patterns of intentional steering as well as (intentional and unintentional) interactional outcomes. Being aware of these dimensions of theorizing international or global order(ing) is crucial, especially in times when prevailing conceptions of

6 Ikenberry, *After Victory*.
7 Bull, *The Anarchical Society*; Buzan, *From International to World Society*.
8 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 3–21.
9 Foucault, *Power*, eg. 15, 94–95, 132.
10 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, eg. §§5, 6, 9, 27.
11 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 13.
12 Campbell, *Writing Security*, 43–46.

order (or "systemic totality"[13]) are turned upside down. The contributions to this volume provide for a diverse set of systematically reflected ways of theorizing global order.

Overview of the Volume

The first chapter by *R.B.J. Walker* tackles the underlying concepts of order, global and theorization against the background of a notion of 'the modern international'. He argues that debates about connections between the concepts of 'order', 'global' and 'theorization' are shaped by shared but conflicting commitments to modern principles of subjectivity and self-determination. These commitments rest on specific claims about spatiotemporal origins and boundaries. The consequence is a structure of spatiotemporally organized contradictions expressed in aporetic claims to humanity and citizenship, and thus in the contested status of sovereignties expressed in state law and international law. Prevailing literatures usually erase the significance of the spatiotemporal, normative and contradictory character of this historical constitution of modern politics, partly by recasting internal and external moments of subjectivity as distinct spatial, temporal and hierarchical domains, partly by identifying specific practices through which contradictions are negotiated as the primary problem that must be engaged. In contrast to these positions Walker argues that the central source of order and disorder remains the status of claims about modern subjectivity expressed in political practices that must try, and fail, to reconcile claims about liberty, equality and security within a scalar hierarchy.

In Chapter 2 *Pinar Bilgin* asks how we should think about global order in a world characterized by a multiplicity of inequalities and differences. In drawing upon the insights of critical and postcolonial IR she suggests that thinking about global order in a world of multiple differences entails inquiring 'others" conceptions of the international, ie. those who are 'perched on the bottom rung' of world politics (Enloe). While the field is called 'International Relations' what we recognize as 'IR knowledge' has mostly focused on 'our' perspectives, not 'others'. The study of global

13Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 14.

order is no exception. Bilgin suggests that the challenge of thinking about global order in a world characterized by a multiplicity of inequalities and differences challenges on us to re-focus our attention on others' conceptions of the international. She offers 'hierarchy in anarchical society' as a concept that captures the hierarchical as well as anarchical and societal aspects of the international as conceived by 'others'.

Christian Reus-Smit discusses the causal significance of culture in world politics in Chapter 3. In contrast to the impoverished understanding of culture in IR, he puts forward conceptual and analytical propositions that build on key insights from other disciplines, enabling us to understand the impact of cultural difference on international order. Instead of treating culture as some kind of homogenous unit and diversity as the 'space' between these units, Reus-Smit discusses culture's inherent diversity and heterogeneous cultural contexts, assuming four axes of cultural diversity, which can guide the future research on cultural diversity and international order: meaning complexity, diversity of interpretation, identity pluralism and multiple identities. The central thesis is that cultural diversity is the existential background condition of world politics insofar as the institutions of the international order evolve in part to manage this diversity, constituting what he calls a 'diversity regime'. Cultural diversity informs practices of recognition and licenses the construction of particular institutional architectures. Changes in the system follow shifts in diversity regimes. Following the assumptions and argumentation put forward in this chapter, the question regarding the key contemporary transformation—the rise of non-Western great powers and its impact on the future of the modern international order—is whether the diversity regime of the modern order can accommodate these new articulations of cultural difference.

Erik Ringmar reminds us in Chapter 4 that (international) political order based on sedentary societies is a modern phenomenon. As a result of globalization societies have become more prosperous and their relations more peaceful, but people have also come to live more nomadic lives. We become increasingly 'homeless', as it were, and consequently more susceptible to the arguments of politicians who promise to create new homes for us. This is how the 'first era of globalization' in the nineteenth-century was interrupted and replaced by a century of genocides and wars. For the past couple of decades we have been going through a new, 'second' era of globalization, and once again the result is economic

development and peace, but also a renewed rhetoric of homelessness. The terrifying prospect is that we will repeat the horrors of the twentieth-century. Ringmar argues that we need to learn to live with rootlessness and that the nomads would be the best teachers in dealing with it because they have no roots; they only have 'paths'. They have homes, of course, but homes that they take with them. We too, Ringmar suggests, must learn to carry everything we need with us.

In Chapter 5 *Iver Neumann* and *Ole Jacob Sending* argue that diplomacy (as 'global order in action') is in the process of undergoing significant changes in that diplomatic practice has gone from being largely representational to becoming increasingly governmental. They specify the contents of what this entails, and the causal pathways through which such a change in diplomatic practice spawns new political orders. Two case studies illustrate their argument. The first one demonstrates how diplomats are now regularly active in brokerage and the facilitation of governance not only between, but also within states. Sovereignty is no longer the basis for diplomatic work, but has been bracketed. The second case study on humanitarian relief and peace and reconciliation work demonstrates how an important part of governmental work, namely dealing with crises, has also been set up in a way that brackets sovereignty. Here they find a general governance logic at work where the key point is not humanitarian relief as such, but governance, ie. to cap crises and resolve political instability to maintain political order. Based on these case studies, they conclude that, while representational practices still dominate diplomacy as an institution, a growing part of diplomatic work is not about representation, but about doing global governance.

Finally, in Chapter 6 *Siddharth Mallavarapu* sheds light on alternative ways of theorizing political order against the background of the colonial (and decolonizing) experience of Indian political and IR thought. Two generations of International Relations (IR) scholarship are distinguished: The work of Sisir Gupta, Angadipuram Appadorai, Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya and Urmila Phadnis forms the first generation and that of Kanti Prasad Bajpai, Bhupinder Singh Chimni and (one exception to the disciplinary norm), Ashis Nandy form the second. Their work reveals the contours and texture of thinking surrounding the praxis of political order against Indian experience. Political order in the Indian IR variant assumes several avatars in these renditions. These encompass revisiting specific ontologies and epistemologies generated by decolonization, the strategies

of 'new states' given their asymmetric standing in the world vis-à-vis entrenched powers, notions of political 'harmony', unsuccessful attempts at overcoming North-South binaries across issue areas, persisting suspicions of neo-imperial designs of external powers, the ascent and decline of particular species of political order theorization at different episodic moments in national and international political life, perspectives on cosmopolitanism read through spiritual lenses, and a scathing indictment of the unfulfilled claims of European Enlightenment modernity. All of this makes for a compelling brew to renew our commitment to a genuinely global IR that takes cognizance of the variety of eclectic perspectives even within a specific theatre of IR scholarship. Mallavarapu argues that this diversity merits being mapped and then brought into conversation with comparative global slices of first order theorization.

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The Modern International: A Scalar Politics of Divided Subjectivities

R.B.J. Walker

International, Global

In the published invitation to this seminar series, Gunther Hellmann offered an elegant account of the broad problem that concerns us. Tellingly, even if unintentionally, but I think rightly, he placed the three terms that make up the title of the series in the reverse sequence, Order, Global, Theorizing, while simultaneously urging a certain priority for the demands of theorizing. My intention is to proceed in precisely this manner.

To state the obvious: each of these three terms expresses many possible meanings. Moreover, the relations between these terms, and especially what we take to be their appropriate sequencing and relative priority, identify many conceptual and political antagonisms of both principle and practice. I thus take the invitation to speak about theorizing global order as an opportunity to sort through some of what is at stake when we make scholarly choices among a broad field of antagonisms that are at once scholarly and political, especially in relation to questions about authority; and I take authority to be one of the important—perhaps most important—of the common denominators expressed in all three terms.

So let me first say something very general about each of these terms before engaging each one in a little more detail. In this way I hope to be able to explain what I think is at stake in making claims about what it means to theorize global order, namely: how to think otherwise about historically and culturally specific forms of subjectivity that are split between claims to citizenship and claims to humanity within a scalar ordering of universalities, particularities and authorities that has enabled us to speak about a politics promising liberty, equality and security. This condensed formulation will obviously require some unpacking, which I propose to do in a way that highlights a number of core propositions:

(i) in order to theorize about global order it is helpful, perhaps necessary, to think about what global order is not, with the most obvious comparative case being what we generally call the international system but which I tend to call the modern international, understood as the twin, parent and child of the modern state. I would nevertheless insist that both terms, state and international, also highlight some of the difficulties of using the term modern in any context.

(ii) similarly, in order to understand the modern international it is also at least helpful to think about what it is not, or at least what it is not supposed to be, which brings us back to the troubling concept of modernity and especially its relationship with the forms of political order that supposedly preceded it.

(iii) conventional Anglo-American theories of international relations provide an insufficient resource for understanding the modern international largely because they rely on a series of sharp distinctions that cut off accounts of an international system from the much broader forms of modern international order of which the international system as traditionally conceived is merely one part.

(iv) what is primarily at stake in thinking about the modern international, as will be quite familiar in many intellectual traditions other than international relations theory, is the status of modern forms of human subjectivity, of a specific understanding of man, especially of the subject that is fundamentally split between claims to political citizenship and claims to some kind of humanity in general. International relations theory affirms both the positives and the negatives of a specific way of reconciling this antagonism, often under thoroughly misleading claims about political realism and political idealism. Such claims, along with related claims about an international anarchy, engage only with some of the consequences of this split, and then in a radically dualistic and reductionist fashion; and this is the form in which a much more complex problem keeps reappearing with some force in contemporary debates about the status of something more global.

(v) Paradoxically, the modern international also affirms an hierarchical structure within which this reconciliation has been affirmed: a scalar order that goes from high to low and from big to small, although, and crucially, this is an articulation of a scalar order that partly resembles and partly refuses the form of order against which the modern international is conventionally counter-posed: empire.

(vi) Thinking about global order very often affirms the basic principles of an international order even while suggesting that we are moving to some other kind of order. This is because of the widespread failure to appreciate what is at stake in (entirely convincing) claims that international order can only enhance greater disorder under conditions that are more and more obviously global. Indeed, the distinction between international and global is a site of considerable analytical and rhetorical confusion.

Before pursuing these and related themes further, however, allow me to forestall some possible misunderstandings by stressing four preliminary points:

(i) Although much of what I will say responds to something we usually call international, I understand very well the force of claims that we need to be thinking in terms of something we should refer to as global. Indeed, the force of such claims has been obvious to me for as long as I can remember thinking about politics; so, more than half a century. The difficulty, of course, lies not in the availability of evidence that might be interpreted as global in some fashion, which is both extensive and heterogeneous, but in the (in)adequacy and deeply over-determining character of the concepts available for the interpretation of and judgements about the significance of this evidence, along with the force of entrenched theoretical traditions that are quite happy to keep working with concepts affirming the necessity of an international order so as to affirm a global order as its necessary even if impossible alternative. Just to take one minor example, Manfred Stegers little book *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*[1], is neither the first nor will it be the last to invoke the old story about blind men trying to identify an elephant from its disparate parts. For me, the more persuasive that empirical claims about specific trends become, the less persuasive the overall interpretation of the significance of those trends become, and the more incoherent our understanding of what the political implications of what any such interpretation might be. Beware, I would say, of premature conceptualizations that tempt us into too many shortcuts in our attempts to make sense of many confusing dynamics and worrying tendencies.

(ii) While various literatures are quite happy to offer various characterizations of what we might now mean by references to or judgements about the most important dynamics shaping a global order, it is rarely very

1 Steger, *Globalization*.

clear to me what questions, or what kinds of question, are being posed when such terms are invoked. The kinds of theorization that interest me, therefore, are those which seek to identify what counts as a provocative question, that is, a question that does not lead to a predictable answer. Easy answers are plentiful and cheap, in this context as in many others, and we do not have to look very far to find their catastrophic consequences in contemporary political life. This is why the theorizations that interest me tend to run up against principles articulated in texts that have achieved canonical status in modern political, social, cultural and economic theory; texts, that is, which provide some insight into the questions that have provoked now conventional accounts of the conceptual and practical options that both enable and disable ways of thinking about what it must mean to engage in politics, or indeed anything else. I tend to wonder about the degree to which the kinds of questions driving the conventional theorizations do or do not continue to be provocative under contemporary conditions. In this context I have long been struck by the degree to which such texts have received startlingly superficial treatment when they appear among theorizations of international and global order: treatments that are themselves interesting for the ways in which they reify a very specific and narrow repertoire of acceptable answers to questions that have been rendered banal as claims about history, and more or less vacuous as attempts to articulate questions responding to very specific conditions that may be relevant now.

(iii) Putting these two points together in very short form, I would say that one must engage very seriously with the *problem* of an international order in order to get a sense of what is at stake, at least politically, in speculating about global order; that is, one must engage with the array of historically and culturally specific questions to which the international order has been understood as a package of acceptable and even necessary answers, at least in retrospect. Nevertheless, one must be very careful about analyses of international order expressed in prevailing forms of international relations theory, including those forms that claim to be either critical or to have something to say about a global order. For me, prevailing theories of international relations are a symptom of a much more serious problem but not a particularly helpful resource for engaging with that problem, though I often appreciate ways in which some scholars manage to say very interesting things on the basis of such compromised resources. I should also say that as contemporary scholarly traditions go, theories of

international relations are certainly not alone in this respect. Most of the social and human sciences can be read in large part through the categories and classifications produced by the modern international. Indeed, methodological internationalism is perhaps even more pervasive and over-determining than methodological nationalism.

(iv) Much of what I say may sound disturbingly ahistorical, or worse, as affirming various caricatured forms of history. This is intentional. One of the key themes that needs to be engaged when thinking about what it means to theorize global and perhaps any other order (a term, after all, that tends to encourage structural and spatial rather than historicist and temporal resources) is precisely the kind of history, or histories, we might want to invoke in relation to any of these three terms. Nevertheless, here I will tend to be content to work with various claims about what *must* have happened historically given the terms with which we tend to think about both international and global order now. Our understanding of international order, and global order, is at least as much a product of claims about what must have been the case, of a specific philosophy of history or a history of the present, rather than of any historically credible account of what might have been the case. It is especially a product of claims about an historical break, a great divide between an era before and an era after the creation of an international order. This is a very difficult issue, which I have been trying to engage in other contexts, but here I just want to register that I am aware that everything I will say is in effect a systematic avoidance of it for the more or less structuralist purposes signaled in the title of this lecture series.

Order, Global, Theorization

To begin with, and to come straight to the significance of attempts to make claims about where and when one must begin, the question of order. This is a question that comes in two primary modes, though one might extend the meaning of the term order in many directions. One mode is ontological, some idea of the entity that concerns us, again as Gunther's invitation puts it, especially of the entity that invites the use of the terms global and international: terms that gesture to claims about universality, humanity and the world as such. These are big terms we might say,

perhaps as big as they get when speaking about contemporary political life, this side of infinity at least.

It is fairly clear that attempts to identify what such terms refer to attract a contested array of answers. It is also fairly clear that common assumptions that the terms global and international name more or less the same phenomenon obscure some of the deepest rifts among those engaged in trying to understand contemporary politics and the possibilities for political engagement. How universal, and how big, is what we call international? Does what we call global refer to something more universal, higher up some scale of magnitude and inclusion? And what do we mean, in either case, by references to humanity, or the world as such, or the relationship between humanity and world? These are questions that were given influentially systematic formulations by Immanuel Kant in eighteenth-century Europe but might be traced both to much earlier centuries and to other locations. So, to engage with questions about order is not for the feint of heart. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread, we might say; not least, I *would* say, because claims about the presence or absence of angels as the markers of certain distinctions between orders, and between orders and disorders, have played a significant part in the genesis of modern understandings of order, and its constitutive absences.

Another mode is normative or axiological, involving some sense of the acceptability of the order that concerns us. In this case, acceptability is presumably to be understood, at a minimum, both in terms of:

(a) whether the order is to be understood through some analytical, positivist or pragmatic account of whether an order does indeed work in relation to the normalized expectations of that order, perhaps in the way that micro-economic theory is normative (so, in relation to whether it is peaceful rather than bellicose, orderly rather than anarchical, orderly but not at the cost of generating injustices that might threaten disorder, systemically organized rather than systematically dysfunctional).

(b) whether that order is acceptable in some other terms, terms that might arise from within the order in question or from somewhere outside that order, and thus, in the specific case of an international order and its constituent states, terms that involve constitutive antagonisms between internalist and externalist understandings of normative judgement and commitment.

Some of many meanings of the many resonances that come with the term order combine ontological and axiological aspirations, sometimes

with some aesthetic resonances thrown in. Consider, for example, in the English formulations, just some of the many concepts-cum-intellectual traditions that have been attached to the term international so as to give a sense of what we are here calling order: structure, system (as in systematic and systemic), form and formation, architecture, constitution, regulative ideal. Already we can intuit the broad outlines of trajectories that take us both from order to global to theorization and from any moment in this sequence to what we call politics. In particular, given the concerns of this lecture series, it is a trajectory that requires that theorization be understood in terms of ontological, axiological and thus political terms before it is considered in more narrowly epistemological terms. This is to take a stance that resists the privileging of epistemological and even methodological conceptions of theorization that have become fashionable in scholarly disciplines seeking to engage with questions about international and global order. It is also to affirm what now appear to be fairly traditional forms of scholarship, despite various attempts to depict these as somehow unconventional and even radical. I would also say that it is also to affirm that what counts as radical, let alone as critical, or even emancipatory, is very much an open question under contemporary conditions.

Put differently, we might say that questions about order lead us not only towards many longstanding controversies about the political, ontological, axiological, epistemological and methodological implications of the term theorization but also, and to jump very quickly to much of what is at stake in distinctions between international and global forms of order, to questions about the relationship between claims about the need to identify a better ontology/axiology so as to achieve a better politics, and thus to questions about the manner in which judgements about what counts as a better ontology/axiology are themselves political. This especially takes us close to controversies associated with some of the canonical thinkers who have been identified as exemplary architects of an international order that can never be global. Thomas Hobbes is especially notable in this respect, not least in relation to his very specific way of framing the (sovereign) conditions under which it was possible to recast the meaning of sovereignty from theological to secular (even if still theological) terms.

Second, the status of claims about a global entity, not least in relation to something we call an international order, or international relations. Here again we can identify two very broad groups of questions:

(i) One about the order that is named as international, a form of human existence structured within a systematic array of inclusions and exclusions among a diversity of more or less distinct states: a form of unity among diversity and diversity *within* unity that attracts a very broad array of characterizations. These characterizations are most easily categorized on a scale that reaches from accusations of a minimal unity, and thus of incoherence, disorder, anarchy, and so on, to celebrations of potentials for a political order of self- determining communities of citizens within an institutionalized expression of a common humanity. That is, this is an order that may not be usefully understood through terms like either anarchy or community/society that push a constitutive antagonism to a polarized extreme. Indeed, given its title, it is perhaps not surprising that, despite many grave weaknesses, Hedley Bull's *The Anarchical Society* remains one of the few useful guides to what it means to speak about an order in international terms.[2]

(ii) A second concerns any order that is plausibly identified as global, not least in relation to:

(a) the general limits within which any order can be said to operate

(b) the specific temporal and spatial limits within which an international order can be said to operate with reference to what we have come to call humanity understood as the legitimate agents of some shared world

(c) the increasingly contestable limits of our capacity to imagine an order within which what we call humanity can be understood as part of a broader world or planet given the extent to which our dominant accounts of humanity have been shaped by cultures predicated on a radical distinction between man and world and various troubled attempts to reconcile claims about human freedom/autonomy with claims about natural and planetary necessities. This is a problem that haunts many contemporary speculations:

– about a multiplication of actors and relations between them
– about the multiplication of and complex character of borders and the changing relationship between discriminations and connects they enact
– about changing relations between stasis and mobility, spatialities and temporalities

2 Bull, *The Anarchical Society*.