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Multilateralism and world order*

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'World order' has become a current catchphrase of political discourse and journalism. 'Multilateralism' has become something of a growth sector in academic studies. What current events have brought into prominence, scholarship has an obligation to subject to critical analysis. This article raises some of the questions that should be probed in this analysis.

The two concepts are interrelated. Multilateralism appears in one aspect as the subordinate concept. Multilateralism can only be understood within the context in which it exists, and that context is the historical structure of world order. But multilateralism is not just a passive, dependent activity. It can appear in another aspect as an active force shaping world order. The agent/structure dilemma is a chicken-and-egg proposition.

To understand the potential for change that multilateralism holds, it is first necessary to place the study of multilateralism within the analysis of global power relations. I deliberately avoid using a term like 'international relations' since it embodies certain assumptions about global power relations that need to be questioned. 'International relations' implies the Westphalian state system as its basic framework, and this may no longer be an entirely adequate basis since there are forms of power other than state power that enter into global relations. 'World order' is neutral as regards the nature of the entities that constitute power; it designates an historically specific configuration of power of whatever kind.

The dominant tendencies in existing world order can be examined within a global system having three principal components—a global political economy, an inter-state system, and the biosphere or global ecosystem. These three components are both autonomous in having their own inherent dynamics, and, at the same time, inter-dependent with each other. Contradictions are generated within each of the three spheres, and contradictions arise in the interrelationships among the three spheres.

In conventional diplomatic usage, the term multilateral refers to states. It covers relationships among more than two states with respect to some specific issue or set of issues.[1] Another usage of 'multilateral' has long been current in international economic relations, i.e. the notion of multilateral trade and payments. Multilateralism, in this sense was synonymous with the most favoured nation principle in

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[1] J. Kaufman. *Conference Diplomacy* (Leyden, 1968).

international trade and the movement towards convertibility of currencies and freedom of capital flows.[2]

The first of these meanings of 'multilateral' derives from the inter-state system. It is limited to relations among states through diplomatic channels or inter-state organizations. The second refers to relations among the economic actors of civil society within a framework regulated by states and international organizations. It pertains to an historically specific form of capitalist market economy, that in which civil society is separate and distinct from the state, and the agents of civil society are presumed to act within a system of rationally deducible behavioural laws. It would have little or no meaning for the relationships among what Karl Polanyi called redistributive societies, whether ancient empires or modern centrally planned economies.[3]

The specific context out of which the economic concept of multilateralism emerged was negotiation essentially between the United States and Britain for the constitution of the post-World War II economic order. The United States used its economic leverage to pressure Britain to abandon the preferential trade and payments system encompassing the Commonwealth and Empire under the Ottawa Agreements of 1933, which was one of several attempts to cope with the world-wide depression of the 1930s by protectionism within an economic bloc. When these Anglo-American negotiations took place, Europe and the Soviet Union were devastated by war and what later became known as the Third World was inarticulate in international economic affairs. These countries were not effective participants in the definition of the concept or in giving substance to it.

In that context, economic multilateralism meant the structure of world economy most conducive to capital expansion on a world scale; and political multilateralism meant the institutionalized arrangements made at that time and in those conditions for inter-state cooperation on common problems. There was, for some people, an implicit compatibility, even identity between economic and political aspects of multilateralism: political multilateralism had as a primary goal the security and maintenance of economic multilateralism, the underpinning of growth in the world capitalist economy. This was the vision of Cordell Hull, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of State. Others saw contradiction between economic and political aspects: political multilateralism for them existed to correct the inequities that resulted from the world economy, leading, for instance, in the 1960s, to a demand for the institutionalization of a New International Economic Order. This view came to be expressed by leaders of Third World nations.

The relative simplicity of the idea of a world order consisting of a state system and a capitalist world economy may, however, be inadequate to encompass the totality of forces capable of influencing structural change at the close of the twentieth century. An enlarged conception of global society would include economic and social forces, more or less institutionalized, that cut across state boundaries—forces of international production and global finance that operate with great autonomy outside of state regulation, and other forces concerned with ecology, peace, gender, ethnicities, human rights, the defence of the dispossessed and the advancement of the advantaged that also act independently of states. Multilateralism has to be considered from the

[2] R. M. Gardner, *Sterling–Dollar Diplomacy. The Origins and Prospects of our International Economic Order* (New York, 1969).

[3] K. Polanyi, C. Arensberg, and H. W. Pearson (eds.), *Trade and Market in the Early Empire* (Chicago, 1957).

standpoint of its ability to represent the forces at work in the world at the local level as well as at the global level. What about aspirations for autonomy and a voice in world affairs by micro-regions or fragments of existing states? How can the less powerful be represented effectively? Who will negotiate for the biosphere which humanity shares interdependently with other forms of life?

To define a meaning of multilateralism for today and tomorrow, we must begin with an assessment of the present and emerging future condition of the world system, with the power relationships that will give contextual meaning to the term. In the most general statement of the problem of multilateralism, these questions are posed:

- What kinds of entities are involved in multilateral relations?
- What kind of system connects these entities?
- What specific condition of the system gives the contextual meaning to the terms multilateral and multilateralism?
- What kind of knowledge is appropriate to understanding the phenomenon of multilateralism?

Multilateralism can be examined from two main standpoints: one, as the institutionalization and regulation of established order; the other, as the locus of interactions for the transformation of existing order. Multilateralism, in practice, is both, but these two aspects find their bases in different parts of the overall structure of multilateralism and pursue different tactics. A comprehensive enquiry into multilateralism at the present time cannot afford to focus on the one to the detriment of the other. Indeed, the question of transformation is the more compelling of the two.

The 'crisis of multilateralism'

Before tackling these questions, we must consider further the circumstances leading to this revived concern with multilateralism on the threshold of the 1990s. Why is multilateralism a matter of such concern today? In a preface to a collection of articles by Dutch officials and scholars published in 1988 entitled *The UN Under Attack*, Sir Shridath Ramphal, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, wrote:

> [T]he paradox—and the tragedy—of recent times is that even as the need for better management of relations between nations and for a multilateral approach to global problems has become more manifest, support for internationalism has weakened—eroded by some of the strongest nations whose position behoves them to be at its vanguard and who have in the past acknowledged that obligation of leadership. This is most true, of course, of the United States, whose recent behaviour has served actually to weaken the structures of multilateralism, including the United Nations itself.[4]

Ramphal then referred to some of the advances in international cooperation, particularly with reference to Third World problems, since Bretton Woods and San Francisco, and continued:

> They were possible because of the emergence of a global consensus which responded in some fashion to the consciousness that we were all part of one world community—neighbours needing an ethic of partnership for living together. That enlightened consensus has become a

[4] J. Harrod and N. Schrijver (eds.), *The UN Under Attack* (Aldershot, 1988).

casualty in the drift towards dominance and the ascendancy of unilateralism in world affairs. . . . Recently there have been moves towards coordination of economic policy among leading industrial countries. This is, in principle, better than wholly uncoordinated national action. But cooperation within a directorate of powerful countries is hardly the answer to the world's needs, the needs of all its nations. In fact, it could well have the result of reinforcing the dominance of the few over the many.[5]

In this perspective, the crisis of multilateralism emerged in the 1980s in a tendency on the part of the United States and some other powerful countries to reject the United Nations as a vehicle for international action and a movement on the part of these countries towards either unilateralism or collective dominance in world economic and political matters. The context in which this shift occurred was the economic crisis of the mid-1970s which led among other things to a reduced willingness on the part of the rich countries to finance aid to the Third World, and an increased tendency on their part to insist upon free-market, deregulating, and privatizing economic policies both at home and abroad. This was accompanied by their suspicion that the United Nations system was an unfriendly political forum and a potential obstacle to economic liberalization.

There thus occurred a cleavage between the old economic multilateralism, perceived as a support to a liberal economic order and institutionally located in the principal agencies of the western dominated world economy, i.e. the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank; and a more political multilateralism, symbolically located in the UN General Assembly, and perceived by these powerful states as harbouring an unfriendly Third World majority.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the configuration of power giving context to multilateralism changed again. The Soviet Union, beset by economic crisis at home and undergoing a major transformation of its political being, proclaimed 'new thinking' about world relationships and the United Nations system. In substance, the key factor for the Soviet Union became the maintenance of friendly relations with the United States and the corollaries of a shift of resources from military to civilian purposes, a turning inward to face political and economic crises within the union, and a withdrawal of support for Third World opposition to US international objectives.

The vacancy of Soviet power as a countervailing balance to US power together with the economic and political weakening of the Third World generated a new potential for the UN Security Council, an opportunity seized by the United States. Cooperative relationships between the five permanent members of the Security Council emerged significantly with regard to the Iran–Iraq war. For Britain and France the new relationship among the permanent five was an opportunity to regain a privileged position at the centre of world power. They needed the United States but the United States also evidently needed them. For China, the new situation was a means of attenuating the relative ostracism it had suffered in the wake of the Tienamen Square incidents of 1989. The Gulf crisis of the summer of 1990 and the military action that followed delineated a new configuration of forces that US President George Bush has repeatedly referred to as the 'new world order'.

From a position of reluctant member of the United Nations, expecting little support for its policies in that organization, the United States, with Soviet acquiescence, took initiative against Iraq and gained legitimacy for it from the Security Council. The reversals of attitude towards the United Nations by both the United

[5] Harrod and Schrijver (eds.), *The UN*.

States and the Soviet Union had previously been followed by measures to begin payment of the considerable arrears owed by both states to the UN, although repayments were stretched out over time sufficiently to constitute a continuing leverage for compliant behaviour by the organization.

The US success in the Security Council posed the problem of multilateralism in a different way, contrasting with the way it was presented by Ramphal in the passage cited above. The problem was no longer how the UN could survive without the political and financial support of the United States. It became whether the UN could function as a world organization if it came to be perceived as the instrument of its most powerful member. The Security Council's action could be seen as legitimating a US initiative already decided, not as the independent source of a genuinely international policy.

This question concerns particularly the Third World countries that had wielded considerable influence over United Nations decisions in the General Assembly. This apprehension is strengthened by the effect of global economic structures in weakening the capacity for resistance by poor countries to the disciplinary market effects generated by forces of global finance and production in an economic system organized and sustained by the rich countries. If Third World countries can no longer seek even symbolic support through collective action in the United Nations, what recourse will they have to express an alternative vision of world order?

The present world political-economic context raises both potentially and more and more explicitly a number of new issues for multilateralism. One concerns the process through which the Security Council majority and the military coalition for the Gulf war was put together. These were *ad hoc* diplomatic constructs built with country-specific pressures and incentives. The cost to the United States in material and diplomatic concessions to secure both Security Council votes and participation in the military coalition was offset by the ability of the United States to extract funding from Japan and Germany, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Such measures could work in the Security Council with its limited membership but could hardly be expected to work in the larger General Assembly. The process hardly compares with the 'enlightened consensus' of a continuing character evoked by Ramphal with respect to the earlier period. Would it be likely to lead to a polarization within UN multilateralism between the dominant few and the relatively powerless many, eventually between the Security Council and the General Assembly?

There is also the question how far a state can act militarily for the United Nations in the absence of any United Nations command and regular accountability to the Security Council or of any defined role for the Secretary-General. The Gulf case seemed to open an institutional void, creating an uncertain and potentially dangerous precedent.

A further issue is the relationship between governments and domestic forces. In a number of countries in the Islamic world, sentiment in the streets favoured Iraq and fuelled resentment against US and other Western intervention forces in the heartland of Islam, despite the official positions of Arab government members of the coalition. Popular Islamism may also be read as a metaphor for a more widespread Third World resentment against the economic and political dominance of the capitalist west, more forcibly felt since the 1980s as a consequence of the Third World debt crisis among other causes. Furthermore, domestic opposition to the war was manifested in the more powerful countries as well, including initially in the United

States. How far can the existence of widespread domestic opposition undermine the legitimating function of the United Nations? Is there any way in which multilateralism can take account of the level of popular forces as well as the level of governments?

The Gulf crisis also brought into focus the issue of the environmental consequences of war. The warnings of environmental disaster from a conference of scientists in London just prior to the beginning of hostilities were quickly realised by oil spills and fires. This particular disaster underscored the problem of achieving some means of managing the relationship between the natural environment and human actions determined by politics in the interests of the biosphere which humanity shares as a part of nature. The implications of multilateralism extend beyond humanity, whether expressed at state or popular or individual behaviour levels, to include non-human forces which will affect prospects for human survival.

Thus, the 'crisis of multilateralism' in its two recent phases, presents an additional set of questions:

- How can national interest as perceived by the most powerful state be reconciled with multilateralism? Must there be a choice between weakening multilateralism through its rejection by the unilateralism of a powerful state, and weakening of multilateralism through its instrumental use by a powerful state?
- What are the conditions for global consensus as a basis for multilateralism? One form of consent may be acquiescence in the leadership of a powerful state insofar as that state is widely perceived to embody universally acceptable principles of order. Another may be through recognition of the coexistence of different value systems where the principles of each value system are brought to bear in the achievement of a solution to common problems.
- What is the relationship between economic multilateralism, i.e. the processes of global liberal economic structures sustained by the most powerful capitalist states; and political multilateralism or the aspiration for consensual control over global economic processes empowering less privileged countries, e.g. as was envisaged in the abortive demands for a New International Economic Order?
- What role could popular movements either mobilized by events or around longer-term issues (e.g. peace, social justice, environmentalism, or feminism), play in multilateralism?
- What role does multilateralism play in the relationship between the biosphere and human political and economic organization?

Intellectual approaches to multilateralism

The current crisis of multilateralism presents the problematic of our study. This problematic can be viewed through a number of different lenses, each a different intellectual perspective. These perspectives are differentiated by epistemologies and ontologies. They express different conceptions of how knowledge in human affairs can be acquired and for what purposes; and they posit different conceptions of what constitutes the field of enquiry, what the basic entities and basic relationships are. Some of the principal perspectives can be reviewed to illustrate this point.

To represent these different perspectives is, in practice, to construct them as ideal types. Here, the perspective becomes separated from the perceiver. The work of

certain authors helps to define the logically coherent forms of ideal types; but many authors share more than one perspective. My intention is not to put people into boxes. It is rather to show how a satisfactory perspective may draw upon several of the main theoretical traditions.

Realism

The starting point for contemporary theorizing about global power relations is the Realist tradition. Realism puts a primary emphasis upon states and the analysis of the historical behaviour of states but, I shall argue, does not limit its vision to states. Realism, in its more sophisticated manifestations, is also concerned with the economic and social underpinnings of states and how the nature of states changes. In classical realism, the state is no absolute; the state is historicized.

However, let us begin by assuming a world in which states are the only significantly powerful entities engaged in global power relations, and in which each state is constrained in its ambitions only by the threat of retaliation by other states. In such a world, multilateralism is conceivable at most as a series of transitory arrangements designed to achieve collective purposes among a group of states that find a temporary common interest. The moving forces in such a system are changes in the relative powers of the states and redefinitions of state interests. These could change the composition of groupings of states that are able to discover common or compatible purposes.

International institutions and general principles of international law and behaviour are not absent from the realist conception of world order, but they have what a Marxist might call a superstructural character. That is, they are not to be taken at face value but to be seen as means of achieving ends that derive from the real conflicts of interest at the heart of the system. E. H. Carr, whose work remains a classic exposition of Realist thinking, wrote: 'Just as the ruling class in a community prays for domestic peace, which guarantees its own security and predominance, and denounces class war, which might threaten them, so international peace becomes a special vested interest of predominant Powers'.[6] And: '[I]nternational government is, in effect, government by that state which supplies the power necessary for the purpose of governing'.[7]

In the Realist perspective, there is room for a considerable proliferation of international institutions, but little room for any cumulative acquisition of authority by these institutions. International organizations will have no real autonomy as agencies capable of articulating collective purposes and mobilizing resources to pursue these purposes. They will remain mechanisms for putting into effect, or merely for publicly endorsing, purposes that have been arrived at and are given effect by those states that dispose of the resources necessary for attaining them. International institutions are a public ritual designed to legitimate privately determined measures.

[6] E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939* (London, 1946), p. 82. Other notable authors who could be included in the Realist tradition include Hams Morgenthau, Reinhold Neibuhr, Raymond Aron and William T. R. Fox. They do, of course, differ in their relative emphasis, particularly on the role of morality in politics; but they participate in a common discourse.

[7] Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, p. 107.

The general principles used to legitimate these measures in the enactment of ritual are suspect as rationalizations of ulterior motives. The critical Realist analyst is enjoined to strip away the cloak of public respectability so as to reveal the basic purposes at work. Argument on the ground of the principles invoked would be an irrelevant distraction from the real issue which is to reveal the basic interests at work. Only by laying bare these interests can effective counteracting forces be put together, forces which, in turn, might make use of international institutions and principles of law and morality to further their different purposes.

Classical Realism is capable of recognizing its own limitations; and these limitations arise with the phenomenon of moral sentiment. The fact that the powerful appeal to moral principles in order to secure acquiescence from the less powerful suggests that moral sentiments do have a certain force in human and even inter-state affairs. Even though the state is a purely fictitious person, the fact that people ascribe moral claims to state behaviour as though the state were a person has some effect in constraining the state. Moreover, moral sentiments may enter into the formulation of state purposes. The realist will, however, beware of placing too heavy a burden of practice upon moral sentiment and will be alive to the hypocrisy with which moral sentiment cloaks egoistic intents.

Classical Realism remains remarkable in the extent to which it is capable of accounting for the condition of multilateralism and in particular for the crisis of multilateralism discussed above. It provides an explanation for United States aloofness from the UN system during the 1970s phase of the crisis, in the perception that a Soviet blocking ability in the Security Council and a Third World majority in the General Assembly negated the endorsement of US goals in these bodies. Meanwhile, economic forces in which US interests remained predominant, were weakening both the Soviet bloc and the Third World. The United States could virtually ignore the United Nations as a centre of multilateral activity and allow economic forces to continue to shift power relations in its favour.

Classical Realism also provides an explanation for the second phase of the crisis of multilateralism. The withdrawal of Soviet power as a counterweight to US power and the alignment of Soviet with US positions in the Security Council, coupled with continuing financial pressures on Third World countries guaranteed a docile response to US initiative in the Security Council. Most Third World countries were constrained by financial pressures of external debt to open their economies further to the penetration of the dominant forces in the world economy protected by the United States. A Third World country that sought to control its economic resources in its own interest in contradiction to external market forces posed a challenge to the global economic system that, even if not substantively threatening, might become contagious. Chile and Nicaragua were not alone to suffer the consequences. A Security Council under US dominance could authorize military action that would stand as a warning to any Third World country disposed to build a military challenge to the system. The real reasons for the US initiation of war against Iraq, in a Realist interpretation, remained obscured by the public ritual in the Security Council.

The epistemological foundations of classical Realism are historicist and hermeneutic. Classical Realism is a critical theory in that it does not accept appearances at face value but seeks to penetrate to the meaning within. It takes account of historical structures as well as of events. The term historical structures designates those persisting patterns of thought and actions that define the frameworks within

which people and states act. These structures are shaped and reshaped slowly over time—the *longue durée* of Fernand Braudel.[8] They are the intersubjective realities of world politics. The critical analysis of classical Realism is the process of discerning the meaning of events within these historically determined frameworks for action.

A critical theory is more at the service of the weak than of the strong. Machiavelli may be accorded the status of first critical theorist of European thought. (I would argue that Ibn Khaldun, the fourteenth-century Islamic diplomat and scholar was the first critical theorist of his civilization; and I expect other instances of critical theory can be discovered in other traditions of civilization.) In form, Machiavelli's *Prince* appears to be addressed to the powerful, to the *palazzo*. In effect, his work instructs the outsiders in the mechanisms of power—it enlightens the *piazza*. Classical Realism is to be seen as a means of empowerment of the less powerful, a means of demystification of the manipulative instruments of power.

There is a distortion of classical Realism called Neo-realism that severs Realism from its critical roots and converts it into a problem-solving device for the foreign policy makers of the most powerful states.[9] This Neo-realism, which is very largely an American product of the Cold War,[10] attempts to construct a technology of state power. It computes the components of power of individual states, and assesses the relative chances of moves in the game of power politics. Its epistemology is positivist and it lacks any dimension of historical structural change. The world of inter-state relations is a given world, identical in its basic structure over time. There are no changes of the system, only changes within the system.[11]

Liberal institutionalism

From the moment of drafting of the UN Charter until the present time a different current of theories has centred attention upon multilateralism, endeavouring to discern in it the emergence of institutions that would transform world order by progressively bringing the state system within some form of authoritative regulation. This current has thrown up a whole sequence of theoretical formulations, each of which appears to have been superceded by its successor.

The earliest formulation was the functionalism of David Mitrany.[12] Functionalism, despairing of progress through the world federalist approach to constructing world

[8] F. Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XV^e–XVIII^e siècle* tome 1 *Les Structures du quotidien: le possible et l'impossible* (Paris, 1979) and 'History and the Social Sciences: The *longue durée*, in Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sara Matthews (Chicago, 1980).

[9] I have discussed the distinction between problem-solving theories and critical theories in an earlier article. See R. Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory', in Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism*.

[10] See, for example, K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass, 1979); cf. R. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York, 1986).

[11] I am using 'Neo-realism' to represent a perspective perhaps best expressed in the work of Kenneth Waltz (see, for example, Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism*). The term has also been used more broadly to include the theorizing of cooperation among interest-pursuing states in such forms as 'regimes'. See, for example, Fox, who had in mind the work of John Ruggie and Stephen Krasner. I think this is better treated as one of the modifications of liberal institutionalism (below), although it does show the influence of neo-realism upon the liberal institutionalist tradition in American scholarship of the Cold War era. (W. T. E. Fox, 'E. H. Carr and Political Realism: Vision and Revision,' Department of International Politics, University College of Wales, Aberstwyth, E. H. Carr Memorial Lecture No. 1).

[12] D. Mitrany, *A Working Peace System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization* (London, 1943).

government, envisaged an alternative route through the 'low politics' of functional or technical agencies. Its principal argument was that by associating professionals and technicians who were primarily concerned with solving practical problems of everyday life—from delivering the mail on time to promoting health, education and welfare—in international agencies charged with these matters, the conflictual sphere of 'high politics' monopolized by diplomats and political leaders would be outflanked and diminished by the cooperative sphere of functionalism. World government would arrive by stealth rather than by design.

Functionalism became embodied in the specialized agencies revived or established as component parts of the UN system. The thought behind it appeared to gain relevancy when the UN system, from the 1960s, expanded its technical assistance work in less developed countries. The world system was, in a sense, helping to build the state structures upon which it formally was to rest.

Functionalism, however, though it distinguished 'low' from 'high' politics in order to focus upon the former with the implication that in the long run low politics was the more fundamental, offered no theory of how a more centralized world authority would come about. Neo-functionalist theory filled this gap. According to its proponents, the scope and authority of international institutions would be increased through a conscious strategy of leadership. Any major field of functional competence entrusted to an international institution was likely to impinge upon linked fields in which no international authority had been assigned. Innovative leadership could manipulate an impasse in which action was blocked at the margin of an institution's existing authority into a consensus for the expansion of authority into the bordering field that would enable action to advance. This was called 'spill over'. Neo-functionalism also expanded the range of relevant actors to include elements of civil society—trade unions, industrial associations, consumer groups and other advocacy groups, and also political parties. The orientation of these various interests towards international institutions would enhance the authority of these institutions.

The broadening of scope and authority of international institutions was considered by neo-functionalists as a process of integration. Karl W. Deutsch, in a somewhat different approach, defined integration as the formation of a 'security community' within which groups of people enjoyed institutions and practices of a kind that allowed for a reasonable expectation that change would proceed by peaceful rather than violent means.[13] Deutsch's approach gave more emphasis to modes of common understanding and communication without placing the condition of integration necessarily upon the creation of an authoritative central power.[14]

Neo-functionalism had its greatest success in studies of the process of European economic integration.[15] The apparent fit with the Western European experience prompted its adaptation to non-European situations. With regard to Latin America, the importance of autonomous interest groups and political parties was replaced by an emphasis on the technocratic elites.[16] Neo-functionalism was also applied, though with somewhat lesser plausibility, to the world as a whole.[17]

[13] K. W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, 1957).

[14] K. W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication. An Enquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (New York, 1953).

[15] E. B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe* (Stanford, 1958).

[16] E. B. Haas and P. Schmitter, 'Economics and Differential Patterns of Political Integration: Projections about Unity in Latin America', *International Organization*, 18 (1964), pp. 705–37.

[17] E. B. Haas, *Beyond the Nation-State. Functionalism and International Organization* (Stanford, 1964).

Both functionalism and neo-functionalism were challenged by events. The East–West conflicts of the Cold War and the North–South political issues that remained after the decolonization of the 1960s (notably Southern African and the Arab–Israeli conflicts) could not be set aside by technical cooperation. These issues kept re-surfacing within specialized agencies as well as in the UN General Assembly. Functionalism then appeared as an ideology of the western capitalist powers which sought to resist what they perceived as 'politicization' of technical work by Soviet and Third World diplomats.

Neo-functionalism encountered its negation in the defeat of the proposed European Defence Community in 1954 when the French National Assembly refused to ratify the treaty establishing it. It was negated again during the 1960s in the personality of General Charles de Gaulle, who stood as an obstacle to the accumulation of further authority by the Community bureaucracy in Brussels. Neo-functionalist analysts who had previously envisaged 'spill over' of authority from one functionalist sphere to another, now began to write of 'spill back'.[18] What had hitherto been represented as an irreversible process now appeared to be stalled and quite possibly reversed.

As functionalism and neo-functionalism lost theoretical lustre, liberal institutionalism shifted ground. It focused less on the prospect of superceding the state though some larger regional or world process of integration, in order to concentrate more upon processes through which cooperative arrangements at the international level are constructed.

From the early 1970s, interest shifted to transnational relations.[19] This approach magnified the emphasis neo-functionalism had placed upon civil society as a network of linkages both extending and circumscribing in some ways the autonomy of state action. The world economy was the centre of attention, in terms both of the business organizations that operated on a global scale and of the emergence of a transnational form of society among those people most directly involved. Alongside interest groups, emphasis in the liberal institutionalist tradition has been placed more recently on 'epistemic communities' or transnational networks of specialists who evolve amongst themselves a way of conceiving and defining global problems in particular spheres of concern.[20]

Corresponding to this prominence of transnational civil society, came a stress on the fragmentation of the state. States, following the lead given by the 'bureaucratic politics' analysis of national policy making, were perceived as systems of competing agencies, where an agency in one state might build a coalition with like agencies in other states in order to enhance its domestic influence within its own state.[21] International institutions now looked more complex: they were both constrained by the transnational linkages of global civil society such as the networks of influence generated by international production and global finance; and they had become vehicles for transgovernmental coalitions constructed by bureaucratic segments within the various states.

[18] L. N. Lindberg and S. A. Schiengold, *Europe's Would-be Policy: Patterns of Change in the European Community* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970).

[19] J. Nye and R. O. Keohane, *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972).

[20] P. M. Haas, 'Obtaining International Environmental Protection through Epistemic Consensus', *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 19 (1990), pp. 347–64.

[21] J. Nye and R. O. Keohane, 'Transgovernmental Relations and World Politics', *World Politics*, 27, 1 (October 1974).

This vision of 'complex interdependence',[22] led to a fresh round of research into international 'regimes'.[23] Without reproducing any exhaustive definition of a regime, it is sufficient to describe it as a set of norms or rules accepted by a group of states as a means of dealing with a certain sphere of common concerns. The notion goes to the heart of the question of how cooperation is achieved and sustained, without necessarily tying this to the existence of formal international organizations. Moreover, it is concerned with cooperation, not with superceding the state system as the repository of authority. Regime theory focuses upon 'rational actors' acting in conditions of 'bounded rationality', i.e. in the absence of the impossible conditions of full information and continuous calculation of self-interest, relying rather on procedures that have worked reasonably well in the past. One probable consequence of the predominance of regime theory in recent liberal institutionalism has been a shift of emphasis back more exclusively to states as the principal actors.[24]

A central issue in regime theory is the thesis of 'hegemonic stability' according to which regimes have been constituted under the protection of dominant powers. The question is: can regimes founded in such conditions survive the decline of such powers? Robert Keohane has constructed an argument based on rational choice argument to suggest that existing forms of cooperation may indeed survive because they continue to provide states with cost-saving, uncertainty-reducing and flexible means of achieving the results of cooperation.[25]

Another theoretical basis of regime theory seems to be derived from Durkheim's thesis that the growth of the division of labour bringing about increased interdependencies among the actors in society will lead to disruptive consequences—he mentioned specifically economic crises and class struggle—unless the growth of interdependence is matched by adequate regulation.[26] Applied to the international level, regimes are the means of introducing such regulation—the counterpart to what Durkheim envisaged as the role for corporatism in national society. In the current world economy, some spheres of activity have been covered by regimes that are being maintained or amended more or less effectively, e.g. in trade with the GATT (at any rate pending the outcome of the Uruguay round), while other spheres of activity, e.g. finance and production, are very largely unregulated.

This current approach of liberal institutionalism pursues answers to these questions: Do international institutions make a difference? Why are some spheres of activity internationally regulated while others are not? Does the density of transborder interactions in a particular area predict the formation of a regime in that area? What determines membership and non-membership in a regime?[27]

Liberal institutionalism through its various developmental phases has certain basic characteristics. Its epistemology has remained both positivist and rational-deductive insofar as its objects of inquiry are actors and interactions and as it attempts to account for their behaviour according to models of rational choice. It has lacked

[22] J. Nye and R. O. Keohane, *Power and Interdependence* (Boston, 1977).
[23] S. Krasner (ed.), 'International Regimes', a special issue of *International Organization*, 36 (1982).
[24] See above, footnote 12, p. 20.
[25] R. Keohane, *After Hegemony. Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, 1984).
[26] E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York, 1984).
[27] R. Keohane, 'Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research', *International Journal* (Autumn, 1990); O. Young, *International Cooperation: Building Regimes for Natural Resources* (Ithaca, 1989).

the historical structural dimension of Classical Realism which is concerned with the frameworks or structures within which actors and interactions take place and the meanings inherent in the relationship of actions to the pre-existing whole. Liberal institutionalism takes the existing order as given, as something to be made to work more smoothly, not as something to be criticized and changed.

In effect, liberal institutionalism has its starting point in the coexistence of state system and world capitalist economy. The problems with which it deals are those of rendering compatible these two global structures and of ensuring stability and predictability to the world economy. Thus regime theory has much to say about economic cooperation among the G7 and other groupings of advanced capitalist countries with regard to problems common to them. It has correspondingly less to say about attempts to change the structure of world economy, e.g. in the Third World demand for a New International Economic Order. Indeed, regimes are designed to stabilize the world economy and have the effect, as Keohane has underlined in his work, of inhibiting and deterring states from initiating radical departures from economic orthodoxy, e.g. through socialism.[28]

The current implications of liberal institutionalism are that new regimes or international institutions may be more difficult to initiate or even to change in the absence of a dominant power able and willing to commit resources to them, but that existing regimes may survive and evolve to the extent that they provide information and facilities for dealing with matters among their members. These regimes and institutions facilitate the interaction of states and components of civil society within their spheres. This approach to multilateralism is consistent with a conservatively adaptive attitude towards the existing structures of world order.

World-system structuralism

World-system theories, unlike liberal institutionalist theories, have not been directed explicitly towards the study of international organizations, though they do provide an explanatory framework for multilateralism. These theories begin with a conception of the totality of the world system. This conception takes states for the constitutive units, as does Realism, but sees these units as having a structural relationship pre-determined by the world economy—a relationship expressed in terms of core and periphery, with an intermediate category of semiperiphery.

The concept 'state' designates the political aspect of an entity conceived primarily in economic terms. Core economies are dominant over peripheral economies; they determine the conditions in which peripheral economies produce and they extract surplus from peripheral production for the enhancement of the core.[29] Thus, the core produces underdevelopment in the periphery through the economic relations linking the two.[30] Semiperiphery economies are strong enough to protect themselves from this kind of exploitation, and they struggle to attain core status.

States and inter-state relations are the political structures that maintain in place the

[28] Keohane, *After Hegemony*, pp. 119–20, 254.
[29] I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (New York, 1974).
[30] A. Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America. Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York, 1969).

exploitative core–periphery relationship of economies. Periphery states are weak in relation to core states and penetrated by them. A principal weapon in the struggle of semiperipheral countries is, accordingly, to strengthen the semiperipheral states so that it can gain autonomy in relation to the core states. Economic protectionism, economic nationalism, and national planning, whether socialist or state capitalist, are characteristic of the semiperipheral struggle for greater local control over development.[31]

The core–periphery structure of dominance is maintained not just by external pressures but also by support from dominant classes or elites in the periphery country who benefit from the relationship. State, military, and economic elites in the periphery country are critical factors in maintaining the relationship. They count on material and ideological support from the core. They maintain their position internally by exclusion or manipulation of the domestic social forces from political and economic power, e.g. by suppressing opposition or allowing only 'domesticated' opposition parties, suppressing or controlling trade unions, etc. Where this peripheral structure of power is overthrown, its components can count on the resources of the core (financial, intelligence, and ultimately military) to destabilize and subvert the forces that have taken power from them.

This political structure of domination is coupled to a socio-economic structure that orients the peripheral economies towards the world economy shaped by the core. The core requires that the periphery economy be open to foreign investment, to imports of core goods and services, and to export of profits. Peripheral structures of labour control differ from those in the core; they ensure a supply of docile and cheap labour, since the economic function of the periphery is to supply inputs to the higher value added production of the core as well as to absorb part of the core's output. This relative subordination of periphery labour contributes to maintaining terms of trade favourable to the core while at the same time separating the interests of core labour (which benefits from the core-periphery relationship) from periphery labour. Within the periphery economy, too, a minority of labour employed in foreign-owned undertakings is integrated into the world-economy networks, while the mass of local labour remains relatively deprived. The structure perpetuates itself by dividing the potential opposition forces.

Even though multilateralism has not the central position in world-system theory analysis that it has in liberal institutionalism, this theory has obvious implications for multilateralism. Multilateralism is seen, first, as an instrument for institutionalizing the core–periphery structure of domination. The role of the world-economy agencies, the IMF and the World Bank, is to enforce the practice of openness to world-economy forces upon peripheral economies, to maintain the outward economic orientation of periphery country economic policy as against any locally-inspired tendencies towards autocentric development.[32]

These international economic agencies operate under majority control by the core countries. They have become the means of collective imposition of core-oriented policies upon peripheral countries, while financial relations among core countries are

[31] I. Wallerstein, 'The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 16 (1974), pp. 387–415.

[32] I. Hayter, *Aid as Imperialism* (Harmondsworth, 1971); C. Payer, *The Debt Trap: The International Monetary Fund and the Third World* (New York, 1974); J. H. Mittelman, 'International Monetary Institutions and Policies of Socialism and Self-reliance: Are They Compatible? The Tarzanian Experience', *Social Research*, 47 (1980), pp. 141–65.

dealt with through other mechanisms.[33] In effect, a two-tier system of economic regulation in the world economy was put in place during the 1960s: a top level comprising only the advanced capitalist countries, and a bottom level through which the advanced capitalist countries collectively imposed financial conditions upon Third World countries.

Moreover, technical assistance through international agencies under the influence of core countries became a means of adjusting the internal structures of the periphery countries to the exigencies of the world economy. International and bilateral aid, in the theory of the world-system structuralism, is seen as part of the total mechanism of subordination of the Third World, in which internal structures of dominance and dependency reinforce external pressures.[34]

Secondarily, however, multilateralism, in the world-system perspective, is seen as a terrain of struggle between core and periphery, a terrain in which the grievances of the periphery can be aggregated into collective demands upon the core for structural change in the world economy. The demand raised in the 1970s for a New International Economic Order had this aspect.[35]

The two phases in the crisis of multilateralism are explainable to a considerable extent within the framework of world-economy structuralism. The quasi-withdrawal of the United States from commitment to the UN system during the late 1970s and the 1980s can be seen as a response to a perception that peripheral countries were using their majority in the major assemblies and conferences in disregard of world-economy-oriented policy and behaviour. The United States and other core countries allowed the pressures of international finance to wreak their toll upon a debt-ridden Third World, while offering palliatives to avoid any Third-World disruption of the system. The United States also contributed to destabilizing revolutionary movements in Central America. By the threshold of the 1990s, economic discipline had very widely been restored in the Third World, where regimes favourable to policies of adjustment to the world economy were in place. The immediate threat of concerted opposition to core country goals within the major international organizations seemed abated. The longer-term problem remained one of sustaining favourable governments in Third World countries and of mounting a deterrent warning against particular instances of radical deviation. The Gulf crisis signalled that the ultimate sanction against defiance of the world-economy hierarchy is military. In these matters, world-system structuralism is close to the critical analysis of Classical Realism.

In world-system structuralism, formal multilateralism, that is what goes on through international organizations, is only the institutionally visible part of a more complex total system of relationships linking First and Third worlds. The advanced capitalist countries dispose of many means of intervention (financial, intelligence, communications, and military) within Third World countries and have the support of class allies in these countries. A threat to any aspect of this complex structure of dependency would provoke retaliatory response, including response through multilateral institutions. Classical Realism also probes the less visible processes of this

[33] R. Cox and H. Jacobson et al., *The Anatomy of Influence. Decision Making in International Organization* (New Haven, 1974).

[34] B. Erler, *L'aide qui tui* (Lausanne, 1987); J. H. Mittelman, *Out from Underdevelopment: Prospects for the Third World* (London, 1988).

[35] R. Cox, 'Ideologies and the New International Economic Order: Reflections on some Recent Literature', *International Organization*, 33 (1979), pp. 257–302; S. Krasner, *Structural Conflict. The Third World against Global Liberalism* (Berkeley, 1985).

power relationship in particular cases; but world-system structuralism offers a more systematic and generalized heuristic hypothesis. Both differ from liberal institutionalism which more readily takes state actions and multilateral processes at face value.

Epistemologically, world-system analysis has a structural-functionist character. It posits the existence of a structure of relationships that are coherent and self-reproducing. Within that framework, it accounts for economic practices and social forces as well as states. Thus it embraces a larger sphere of human activity that does a realism which focuses more exclusively upon states. Realism does take account of economic capabilities as the resource underpinning state power, but tends to perceive economics as segmented into national compartments whereas world-system theory stresses the transnational linkages of economies in dominant-dependent relationships.

The weakness of world-system theory is the limitation of functionalism. Functionalism can account for synchronic relationships in a given system that has coherence. It cannot explain how that system came into existence; nor is it adequate to explain how it may be transformed.[36] What world-system theory lacks is an ability to explain change, to explain structural transformation. For this reason, it is appropriate to describe world-system theory as a structural*ism*. This structuralism can be contrasted with or complemented by a dialectical transformation of historical structures.

Historical dialectic[37]

Historical structures, as noted above in the discussion of realism, are persistent patterns of human activity and thought that endure for relatively long periods of time. They are the result of collective responses to certain common problems—whether these relate to the satisfaction of material wants (economics), the organization of cooperation and security (politics), or the explanation of the human condition and purpose (religion and ideology)—which become congealed in practices, institutions, and intersubjective meanings for a significant group of people. These practices and meanings in turn constitute the objective world for these people.

These structures are historical because they come into existence in particular historical circumstances and can be explained as responses to these circumstances. Similarly, they are transformed when material circumstances have changed or prevailing meanings and purposes have been challenged by new practices. This historical malleability of structures differentiates them from the structural*ism* that posits fixed and immutable structures, e.g. like those of Neo-realism.

The dialectical approach to the understanding of change was concisely expressed by Ralf Dahrendorf: 'The idea of a society which produces in its structure the antagonisms that lead to its modification appears as an appropriate model for the analysis of change in general'.[38] The method set forth here is thus both dialectical in its explanation of change, and hermeneutic insofar as it enquires into purposes and

[36] W. G. Runciman, *Social Science and Political Theory* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 109–34; R. Brenner, 'The Origins of Capitalism Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism', *New Left Review*, 104 (1977), pp. 25–92.

[37] I have discussed this concept more fully in earlier articles. See R. Cox, 'On Thinking about Future World Order', *World Politics*, 28 (1976), pp. 175–96 and 'Social Forces, States, and World Orders; Beyond International Relations Theory', in Keohane, (ed.), *Neorealism*.

[38] R. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford, 1959), pp. 125–6.

meanings and links subjectivity and objectivity to explain a socially constructed world order and multilateralism.

This approach can be seen in one aspect as a deepening of classical Realism. Where Realism focuses upon the state and the state system, historical dialectic enquires into the social processes that create and transform forms of state and the state system itself, and into the alterations in perceptions and meanings that constitute and reconstitute the objective world order.

The approach, therefore, begins with an assessment of the dominant tendencies in existing world order, and proceeds to an identification of the antagonisms generated within that order which could develop into turning points for structural transformation. Multilateralism, in this context, will be perceived as in part the institutionalization and regulation of existing order, and in part the site of struggle between conservative and transformative forces. Multilateralism's meanings and purposes, and thus the new or changed structures which multilateralism may help to create, are to be derived from its relationship to the stresses and conflicts in world order.

Karl Polanyi gave a dialectical interpretation of European economic and social history in the nineteenth century in what he callled a double movement.[39] The first phase of movement was the introduction of the self-regulating market—what Polanyi saw as an utopian vision backed by the force of the state. The second phase of movement was society's unplanned and unpredicted response of self-preservation against the disintegrating and alienating consequences of market-oriented behaviour. Society set about to tame and civilize the market.

The approach of historical dialectic discerns a recurrence of the double movement in the late twentieth century. A powerful globalizing economic trend thrusts toward the achievement of the market utopia on a world scale, opening national economies and deregulating transactions. At the present moment, the protective responses of societies at the national level are being weakened by the trend, while a protective response at the level of global society has yet to take form. Yet the elements of opposition to the socially disruptive consequences of globalization are visible. The question remains open as to what form these may take, as to whether and how they may become more coherent and more powerful, so that historical thesis and antithesis may lead to a new synthesis. In this context, multilateralism will become an arena of conflict between the endeavour to buttress the freedom of movement of powerful homogenizing economic forces, and efforts to build a new structure of regulation protecting diversity and the less powerful.

The global economy has become something distinct from international economic relations, i.e. from transborder economic flows assumed to be subject to state control and regulation.[40] Global production and global finance now constitute distinct spheres of power relations which constrain the state system at least as much as they are influenced by it.[41] They are bringing about a new social structure of production relations superseding the nation-centred labour-capital relations of the past. Decentralizing of production organizations and mass migratory movements from South to North are generating global patterns of social cleavage and bringing new sources of conflict within national borders.

It is less and less pertinent to think of societies as confined within territorial limits,

[39] K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston, 1957).

[40] B. Madeuf and C.-A. Michalet, 'A New Approach to International Economics', *International Social Science Journal*, 30 (1978), pp. 253–83.

[41] S. Strange, *States and Markets* (London, 1988).

more and more necessary to think of a stratified global society in which global elites have the impetus in shaping the social order, including the ideology in which it is grounded, and other social groups are in a position of relative powerlessness, either acquiescent or frustrated. The concepts of core and periphery, introduced by world-system analysis with a geographical meaning, are coming more and more to have a meaning of social differentiation within and across territorial boundaries.[42] The elites of globalization merge into a common structural force, even when they compete amongst themselves for primacy in the common movement.[43] The relatively powerless are fragmented by nationality, ethnicity, religion, and gender—all obstacles to greater cohesion—but their subordination is a manifestation of the formation of global society. The problem of how their concerns will be articulated is critical for the future of multilateralism.

Global finance limits drastically the capacity of states to conduct autonomous economic and social policies for the protection of their populations. The state system of the late twentieth century is coming to act more as a support to the opening of the world to global finance and global production, less as a means of defence of the welfare of local populations. Indeed, where states try to act in the protective mode they face retaliation, initially financial, ultimately perhaps military, from the changed state system. The state system skews the distribution of benefits and costs of an increasingly globalized society in favour of the economically powerful within the dominant states. (In this sense, world-system analysis retains validity within the framework of historical dialectic.) The centres of financial power and military power are located in these states. These forms of power sustain the globalizing world economy, even while the processes of global society are introducing the social cleavages and latent conflicts of First and Third Worlds *within* these centres of world power—in a process that has been called the 'peripheralization of the core'.

The biosphere suffers the impact of both the global economy and the state system. The global economy, activated by profit maximization, has not been constrained to moderate its destructive ecological effects. There is no authoritative regulator, so far only several interventions through the inter-state system to achieve agreement on avoidance of specific noxious practices. The state system itself is capable of massive ecological destruction through war.

The ecosystem is no longer to be thought of as an inert, passive limit to human activity. It has to be thought of as a non-human active force capable of dramatic interventions affecting human conditions and survival. Humanity is only one contingent element in the biosphere. A valid paradigm for the investigation of global change would need to include the historical interaction of human organization with the other elements in nature. The biosphere has its own automatic enforcers, for instance in the consequences of global warming; but who will negotiate on behalf of the biosphere? That must be one of the questions overshadowing future multilateralism.

The dominant economically-based globalizing tendencies are accompanied and accelerated by a process of cultural homogenization emanating from the centres that give impetus to globalization. They are spread by the world media, and sustained by a convergence in modes of thought and practices among business and political elites. Yet this homogenizing tendency is countered by the affirmation of distinct identities

[42] R. Cox, *Production, Power and World Order. Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York, 1987), chapter 9.

[43] S. Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission*, (Cambridge, 1990); K. Van der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class* (London, 1984).

and distinct cultural traditions. The changes taking place in state roles in the globalizing economy give new opportunity for self-expression by nationalities that have no state of their own, in movements for separation or autonomy; and the same tendencies encourage ethnicities and religiously-defined groups that straddle state boundaries to express their identities in global politics. Social movements like environmentalism, feminism, and the peace movement also transcend territorial boundaries. Transnational cooperation among indigenous peoples enhances their force within particular states. These various developments augur modification of the pure Westphalian concept of inter-state system into something that might be more like what Hedley Bull envisaged as a 'new medievalism', a multilevel system of political authorities with micro- and macro-regionalisms and transborder identities interacting in a more complex political process.[44]

The cultural challenge goes to the heart of the question of hegemony. 'Hegemony' is used here in the Gramscian meaning of a structure of values and understandings about the nature of order that permeates a whole society, in this case a world society composed of states and non-state corporate entities.[45] In a hegemonic order these values and understandings are relatively stable and unquestioned. They appear to most actors as the natural order of things. They are the intersubjective meanings that constitute the order itself. Such a structure of meanings is underpinned by a structure of power, in which most probably one state is dominant but that state's dominance is not sufficient by itself to create hegemony. Hegemony derives from the ways of doing and thinking of the dominant social strata of the dominant state or states insofar as these ways of doing and thinking have inspired emulation or acquired the acquiescence of the dominant social strata of other states. These social practices and the ideologies that explain and legitimize them constitute the foundation of the hegemonic order. Hegemony frames thought and thereby circumscribes action.

Today there is an apparent disjunction between military power, in which the United States is dominant, and economic power, in which the US advantage is lessening. Neither military nor economic power alone, or even in combination, necessarily implies hegemony. In the structure of hegemony, cultural and ideological factors are decisive. Whether or not the hegemonic order of Pax Americana is in decline, is a matter of current debate.[46] The very fact that it is called in question indicates a weakening of the ideological dimensions of hegemony, even if it proves nothing about the material power relations underpinning hegemony.

Supposing hegemony to be in decline, several logical possibilities for the future are (a) a revival of the declining hegemony,[47] (b) a revival of the universals of the declining hegemony underpinned not by one state but by an oligarchy of powerful states that would have to concert their powers;[48] (c) the founding of a new hegemony by another state successfully universalizing its own principles of order;[49] (d) a non-

[44] H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York, 1977), pp. 254–5.

[45] R. Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 12 (1983), pp. 162–75.

[46] On this, see for example, P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York, 1987); J. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York, 1990); S. Strange, 'The Persistent Myth of Lost Hegemony', *International Organization*, 41 (1987), pp. 551–74; and S. Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission* (Cambridge, 1990).

[47] This would seem to be Nye's thesis in *Bound to Lead*.

[48] Envisaged notably in Keohane, *After Hegemony*.

[49] For example, speculations about a Pax Nipponica. See E. Vogel, 'Pax Nipponica?', *Foreign Affairs*, 64 (1986), pp. 752–67, and a sceptical comment by R. Cox, 'Middlepowermanship, Japan, and Future World Order', *International Journal*, 44 (1989).

hegemonic order lacking effective universal principles of order and functioning as an interplay of rival powerful states, each with their client states, most probably based on an organization of rival world regions;[50] and (e) a counterhegemonic order anchored in a broader diffusion of power, in which a large number of collective forces, including states, achieve some agreement upon universal principles of an alternative order without dominance. Quite obviously, the likelihood of these logical possibilities seems weighted in favour of some more than others. Equally obviously, the role and possibilities of multilateralism would be very different in each. The most unlikely prospects are (a) and (c)—the era of dominant single powers founding hegemony seems now past; there are no plausible successors to Pax Britannica and Pax Americana. The globalizing trend of the present would, at least in the medium term, give most probability to (b), with a distinct possibility, in case of breakdown, e.g. through major financial crisis, of (d). In the much longer run, (e) will remain a possibility, and for many of the world's less powerful, an aspiration.

Previous hegemonic orders have derived their universals from the dominant society, itself the product of a dominant civilization. A post-hegemonic order would have to derive its normative content in a search for common ground among constituent traditions of civilization. What might be this common ground?

A first condition would be mutual recognition of distinct traditions of civilization, perhaps the most difficult step especially for those who have shared a common hegemonic perspective, and who are unprepared to forsake the security of belief in a natural order that is historically based on universalizing from one position of power in one form of civilization. The difficulty is underlined by the way political change outside the West is perceived and reported in the West—the tendency to view everything through Western concepts which can lead, as an example, to a conclusion that the 'end of history' is upon us as the apotheosis of a late Western capitalist civilization. Mutual recognition implies a readiness to try to understand others in their own terms.

A second condition for a post-hegemonic order would be to move beyond the point of mutual recognition towards a kind of supra-intersubjectivity that would provide a bridge among the distinct and separate intersubjectivities of the different coexisting traditions of civilization. One can speculate that the grounds for this might be (1) recognition of the requisites for survival and sustained equilibrium in global ecology —though the specific inferences to be drawn from this may remain subjects of discord; (2) mutual acceptance of restraint in the use of violence to decide conflicts—not that this would eliminate organized political violence, though it might raise the costs of resort to violence; and (3) common agreement to explore the sources of conflict and to develop procedures for coping with conflict that would take account of distinct coexisting normative perspectives.

Historical dialectic crosses the threshold of the present from past to future. Its mode of reasoning moves from an appraisal of the forces that have historically developed to interact in the present, towards an anticipation of the points of crisis and the real options for the future. It draws upon the three preceding perspectives—Realism, liberal institutionalism, and world-system analysis—while appropriating their insights within its own hermeneutic method. It approaches the problem of multilateralism as a problem in the making of a new world order.

[50] For example, R. Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton, 1987).