

Writing International Order, Ordering Insecurity

JÉRÉMY DIEUDONNÉ 
UCLouvain, Belgium

OLIVER TURNER 
University of Edinburgh, UK

International order (IO) remains one of the most powerful ideas in global politics. This article challenges prevailing scholarly interpretations of IO as a set of material structures and as a means to enhance security. Drawing from theories of securitization, it argues that state capabilities and international institutions do not objectively constitute international order in themselves. Rather, the meaning of international order comes subjectively from discourses attached to those structures, with meaning-giving power and agency of their own. Further, international order-as-discourse has always operated purposefully and persistently in the name of international *in* security, with political elites writing and rewriting order to mythologize stable conditions of the past to be recaptured, or of the future yet to be realized. With a primary focus on the United States and its political elites, we show that by promoting realities of danger and disorder, leaders and policymakers have engaged throughout history in this process we term “ordering insecurity”. International order, we contend, is an especially potent and effective political discourse because of its ability to invoke existential fears around global stability and survival in the service of policy goals.

El orden internacional sigue siendo una de las ideas más poderosas en la política global. Este artículo desafía las interpretaciones académicas predominantes que caracterizan al orden internacional como un conjunto de estructuras materiales y como un medio para lograr un mayor nivel de seguridad. El artículo parte de la base de las teorías de la securitización y argumenta que las capacidades del Estado y de las instituciones internacionales no constituyen objetivamente el orden internacional por sí mismas sino que, más bien, el significado del orden internacional proviene subjetivamente de los discursos asociados a estas estructuras, que tienen el poder de dotar de significado y de agencia propios. Además, el orden internacional como discurso siempre ha operado de manera deliberada y persistente en nombre de la inseguridad internacional, con las élites políticas escribiendo y reescribiendo el orden con el fin de mitologizar las condiciones estables del pasado que se desea recuperar, o del futuro que aún está por realizarse. Demostramos, centrándonos, principalmente, en Estados Unidos y sus élites políticas, que los líderes y los responsables de formulación de políticas, al promover realidades de peligro y desorden, han participado a lo largo de la historia en este proceso que llamamos «ordenación de la inseguridad». Argumentamos que el orden internacional es un discurso político especialmente potente y eficaz debido a su capacidad para invocar temores existenciales en torno a la estabilidad y la supervivencia global al servicio de objetivos políticos.

L'ordre international (OI) reste l'une des idées les plus puissantes de la politique mondiale. Cet article remet en question les interprétations académiques dominantes de l'OI en tant qu'ensemble de structures matérielles et en tant que moyen de renforcer la sécurité. S'appuyant sur les théories de la sécuritisation, il soutient que les capacités des États et les institutions internationales ne constituent pas objectivement l'ordre international en soi. Au contraire, la signification de l'ordre international provient subjectivement des discours associés à ces structures, dotés d'un pouvoir de signification et d'une capacité d'action qui leur sont propres. De plus, l'ordre international en tant que discours a toujours fonctionné de manière délibérée et persistante au nom de l'insécurité internationale, les élites politiques écrivant et réécrivant l'ordre pour mythifier des conditions stables d'un passé à retrouver ou d'un futur encore à réaliser. En nous concentrant principalement sur les États-Unis et leurs élites politiques, nous montrons qu'en mettant en avant des réalités de danger et de désordre, les dirigeants et les décideurs politiques se sont engagés tout au long de l'histoire dans ce processus que nous appelons «ordonner l'insécurité». Nous soutenons que l'ordre international est un discours politique particulièrement puissant et efficace en raison de sa capacité à invoquer des craintes existentielles concernant la stabilité et la survie mondiales au service d'objectifs politiques.

Introduction

The concept of international order (IO) has become ubiquitous among policymakers, analysts, and observers, especially throughout the West. Across many decades, it has also been exhaustively studied by scholars of global affairs, attracting increasing attention in recent times (e.g., Paul and Kornprobst 2021; Lake, Martin, and Risse 2021; Goddard et al. 2024). By speaking to matters of core disciplinary interest, including conflict, anarchy, interdependence, and global governance, international order and its conceptual variations

have been of sustained interest to traditional schools of International Relations and associated fields (e.g., Ikenberry 2010, Schweller and Pu 2011). Critical and interpretivist approaches have also critiqued and expanded the existing wisdom (e.g., Benabdallah 2024; Pantzerhiel 2024). What, if anything, is left to say?

Across multivarious schools of thought, two interpretations of international order prevail. First, even among more critical approaches, IO is broadly assumed to exist “out there” as a physical structure or set of structures. Modern/post-1945 international order is typically found in organizations and institutions such as the United Nations, World Bank, and IMF, entwined with state power most notably of the United States.

*Corresponding author: University of Edinburgh, UK. Email: oliver.turner@ed.ac.uk

This order, moreover, is commonly assumed to have been realized before entering an era of decline (Acharya 2014a; Mearsheimer 2019). Second, IO is generally examined as a vehicle for international security. Some argue that modern international order has worked to defend the interests of the United States and its allies, providing generalized stability to the nation-state system (see Ikenberry 2011). For others, it serves the aims of elites or those of “rising” or “illiberal” states pursuing security and development interests of their own (see Benabdallah 2024).

While revealing much, these interpretations leave puzzles and blind spots behind. Notably, scholarly accounts of a once-realized post-war international order now imperilled generally fail to specify a point in time when it was ever actually full or secure. Moreover, if a now increasingly fractured international order had ever been deemed secure by policymakers of the past, we would expect them—not least in the United States where its power centres are said to reside—to have identified it as such. This, however, as explored in due course, has very rarely been the case. American (and wider Western) administrations have consistently described the condition of international order in much the same terms as they do today: of threat, vulnerability, and real or impending disorder. Which forces or interests might this apparent contradiction reveal? What do leaders and policymakers gain from persistent assertions of fragile, or even absent, order?

To address these questions, we revisit two deceptively simple questions of international order: what *is* it, and what does it *do*? At the time of writing in early 2026, assessments of a rapidly disintegrating international order have become more prevalent, broadly gravitating around a seemingly disruptive brand of Trumpian American internationalism (see Sharma 2020; Goddard and Newman 2025). Washington’s capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, its provocations toward NATO ally Denmark over Greenland, and war against Iran, all since late 2025, have led some to declare the post-war (liberal/rules-based) international order in a state of “collapse” (Ramos Coelho 2025). Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney (2026) described the “rules-based international order” as “fading.” German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (2026) argues that “the international order. . . no longer exists.” We agree that the political world is experiencing major turbulence. Washington is aggressively stress-testing alliances and institutions, which have long dominated global affairs. Wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, and elsewhere are perilous for local security environments and beyond.

Yet we begin from the proposition that there is no objectively observable international order which structures global politics. This should not appear controversial; IR realists have long argued that what Liberal Institutionists identify as the post-war Liberal International Order (LIO) never actually existed, at least until the 1990s when a bipolar superpower order was replaced by American hegemony (Mearsheimer 2019). Through an English School lens, Hedley Bull (1977: XII) argued that “there is no such thing as order in world politics at all. . . [it] does not exist at present and has not existed in the past.” Scholars of the Global South argue that mainstream assumptions of international order presume universal conditions that are not always evident. Observes William Brown (2006: 123): “African reality doesn’t look very much like the images of international order received from the mainstream of the discipline. . . if IR theory presupposes functioning states and these don’t exist in parts of Africa, then the IR theory can’t apply.” In this view, international order becomes a matter of position and priorities.

From here, we propose a conceptual revision of international order, not as another alternative arrangement of states,

international institutions, or other political entities, but as a powerful political discourse. This does not deny the importance of state capacity or the institutional pillars of modern global governance. The US, UN, IMF, and myriad others exert critical forms of organising power. To retheorize international order as discourse, then, is not to argue that there is “nothing else there,” or no *form* of order beyond discourse. It is to say that state capabilities and the organizations and institutions they breed do not in themselves constitute “the international order” (beyond a narrow definition of order as power and authority). The term “international order” has no natural or universal meaning. It is no innocent descriptor, and so its meaning is that which it is designed to convey. As we will see, political discourse of order is deployed with purpose and reason, and attached to *selected* states, institutions, and other centres of physical power, primarily to legitimize their nature and operations. Identifying those centres of power *as order* grants them levels of status and value they would otherwise unlikely have, shaping policy decisions and (re)allocations of resources.

With an empirical focus on the United States, we show how policymakers write and rewrite international order. In past moments, it may have been accepted that international order was fraying or even out of reach. But those moments can be reimagined later, with constructed historical “orders” becoming mythologized as conditions to be recaptured. Equally idealized future orders can be just out of reach, but “there” to be realized. Secure international order in contrast—and by design—is rarely of the present. And so, while leaders and policymakers at any given time have spoken regularly of international order as a promoter of peace and security, they most commonly do so to establish threats to its existence and realities of international *in* security. This, we contend, represents a type of order-insecurity nexus where the promotion of international order as peace and security works with the invocation of danger and instability as complementary elements of a single discursive-political practice we term “ordering insecurity.” By discursively manipulating—or writing—understandings about international order, policymakers create realities of threat in the service of political goals. The perceived achievement of order would therefore be undesirable for leaders to whom that task is assigned, because of the value gleaned from “threats” to be confronted. International order, we argue, is thus a particularly potent security discourse because of its ability to invoke existential fears about global stability and survival, facilitating calls to action to counter those outside of order who threaten those within.

Drawing on securitization theory, we show how understandings of international order—of perpetual insecurity and unending dangers of instability and disorder—have been contested, propagated, and routinized through discursive practice, and for what purpose. As noted above, by way of a qualitative case study approach, we focus on US political discourse. The United States is commonly presented as leader of the post-war order, and as the most physically capable state actor in global politics it is inevitably among the dominant authors of its meaning. While our concern is not for how great powers construct order as physical structure(s), case selection is rationalized on the basis that they represent markedly powerful writers of the truths of its existence.

The article first surveys scholarly wisdom around the concept of international order. It then unpacks a theoretical approach, which allows an exploration of order-as-discourse and as a vehicle for promoting international insecurity. The article then analyzes how American policymakers have historically written international order, before demonstrating

its ability to order insecurity in the pursuit of policy aims. The article concludes by reflecting on how its conceptual contributions might apply to other cases and contexts, as well as its normative and policy relevance.

The Logics of International Order

As noted earlier, two scholarly interpretations of international order tend to prevail. First, it is generally treated as a system or arrangement of states and institutions “out there,” with its meaning derived from physical characteristics and capabilities. Realist and Liberal Institutional schools in particular have debated the constitutions of order, with the former emphasizing state-centric hegemony and balances of power (Wohlforth 1999; Schweller 2015), and the latter stressing institutional arrangements of regional and global governance, with state power and authority a necessary but not defining characteristic (Ikenberry 2018; Nye 2019). Here, the meaning of international order is found with the most powerful states in the system, which exert themselves through international organizations and institutions and the rules and norms they create. John Ikenberry (2010: 512) is representative of many, finding today’s international order:

“anchored in large-scale institutions, which include the United Nations, NATO, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization...and informal governance groupings such as the G-7/8. In the background, the United States played a hegemonic role, providing public goods by supporting open markets and the provisioning of security”

English School theorisations of international society depict a physically observable system of normatively bound sovereign states (Bull 1977; Buzan 2014). For Bull and Watson (1984: 1), international society represents “a group of states. . .which not merely form a system. . .but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations.”¹

The concept of the LIO has become a particularly dominant framing (see Deudney and Ikenberry 1999; Ikenberry 2011; Lake, Martin, and Risse 2021), albeit one highly contested (Wiener, Lake, and Risse 2026) and challenged on multiple fronts. Mearsheimer (2019: 8) argues that Cold War international order was largely restricted to the West and defined by great power competition, making it “neither liberal nor international.” Groitl (2023: 19) sees similar contradictions in the proposed co-existence of a post-war LIO and global power blocs, labelling the notion “lazy and politically preposterous.”

A continual fragmentation of scholarly research around international order has seen vertical diversifications. Here, practices and agents operating at different levels of global politics are explored, examining relations between the micro and the systemic (Koivisto and Dunne 2010; Drieschova 2022). Others pursue horizontal diversifications, notably via moves to “reworld” International Relations. In this case, non-Western orders are methodologically (re)integrated, decentering Europe and North America as well as traditionally privileged “great powers” (Acharya 2014b; Benabdallah 2019; Zarakol 2022). A proliferation toward multiple, simultaneous international orders into a multi-order world is also revealed (Flockhart 2016), particularly within the context of rising-established great power dynamics (Owen 2021) as the US contests established order from within (Ducci and Lucenti 2022; Lesch, Zimmermann, and Deitelhoff 2024).

Rather than the structures or constitutions of international order, others critique its normative foundations. The no-

tion, for example, that “Liberal International Order” dispassionately theorizes today’s prevailing system of international organization is challenged. Class-based and elitist, with racial and imperial underpinnings, the LIO is reinterpreted as an Anglo/US Establishment project, or legitimating ideology, to defend the interests of key architects (Parmar 2018). Exclusionary designs of hegemonic Western ordering attract wider attention; ideas are not seen to flow simply from the West to “the rest.” Each actor has its own agency in the production of knowledge, identity, and order (Grovgui 2006; Benabdallah 2024). Despite these critiques, questions of order generally remain confined to its conditions and prospects, with far less attention paid to its ontological realities. Today, prominent concerns include the influence of China (Chan et al. 2021; Weiss and Wallace 2021) and Russia (Flockhart and Korosteleva 2022), and waning American leadership (Ikenberry 2010, 2011; Cooley and Nexon 2020).

The social and discursive constitutions of IO remain comparatively understudied. This may seem surprising in the light of numerous post-positivist turns, and the now-mainstreamed understanding that rather than radiating meaning themselves, the world and its key political actors are made up of language and ideas. Such core disciplinary concepts as anarchy (Donnelly 2015), (international) power (Barnett and Duvall 2005), and security (Wæver 1995) are now widely recognized as constituted by discursive forces. If international anarchy is socially constructed or, famously, “what states make of it” (Wendt 1992), would the same logic not apply to its apparent antithesis, international order? There would also seem no great conceptual leap from understandings of socially constructed states (Anderson 1983), regions (Paasi 2001), or international communities (Acharya 2021), to socially constructed international order.

A nascent body of work embraces this line of reasoning. Wojczewski (2018) emphasizes the discursive properties of “world order,” with its meanings argued to be assigned by hegemonic discourse; “World order. . .cannot be simply treated as something “out there” waiting to be observed and discovered. Rather, it is a discursive formation endowed with meaning through systems of significant differences” (Wojczewski 2018: 37; see also Johnson, Basham and Thomas 2022). Mitrani (2017: 5) conceives “international community” as a discursive construct, which “materializes only when political agents refer to it and attribute to it certain values, rules, and virtues.” For Homolar and Turner (2024), IO is a compelling political story, or narrative, which depicts an imperfect but progressive order built by the United States and key allies, now increasingly threatened by nefarious antagonists. Narrative alliances around this powerful story bind even traditionally nonallied nation states, amplifying its representational power and fostering mutual security interests (Homolar and Turner 2024).²

The second prevailing interpretation of international order—which extends across these strands of wisdom—is its operation in the name of security, for individuals, great powers, global communities, and so on. For realists and liberals, post-war international order served the security interests of the United States and invested members. Similar arguments are made with reference to states like China, shown to harbor their own visions of how structures of order can be better utilized for their own prosperity and security (e.g., Schweller and Pu 2011; Wu 2018). Parmar’s (2018)

¹For an overview and critique of the English School’s ontological approach to international order, see Buries (2023).

²Others examine competing political narratives of international order endorsed by political actors, without the argument that international order itself is political narrative. See, for example, Li (2019); Miskimmon and O’Loughlin (2017); Retzmann (2025).

legitimizing ideology of the LIO is said to protect the interests of global elites against radical reorientations of power. Homolar and Turner (2024) assert that shared stories of international order articulate common security concerns, helping to foster security investments against perceived antagonists. Also worth noting is that scholars from feminist and postcolonial traditions have long explored structural *in* securities brought by dominant formations of international order—where the term is often used synonymously with “global governance.” The World Bank, IMF, and others are argued to have exacerbated inequalities and injustices for selected global communities (Daoud et al 2017; Langan 2018). Our aim here however is not to assess the policies and workings of the organizations and institutions said to represent IO. It is to show how manufactured discourses of the political concept of international order create realities of insecurity.

Ultimately, we diverge from materialist and institutionalist accounts of international order by shifting from an interactional to a constitutional view of power. The former—which informs much of the existing wisdom—sees social dynamics between actors that are pre-existing and given, and which wield power as a physical or behavioural attribute. The latter sees social dynamics as preceding those actors who, in turn, are made up of the power those dynamics exert (Barnett and Duvall 2005). But analytical reliance on one brings no requirement to dismiss the agency of the other; “scholars examining power through social interaction can see effects on social identities, and those examining power through constitutive relations can see effects on action” (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 47). On this we concur with Epstein (2008: 8) that “[the] productivity of discourse does not mean that material objects are physically brought into existence. . . Rather, these physical objects are brought into a system of meaningful relations. They are linguistically brought into existence.”

Rather than a set of given structures with self-evident meanings and interactions (e.g., Ikenberry 2011; Lake, Martin, and Risse 2021), international order here is revealed as meaning-giving political discourse with the power to create selected realities in the service of political designs. Material configurations of power including today’s states and international organizations and institutions are thus constituted and reconstituted by discourse. They always matter, but to understand and treat them *as order* is a political choice, which some adopt and some do not, often because their experiences of those configurations are not the same. As functions of ideas, their meanings and value are malleable and their existence as order is not unconditional.

Rethinking Order

Securitization is the discursive process through which issues are framed as security threats and transformed into problems that demand urgent action (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998; Balzacq 2016). Securitization theory therefore views security as a discourse that both reflects and enacts political choices (Browning and McDonald 2011; Dieudonné 2024a). The question for scholars is how any given phenomena become rendered as security problems, and how this reconfiguration reshapes political dynamics and authority structures (Hansen 2011; Stritzel 2012). If an audience accepts their framing, it authorizes the securitizing actor(s) to address the threat (Vuori 2010: 257).

To successfully write security, actors identify discourses, which resonate with their intended audience(s) (Balzacq 2010). One possibility is to tap into enduring discursive narratives, or myths. At their core, myths circulate through-

out political communities, becoming ingrained and naturalized over time (Turner 2022). “By providing an overarching framework to events, they seek to make sense of why the political community came together, why it excluded others, and how political authority should govern” (Della Sala 2016: 525). To sustain themselves *as* myths, they must continually reaffirm their application and significance (Bottici 2007: 5–8). In doing so, they can become powerful justifying instruments for resolving perceived threats to “our” definition of past events. At times—as we will see in the case of international order—they become so important as to constitute referent objects of securitization themselves (Mälksoo 2015).

Importantly, we contend that (international) order is not just any political discourse about security. It is particularly potent because it is already imbued with high normative appeal. As a totalizing concept, nothing sits above international order in the global security hierarchy, not even nation states. This imbues it with an all-or-nothing quality, meaning it intrinsically speaks to existential matters of safety and survival. Motivating urgency and commitment, international order is often recognized as the framework through which peace, prosperity, and security are to be realized. Among these, indeed, security is long regarded as “the greatest social value, the highest objective of any social action, indeed the universal good” (Mälksoo 2015: 224). History-writing is thus a powerful force for securitization and the delineation of ontological communities from others beyond (Coskun 2010; Bækken and Enstad 2020). Challenges to historical narratives can be portrayed as challenges to “our” common society (Juttila 2015: 928).

But rather than producing greater security, securitizing discourses (including as myths) frequently sustain or even amplify conditions of *in* security (Croft 2012). This makes securitization less about ensuring safety than about “the reproduction of unease and insecurity in everyday life” (Nyman 2018: 107). In short, securitizing discourses “enact a governmentality of fear” (Bigo 2014: 211). By continually emphasizing threat—or the potentiality of threat—such discourses reinforce the centrality and validity of those who claim the responsibility to protect. Nyers (2009: 4) describes this as “a paradoxical form of rule”; political leaders claim legitimacy by assuaging fears and pledging to repel danger, while perpetuating fears and insecurity to achieve policy goals. Securitization processes in this sense both structure and destabilize international relations.

This is how political actors can be said to write international security (see Campbell 1992; Jackson 2005) and ultimately order insecurity, by forging realities of threat and danger to international order, which are advantageous to their own political interests. Interrogating international order-as-discourse thus reveals its substantive content, but also contests of authority to define and own it. Worth noting here is that by introducing the term “ordering insecurity,” our claim is not to be forging new conceptual (in)security mechanisms. Related concepts of Security Studies and cognate fields include securitization itself, plus well-established others including threat inflation. We use ordering insecurity to denote the discursive manipulation of understandings about international order, without necessarily implying escalation or inflation, where the purpose is typically (though not necessarily exclusively) to create politically expedient realities of threat to international order for a securitizing actor. We do so to isolate the question of how threat dynamics around the idea of international order specifically can be (re)arranged, where discourses of international order function as (in)securitization.

Framing and reframing threat, securitizing actors condition political order by reconfiguring social priorities and repositioning actors vis-à-vis one another (Balzacq 2016; Hagmann 2018). Via logics of inclusion and exclusion, the most powerful actors are typically the most capable of establishing truths of threats and threatened (Croft 2012: 220). As we will see, international order in this view represents a political process that “makes foreign”—or in this case disorders—events and actors, where boundary-making practices distinguish inside from outside of order (Ashley 1987; Campbell 1992). This means that to securitize international order is to craft and manipulate social hierarchies by marginalizing some actors while empowering others (Dieudonné 2024b; Ganz 2025).

A possible rejoinder is that international order transcends logics of exclusion because of its implied universality of being. Securitization theory itself entertains the possibility of genuinely universal threats, and threats to international order seemingly qualify as such (see Buzan and Wæver 2009). Yet critical scholarship demonstrates the divisive effects of universality claims and their surrounding implications (Barkawi and Laffey 2006). What is presented as legitimate common good for some is experienced by others as an act of exclusion, if not an existential affront to their ontological security (Mälksoo 2015). In this way, the universality of international order reveals itself less as a neutral horizon and more as a particularistic project, imbued with both stratifying and antagonistic effects.

(in)Securing Order

Writing international order

At the most basic level, and as noted at the outset, the term “order” is subjective in that it is not a neutral descriptor. It is inherently normative, with seductive connotations of functionality, predictability, and organization. Plato (1943) saw “wise” and “noble” political order—administered by ruling classes of Guardians—as a route to justice and communal happiness. In Confucianism, order is not just compliance to rules but processes of moral development, which allow societies to flourish (see Wood 2023). As already noted, we propose that international order is not just any political discourse about security, and in the West at least its in-built potency and resonance have persuaded policymakers to adopt, adapt, and deploy the concept for over a century.

From around the time of the First World War, the underpinning subjectivities and normativities of international order were firmly evident in US political discourse. In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson implored Congress to support the collective post-war management of global affairs, invoking classically Western interpretations of modernism and progress. “[O]ur own desire for a new international order” he explained, “under which reason and justice and the common interests of mankind shall prevail, is the desire of enlightened men everywhere” (Wilson 1918). Rather than the physical or logistical manifestations of order, Wilson’s focus was the ideas and values by which order should be defined: universal principles of right and justice, reason, free trade, and self-government, each interpreted through the lens of American history and a powerful sense of self.

Importantly, order itself was not the end, but a conduit for “the maintenance of civilization” (Wilson 1918). Prior to the Second World War, US Secretary of State Cordell Hull (1938: 1) similarly argued that international order should be framed by the principles of American government, to prevent anarchy from “sweep[ing] away the very bases of civilization.” Fu-

ture British Prime Minister Winston Churchill argued a substantively similar point, through a distinctively British identity; “Why should not the same principles which have shaped the free, ordered, tolerant Civilization of the British Isles and British Empire be found serviceable in the organization of this anxious world?” (see Geiger 2019).

Logics of order-as-civilization have persisted; when US President Barack Obama (2016) encouraged Americans to remember the virtues of “the international order and civilisation that was built. . . after a twentieth century full of world war,” he conflated the two as did George H.W. Bush (1991a), Jimmy Carter (1981), Harry Truman (1949a) and others before him. At such times, international order has been exposed as a function of ideas, beliefs, and values that pre-date the United Nations, US hegemony, and other post-1945 power structures now cited as constituting international order. Moreover, from around 2008, the concept of a “Rules-Based International Order” (RBIO) became more discursively prominent. In 2022, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken defined it as “the system of laws, agreements, principles, and institutions that the world came together to build after two world wars” (Blinken 2022). This rewriting of world history now depicts an 80-year-old order framed since its conception not by value-laden contours of (Western) civilisation, but by the impartiality of rules.

To explore this continuous (re)writing of order more fully, we can examine the identification of 1945 as the birth of the international order. The account throughout the West and beyond is commonly that of a global settlement of peace and organization, structured around the UN, World Bank, and other institutional arrangements, and the rules and values they impart. It is also that of an order increasingly under threat. As then-Vice President, Joe Biden (2017) observed: “[a]fter World War Two, we drew a line under centuries of conflict. . . we built institutions and alliances to advance our shared security.” Yet, he lamented, it was an urgent imperative now to defend that order as it faced “fracturing” and “collapse.”

Discourses of an externally threatened post-1945 order extend beyond Washington in the service of shared and individual aims. Canada, Germany, India, Japan, and myriad others variously embrace this essential narrative, generating a form of narrative alliance (Homolar and Turner 2024). France’s 2022 National Strategic Review (NSR) explains that “[t]he defence of a stable international order. . . has underpinned our security and prosperity since 1945,” referring to its current state of “fracture” (Republic of France 2022). Former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (2023) argued the need “to rebuild the international order” upon which UK security has rested for 80 years. Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong (2025) has observed that “[f]or much of the past 60 years, we thrived in a post-World War Two rules-based international order.” But with that order now “fraying,” he concluded, the world was becoming “more fragmented and disorderly.”

The central contention, then, is that throughout the post-war era, international order of one form or another “ordered.” Its successes and stability might be debated. But order is fundamentally assumed to have been secured, acting *to secure*, before entering an era of instability and decline. As examined in more detail shortly, the roots of today’s order are traced to alternative eras such as the post-Cold War. But what we might call an ordering mythology or fetishization of 1945 among political leaders has become firmly embedded. Politically evolutionary, the realities of international order have shifted between “civilisational,” “rules-based,” and “liberal,” reaffirming its relevance and significance over time

(Bottici 2007). Scholars have also long been active in this regard (see, e.g., Deudney and Ikenberry 1999; Walt 2011; Parsi 2021). Busby and Monten (2018) argue succinctly that what they see as a now essentially defunct liberal international order, from 1945 to 2016, “had a good run.”

As noted at the outset, a key problem with this logic is that, for decades after 1945, political leaders spoke consistently not of a newly established, fully functioning system of post-war international order as a source of stability and security, but as an outcome still to be achieved amidst persistent *in* security. In 1949, US President Harry Truman explained that with the threat of wars still present, “[o]ne of the most important aspects of our foreign policy. . . is our effort to establish international order” (Truman 1949b: 431). A 1950s US delegation to NATO explained that the United Nations represented only “a great step *toward* organization of international order” (US Department of State 1956, emphasis added). Truman’s successor, Dwight D. Eisenhower (1957), cautioned that conflicts in the Middle East may have jeopardized “our best hope of establishing a world order.” “The supreme need of this Century,” he argued in 1960, “is to find a way to produce an effective international order” (Eisenhower 1960).

Political discourse of a full or secure international order, then, has rarely—if ever—been that of the present. To a significant extent, the mythicized post-war international order policymakers identify today as fractured or threatened, or in need of being rebuilt, never existed.³ Far more common at the time was the depiction of international order as a future condition to be achieved. In 1970, US President Richard Nixon (1970) stated his ambition “to participate in the building of international order. . . .” Then-National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger (1969) lamented an absence of agreement of what international order should be at a time of global “schisms” and instabilities. Even in the triumphalist post-Cold war era of hegemonic-US stability, Washington regularly framed observations of a new international order not as the realisation of order or security, but once more in terms of crisis and insecurity. Conflicts in the Middle East, President George H.W. Bush (1992: 12) said, represented “assaults” on international order. Such regional violence, he argued, “threatens to turn the dream of a new international order into a grim nightmare of anarchy” (Bush 1991b: 1333).

Certainly, the subjectivities and ontological instabilities of order-as-discourse ensure that its manufactured reality has not always been clear or consistent. In the late 1970s, for example, President Jimmy Carter represented something of an outlier by writing international order as a comparatively more complete and predictable condition of the type so commonly constructed retrospectively today. The United States, he argued, faced no major international crises, thanks largely to what he deemed President Truman’s achievement a world order, which protected the country from threats (Carter 1978; see also Carter 1980). Still, 6 months earlier, he had tied the need to protect national security with the familiar forward-facing goal of *creating* international order (Carter 1977, emphasis added).

³Worth noting is that today’s sanctification of an historical (post-1945) order is not unique; international political landscapes of any era can be retrospectively rewritten—and “re-ordered”—to suit contemporary interests or agendas. In 1969, for example, Henry Kissinger looked back on the nineteenth century to lament that much of its balance-of-power stability could not be recreated. Instability and unrest of his day, he explained, required a reinvention of international order and that without it, “stability will prove elusive” (reprinted in US Department of State 2003: 21).

Ordering insecurity

As we have shown, throughout history, international order has been continuously rewritten to suit the needs of the day—as civilizational, rules-based, liberal, and so on. But while these orders have all broadly been seen in the prevailing physical structures of international organizations, institutions, and state capability, their physical attributes are rarely detailed by policymakers. The pursuit of factual accuracy in this regard is not the point. The aim, rather, has always been to write and rewrite the *meaning* of those physicalities in the service of political goals. To reiterate, we argue that those goals have commonly been to construct and sustain realities of insecurity; by design, notions of international order have been purposefully and discursively securitized. Using the vocabulary of securitization theory, IO has come to function as a referent object whose well-being is repeatedly staged and defended.

Again, the argument is not that post-war international order never existed as a statement of its material constitutions. It is that processes of discursive regulation have ensured that the perceived reality of complete or secure order has for the most part not been *allowed* to exist. The reason, we argue, is straightforward. If the project of ordering is declared complete, which groups or forces can be rallied for political gain? What support or resources can be leveraged to promote or defend order, in the absence of uncertainty and danger? Of course, manufacturing truths and realities of threat is a well-recognized political tool, for boosting domestic support, advancing policy agendas, and so forth.

For decades, US policymakers have proclaimed the virtues of the post-1945 international order. George G.W. Bush (2001) argued that “the rule-based international order. . . is crucial to the peace and prosperity of the United States.” Antony Blinken, former Deputy Secretary of State under Obama and Secretary of State under Biden, remarked that the prevailing international order has worked “to prevent conflict, to uphold the rights of all people” (Blinken 2022). The second Trump administration refers relatively less than its predecessors to international order, at times rejecting the traditional notion that it has always served US interests. Still, Trump (2018) has cited the importance of deterring threats to “peace, stability, and an international order based on the rule of law.” Trump’s former US Secretary of Defense James Mattis also argued that “[t]he postwar international rules-based order is the greatest gift of the greatest generation” (quoted in Rucker and Leonnig 2020: 132).

This glorification, even mythicization, of the post-1945 international order creates a fictitious but idealized condition which all—but necessitates its defence and renewal. It does so by offering a compelling account of who “we” are and how “we” came to be so (Juttila 2015), buttressing the virtuosity of those who can persuasively claim to embody that order (Mälksoo 2015). Extending Bigo’s (2002) insights on the state’s management of immigration to the global realm, international order can be read as the deployment of a symbolic discourse that seeks to monopolize authority over the terms of legitimacy, including “like-minded” partners while marginalizing or excluding threatening others.

And so when Washington positions itself as the benevolent guardian of a just and equitable system now threatened by deviant others, it promotes a continuous state of crisis to compel preventive or restorative action (see Nyers 2009; Vuori 2010). Since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia is said to pose “a direct challenge to the rule-based international order established since the end of World War Two” (Biden 2022). China is identified as “the only

competitor with both the intent to reshape the [post-war] international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it" (White House 2022: 23). The two Trump administrations have similarly identified Russia and China as key antagonists, or revisionists, of order; both, it was argued in 2017, "are contesting our geopolitical advantages and trying to change the international order in their favor" (White House 2017: 27).

The 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) (White House 2022) offers a particularly clear account of the US as guardian of the order it created. It presents international order as a normative ideal—"free, open, prosperous, and secure"—but one simultaneously imperiled. Russia and China are depicted as seeking to "create a world conducive to their . . . repressive type of autocracy," thereby threatening the foundations of order. The NSS accordingly frames the moment as a "decisive decade," one that demands action "with urgency and creativity" (White House 2022: 9 and 13) if the United States and its partners are to prevent the erosion of the rules, institutions, and values, which constitute the prevailing order.

Through this discursive structure, international order is represented not as a secured condition but as a fragile project whose survival requires ongoing vigilance and intervention. The identification of hostile others and the temporal compression implied by a "decisive decade" establish existential urgency to legitimize political mobilization. In turn, the strategy reaffirms the necessity of "America's enduring leadership" (White House 2022: 11), presenting US authority not as a discretionary preference but as a functional requirement for the preservation of global stability. In this sense, the NSS does not simply describe the state of international order; it performs a securitising move. By staging order as acutely threatened, it organizes a field of insecurity within which allied nations are called to coalesce around American leadership and confront those outside the boundaries of order.

As that inherently potent, totalizing political discourse of survival, international order is primed to underpin US political practice. Threats to order from China and Russia validate urgent and potentially extraordinary effort; Biden argued that this was nothing less than "the contest for the future of our world" (White House 2022: 3), requiring universal measures. To defend order, Washington would protect global democracy, partner with supporters of the prevailing "rules-based" order to build grand coalitions, and modernize its military and industrial capabilities (White House 2022). Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (2020) argued that without immediate action, China would "erode our freedoms and subvert the rules-based order that our societies have worked so hard to build. If we bend the knee now, our children's children may be at the mercy of the Chinese Communist Party." Ultimately, tying threatening others to the existentiality of international order itself enables a stark choice: "a battle between democracy and autocracy, between liberty and repression, between a rules-based order and one governed by brute force" (Biden 2022).

As drivers of policy, order-as-discourse might be interpreted as epiphenomenal next to "brute facts" of international politics. China's disruption to international order, for example, might be seen in its unprecedented material "rise" and revisionist designs for the workings of global affairs. Russia's invasion of Ukraine could be presented as irrefutable proof of its disdain for, and danger to, established foundations of order. But among those who specifically study China's relationship with international order, a majority conclude that it is more status quo than revisionist (see Turner and Nymalm 2019). Russia's war against Ukraine has proven violent and destructive. But the subjectivities of discourse

mean *this* conflict can be determined a threat to order while others are not; for successive American administrations, for example, Washington's global, decades-long War on Terror was not a danger to international order. It was a move to "defend the world" (Bush 2003), forming part of Washington's record of "underwrit[ing] global security" (Obama 2009).

Securitising order thus deliberately and effectively produces unease (Nyman 2018: 107), reinforcing the authority of those like the US who identify as its rightful defenders. Still, states are no unitary or monopolistic orderers of insecurity, with individuals, groups, and institutions competing for discursive authority. Some in Washington refute the idea of a continuous post-war order, for example, describing instead a distinctive post-Cold War formation. For US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, post-war order promoted global democracy, enriched Americans, and eradicated the Soviet Union. But from the 1990s, a misguided project for liberal world order failed Americans and benefited rivals, notably China (Rubio 2025). This alternative securitization of order works for the guiding nationalisms of the two Trump administrations, including nationalist critiques of "globalist" projects and values abroad. It also discredits ideological rivals at home. For decades, observes the 2017 US National Security Strategy, US policy supported China's integration into the post-war international order on the assumption that Beijing would align with Western values. "For the most part," it concludes, "this premise turned out to be false" (White House 2017: 25 and 3).

While our empirical focus is US political discourse, neither the manipulation of order nor its value to political practice is the sole preserve of the United States. In China, for example, international order is no less a securitized construct, with its policymakers today articulating their support: "post-war international order must be preserved," asserted former Foreign Minister Qin Gang (China Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2023). President Xi Jinping has similarly insisted that "[c]ountries should uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core" (China Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021). Simultaneously, China denounces the concept of "rules-based" international order as a US-led ploy to sustain inequalities of power, under the guise of a benevolent narrative. Washington "talk[s] a lot about upholding the rules-based international order," argued Qin, "but it . . . disrupt[s] the post-war international order and undermin[es] China's sovereignty" (China Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2023).

As in Washington, moreover, the subjectivities of order help to enable policy goals. Despite China's assertions today that "China has all along . . . firmly upheld the international system with the UN at its core" (China Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2025), Beijing has a long history of contradictory discourse. In the 1960s, Premier Zhou Enlai argued that the United Nations had become a tool of Washington and "must be thoroughly reorganized" or even replaced (quoted in Weng 1966: 698). Former leader Deng Xiaoping described "great disorder under heaven," proposing global revolution to address the "exploitation and plunder" of the dominant bipolar system (Deng 1974: 1–2). By the early twenty-first century, after decades of integration into the political and economic frameworks of global governance, it made sense for a more globalized China to reinterpret history by desecuritising a system once denounced as oppressive, and claim consistent support. Such apparent inconsistencies reflect efforts to rewrite international order and security, with political discourse framing IO as fragile and threatened to mobilize the boundary-making logics of securitization processes.

Such exploratory probes beyond the confines of the United States indicate that the tendencies of American political discourse to construct and securitize realities of international order are evident elsewhere. Further research could better determine exactly how generalizable are discursive US trends. A tentative conclusion can be, however, that across authors discourse of international order is able to bring claims about who threatens conditions of international order and how, via subjectification and subject-positioning (Hagmann 2018: 194–200). This would suggest that securitizing state actors assert the vulnerabilities and instabilities of the international order they choose to see at any given time. In the case of the United States at least, the aim has regularly been to marginalize others by “making them foreign” (Campbell 1992)—or more specifically, disorderly—to the character and purpose of international order, sustaining and manipulating relations of power and, in the end, ordering insecurity.

Conclusion

Studying international order has traditionally been to chart an axiomatic system or condition, but we have proposed that it is no objectively observable assembly of material structures. The physical foundations of modern-day global governance may have been laid in 1945, but the term international order does not appear in the UN Charter, nor in the founding texts/Articles of Agreements of the IMF, the World Trade Organization,⁴ or the World Bank.⁵ It was not written into the closing speech of the Bretton Woods Conference of 1944. As with any “orders,” their meanings *as* order are attributed by political discourse and interests. To some degree at least, we have written international order back onto the institutions, which are said to have always defined it. For many, a liberal international order was birthed with the United Nations (e.g., Ikenberry 2010); for others, it only emerged after the Cold War (e.g., Mearsheimer 2019). Western values of civilization have at times been central, aspirational characteristics of order, before revisionist accounts of the past decided they were not. International order is what powerful voices decide it to be, and as of 2026—for those who still accept its existence—it is more commonly “rules-based.”

We have built upon an emergent body of work which narrativizes the concept of international order (Homolar and Turner 2024) and problematizes related notions of world order (Wojcowski 2018), to reassess international order-as-discourse. Yet we switched focus, from order as security to order as securitizing practice. By demonstrating that order-as-discourse operates so frequently to establish realities of danger and *disorder*—in a process we termed “ordering insecurity”—we have shown how commonly policymakers write international order to promote conditions of (international) *in* security and facilitate political goals. US political elites have continually drawn strength from a post-1945 international order mythologized as once secured. But as their predecessors reveal, they claim to defend something which has rarely, if ever, been recognized to exist. As Mark Carney (2026) recently noted, albeit with different intentions: “We knew the story of the international rules-based order was partially false.” Past and future orders are typically of promise and hope. The lived present is, in contrast, almost always of instability and disorder. In this sense at least, and regardless of its physical structures, American discourse of international order is a purposeful political project of international ordering.

The writing and rewriting of order are therefore more than innocent rhetorical labelling. The notion of international order is no mere description of the world, it is a political tool with normative power, which policymakers use to manipulate essential truths about the very structures of global (in)security. By setting out “realities” of dangers faced, appropriate courses of policy are prescribed. The task for scholars in particular should be to seek out and assess the political interests behind the deployment of the idea. What have American leaders and policymakers gained from the articulation of “international order,” the mythologizing (even exaggerating) of its past, and its persistent framing as endangered in the present? For what purposes do those beyond the United States engage in equally selective discursive practices, with equally deliberate provocations of insecurity?

For policymakers, the responsibility is perhaps to reflect on the consequences of provoked insecurity, and to recognize the subjective nature of international order. While states so commonly identify fractures and failings of international order, it has no single universal meaning and the lived realities of order are not identical. Conflicts like those between Russia and Ukraine and in the Middle East reverberate across wider global politics. But for many, such events are not the litmus test of international order and they reveal far less about its relative health or demise. For some, its life force is revealed instead in its ability to address alternative challenges or threats, for example, by delivering fairness, equality, and developmental goals (Ali 2024). International order, argued former South African President Thabo Mbeki, is defined by its record on “the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment. . . and the democratisation of the system of international relations” (Mbeki 2002). For others, international order is a capacity to manage existential dangers posed by the environment; “The future of international order will be determined. . . by how we govern the oceans. Nowhere is this more evident than in climate change” (Muizzu 2026). Declarations of the end of international order at moments seen as decisive for the West may not always translate.⁶ This means that the securitization of international order is not inevitable or timelessly consistent. Political actors are more likely to engage in this process when they perceive an order they are motivated to endorse. Having traditionally identified itself as the architect of a post-1945 (“liberal” or more recently “rules-based”) order, Washington has securitized this order to facilitate policies for its protection. Others speak to vulnerabilities of order *they* see instead, from positions of alternative political interests.

Subjective, selective, and compelling, discourse of international order repeatedly reveals itself as a valued political device to foment and sustain “knowledges” of insecurity. Others can be positioned outside of order as problems or villains or even enable their elevation to threats of maximalist proportions. This helps provoke calls to action through which energy and resources can be rallied by self-proclaimed defenders (the authors) of order. For more than a century, international order has been invoked by those in power. Political elites claim to pursue the future possibilities of order, or its reclamation from the past, while sustaining insecurity and fears of real or impending disorder. This makes uncertainty not merely a background condition, but a central force of these claims. What emerges is a pattern able to transcend geography or power status; international order can be authored

⁴Originally, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

⁵Originally, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

⁶On this point, see also Markland (2025), who argues that spatial and temporal diversity in the study of global anxiety is neglected in International Relations, which focuses predominantly on the Western experience.

as insecurity wherever it is written. A key political value of international order has always been the belief of its absence.

References

- ACHARYA, A. 2014a. *The End of American World Order*. Cambridge: Polity Books.
- ACHARYA, A. 2014b. "Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies." *International Studies Quarterly* 58: 647–59.
- ACHARYA, A. 2021. *ASEAN and Regional Order: Revisiting Security Community in Southeast Asia*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- ALI, MI. 2024. "Address by His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, to the 79th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations." 25 September. https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/79/gy_en.pdf.
- ANDERSON, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- ASHLEY, R. 1987. "Foreign Policy as Political Performance." *International Studies Notes* 13: 51–4.
- BEKKEN, H, AND JD ENSTAD. 2020. "Identity under Siege: Selective Securitization of History in Putin's Russia." *Slavonic and East European Review* 98: 321–44.
- BALZACQ, T. 2010. "Constructivism and Securitization Studies." In: M., Dunn Cavely, V. and Mauer, *The Routledge Handbook of Security Studies*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 56–72.
- BALZACQ, T. 2016. "Le Constructivisme." In: T. and Balzacq, *Théories de la sécurité. Les approches critiques*. Paris: Les presses de SciencesPo, pp. 165–249.
- BARKAWI, T, AND M LAFFEY. 2006. "The Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies." *Review of International Studies* 32: 329–52.
- BARNETT, M, AND R DUVAL. 2005. "Power in International Politics." *International Organization* 59(1): 39–75.
- BENABDALLAH, L. 2019. "Contesting the International Order by Integrating It: The Case of China's Belt and Road Initiative." *Third World Quarterly* 40: 92–108.
- BENABDALLAH, L. 2024. "The Liberal International Order as an Imposition: A Postcolonial Reading." *Ethics & International Affairs* 38: 162–79.
- BIDEN, J. 2017. *Joe Biden's last major speech as Vice President in full*, 18 January. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2017/01/joe-bidens-last-major-speech-in-full/>
- BIDEN, J. 2022. *Remarks by President Biden on the United Efforts of the Free World to Support the People of Ukraine*, 26 March. The White House, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/26/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-united-efforts-of-the-free-world-to-support-the-people-of-ukraine/>.
- BIGO, D. 2002. "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 27: 63–92.
- BIGO, D. 2014. "The (in)Securitization Practices of the Three Universes of EU Border Control: Military/Navy—Border Guards/Police—Database Analysts." *Security Dialogue* 45: 209–25.
- BLINKEN, A. 2022. "Secretary Blinken Speech: The Administration's Approach to the People's Republic of China." 27 May. US Embassy in Cambodia. <https://au.usembassy.gov/secretary-blinken-speech-the-administrations-approach-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>
- BOTTICI, C. 2007. *A Philosophy of Political Myth*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- BROWN, W. 2006. "Africa and International Relations: A Comment on IR Theory, Anarchy and Statehood." *Review of International Studies* 32: 119–43.
- BROWNING, CS, AND M McDONALD. 2011. "The Future of Critical Security Studies: Ethics and the Politics of Security." *European Journal of International Relations* 19: 235–55.
- BULL, H. 1977. *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- BULL, H, AND A WATSON. 1984. "Introduction." In: H., Bull, A. and Watson, *The Expansion of International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–9.
- BURLES, R. 2023. "Globalizing the International: Bull's Metaphysics of Order." *International Theory* 15: 184–207.
- BUSBY, J, AND J MONTEN. 2018. "Has Liberal Internationalism Been Trumped?" In: R., Jervis, F. J., Gavin, J., Rovner, D. N. and Labrosse, *Chaos in the Liberal Order: The Trump Presidency and International Politics in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 49–60.
- BUSH, GHW. 1991a. "Remarks at the Annual Conference of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Baltimore, Maryland." 20 August. In: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush, Book II 1 July to 31 December 1990*. Pp. 1147–50. Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office.
- BUSH, GHW. 1991b. "Address Before the 45th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, New York, 1 October." In: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush, Book II 1 July to 31 December 1990*, pp. 1330–4. Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office.
- BUSH, GHW. 1992. "Message to Allied Nations on the Persian Gulf Crisis." In: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush, Book I 1 January to 30 June 1991*, pp. 12–3. Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office.
- BUSH, GW. 2003. *President Bush Addresses the Nation, 19 March*. White House Archives: George W. Bush. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030319-17.html>.
- BUSH, GW. 2001. "Message to the Congress on Additional Measures Prohibiting the Importation of Rough Diamonds From Sierra Leone." 23 May. Online by G. Peters and J. T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucs.edu/node/215570>.
- BUZAN, B. 2014. *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BUZAN, B, AND O WÆVER. 2009. "Macrosecritisation and Security Constellations: Reconsidering Scale in Securitisation Theory." *Review of International Studies* 35: 253–76.
- BUZAN, B, O WÆVER, AND J DE WILDE. 1998. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- CAMPBELL, D. 1992. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- CARNEY, M. 2026. *Davos 2026: Special address by Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada*. World Economic Forum, 20 January. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2026/01/davos-2026-special-address-by-mark-carney-prime-minister-of-canada/>.
- CARTER, J. 1977. "Charleston, South Carolina Remarks at the 31st Annual Meeting of the Southern Legislative Conference." Online by G. Peters and J. T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* <https://www.presidency.ucs.edu/node/243358>
- CARTER, J. 1978. "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress." Online by G. Peters and J. T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* <https://www.presidency.ucs.edu/node/245063>
- CARTER, J. 1980. "Toast of the President at a State Luncheon in Lisbon, Portugal." Online by G. Peters and J. T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* <https://www.presidency.ucs.edu/node/251388>.
- CARTER, J. 1981. "Jimmy Carter presents his State of the Union Speech to Congress." 23 January. *Digital Public Library of America*. <https://dp.la/it/em/00722c44fee029d24045c8d27a1debb>
- CHAN, S, H FENG, K HE, AND W HU. 2021. *Contesting Revisionism: China, the United States, and the Transformation of International Order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CHINA MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2021. "Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at the Conference Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Restoration of the Lawful Seat of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations." 25 October. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyjh/202405/t20240530_11341573.html.
- CHINA MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2023. "Qin Gang: Post-war International Order Must Be Preserved; China's National Reunification Must Be Realized." 10 May. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjz/zjg_663340/xos_664404/xwlb_664406/202305/t20230511_11075275.html
- CHINA MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2025. "Ding Xuexiang on Improving Global Governance and Safeguarding the International Order." 22 January. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyxw/202501/t20250122_11543094.html
- COOLEY, C, AND D NEXON. 2020. *Exit from Hegemony: The Unravelling of the American Global Order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- COSKUN, BB. 2010. "History Writing and Securitization of the Other: The Construction and Reconstruction of Palestinian and Israeli Security Discourses." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23: 281–98.

- CROFT, S. 2012. "Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of Britain's Muslims." *Contemporary Security Policy* 33: 219–35.
- DAOUD, EN, B REINSBERG, AE KENTIKELIS, TH STUBBS, AND LP KING. 2017. "Impact of International Monetary Fund programs on child health." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114: 6492–7.
- DELLA SALA, V. 2016. "Europe's Odyssey?: Political Myth and the European Union: Political Myth and the European Union." *Nations and Nationalism* 22: 524–41.
- DENG, X. 1974. *Speech by Chairman of the Delegation of the People's Republic of China, Teng Hsiao-ping, at the Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly, April 10, 1974*. Peking: Foreign languages Press.
- DEUDNEY, D, AND JG IKENBERRY. 1999. "The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order." *Review of International Studies* 25: 179–96.
- DIEUDONNÉ, J. 2024a. "When Securitisation Fails and Succeeds at the Same Time: The 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal and Functional Actors in the US." *Contemporary Politics* 30: 577–96.
- DIEUDONNÉ, J. 2024b. "Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Power Struggle over 'Muslimness': Reification, Securitization, and Identification." *Middle East Critique* 33: 63–84.
- DONNELLY, J. 2015. "The Discourse of Anarchy in IR." *International Theory* 7: 393–425.
- DRIESCHOVA, A. 2022. "Representants and International Orders." *International Theory* 14: 233–62.
- DUCCI, C, AND F LUCENTI. 2022. "Contestation from Within: US Escalating Aversion to the International Criminal Court and the Non-impunity Norm in the Trump Era." *Interdisciplinary Political Studies* 8: 281–97.
- EISENHOWER, DD. 1957. "Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in the Middle East." Online by G. Peters and J. T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/234105>
- EISENHOWER, DD. 1960. "Address in San Francisco to the Commonwealth Club of California Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley." *The American Presidency Project* <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/234205>
- EPSTEIN, C. 2008. *The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
- FLOCKHART, T. 2016. "The Coming Multi-order World." *Contemporary Security Policy* 37: 3–30.
- FLOCKHART, T, AND EA KOROSTEVA. 2022. "War in Ukraine: Putin and the multi-order world." *Contemporary Security Policy* 43: 466–81.
- GANZ, A. 2025. "Securitization by Dispossession: Rethinking Labour and Security in Italy's Migration Regime." *Security Dialogue* 56: 211–40.
- GEIGER, S. 2019. "Churchill: What We Mean by 'Civilization', 2 July 1938." *The Churchill Project*, Hillsdale College. <https://winstonchurchill.hillsdale.edu/churchill-understanding-civilization/>
- GODDARD, SE, RR KREBS, C KREUDER-SONNEN, AND B RITTBERGER. 2024. (eds), "Its Own Worst Enemy: Liberal Order and Endogenous Sources of Contestation [Special Issue]." *Global Studies Quarterly* 4.
- GODDARD, SE, AND A NEWMAN. 2025. "Further Back to the Future: Neo-Royalism, the Trump Administration, and the Emerging International System." *International Organization* 79: S12–25.
- GROITL, G. 2023. *Russia, China and the Revisionist Assault on the Western Liberal International Order*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- GROVOGUI, SN. 2006. *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy: Memories of International Order and Institutions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- HAGMANN, J. 2018. "Securitisation and the Production of International Order(s)." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 21: 194–222.
- HANSEN, L. 2011. "Theorizing the Image for Security Studies: Visual Securitization and the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis." *European Journal of International Relations* 17: 51–74.
- HOMOLAR, A, AND O TURNER. 2024. "Narrative Alliances: The Discursive Foundations of International Order." *International Affairs* 100: 203–20.
- HULL, C. 1938. *Our Foreign Policy, 17 March*, Washington DC: US Government Printing Office.
- IKENBERRY, JG. 2010. "The Liberal International Order and its Discontents." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38: 509–21.
- IKENBERRY, JG. 2011. *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- IKENBERRY, JG. 2018. "The End of Liberal International Order?" *International Affairs* 94: 7–23.
- JACKSON, R. 2005. *Writing the war on terrorism: Language, politics and counter-terrorism*. Manchester University Press.
- JOHNSON, JM, VM BASHAM, AND THOMAS OD. 2022. "Ordering Disorder: The Making of World Politics." *Review of International Studies* 48: 607–25.
- JUTILA, M. 2015. "Securitization, History, and Identity: Some Conceptual Clarifications and Examples from Politics of Finnish War History." *Nationalities Papers* 43: 927–43.
- KISSINGER, H. 1969. *Essay by Henry A. Kissinger. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume 1: 1969-72*. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d4>
- KOIVISTO, M, AND T DUNNE. 2010. "Crisis, What Crisis? Liberal Order Building and World Order Conventions." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38: 615–40.
- LAKE, DA, LL MARTIN, AND T RISSE. 2021. "Challenges to the Liberal Order: Reflections on International Organization." *International Organization* 75: 225–57.
- LANGAN, M. 2018. *Neo-colonialism and the Poverty of 'development' in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- LESCH, M, L ZIMMERMANN, AND N DEITELHOFF. 2024. "Contestation from Within: Norm Dynamics and the Crisis of the Liberal International Order." *Global Studies Quarterly* 4. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksae022>
- MÄLKSOO, M. 2015. "Memory Must Be Defended": Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security." *Security Dialogue* 46: 221–37.
- MARKLAND, A. 2025. "Whose Age of Anxiety? Provincialising Ontological Insecurity." *Review of International Studies*. 52:229–48, Online.
- MBEKE, T. 2002. *Opening address by President Thabo Mbeki*. African National Congress, 16 December. <https://www.anc1912.org.za/national-conference-2002-opening-address-by-president-thabo-mbeki/>
- MEARSHEIMER, J. 2019. "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order." *International Security* 43: 7–50.
- MERZ, F. 2026. "Speech by Federal Chancellor Merz at the Munich Security Conference." 13 February. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/federal-government/speech-chancellor-msc-2407256>
- MISKIMMON, A, AND B O'LOUGHLIN. 2017. "Understanding International Order and Power Transition: A Strategic Narrative Approach." In: A., Miskimmon, B., O'Loughlin, L. and Roselle, *Forging the World: Strategic Narratives and International Relations*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 276–310.
- MITRANI, M. 2017. "The Discursive Construction of the International Community: Evidence from the United Nations General Assembly." *KFG Working Paper* 78, https://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/v/transforneurope/publications/working_paper/wp/wp78/WP_78_WEB_new.pdf
- MUIZZU, M. 2026. *Keynote Speech by His Excellency Dr Mohamed Muizzu, President of the Republic of Maldives at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP), the German Council on Foreign Relations, 11 February*. <https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/36214>
- NIXON, R. 1970. "US Presidential Message on UN Genocide Convention." *International Legal Materials* 9: pp. 431–33.
- NYE, J. 2019. "The Rise and Fall of American Hegemony from Wilson to Trump." *International Affairs* 95: 63–80.
- NYERS, P. 2009. "Introduction." In: P. and Nyers, *Securitizations of Citizenship*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 1–14.
- NYMAN, J. 2018. "Securitization." In: P. D., Williams, M. and McDonald, *Security Studies: An Introduction*, Third ed. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 100–13.
- OBAMA, B. 2009. "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1 December." *The White House Archives: President Barack Obama*. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>
- OBAMA, B. 2016. "Press Conference by the President After Meeting with National Security Officials." *The White House Office of the Press Secretary* 4 August. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/08/04/press-conference-president-after-meeting-national-security-officials>
- OWEN, JM. 2021. "Two Emerging International Orders? China and the United States." *International Affairs* 97: 1415–31.
- PAASI, A. 2001. "Europe as a Social Process and Discourse: Considerations of Place, Boundaries and Identity." *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8: 7–28.

- PANTZERHIELM, L. 2024. "Objects in Relations: Competing Visions of International Order at the Nexus of Human Rights and Development." *Global Studies Quarterly* 4. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksae058>.
- PARMAR, I. 2018. "The US-led Liberal Order: Imperialism by Another Name?." *International Affairs* 94: 151–72.
- PARSI, V. 2021. *The Wrecking of the Liberal World Order*, translated by M. Parsi. London: Palgrave.
- PAUL, TV, AND M KORNPROBST. 2021. (eds.) "Deglobalization? The Future of the Liberal International Order [Special Issue]." *International Affairs* 97.
- PLATO 1943. *Plato's The Republic*. New York: Books, Inc.
- POMPEO, M. 2020. "Remarks Delivered by Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo." 23 July. <https://2017-2021-translations.state.gov/2020/07/23/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-remarks-at-the-richard-nixon-presidential-library-and-museum-communist-china-and-the-free-worlds-future/>
- RAMOS COELHO, D. 2025. "A Fractured World and the Collapse of the Liberal Order." *CEBRI Journal* 4. <https://cebri.org/revista/en/artigo/215/a-fractured-world-and-the-collapse-of-the-liberal-order>
- REPUBLIC OF FRANCE 2022. "National Strategic Review." <https://www.sgds.n.gouv.fr/files/files/rns-uk-20221202.pdf>.
- RETZMANN, N. 2025. "Narratives of Competition, Competition of Narratives? United States–China Relations, Technology, and the Role of Storytelling." *Global Studies Quarterly* 5. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksaf036>
- RUBIO, M. 2025. "Opening Remarks by Secretary of State–Designate Marco Rubio before the senate Foreign Relations Committee. 15 January." *US Department of State*. <https://www.state.gov/opening-remarks-by-secretary-of-state-designate-marco-rubio-before-the-senate-foreign-relations-committee>
- RUCKER, P, AND C LEONNIG. 2020. *A Very Stable Genius: Donald J. Trump's Testing of America*. London: Bloomsbury.
- SCHWELLER, R. 2015. "Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders." *Valdai Papers* 16: 1–15.
- SCHWELLER, R, AND X PU. 2011. "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline." *International Security* 36: 41–72.
- SHARMA, SD. 2020. "Trump and the End of an Era? The Liberal International Order in Perspective." *The International Spectator* 55: 82–97.
- STRITZEL, H. 2012. "Securitization, Power, Intertextuality: Discourse Theory and the Translations of Organized Crime." *Security Dialogue* 43: 549–67.
- SUNAK, R. 2023. *PM speech at Munich Security Conference—18 February 2023*. Prime Minister's Office, 18 February. <https://www.gov.uk/government/t/speeches/pm-speech-at-munich-security-conference-18-february-2023>
- TRUMAN, H. 1949a. "Inaugural Address, 20 January. National Archives, Harry S." *Truman Library and Museum*. <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/19/inaugural-address>.
- TRUMAN, H. 1949b. "Address in Miami at the Golden Jubilee Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars." In: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, January 1 to December 31, 1949*, pp. 431–4. Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office.
- TRUMP, D. 2018. "President Donald J. Trump's Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe." *The Trump White House Archives* 18 April. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-summit-meeting-prime-minister-shinzo-abe/>.
- TURNER, O. 2022. "Frontiering International Relations: Narrating US Policy in the Asia Pacific." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 18 <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orac009>.
- TURNER, O, AND N NYMALM. 2019. "Morality and Progress: IR Narratives on International Revisionism and the Status Quo." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32: 407–28.
- US DEPARTMENT OF STATE 1956. "Telegram From the United States Delegation at the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting to the Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957*." Volume IV. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v04/d42>.
- US DEPARTMENT OF STATE 2003. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume 1. Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969–1972*. Washington DC: US Government Printing Office.
- VUORI, JA. 2010. "A Timely Prophet? The Domsday Clock as a Visualization of Securitization Moves with a Global Referent Object." *Security Dialogue* 41: 255–77.
- WEVER, O. 1995. "Securitization and Desecuritization." In: D. and Lipschutz, *On Security*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 46–87.
- WALT, S. 2011. "The End of the American Era, The National Interest, November/December 2011, No. 116 (November/December 2011)." pp. 6–16.
- WEISS, JC, AND JL WALLACE. 2021. "Domestic Politics, China's Rise, and the Future of the Liberal International Order." *International Organization* 75: 635–64.
- WENDT, A. 1992. "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 46: 391–425.
- WENG, BS. 1966. "Communist China's Changing Attitudes Toward the United Nations." *International Organization*. 20: 677–704.
- WHITE HOUSE 2017. "National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December." <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>
- WHITE HOUSE 2022. "National Security Strategy, October." <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.
- WIENER, A, DA LAKE, AND T RISSE. (eds.) 2026. *Deepontestations of the Liberal International Order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WILSON, W. 1918. "Address to Congress on International Order." Online by G. Peters and J. T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/311360>.
- WOHLFORTH, WC. 1999. "The Stability of a Unipolar World." *International Security* 24(): 5–41.
- WOJCZEWSKI, T. 2018. "Global Power Shifts and World Order: The Contestation of 'Western' Discursive Hegemony." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 31: 33–52.
- WONG, L. 2025. *Speech by Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong at the S Rajaratnam Lecture on 16 April 2025*. Prime Minister's Office, Singapore, 16 April. <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/PM-Lawrence-Wong-at-the-S-Rajaratnam-Lecture-2025>
- WOOD, AT. 2023. "Confucianism and Social Structure." In: J. and Oldstone-Moore, *The Oxford Handbook of Confucianism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 382–94.
- WU, X. 2018. "China in Search of a Liberal Partnership International Order." *International Affairs* 94: 995–1018.
- ZARAKOL, A. 2022. *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.