

Recognizing injustice: the ‘hypocrisy charge’ and the future of the liberal international order

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Recognizing injustice

If there is widespread agreement that the liberal international order (LIO) is in crisis, there is less agreement about the principal causes of this crisis. A catalogue of major sources of turbulence includes: a shift in systems of governance around the world from democracy to autocracy, including the rise of authoritarian great powers;¹ the pressure on free markets caused by rising inflation, lower growth and trade wars; the use of the COVID-19 pandemic by states to restrict individual liberties; the chronic tensions that beset a range of liberal institutions, from the European Union to the International Monetary Fund; and the apparent stalling of grand liberal projects such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Assessments of these multiple, overlapping crises tend to focus on either *external* sources of instability for the LIO, such as the rise and apparent stability of illiberal forms of governance, or *internal* dynamics, including increasing levels of inequality within liberal societies or the corrosive effects of the ‘culture wars’.² Whatever the primary mode of explanation, most commentators agree that the crisis of the LIO is real.

Taking this crisis as our point of departure, the main concern of this article is with the distinction between problems that *any* international order faces and

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¹ V-Dem, *Autocratization turns viral* (Gothenburg, 2021), https://www.v-dem.net/static/website/files/dr/dr_2021.pdf. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 5 Oct. 2022.)

² See e.g. David A. Lake, Lisa L. Martin and Thomas Risse, ‘Challenges to the liberal order: reflections on international organization’, *International Organization* 75: 2, 2021, pp. 225–57. This article was the introduction to the 75th year special issue of *International Organization* on the crisis of the LIO, which includes contributions based on the internal–external distinction. See also T. V. Paul, ‘Globalization, deglobalization and reglobalization: adapting liberal international order’, *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1599–1620; Umut Aydin, ‘Emerging middle powers and the liberal international order’, *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1377–94; Jeannette Money, ‘Globalization, international mobility and the liberal international order’, *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1559–77.

problems that are *specific* to the LIO.³ All international orders face crisis points when their central actors experience (relative) decline and their challengers grow in (relative) power. As is well documented, the LIO is experiencing precisely these difficulties now, whether captured by the relative levelling out of material power capabilities between the United States and China,⁴ or more generally in the erosion of the structural power gap that enabled the ‘rise of the West’ over the past two centuries or so.⁵

The changing patterns of material power capabilities are certainly important to any assessment of international order and disorder, including that of the LIO. But as the introduction to this special section outlines, questions about order are intimately bound up with questions of justice.⁶ As the introduction also notes, all international orders experience competing justice claims, including those around ‘recognitional justice’: the denoting of *who* is considered to be a (full or partial) member of that order and *what* forms of recognition follow from membership.⁷ Struggles for recognition, rooted in the desire to be acknowledged by others, are a fundamental source of order stability and instability.⁸ In particular, misrecognition—understood as the gap between an individual’s desired status and how they are seen by others—destabilizes orders.⁹ Recognition struggles emerge from reactions to experiences of misrecognition and often act as the source of the myriad justice claims discussed by contributors to this special section. All international orders face actors with recognition grievances and these grievances are often difficult to accommodate. But there are some struggles over recognitional justice that are specific to the LIO because they conflict with the constituent elements of this order. This article unpacks these elements, explores why they matter, and outlines the consequences of disputes over recognitional justice for the future of the LIO.

³ We define ‘international order’ as the (human-made) rules, understandings and institutions that govern (and pattern) relations between actors in world politics. Order is more purposively created (or designed) by its various actors and more reflexively maintained (or undermined) than structure, which includes dynamics beyond human agency. On this point, see Ayşe Zarakol, *Before the West: the rise and fall of eastern world orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

⁴ Christopher Layne, ‘The US–Chinese power shift and the end of the *Pax Americana*’, *International Affairs* 94: 1, 2018, pp. 89–111. For a counter-view, see Michael Beckley, ‘The power of nations: measuring what matters’, *International Security* 43: 2, 2018, pp. 7–44; Norrin Ripsman, ‘Globalization, deglobalization and great power politics’, *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1317–33.

⁵ Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The global transformation: history, modernity and the making of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁶ Chris Reus-Smit and Ayşe Zarakol, ‘Polymorphic justice and the crisis of international order’, *International Affairs* 99: 1, 2023, pp. 1–22.

⁷ Reus-Smit and Zarakol, ‘Polymorphic justice’.

⁸ Rebecca Adler-Nissen, ‘Stigma management in international relations: transgressive identities, norms, and order in international society’, *International Organization* 68: 1, 2014, pp. 143–76; Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Alexei Tsinovoi, ‘International misrecognition: the politics of humour and national identity in Israel’s public diplomacy’, *European Journal of International Relations* 25: 1, 2019, pp. 3–29; Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Ayşe Zarakol, ‘Struggles for recognition: the liberal international order and the merger of its discontents’, *International Organization* 75: 2, 2021, pp. 611–34; Ayşe Zarakol, *After defeat: how the East learned to live with the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Ayşe Zarakol, ‘Sovereign equality as misrecognition’, *Review of International Studies* 44: 5, 2018, pp. 848–62.

⁹ See e.g. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Patchen Markell, *Bound by recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). See also the 2019 special issue of the *Review of International Studies* on misrecognition.

Our argument is that, when it comes to issues of recognitional justice, the main vulnerability of the LIOs is what we call ‘the hypocrisy charge’. The LIO faces multiple, often intersecting, justice claims, from claims for reparations to those pressing for climate justice.¹⁰ What lies behind many of these claims is the perception that the LIO is guilty of double standards. Like all orders, the LIO relies on forms of social hierarchy that denote who and what is inside and outside the order. These social hierarchies create recognition grievances among actors who feel they are not getting the recognition to which they are entitled. In and of itself, this is not an insurmountable problem—liberal societies have often proved adept at accommodating movements that mobilize around misrecognition claims, and in the process defanging their radical intent, whether these struggles concern claims over redistribution, representation, recognition or all three.¹¹ The bigger problem is that the grounds offered by the LIO for these exclusionary practices are unsustainable. The promises of justice contained within liberalism (equal membership, universal rationality, the sanctity of individual rights etc.) conflict with the core requirements of order construction (the establishing of social hierarchies, justifying unequal recognition claims, maintaining exclusion regimes etc.). Orders that do not promise *liberal* recognitional justice do not face these tensions, even when they are more hierarchical or exclusionary than the LIO. Of course, these orders have recognition struggles of their own, some of which are existential.¹² But what is specific to recognition struggles within the LIO, and what stands as the font of its vulnerability, is ‘the hypocrisy charge’.

Our argument unfolds in three main sections. First, we outline the contours of the LIO as a recognition order, arguing that the heart of the LIO features a fundamental tension between justice claims based on liberal meritocracy and practices of hierarchical recognition.¹³ This opens up the LIO to charges of hypocrisy. The second section explores the ways in which the hypocrisy charge undermines LIO claims to recognitional justice. Most notably, the LIO faces recognition grievances that it can either accommodate or reject only through illiberal practices. This increases the threat of the hypocrisy charge and, as a result, undermines LIO claims to recognitional justice. The final, concluding section explores the consequences of this core vulnerability within the LIO. We argue that tensions around recognitional justice are fundamentally irresolvable. As such, contention around justice claims is likely to remain a central source of the multiple crises enveloping the LIO.

¹⁰ On reparations, see Ta-Nehisi Coates, ‘The case for reparations’, *The Atlantic*, June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>. On climate justice, see Julie Sze, *Environmental justice in a moment of danger* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020).

¹¹ Nancy Fraser, ‘A triple movement’, *New Left Review*, May–June 2013, pp. 119–32.

¹² For example, the Eurasian international order constructed largely by the Mongols between the 13th and 16th centuries held ‘world conquering’ as its central claim. In the 20th century, socialist international order was oriented around the promise of egalitarianism. Both orders featured contestation over recognitional justice. And, like the LIO today, both faced several crisis points. But what was central to their stability, or otherwise, was their ability to plausibly realize these foundational claims. On the former, see Zarakol, *Before the West*; on the latter, see Bhaskar Sunkara, *The socialist manifesto* (London: Basic Books, 2020).

¹³ This is not to say that meritocracy is itself egalitarian, as discussed in Michael Young, *The rise of the meritocracy* (London: Transaction, 1958). As Young points out, meritocracy is more about equality of opportunity than equality of treatment, while often denying the hierarchical elements of ‘equal opportunity’ and, in the process, reinforcing forms of stratification. Many thanks to a peer reviewer for pushing us on this point.

Liberal recognition

Like any enduring political ideology, liberalism is a shapeshifter that adjusts to different temporal and spatial contexts. Indeed, liberalism is associated with a range of often conflicting value commitments (to individual autonomy and equality, pluralism and universalism), concept practices (free markets, self-determination, human rights, representative government, collective security), and people (Smith and Paine, Mill and Wilson, Rawls and Nussbaum). In short, liberalism is not a single thing. If there are many liberalisms, it is no surprise that there is an inbuilt ambivalence in terms of how liberal international order is realized in practice, captured, for example, by the ways in which self-declared liberal states can simultaneously favour non-intervention (on the grounds of supporting self-determination) and intervention (on humanitarian grounds).¹⁴

Although liberalism comes in many forms, in general terms it is oriented around three constituent ideas that sustain its claim to recognitional justice: the individual as the primary site for the articulation of normative claims; the market as the primary site of economic exchange; and representative democracy as the primary site of political authority.¹⁵ In principle, these ideas are complementary: liberals favour constitutional polities in which free markets, sustained through private property regimes, provide the means for maximizing individual autonomy. Indeed, a central theme in liberal thought is the notion of the ‘harmony of interests’—the idea that the world is, potentially, orderable through individual autonomy, free-market exchange, and representative governance in ways that serve the interests of all. To what extent the LIO lives up to these aspirations is, of course, highly debatable.¹⁶ Liberalism often generates disputes over its core tenets and practical prescriptions—for example, when democratically elected representatives choose to curtail free markets or individual rights or both. At the same time, liberalism emerged, and continues to function, often without significant regard for its modes of exclusion.¹⁷ This generates a gap between justification and practice: in theory, liberalism is highly inclusive; in practice, it is necessarily exclusive.¹⁸ But despite these sources of tension, these three constituent claims provide a minimalist set of foundations around which the LIO is organized and its authority legitimized.

What makes the LIO, especially its post-Cold War iteration, so central to contemporary world politics is that its constituent claims are not reducible to particular states or regions. The universalizing aspirations of the LIO take it beyond being an American project, a European project or even a western project. Rather, liberalism functions as the general operating system for contemporary

¹⁴ Gerry Simpson, ‘Two liberalisms’, *European Journal of International Law* 12: 3, 2001, pp. 537–72.

¹⁵ See also Lake et al., ‘Challenges to the liberal order’.

¹⁶ Indeed, they have led some commentators to question whether a liberal international order exists at all. See e.g. Patrick Porter, *The false promise of liberal order: nostalgia, delusion and the rise of Trump* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020).

¹⁷ Beate Jahn, ‘Barbarian thoughts: imperialism in the philosophy of John Stuart Mill’, *Review of International Studies* 31: 3, 2005, pp. 599–618; Jennifer Pitts, *A turn to empire: the rise of imperial liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁸ Simpson, ‘Two liberalisms’; Tristen Naylor, *Social closure and international society: status groups from the family of civilised nations to the G20* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

world politics: its central ideology, its everyday practices, its code.¹⁹ In this way, the LIO is embedded in the deep substrate of international relations, most obviously within forms of international administration, from the UN system to practices of international law.²⁰ Even though liberalism is unevenly applied within these various forums, and even though individual states wax and wane in terms of their actually existing liberal features, liberalism remains the referent object of international administration. This makes it the world's first truly global order.

Given the global reach of the LIO, it is not surprising that its legitimacy is contested on multiple fronts, from those who emphasize its entanglement with colonial and imperial histories,²¹ to those who stress its inability to solve pressing contemporary problems: climate justice, rising inequality, racial injustice and more.²² What lies behind many of these critiques is the observation that the LIO rests on forms of social stratification: 'West' and 'non-West', 'modern' and 'backward', 'developed' and 'undeveloped', and so on.²³ No social order, the LIO included, can function without social hierarchies. The question facing the LIO is on what basis—if any—social hierarchies can be legitimized and recognitional justice claims acknowledged, accommodated or rejected.

Unlike the LIO, social orders that are explicitly organized as hierarchies cannot be easily criticized for deploying hierarchical logics. They are vulnerable in other ways, of course, just not this one. For example, most historical agrarian societies were highly stratified and exploitative, yet in the absence of exogenous pressures, those arrangements were durable over long periods.²⁴ By contrast, any vestige of social hierarchy in a liberal society, domestic or international, opens up liberalism to accusations of hypocrisy, because liberalism promises equal treatment of members and equal opportunity for upward mobility. The emphasis liberalism places on 'rational' agency means that, in order to be considered legitimate, hierarchies within liberal orders require a 'rational' basis, one rooted in an 'objective' assessment of 'merit': ability, performance and so on. In similar vein, this meritocratic logic necessitates the justification of liberal exclusions through 'rational' criteria.

In practice, though, liberal orders often deploy 'irrational' criteria of exclusion based on factors such as race, gender, class, geography and more. The bitter struggles over voting rights in many liberal states provide one illustration of this dynamic at work. What is the case for domestic liberal societies is also true of

¹⁹ G. John Ikenberry, 'The end of liberal international order?' *International Affairs* 94: 1, 2018, pp. 7–23.

²⁰ Simpson, 'Two liberalisms'.

²¹ Jeanne Morefield, *'Covenants without swords': idealist liberalism and the spirit of empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Pitts, *A turn to empire*; Duncan Bell, *Victorian visions of global order: empire and international relations in nineteenth-century political thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²² See, respectively, Sze, *Environmental justice in a moment of danger*; David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The dawn of everything* (London: Allen Lane, 2021); Akala, *Natives: race and class in the ruins of empire* (London: Two Roads, 2018).

²³ Zarakol, *After defeat*; Ntina Tzouvala, *Capitalism as civilisation: a history of international law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). Also see: Amitav Acharya, 'Race and racism in the founding of the modern world order', *International Affairs* 98: 1, 2022, pp. 23–43; Navnita Chadha Behera, 'Globalization, deglobalization and knowledge production', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1579–97.

²⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006; first publ. 1980).

the LIO. Indeed, it could be argued that the LIO was predicated on the political, economic and social hierarchies that have characterized relations between the West and other parts of the world during the modern period.²⁵ This dynamic took on particular salience in the early nineteenth century, which not only saw the emergence of liberalism in its modern form,²⁶ but was also a pivotal period in the creation of modern international order.²⁷ During the nineteenth century, parts of the West became more powerful than their non-western counterparts across a range of indicators, from GDP to life expectancy. This process was not, of course, ‘natural’—western power arose from imperial and colonial conquest, the dispossession of ‘native’ land, and the debasement of ‘others’.²⁸ Underpinning these dynamics was a social hierarchy in which the West was taken to be the centre of international order and its political, economic and cultural standards came to define what was considered to be ‘normal’.²⁹ Those who fell short of these expectations, whether because they were insufficiently modern, insufficiently white, insufficiently Christian or all three, were stigmatized. This took place formally via the ‘Standard of Civilization’,³⁰ which deprived polities that were not considered ‘civilized’ of equal legal recognition, and also in more informal ways through the adoption of western languages, manners, clothes and diets within stigmatized societies, particularly by elites who saw it as a means of acquiring status, recognition and, they hoped, equality.³¹

These social hierarchies can be characterized in ‘established–outsider’ terms. Those who are ‘established’ in a social setting (often early adopters) have the power to set standards and stigmatize those who are ‘outsiders’ (usually latecomers), even if the material differences between them are insignificant. For example, even as Japan became the first modern, non-white, non-Christian, non-western great power, it still suffered from racial stigmatization, most obviously when its attempt to be accepted as a racial equal at the 1919 Versailles Conference was rejected by western powers. It is possible to argue that the LIO has been parasitic on these longstanding social hierarchies, even as it is presented as a means of reducing or eradicating them.³² Because exclusion from the western status club has engendered

²⁵ Tzouvala, *Capitalism as civilisation*. See also Jamie Martin, *The meddlers: sovereignty, empire, and the birth of global economic governance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022).

²⁶ Although many liberals claim a prehistory dating back to Locke, the term ‘liberalism’ emerged in self-conscious form only during the early years of the nineteenth century, when it was used to refer to the curtailment of arbitrary monarchical power through a constitution. On this, see Bell, *Victorian visions of global order*.

²⁷ Buzan and Lawson, *The global transformation*.

²⁸ George Lawson, ‘The rise of modern international order’, in John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, eds, *The globalization of world politics*, 9th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

²⁹ Zarakol, *After defeat*.

³⁰ See e.g. Gerrit Gong, *The standard of ‘civilization’ in international society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Anthony Anghie, *Imperialism, sovereignty and the making of international law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Ann Towns, *Women and states: norms and hierarchies in international society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Arnulf Becker Lorca, *Mestizo international law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Tzouvala, *Capitalism as civilisation*; John Hobson, *Multicultural origins of the global economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

³¹ Richard Drayton, ‘Race, gender, and class’, in David Motadel, Christof DeJung and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds, *The global bourgeoisie: the rise of the middle classes in the age of empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

³² Zarakol, ‘Sovereign equality as misrecognition’.

misrecognition, many elites and publics, even those not persuaded by liberalism, have sought to join the LIO, understood as the latest chapter in an older story. In other words, the appeal of the LIO has not always been based on 'rational' arguments, as many liberals imagined, but has also drawn on 'irrational' emotions, such as belonging, which are themselves rooted in concerns about recognition. To attribute the creation of the LIO primarily to western power, the example of liberal institutions, the seduction of liberal economic incentives or the intrinsic appeal of liberal values is to miss a significant part of why so many peoples and states sought to join the order in the first place. The choice was not about, or at least was not only about, the wealth and power of the LIO. It was also about acquiring much sought-after labels ('liberal', 'developed', 'civilized') and, in the process, shedding undesirable alternatives ('illiberal', 'backward', 'uncivilized').

Social hierarchies between the West and the non-West have, therefore, been in place since the emergence of modern international order in the nineteenth century, albeit under different guises: 'civilized' vs 'uncivilized', 'First World' vs 'Third World', 'global North' vs 'global South' and so on.³³ Although the LIO claims to have replaced these hierarchies with objective meritocratic metrics, they are still in large measure operational. Indeed, the distinction between liberal and illiberal states is often collapsed in these categorizations. For example, Asian countries that score highly on various metrics of liberalism (e.g. Taiwan) tend to receive less recognition for their actions than western states that are more easily admitted into the inner circle (and kept there) even when they fall short of objective metrics (e.g. the United States). In this way, the erosion of democratic practices in the United States does not substantively threaten its ranking within the LIO, while few commentators appear to notice that Taiwan is one of several Asian countries that have significantly deepened their democratic systems in a period when there is widespread bemoaning of the crisis of the LIO. Indeed, Taiwan now ranks ahead of many western countries on measures of liberalism.³⁴ It is hard to believe that the reverse would hold: that a decline in liberalism in Taiwan would be given the same leeway as it is in the United States.

Thus there is both a temporal lag and a spatial differentiation within the LIO that works to police hierarchies: states outside the West are slow to receive recognition even when 'objective' indicators indicate their 'readiness' for full membership, while states inside the West maintain their hierarchical status position even when their metrics decline. At the end of the Cold War, for example, states in central and eastern Europe were allowed to queue-jump ahead of other applicants to join some of the major institutions that sustain the LIO. And liberal states, such as the United States, maintain a range of alliances and partnerships with illiberal states, such as Saudi Arabia, on the grounds of exceptional strategic importance, while permitting exceptions to international norms, for example via the 'submarine loophole' in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons for a

³³ Zarakol, *After defeat*.

³⁴ 'Global democracy has a very bad year', *The Economist*, 2 Feb. 2021.

liberal state (e.g. Australia), while denying it to illiberal powers (e.g. Iran).³⁵ Thus leading actors in the LIO employ a selective legitimation system that recognizes *some* illiberal actors, while denying recognition to others on the basis of their illiberal features. These unequal practices, and their relationship to issues of status and belonging, lie behind much of the anger, resentment and bitterness that are shown towards the LIO in the contemporary world.

This tension between justice claims based on liberal meritocracy and practices of hierarchical recognition opens up the LIO to charges of hypocrisy. And these charges of hypocrisy lead, in turn, to contestation. Many elites and publics are intensely resentful about the subaltern positions they occupy within LIO hierarchies.³⁶ This generates the potential for mobilization by a variety of actors (populists, social movements, elite factions and others) who claim, with considerable justification, that the LIO is not living up to its promise of equal, merit-based recognition. Even though some of these actors are comfortable with alternative social hierarchies that would privilege illiberal groupings, including themselves, their most potent weapon is an ability to criticize the LIO using the LIO's own logics of legitimation. This is why the hypocrisy charge against the LIO is so powerful—it upscales specific, local grievances into a general global recognition struggle directed at the LIO.

The hypocrisy charge

There is, therefore, a tension hardwired into the LIO over its claims to recognitional justice. It is right to say, as the introduction to this special section makes clear, that many justice claims are intersectional. But it is also the case that justice claims exhibit points of friction, pitting actors within the LIO into contestation with each other,³⁷ while also fostering hostility between groups mobilizing against the LIO.³⁸ As noted above, the terrain on which these forms of contestation takes place often features charges of hypocrisy.³⁹ Why does this matter?

³⁵ Thanks to Ben Zala for making this point to us quite loudly, quite insistently and quite correctly. On the practice of 'conditional proliferation', see William Alberque and Ben Schreer, 'AUKUS, US allies and the age of conditional proliferation', IISS Analysis, 29 Oct. 2021, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2021/10/aukus-us-allies-and-the-age-of-conditional-proliferation>.

³⁶ Adler-Nissen and Zarakol, 'Struggles for recognition'.

³⁷ Brexit provides an obvious example in that it was mediated through multiscale, polymorphic justice claims, including those over sovereign recognition, institutional fairness, redistributive practices and epistemic authority.

³⁸ Challenges from 'inside' the LIO come from both left and right. The diagnosis and prognosis of justice claims expressed by these groups may share a common opposition to the LIO, but in almost every other respect they are incompatible. We return to this point in the following section.

³⁹ See e.g. Rami Rayess, 'While standing up to Putin the West must leave the hypocrisy behind', Al-Arabiya News, 25 Feb. 2022, <https://english.alarabiya.net/views/2022/02/25/While-standing-up-to-Putin-the-West-must-leave-the-hypocrisy-behind>; Paul Rogers, 'Western hypocrisy: what Joe Biden gets wrong about Russia', openDemocracy, 2 April 2022, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/russia-ukraine-joe-biden-west-hypocrisy-war>; Alexander Hill, 'Western hypocrisy is one reason Vladimir Putin won't back down in Ukraine', UPI, 25 Feb. 2022, <https://www.upi.com/Voices/2022/02/25/ukraine-Vladimir-Putin-wont-back-down-Ukraine/4901645793270/>; Simon Tisdall, 'China looks at Britain and sees only weakness and hypocrisy', *Guardian*, 6 July 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/06/china-britain-weakness-hypocrisy-jeremy-hunt-hong-kong>; 'Hungary warns Pompeo against western "enormous hypocrisy" toward Russia', euractiv.com, 12 Feb. 2019, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and->

In the discipline of International Relations (IR), as in world politics more generally, hypocrisy is often asserted but rarely defined. Even Stephen Krasner's classic study, *Sovereignty: organized hypocrisy*, defines hypocrisy somewhat obliquely, despite having the concept in its title. Krasner sees hypocrisy as the point of tension between logics of appropriateness and logics of consequences, arguing that 'actors never fully conform with the logic of appropriateness associated with their specific roles; they also engage in purely instrumental behavior generated by a logic of expected consequences'.⁴⁰ In the book as a whole, Krasner's emphasis is on the *organization* of hypocrisy rather than its nature or its effects. Krasner is far from unusual in taking this somewhat indirect approach to the subject—IR scholarship tends to adopt a taken-for-granted approach to hypocrisy. Even those who use the term, related terms such as lying and mistrust,⁴¹ or related approaches such as political psychology,⁴² rarely theorize it explicitly.

One notable exception can be found in debates about unipolarity and US foreign policy. In a discussion of the latter, Daryl Glaser defines hypocrisy as 'action that fails to live up to proclaimed principles or adheres to them selectively'.⁴³ Glaser argues that US hypocrisy is damaging to US interests, at least over the long run. Martha Finnemore argues that unipoles 'feel the constraints of the legitimization structures and institutions that they, themselves, have created'.⁴⁴ Unipolar powers get around this problem by 'proclaiming adherence to rules while busily violating them'.⁴⁵ In contrast to Glaser, Finnemore argues that hypocrisy can have positive effects by reinforcing norms over the long term. In work co-authored with Henry Farrell, Finnemore further develops this reasoning, maintaining that 'hypocrisy is central to Washington's soft power' and that American hypocrisy is particularly effective because it stems from sincerity.⁴⁶ For Farrell and Finnemore, hypocrisy signifies a respect for the norms that are being violated.⁴⁷ If this respect

security/news/hungary-warns-pompeo-against-western-enormous-hypocrisy-toward-russia/; 'Erdogan accuses West of hypocrisy over Armenian genocide claims', *Ahval*, 24 April 2019, <https://ahvalnews.com/armenian-genocide/erdogan-accuses-west-hypocrisy-over-armenian-genocide-claims>; Burhanettin Duran, 'The West's hypocrisy toward Turkey', SETA, 7 April 2016, <https://www.setav.org/en/the-west-hypocrisy-toward-turkey/>; 'Turkey's Erdogan accuses West of hypocrisy over Paris attacks', euractiv.com, 13 Jan. 2015, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/news/turkey-s-erdogan-accuses-west-of-hypocrisy-over-paris-attacks/>; Shaun Walker, 'Putin condemns western hypocrisy as he confirms annexation of Crimea', *Guardian*, 18 March 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/18/crimea-putin-condemns-western-hypocrisy-annexation>.

⁴⁰ Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: organized hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 12.

⁴¹ Guido Möllering, 'Leaps and lapses of faith: exploring the relationship between trust and deception', in Brooke Harrington, ed., *Deception* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 137–53; John Mearsheimer, *Why leaders lie* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Nicholas Wheeler, *Trusting enemies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁴² Marcus Holmes and Keren Yarhi-Milo, 'The psychological logic of peace summits', *International Studies Quarterly* 61: 1, 2017, pp. 107–22; Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Who fights for reputation: the psychology of leaders in international conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

⁴³ Daryl Glaser, 'Does hypocrisy matter? The case of US foreign policy', *Review of International Studies* 32: 2, 2006, p. 252. See also Porter, *The false promise of liberal order*, pp. 76–9.

⁴⁴ Martha Finnemore, 'Legitimacy, hypocrisy, and the social structure of unipolarity', *World Politics* 61: 1, 2009, p. 61.

⁴⁵ Finnemore, 'Legitimacy, hypocrisy and the social structure', p. 61.

⁴⁶ Henry Farrell and Martha Finnemore, 'The end of hypocrisy: American foreign policy in the age of leaks', *Foreign Affairs* 92: 6, 2013, p. 23.

⁴⁷ Farrell and Finnemore, 'The end of hypocrisy'.

were not present, the US would simply flout international norms more openly and directly. In this way, while a great power cannot always uphold the norms it advocates (especially if these norms cut against its interests), hypocrisy provides a workaround on a specific issue without weakening the wider practice.

In IR scholarship, therefore, hypocrisy—to the limited extent that it has been scrutinized in a concerted way—tends to be associated with order maintenance and, when applied to studies of US foreign policy, is not usually assumed to be damaging. Outside IR, hypocrisy is seen differently, perhaps because it is often studied from the perspective of those on its receiving end.⁴⁸ Psychologists, for example, have documented that most people find hypocrisy abhorrent, even more so than lying and other forms of deception.⁴⁹ Philosophers have tried to understand why this is the case.⁵⁰ A major concern of these studies is whether an intent to deceive is a precondition for hypocrisy. By contrast, recent psychological experiments have focused more on the attribution of hypocrisy by others, bracketing out claims around intentionality and/or self-deception. For example, Mark Alicke and colleagues find that hypocrisy is ascribed especially in those cases where ‘actors whose behaviours contradict their own attitudes are critical of others who do the same’.⁵¹ Key to these studies is the finding that charges of hypocrisy resonate most strongly when associated with the air of superiority that hypocrites are perceived to evince. This linking of resentment around hypocrisy to powerful actors and their enactment of moral superiority is the primary point of differentiation between hypocrisy and other forms of deception.

These findings are useful for understanding why the LIO is so vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy. Liberalism does not, indeed *cannot*, deliver fully on the principles of egalitarian, meritocratic justice on which its legitimacy is premised. All orders contain a shortfall between principles and practices. But what is especially damaging to claims of liberal recognitional justice is that it is clear to many actors around the world that the LIO rests on illiberal historical legacies and still relies on illiberal practices and rationales for its maintenance today. At the same time, the LIO is charged with hypocrisy precisely because powerful liberal actors often lecture others for illiberal behaviours while engaging in similar practices themselves. This erosion of the LIO’s claims to recognitional justice, when set alongside changing power configurations, provides a fundamental challenge to its stability. Even though critics agree on little, including the specific form of

⁴⁸ Some studies outside IR support the association of hypocrisy with unipolar stability and the maintenance of US power. See e.g. Joris Lammers, Diederik A. Stapel and Adam D. Galinsky, ‘Power increases hypocrisy’, *Psychological Science* 21: 5, 2010, pp. 737–44.

⁴⁹ Jillian J. Jordan, Roseanna Sommers, Paul Bloom and David G. Rand, ‘Why do we hate hypocrites? Evidence for a theory of false signaling’, *Psychological Science* 28: 3, 2017, pp. 356–68; Jamie Barden, Derek D. Rucker and Richard. E. Petty, ‘Saying one thing and doing another: examining the impact of event order on hypocrisy judgments of others’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31: 11, 2005, pp. 1463–74.

⁵⁰ See e.g. Eva Feder Kittay, ‘On hypocrisy’, *Metaphilosophy* 13: 3–4, 1982, pp. 277–89; Judith N. Shklar, *Ordinary vices* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Dan Turner, ‘Hypocrisy’, *Metaphilosophy* 21: 3, 1990, pp. 262–9; Maureen Sie, ‘Moral hypocrisy and acting for reasons: how moralizing can invite self-deception’, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18: 2, 2015, p. 235.

⁵¹ Mark Alicke, Ellen Gordon and David Rose, ‘Hypocrisy: what counts?’ *Philosophical Psychology* 26: 5, 2013, pp. 673–701.

hypocrisy of which liberals are accused, they are united by a common concern with the hypocrisy of the LIO.

A house divided

The hypocrisy charge against the LIO is not just raised by a range of ‘outsiders’, from Russia to China, and from Turkey to Iran. It is also raised by many ‘insiders’, that is, those who should feel strong ownership of the LIO. The defeat of Donald Trump by Joe Biden in the 2020 US presidential election raised hopes that these ‘insider’ threats would abate. But simmering unrest in large segments of the US population does not appear to be dissipating. And there are few signs of a liberal reset elsewhere in the West. Indeed, each of the three constituent components of liberalism we highlighted above—individual rights, free markets and representative government—are, as we also highlighted, currently being challenged. A sizeable component of the contemporary challenge to liberalism, therefore, comes from within. For much of the IR literature on the LIO, it is this aspect of the current crisis that is particularly surprising.⁵² If most commentators accept some degree of contestation to the LIO from those outside its core states and institutions,⁵³ few see the LIO as likely to implode from within.

To an extent, the assumption about the resilience of the LIO’s recognition order is well founded. Over the past two centuries, liberalism has waxed as many other political ideologies have waned. In part, this is because liberalism appears to offer effective immunization against radical challenges from below. Liberal societies are unlikely to face radical forms of contestation for three reasons: first, because they ‘solve’ the social question (mass inequality and poverty) through a mixture of growth and redistribution; second, because they institutionalize points of contact between those with grievances and those in positions of authority, thereby promoting negotiation rather than confrontation; and third, because they delegitimize violent protest, regarding this as outside the bounds of legitimate contention.⁵⁴ It is not that violent protest does not take place in liberal societies—clearly it does, whether in the form of riots or sometimes violent campaigns by dissident groups, including the world’s longest ongoing armed struggle, the Naxalite rebellion in central and eastern India. But this violence is seen by the majority of citizens within liberal states as illegitimate next to regularized, unarmed forms of contention: marches, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, petitions and, not least, elections. In liberal societies, the state can be lobbied and put under pressure, but it cannot be directly confronted.⁵⁵

⁵² Ikenberry, ‘The end of liberal international order?’

⁵³ Quite often, it is worth noting, illiberal states argue that the LIO should be more rather than less liberal, through fairer representation (e.g. by reforming voting rights within forums of international administration) or more egalitarian redistributive practices (e.g. of COVID-19 vaccines). Once again, the hypocrisy of the LIO becomes grounds for contesting its legitimacy. For a related argument, see Edward Newman and Benjamin Zala, ‘Rising powers and order contestation’, *Third World Quarterly* 39: 5, 2018, pp. 871–88.

⁵⁴ Colin Beck, Mlada Bukovansky, Erica Chenoweth, George Lawson, Sharon Nepstad and Daniel Ritter, *On revolutions: unruly politics in the contemporary world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 194–5.

⁵⁵ George Lawson, *Anatomies of revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 227–8.

In the contemporary world, however, each of these rationales is being challenged. First, as has been well chronicled,⁵⁶ inequality is on the rise: 80 per cent of American households, 90 per cent of Italian households and 70 per cent of British households saw their incomes either stagnate or decline between 2009 and 2016.⁵⁷ Since 2008, Britain has experienced its longest period of decline in real incomes since continuous records began at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.⁵⁸ At the same time, intermediary associations between states and societies are being eroded, most forcefully by populists, but also by slower-moving processes: falling rates of participation in elections, the decline of 'traditional' parties and more. Finally, violent protest is becoming an increasingly common feature of liberal societies, most notably from the right, many of whom see the LIO and its surrogates (e.g. 'globalism') as an attempt to elevate the status of previously stigmatized groups (e.g. non-white immigrants), and erode the superior status afforded to 'traditional' constituencies.

Perhaps the most notable challenge from the right is populism,⁵⁹ a term that encompasses a range of linked movements: those headed by charismatic demagogues, such as Jair Bolsonaro and Rodrigo Duterte; political parties that mobilize through populist appeals, such as Fidesz in Hungary and Law and Justice in Poland; and grassroots movements that have mutated into parties, such as Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) in Turkey and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India. Charismatic populists rally publics with radical appeals focused on inequality, crime and race. The rhetoric of these demagogues pairs promises of law and order with economic prosperity, if only the public would turn away from the false promises of liberalism. In this vision, the LIO is the Trojan horse of a radical movement that will destroy what little remains of 'traditional' society. This analysis is closely related to the championing of 'illiberal democracy' by populist parties, perhaps most successfully Fidesz, which marries conservative nativism with nationalist public policies, while scapegoating those held to be responsible for the 'polluting' of society: Muslims, liberal elites and leftists. Finally, grassroots movements in Turkey, India and elsewhere have morphed into successful political parties able to transform liberal polities into illiberal orders in ways that would have been inconceivable a decade or two ago.⁶⁰

Illiberal populist challenges are, therefore, multiple in form and wide-ranging in scope. They are, perhaps, at their strongest when durable movements combine

⁵⁶ See e.g. Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the twenty-first century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Anthony B. Atkinson, *Inequality: what can be done* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Branko Milanovic, *Global inequality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); Martin, *The meddlers*.

⁵⁷ Manuel Muñiz, 'Populism and the need for a new social contract', in Henning Meyer, ed., *Understanding the populist revolt* (Brussels: Social Europe, 2017), pp. 10–13.

⁵⁸ John Lanchester, *Reality and other stories* (Harlow: Faber, 2020).

⁵⁹ Populism is not, of course, limited to right-wing movements. Nor is it a straightforward term to use. Given that the main focus of our attention in this article lies elsewhere, we leave the nuances of this debate to others. See e.g. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul A. Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo and Pierre Ostiguy, eds, *The Oxford handbook of populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). The Global Populisms website hosts a range of resources on the broader movement: <https://fsi.stanford.edu/global-populisms/global-populism-about>.

⁶⁰ Beck et al., *On revolutions*, pp. 203–4.

with effective leaderships to seize power, electorally or otherwise.⁶¹ All share a capacity to act as a means of mobilizing claims around recognitional justice. And all do so by charging liberalism with hypocrisy. Liberal politics can either accommodate recognition grievances based on beliefs in the claimed distinctiveness—and superiority—of certain groups (racial, religious, ethnic etc.), or they can restrict the political expression of these demands. Neither is a liberal option. In both cases, liberal states are pushed into illiberal terrain, adding weight to the hypocrisy charge.

The 'insider' challenge from the right is matched by one from the left, in particular the emergence of groups that blend social movement techniques with revolutionary rhetoric. These groups are mobilized, in large part, by critiques of liberal claims to recognitional justice. Some of these groups have been radicalized by institutional forms of racism—Black Lives Matter provides an obvious example. Others, like Extinction Rebellion, are motivated by the systemic nature of the climate crisis, which, it is argued, requires more radical action than the LIO can countenance. Others trace their origins to the anti-austerity protests that followed the global financial crisis of 2007–2008—here liberalism is seen not just as inadequate, but as ground zero for the crisis. For many on the radical left, corporations have captured the liberal governance apparatus, both domestically and internationally, making liberalism appear to be a natural force rather than a policy practice, and a realm of depoliticized technical expertise rather than a site of political contestation.⁶²

These critiques are not new. Indeed, they lay at the heart of nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialist critiques of liberalism. It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, to see some contemporary radicals on the left turning back to socialism as at least rhetorical ballast for their movements. One difference between these groups and older socialist movements can be found in the formers' embrace of horizontal forms of participation and deliberation, including the occupation of squares and the establishing of public assemblies and protest camps.⁶³ These are, as Eric Selbin nicely puts it, 'we are here' movements.⁶⁴ 'We are here' movements make clear that liberalism has not made, and cannot make, good on its promises of delivering justice along any of the axes outlined in this special section: recognitional, institutional, distributive, intergenerational, historical and epistemic. Rather, they aim to forge cross-sectional alliances that mobilize through two or more of these claims.

Some contemporary movements, therefore, traverse the line between social movements and revolutionary politics. This link has been evident for some time. It can be found in the radical flanks of movements concerned with recognition,

⁶¹ Beck et al., *On revolutions*, pp. 204–5.

⁶² Greta Krippner, *Capitalizing on crisis: the political origins of the rise of finance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

⁶³ Indeed, at root, these 'prefigurative' strategies are more closely associated with anarchist than socialist movements. On this, see Paul Raekstad, 'Revolutionary practice and prefigurative politics: a clarification and defense', *Constellations* 25, 2018, pp. 359–72.

⁶⁴ Eric Selbin, 'Revolutions', in Mlada Bukovansky, Edward Keene, Christian Reus-Smit and Maja Spanu, eds, *The Oxford handbook of history and international relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2023).

redistribution and representation, perhaps best articulated by the global movement that shook the world, however temporarily, in 1968.⁶⁵ It can also be found in post-Second World War ‘Third World’ projects for a more just international order prioritizing non-domination,⁶⁶ as well as in strains of the global justice movement of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.⁶⁷ It takes explicit expression in the revolutionary challenge presented by the Zapatistas, who have contested power in the Chiapas region of Mexico since the mid-1990s, and also in the three self-governing enclaves that make up the Rojava region of northern Syria.⁶⁸ This latter example contains a particularly significant challenge for liberalism in its blending of egalitarian justice claims with cooperative forms of production and exchange. This fusion speaks to a complex ecology in which liberalism is one among many ways of closing the gap between principles and practices, and better aligning claims around order and justice.

These are not easy challenges for the LIO to deal with. To some degree, groups contesting the liberal recognitional order are mobilizing through liberal justice claims: to rights, freedom, epistemic pluralism and so on. Yet their struggles are often energized by the failure of liberalism to deliver these claims, whether as a project embedded in particular states and international institutions, or as a global operating system. If liberalism is unable to deal effectively with global harms (high levels of inequality, the climate crisis, excessive corporate power, the erosion of democracy and more) and, indeed, is complicit in at least some of them, then it follows that the position of the LIO as a global code cannot be sustained. At the same time, because the principles and, sometimes, the practices of these movements (such as non-violent mass demonstrations) overlap with liberalism, members of the LIO have difficulty rejecting them out of hand, at least not without—again—slipping into illiberalism. Once again, the LIO becomes subject to charges of hypocrisy that undercut its claims to recognitional justice. There is no easy way out of this bind.

The hypocrisy charge and the future of the LIO

It is sometimes forgotten, including by liberals, that liberalism and revolution were born under the same sign, as twins of the radical Enlightenment. From the vantage-point of the contemporary world, it can be difficult to recall just how radical the package of individual rights, free markets and constitutionalism was two centuries ago. During the second half of the nineteenth century, revolution and liberalism began to move apart—the increasing hold of socialism and anarchism ‘othered’ liberal revolution, seeing it as, at best, ameliorative and, at worst, capitulatory. During the twentieth century, this othering was hardened

⁶⁵ Jeremy Suri, *The global revolutions of 1968* (New York: Norton, 2007).

⁶⁶ Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after empire: the rise and fall of self-determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁶⁷ Donatella Della Porta, ed., *The global justice movement* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

⁶⁸ Thomas Schmidinger, *Rojava: revolution, war, and the future of Syria's Kurds* (London: Pluto, 2018); Huseyin Rasit and Alexander Kolokotronis, ‘Decentralist vanguards: women’s autonomous power and left convergence in Rojava’, *Globalizations* 17: 5, 2020, pp. 869–83.

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by revolutionary anti-colonial thinkers, who fused anti-imperialism, anti-racism, socialism and nationalism with forms of federalism. In the twenty-first century, the gap between liberalism and revolution has once again closed as unarmed, mass people-power movements have become increasingly prominent. In many ways, therefore, it could be argued that the world's most revolutionary force over the past two centuries has been liberalism itself. Not only is liberalism embedded in many states around the world, it also functions as a kind of common sense through which international administration works. In this sense, there is a potent strand of revolutionary liberalism that functions as a global project. The heart of the LIO strikes a radical beat.⁶⁹

However, as the discussion in the previous section outlined, many radical currents in the contemporary world, both left and right, see liberalism as, at best, an inadequate response to contemporary crisis or, at worst, the cause of it. For these critics, liberalism is a hypocritical recognition order, one that either safeguards existing hierarchies or cannot meet contemporary challenges without itself becoming illiberal. In both cases, hypocrisy serves as a rallying call for the recognition of injustice. This suggests that the specifically liberal part of the LIO is the problem rather than the solution to its current dilemmas. As discussed above, in straightforwardly hierarchical orders there are no promises of equality and, as a result, no charges of hypocrisy on this basis. The LIO works differently. Because it promises meritocracy based on 'rational' standards, it generates resentment when these standards are not met, much more so than orders that do not make equivalent promises. In this sense, the LIO is its own gravedigger. In articulating this hypocrisy charge and mobilizing on the basis of it, critics are not just helping to weaken the LIO, but are also playing their part in the formation of international orders that are likely to be more explicitly hierarchical. Here there may be a cautionary case to be made: be careful what you wish for.

How likely is it that the hypocrisy charge levelled against the LIO will hasten its demise? To some extent, we have been here before. The expansion of the LIO has always featured forms of contestation around justice claims, whether reformist, as in those states, international organizations and other actors that sought to strengthen its project by better aligning promise and practice, or more radical, as in attempts to generate non-liberal international orders: socialist, fascist, Islamist and more. Perhaps the last time international order projects were faced with a similarly generalized crisis was during the latter stages of the period between the two world wars. Yet the contemporary world is not like that of the 1930s, when imperialism was legitimate (and 'normal'), great power war was seen as a rational policy option and ideological differences were acute. Despite the populist surge of recent years and the increasing assertiveness of autocratic states, the ideological bandwidth of states in the contemporary world is relatively narrow, nuclear weapons appear to have made systemic great power war untenable, and formal imperialism is illegiti-

⁶⁹ George Lawson, 'Revolutionary generosity', *International Politics Reviews* 9: 1, 2021, pp. 38–9; Beck et al., *On revolutions*, p. 191.

mate.⁷⁰ Most obviously, there are no states in the contemporary world seeking to generate a radically new economic system—we're all capitalists now. Rather, competition in the contemporary world is largely oriented around which form of governance—liberal, social democratic, authoritarian of various hues—best provides the conditions under which capitalist accumulation thrives. This logic is also present, albeit to a lesser extent, among today's insurgent democratic socialists, who, even if they win elections, are likely to temper capitalist excess through increased regulation and redistribution, democratize capitalism through forms of public control, and link it more closely to emerging technologies and green politics. As a result, these movements have stirred, but not shaken, liberal states.

Historical comparisons, therefore, only take us so far. In many ways, the contemporary world is a novel formation: a multiscale tapestry of the global, the transnational, the regional, the national and the local. In this setting, it is unsurprising that, for many publics around the world, the idea of a singular LIO looks like a proxy for a world constructed by, through and for western power. Here, attempts to reform liberalism serve mainly to rekindle recognition struggles that speak to histories of stigmatization. To these recognition struggles can be added those within the West where some publics feel, not without justification, either forgotten or left behind by the LIO. This pincer movement links those who see liberalism as a means of sustaining western inequality with those who see it as an attempt to end these inequalities.⁷¹ Despite their different starting-points and contradictory analyses, critics outside and inside the core of the LIO are united by a shared opposition to liberalism. And this, in turn, is generating illiberal dynamics within liberal states.

Two conclusions follow from this analysis. First, the LIO cannot solve its internal contradictions. The problem is not that these are more numerous, or even more obvious, in the contemporary world than they were before. It's simply that they matter more because configurations of global power, both material and social, have changed. Many states and publics have long been aware of liberal hypocrisy. It does not surprise them that so many Afghans who fought on the side of liberalism have been abandoned to the Taliban, or that so many migrants who attempt to reach liberal states die on their borders or are removed to sites far away from liberal societies, from Rwanda to Nauru. This history has been hiding in plain sight. Until relatively recently, however, these grievances existed within a set of claims around recognitional justice that saw them as, at best, marginal. In the contemporary world, these grievances have become more acute, in relation to both how liberal states see themselves and how others see liberal states. This presents a major challenge to claims around liberal recognitional justice, one that erodes the centrality of the LIO as a global recognition order. It may be that the LIO can ameliorate these concerns—as we have discussed, liberal societies have often been adept at finding fixes for their internal contradictions and reforming

⁷⁰ Barry Buzan and George Lawson, 'Capitalism and the emerging world order', *International Affairs* 90: 1, 2014, pp. 71–91.

⁷¹ Adler-Nissen and Zarakol, 'Struggles for recognition'.

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their way out of crises. It is possible that the United States will join the ICC and liberal states will stop cosyng up to autocratic regimes. It is also possible that they will introduce campaigns to decrease inequality, while strengthening democratic governance and individual rights.⁷² But it would be risky to bet on these outcomes.

Second, illiberal alternatives have also been hiding in plain sight. Authoritarian nationalists are just as interconnected as liberal internationalists. Populism is a transnational movement, as was socialism and, to a lesser extent, fascism. Transnational ties help to forge solidarities between white supremacists, evangelical Christians, Islamist revolutionaries, capitalist oligarchs, gun lobbyists, narcotrafickers and more. Over the past two centuries, many challengers to liberalism have also sought to generate international orders. So it is today. Over years to come, the LIO will not be the only, or even the dominant, recognition order around the world. Rather, it will compete as one among many in a global field of struggles around recognitional justice.⁷³ Contestation over justice claims is here to stay.

⁷² Many thanks to a peer reviewer for emphasizing this point.

⁷³ See also Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The making of global international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 261–84.