

Let's talk about the *interregnum*: Gramsci and the crisis of the Liberal World Order



This is the Original pre-review version of a manuscript that has been accepted for publication in International Affairs (forthcoming 2020) - <https://academic.oup.com/ia>.

Please do not cite

Milan Babic

Email: m.babic@uva.nl

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9179-8120>,

Twitter: [@mbabic_1](https://twitter.com/mbabic_1)

CORPNET | corpnet.uva.nl

Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) | aissr.uva.nl

Nieuwe Achtergracht 166 | 1018 WV Amsterdam | The Netherlands

Let's talk about the *interregnum*: Gramsci and the crisis of the Liberal World Order

Abstract

The liberal international order (LIO) is in crisis. Numerous publications, debates and events have made it time and again clear that we are in the midst of a grand transformation of world order. While most contributions focus either on what is slowly dying (the LIO) or what might come next (China, multipolarity, chaos?), there is less analytical engagement with what lies in between those two phases of world order. Under the assumption that this period could last years or even decades, a set of analytical tools to understand this *interregnum* is urgently needed. This paper proposes an analytical framework that builds on Gramscian crisis concepts that will help understanding the current crisis of the LIO in a more systematic way. It adds to a gap in the literature on changing world order by elaborating three Gramsci-inspired crisis characteristics - processuality, organicity and morbidity - that sketch the current crisis landscape in a systematic way. Building on this framework, the paper suggests different empirical entry points to the study of the crisis of the LIO and calls for a research agenda that takes this crisis seriously as a distinct period of changing world orders.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Jouke Huijzer, Danny DeRock and two anonymous reviewers for constructive comments on the manuscript. This research has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement number 638946).

Keywords: Gramsci; international political economy; liberal international order; crisis; world order

1. Introduction

The Liberal International Order (LIO) is in crisis. The near-collapse of the global financial system in 2008; the emergence of 'statist' economies (especially the BRIC(S)-states) as a counter-model; the rise of right-wing movements across Europe and the US since the crisis; the Brexit-Vote and Trump's election in 2016 are just the most obvious signs. All those events question different pillars of the LIO like institutions of global governance, economic openness or multilateral trade and security cooperation¹. There is little disagreement among scholars and commentators that the LIO faces the greatest and deepest challenge since its postwar establishment². Two core questions accompany this diagnosis: Is there a possibility of 'renewal and reorganization'³ to save the LIO into the future? And: What comes next? Authors that engage with the first question usually tend to accentuate the merits of the LIO and its role in building and maintaining a relatively stable, cooperative and prosperous order⁴. The second question is mostly concerned with the rise of China as a rivaling superpower challenging US hegemony⁵. Each of these questions has a specific time perspective: while the first looks rather into the past and history of the LIO to draw conclusions about its fitness for present challenges, the second one embraces a clear future-oriented perspective. Although both perspectives ask key questions with regards to the past and future of world order, there is an analytical blind spot in the discussions about the LIO: we lack an analysis of *the nature of the crisis itself* as it unfolds. By that I mean a comprehensive account that brings together the various different strings and dimensions of a crisis of world order which amount to more than the sum of its parts. How can we describe and analyse the crisis *as a crisis* and not only as the period between what is eroding (the LIO) and what will emerge instead (a future world order)? This paper proposes an answer by

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

2 Ikenberry, 'The end of liberal international order?'; Nana de Graaff and Bastiaan van Apeldoorn, 'US-China relations and the liberal world order: contending elites, colliding visions?', *International Affairs* 94:1, January 2018, pp. 113-131; Richard Haass, *A world in disarray: American foreign policy and the crisis of the old order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017); Constance Duncombe and Tim Dunne, 'After liberal world order', *International Affairs* 94:1, January 2018, pp. 25-42; John Peterson, 'Present at the Destruction? The Liberal Order in the Trump Era', *The International Spectator*, 53:1, 2018, pp. 28-44; Inderjeet Parmar, 'The US led liberal international order is in crisis', *OUP Blog*, January 2018; Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane, 'The Liberal Order is Rigged', *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2017.

3 G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The origins, crisis and transformation of the American world order* (Princeton: University Press, 2011).

4 Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*; Tim Dunne and Trine Flockhart, eds., *Liberal world orders* (Oxford: University Press, 2014).

5 Astrid H. Nordin and Mikael Weissmann, 'Will Trump make China great again? The belt and road initiative and international order', *International Affairs* 94:2, March 2018, pp. 231-249; Bentley B. Allan, Srdjan Vucetic and Ted Hopf, 'The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China's Hegemonic Prospects', *International Organization* 72:4, Fall 2018, pp. 839-869; Shaun Breslin, 'Global Reordering and China's Rise: Adoption, Adaptation and Reform', *The International Spectator* 53:1, 2018, pp. 57-75.

outlining an analytical framework drawing on three Gramscian crisis concepts - processuality, organicity and morbidity. I argue that these elements capture conceptually three dimensions that are crucial to understand the crisis of the LIO comprehensively - the global political economy (macro), the state-level (meso) and societal (micro) dimensions. This framework does not itself provide an overarching synthesizing analysis of the crisis, but rather proposes a research program that can help to overcome the isolated analyses of various crisis dimensions for the benefits of an encompassing framework.

The starting point for the importance of a comprehensive crisis analysis is the observation that the time horizon of the crisis is long-term: It is at least the financial crisis of 2008 that many observers see as the starting point for a decade of global turbulences, culminating in the election of Donald Trump⁶. Given that the crisis of the LIO has its beginning point somewhere around the Great Recession and what followed, it is pivotal to provide an interpretative framework to understand the crisis better as a distinct and decisive time period for world affairs. If we furthermore think about when the advent of a new, hegemonically stable world order would be realistic, this time-span of the crisis grows further. Decades could pass until this new equilibrium is found⁷. In the meantime, significant global processes are taking place: Brexit is weakening the role of the EU in global affairs; the US administration is eroding the legitimacy of the WTO and other global institutions possibly lastingly; China's role is being re-defined under Xi Jinping; many countries experience a right-wing populist backlash that seems to be more than a temporary episode and states like Russia are re-discovering territorial gains as means of geopolitical competition. Analysing these issues seriously only from a backwards-or future-oriented perspective misses their impact on present power relations and the crisis we live in. In order to make educated guesses about the future of world order, a better understanding and analysis of its current crisis is crucial.

While there is hence enough reason to study the crisis of the LIO for itself, it also proves to be particularly difficult: fundamental crises are often perceived as 'Black Swan' events that challenge well-established modes of thinking and generalizing and often even render them obsolete - the crisis appears as the manifestation of historical randomness⁸. The result is that severe politico-economic crises provoke perplexity and a flood of alternative explanations about what went wrong and how to fix it. Crises are thus often interpreted from either 'old' and vanishing analytical frameworks or from new perspectives that arise out of the old's crisis. This means that both perspectives are therefore *asynchronous* to the event

6 Adam Tooze, *Crashed: How a decade of financial crises changed the world* (New York: Viking, 2018).

7 Wolfgang Streeck, 'The Post-Capitalist Interregnum', *Juncture* 23:2, 2016, pp. 68-77.

8 Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The black swan: The impact of the highly improbable* [2nd edition] (New York: Random House, 2010).

they want to describe. I argue that a Gramsci-inspired framework offers tools to overcome this analytical problem. By analysing the crisis as a distinct phase of instability and uncertainty (and not 'only' as a transition between two stable periods) we are able to 'zoom in' on the particularity and idiosyncrasy of the crisis of the LIO. With Gramsci, we are able to think through the organic multidimensionality of a crisis and are given words and concepts to describe this complexity in an appropriate way as the empirical entry points described in this paper will show. This allows for establishing a language and a framework to describe and analyse the *crisis* of the LIO instead of the LIO itself or its possible future.

In the following, I outline the different dimensions of the LIO that can be assessed empirically and argue for a Gramsci-centered analytical framework. In the main part of the article, I apply the different Gramscian crisis characteristics to the different levels of the LIO and delineate empirical entry points for their analysis. I end with an evaluation and call for a research program that takes the crisis of the LIO analytically serious.

2. Understanding the politics of the *interregnum*: the LIO and Gramsci

The material and ideational sources of the multi-level LIO

Seeking to study the crisis of the LIO means first to acknowledge that a (liberal) world order exists and that this order is a significant constraining and enabling factor for international politics. Despite criticisms about the illiberal and 'imagined' characteristics of the LIO⁹ or its alleged irrelevance for explaining policy outcomes during the last decades¹⁰, most mainstream and critical theoretical perspectives agree on the existence and relevance of some sort of liberal, American-led international order. In this paper, I will work with a broad definition of the LIO, bringing together its 'material' and ideational aspects. The LIO, hence, consists of an institutional structure that is being supported and legitimated by an ideational underpinning.

On the material side there are international institutions like the World Bank or the IMF, multilateral cooperation in different policy fields, a specific market-based economic model and also an implicit and often explicit ranking order of state power, leadership and responsibility with the US at the top of this ranking. This material structure is understood as flowing from, or at least being grounded in, a broader 'set of ideas, principles and political agendas for organizing and reforming international order'¹¹ which is liberal institutionalism. G.

9 Patrick Porter, 'A World Imagined: Nostalgia and Liberal Order', *Cato Policy Analysis* No. 843, June 2018.

10 Graham Allison, 'The Myth of the Liberal Order', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018.

11 Ikenberry, 'The end of liberal international order?', p.9.

John Ikenberry summarizes liberal institutionalism as consisting of five 'convictions'¹²: economic openness, rule-based international relations, security cooperation, openness to reform and change and solidarity centered around a desirable model of liberal democracy. Both, the material, institutionalized reality and the underlying ideological rationale together embody the LIO as it was developed in the postwar North-Atlantic sphere and, after the Cold War, became the hegemonic governing principle of international relations. Not all of those factors are located on the same analytical level: the role of American leadership and hegemony is a macro-level phenomenon that can hardly be captured in a single material or ideational entity. Other factors like the embrace of a certain type of market-based economy or liberal democracy are more state-level characteristics that are part of the LIO, but not exclusively defined through it. Furthermore, there are also characteristics that are rather societal and cultural phenomena like a Western identity built around a 'civic culture'¹³ that bolsters the ideational core of the LIO. To account for these analytical differences, I heuristically distinguish between different levels of the analysis that the subsequent Gramscian framework entails: the global political economy that captures the structural changes and long-term developments of the global economy and American hegemony in it. The state-level analysis focuses on the dynamics between national developments (especially national populism) and the international sphere. The society-level analysis finally looks at the underlying societal changes that undermine ideational support for the LIO. For each of those analytical levels, I highlight a particular characteristic of a Gramscian crisis understanding that is laid out below. As will become clear in the following, a Gramscian framework addresses each of those analytical levels in a specific way and helps to locate the various faces of the crisis where they can be empirically assessed. Treating the crisis symptoms of the LIO as taking place on only one analytical level can lead to diagnoses that are empirically difficult to access such as a 'crisis of authority' or 'crisis of social purpose'¹⁴. An analytically more nuanced framework, I argue, opens up the possibility for empirically fruitful work on the crisis.

¹² Ikenberry, 'The end of liberal international order?', p. 11.

¹³ Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, 'The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order', *Review of International Studies* 25:2, April 1999, pp. 179-196.

¹⁴ Ikenberry, 'The end of liberal international order?', p.10.

Why Gramsci? Understanding transitions of world order

There are several arguments for applying Gramsci to describe the deep crisis of the LIO. From a historical perspective, it can be argued that Gramsci described a similar crisis of global proportions during his lifetime as we face today. The Prison Notebooks represent a 'running commentary'¹⁵ on the crisis of Liberalism and the Italian state in a period of sliding from the First World War into fascism. Although today's world is different, we can draw insights on the specific crisis dynamics that Gramsci describes throughout his work. What is particularly interesting is that the 1920s and 30s - Gramsci's intellectually active time - constitute the last grand transition period to a stable world order. This transition period was a crisis-ridden, chaotic and 'morbid' phase that resulted in the outbreak of the Second World War before an American-led postwar LIO was established. The potential beginning demise of this order in the early 21st century provides a relevant 'testing field' for the concepts developed in the last grand transitional crisis of world order.

From a disciplinary perspective, Gramscian concepts already have a long-standing tradition in International Relations (IR) and International Political Economy (IPE) research¹⁶ and contributed to a better and more dynamic understanding of changing world order¹⁷. Although this article does not engage in using existing neo-Gramscian concepts, it stands in a tradition of applying specific Gramscian concepts and analysing techniques to the inter-and transnational political economy. As large parts of this body of research have shown, it is possible to understand change and continuity in global affairs in a more 'organic' way that mainstream IR and IPE research does by drawing on insights from political *and* economic factors constituting the crisis¹⁸. Grasping the crisis from a perspective that emphasizes contestation and contradiction within both of these realms makes it possible to understand dis-order in a time of crisis. Furthermore, neo-Gramscian analyses have shown some of the most compelling efforts of integrating the role of ideational factors in the analysis of the contemporary crisis of hegemony and world order¹⁹.

Finally, Gramscian concepts offer a theoretical and analytical flexibility to understand *ongoing* change in world order. While analytical perspectives that build on grand theories

15 James Martin, 'Morbid Symptoms: Gramsci and the Crisis of Liberalism', in Mark McNally, ed., *Antonio Gramsci* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 34-54.

16 Robert W. Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders', *Millennium* 10:2, 1981 pp. 125-155; Robert W. Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations', *Millennium* 12:2, 1983, pp. 162-175; Andreas Bieler and Adam D. Morton, 'A Critical Theory Route to Hegemony, World Order and Historical Change', *Capital&Class* 28:1, 03/2004, pp. 85-113; Henk Overbeek, 'Transnational Historical Materialism', in: Ronan Palan, ed., *Global political economy: Contemporary theories* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.168-183.

17 Robert W. Cox and Timothy Sinclair, *Approaches to world order* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996).

18 James Martin, 'Hegemony and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Gramsci', *History of the Human Sciences* 10:1, 02/1997, pp. 37-56.

19 Allen, Vucetic and Hopf, 'The Distribution of Identity'.

often have problems to implement change - or even the obliteration - of world order, a Gramscian approach offers some much-needed flexibility. Gramsci himself acted more as a live-observer of ongoing events than as a theoretician of past events. His analytical value thus lies maybe less in a description of world order as in the analysis of world order *transitions*, which are more difficult to conceptualize compared to more static phases of existing orders. Taking this position as observers within the crisis, we are better able to access its developments and (sometimes contradictory) mutations instead of engaging in stylized ex-post explanations about its roots and causes. In this sense, a Gramscian perspective is a less methodologically streamlined, but therefore analytically adequate answer to the difficulties of pinning down the current crisis of the LIO.

Processuality, Organicity, Morbidity

While themes like hegemony or pedagogy are well-known sites of Gramsci's thinking, crisis is a not really thoroughly theorized 'background concept' in Gramsci-inspired research. This might be due to the fact that, although often assumed, Gramsci himself did not develop a full-fledged crisis theory, but rather analysed different types of crises he encountered during his lifetime such as a crisis of authority, of civil society or organic crises²⁰. Gramsci's thinking is thus not crisis-centered, but rather *crisis-driven* as it evolves through many crises of the Italian state and the international sphere during the turbulent 1920s and 30s. The following three characteristics from this crisis-driven thinking can help us to better analyse the current crisis of the LIO. I locate each of those characteristics on a different analytical level of abstraction: processuality at the global political economy, organicity at the state, and morbidity at the societal level. This threefold division structures the subsequent analytical framework and hence helps us to identify empirically accessible moments of the crisis of the LIO.

A first and most fundamental point is that Gramsci understood crises not as static 'events' that happen, but as processes²¹. Two aspects of this process-understanding are crucial. First: crises are not, as widespread ideas suggest, framed as external shocks or exogenous events that break into a social order. Crises have in this sense a 'history' since they originate in contradictions or tensions in the old, dying social order. For Gramsci, those were mainly contradictions that capitalism itself created. Crises hence lose partly their exogenous and cryptic character, as their sources are traceable and analysable, at least to a certain extent. Second, if crises are not reducible to single, exogenous events, they represent more than just a single moment separating the old from the new order. They are rather long,

20 See: Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the prison notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

21 Michele Filippini, *Using Gramsci: A new approach* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), p. 88.

multidimensional processes of economic and political insecurity that can last decades²².

They are hence transformative social processes that have a 'life'. Studying this life of a crisis requires an analytical perspective that is broad enough to understand where a crisis comes from and how it is developing as we speak. Processuality hence gives room to develop an analytical language and narratives that acknowledge the distinctiveness of the crisis as a period of societal and political insecurity. In this paper, processuality is understood as a crisis feature on the macro-level of the global political economy.

The second point is that we can distinguish broadly between what Gramsci describes as 'conjunctural' and 'organic' crises²³. Some crises that appear in daily political life can be of a less fundamental nature and not systemically relevant - they come and go conjuncturally. Organic crises however challenge the very fundamentals on which social orders are built. They produce the 'morbid symptoms' that disrupt everyday political and economic life and hence, in the long run, destroy old societal orders and power relations. For Gramsci, organic crises are rooted in an alienation of the masses from their political representation, the mismatch between 'represented and representatives'²⁴. This in turn leads to a 'crisis of authority'²⁵ that leaves an ideological void and thus the possibility for different crisis solutions. The decisive feature of an organic crisis is that it cannot be solved through the tools and mechanisms of the old order - and most certainly not through the old actors that become 'mummified and anachronistic'²⁶. This can help us in understanding the case of the LIO. While there are always conjunctural crises like the international disagreements about the practiced unilateralism in the Bush administration's war on terror, organic crises run deeper. Their unique feature is that they question the fundamentals of the order itself instead of practical questions of its governance. The alienation of representatives and represented can here be translated into a mismatch between the normative 'pillars' of the LIO and the shifting preferences of the constituents of this order, namely the electorates in the nation states that make up this world order. If what a world order consists of - e.g. economic openness or security cooperation - is being regularly and severely deprecated at the ballot box and in everyday politics, we can speak of a severe or organic crisis of this world order. This feature of the crisis is treated here as a meso-phenomenon, connecting national and international developments over time.

The third point relates to what Gramsci describes as 'morbid symptoms'. This term is part of his famous definition of crisis of authority:

22 Stuart Hall, *The hard road to renewal* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 167.

23 J.J. Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge guidebook to Gramsci's prison notebooks* (London/New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 181.

24 Gramsci, *The prison notebooks*, p. 210.

25 Gramsci, *The prison notebooks*, p. 210.

26 Gramsci, *The prison notebooks*, p. 211.

'The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear'²⁷

The morbidity of the 'symptoms' we see stems from the impression that they are outgrowths of the 'dying' order (Martin 2015). The symptoms that Gramsci could observe during his lifetime were e.g. sudden political violence; outbreak and manifestation of mass discontent; the rise and acceptance of extreme political positions and their respective leaders; shifts in international relations of unprecedented dimensions or the sudden depletion of once strong institutions. Those symptoms are morbid because they show that the existing order suffers from serious problems which are unlikely to be solved within the limits of the old framework. At the same time, a new, hegemonically stable order does not seem to be on the rise, ready to supplant the old one. This crisis period is then shaped by the morbidities that cannot be managed but are at the same time not representing a viable alternative for the future. If we translate this to questions of world order, the rise of political leaders that undermine existing institutions and rules; the open hostility towards values of multilateral cooperation; the emptying of core principles like democratic solidarity and so on represent moments of morbidity that cannot be captured by the logic of the LIO itself. They represent problematic developments that disturb international order without offering a new stable equilibrium that could replace the old order. In the framework presented in this paper it is an empirical and theoretical task to trace the sources of these mobilities within the changing cultural and societal dynamics that take place on a societal level. Those changes manifest themselves in the gradual corrosion of values and attitudes (passively or actively) supporting the LIO that feed the morbidities undermining the LIO.

3. Studying the crisis of the LIO: Empirical entry points

The sketched three elements of a crisis analysis can serve as analytical tools to understand the crisis of the LIO from a *crisis-centered* perspective. The idea is not to give an account of the crisis itself, but to offer a coherent approach to studying it. After all, the complexity and durability of the current crisis of world order run too deep to be able to pinpoint it to one crisis explanation. But, taking the crisis seriously, we need analytical tools and perspectives to be able to empirically and analytically assess the crisis, understand its morbidities and categorize them appropriately. We can think of the sketched Gramscian framework hence not as an explanatory, but more as an exploratory one in the sense of Stuart Hall's use of Gramscian thought:

²⁷ Gramsci, The prison notebooks, p. 276.

'I do not claim that, in any simple way, Gramsci 'has the answers' or 'holds the key' to our present troubles. I do believe that we must 'think' our problems in a Gramscian way - which is different'²⁸

This paper is hence not an attempt to translate Gramsci into 21st century world order discussions, but to show how thinking in a Gramscian way can offer us the outlines and tools to understand the crisis of the LIO as a distinct, analytically idiosyncratic period rather than 'only' a transitional phenomenon between two world orders. As the excellent contribution by Rune Møller Stahl²⁹ recently illustrated, Gramscian thought seems to be getting more traction in scholarly work at a time when the crisis-ridden decade since 2008 is slowly morphing into an interregnum that could last decades. This paper is hence a contribution to this emerging body of analyses that seek to understand the interregnum better from an analytical perspective.

The following split of the framework into three parts follows the logic of going from the global political economy level (the processuality of the crisis) to the state (organicity) and finally the societal level (morbidity) of analysis. All three perspectives are thus lenses to the crisis of world order that can be analytically, but not factually, separated. This means that empirical analyses should use the different angles as analytical entry points, but a full-fledged crisis analysis needs to incorporate all three of the levels described here. I will put the focus of the following outline on the meso-level as this offers to most fruitful way to empirically engage with the crisis of the LIO.

Global political economy: Studying processes

Describing the crisis of the LIO as a process might be counterintuitive to a general tendency of framing certain events - Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, the 'trade war' with China - as crucial crisis moments. As we can learn from Gramsci, however, crises of social formations usually have their origin in the deep layers of the well-functioning 'old' order and grow in their depth over time until they culminate in specific events that represent only the famous tip of the iceberg. Those events themselves are however not the crisis as such: Between two events that are very popular references of the crisis of the American-led world order - the financial crisis of 2008 and Trumps election in 2016 - there are eight years of global changes and turbulence that substantively changed the attractiveness and resilience of the LIO. Reducing the crisis to events does not capture this incremental build-up of a process that is about to change the coordinates of the world order lastingly.

²⁸ Hall, *The hard road to renewal*, p. 161.

²⁹ Rune Møller Stahl, 'Ruling the Interregnum: Politics and Ideology in Nonhegemonic Times', *Politics & Society*, 2019, pp. 1-28.

In this sense, the crisis of the LIO has its roots in the operating principles of American postwar hegemony. While it would exceed the scope of this paper to delineate all of them, there is a range of contradictions and contestations that accompany American leadership of the LIO³⁰: the fickle monetary hegemony of the US³¹, the contestation of American military and security politics after 9/11³², the rise of the BRIC(S) and other emerging economies under the auspices of American hegemony, signaling the dawn of multipolarity³³, the opening and subsequent steady growth of China within the LIO, finally becoming the prime challenger for US hegemony³⁴ are just some of those core processes. They all originated in the 'old' order and developed into main challenges for the sustainability of the LIO over time. A prime task for the process-perspective is thus to 'connect the dots' of crisis events and phases into a consistent narrative. This narrative-building is per definition a multi-disciplinary and multi-perspective undertaking. Comparative efforts bringing together the financial and political crises since 2008³⁵ can be one way of integrating varying spatial, temporal and political dynamics into a broader analytical framework. As Tooze³⁶ impressively shows, it is possible to come up with a crisis narrative spanning the whole decade since 2008 that integrates different events and sub-processes of global significance into a processual understanding of how the crisis of the LIO unfolds today.

A first good empirical entry point for studying the processuality of the crisis is the role of finance and financialization in general and the sequence of financial crises that are unsettling the global economy since 2008 in specific. The financial sector played a key role for the implementation of neoliberal globalization³⁷ and remains the key driving force of pervasive changes in the global economy. The rise of finance was the driving force of the last grand paradigm change in world order in the 1980s. The first phase of an American-led LIO after the Second World War was crucially built on the Bretton-Woods framework that kept cross-border financial flows restricted and allowed productive capital to develop within national economies as the working principle of the world economy. The internal contradictions and limitations to this model led first to its crisis and gradual dissolution in the 1970s and 80s, when the transnationalization of production and the unleashing of global

30 Sam Gindin and Leo Panitch, *The making of global capitalism: The political economy of American empire* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 301.

31 Matthias Vermeiren, 'The Global Imbalances and the Contradictions of US Monetary Hegemony', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 13:2, 6/2010, pp. 105-135.

32 James Anderson, 'American Hegemony after 11. September: Allies, Rivals and Contradictions', *Geopolitics* 8:3, 10/2003, pp. 35-60.

33 Oliver Stuenkel, *The BRICS and the future of global order* (London: Lexington Books, 2015).

34 Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21st century* (London: Verso, 2008).

35 Brantly Womack, 'International Crises and China's Rise', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 10:4, 2017, pp. 383-401.

36 Tooze, *Crashed*.

37 Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, *Capital resurgent: Roots of the neoliberal revolution* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

finance marked the transition to full-fledged globalization and hence to a new chapter of the American-led LIO. The inherent tendency of financial markets to produce instabilities³⁸ led to a series of smaller and larger crises that culminated in the great recession of 2008.

American hegemony was during these decades strongly tied to the development of neoliberal globalization due to the vanguarding role of the US state in strengthening the role of highly mobile financial capital³⁹. Especially the 1990s and the commitment of the Clinton administration to the full unleashing of capital markets marked the heyday of neoliberal globalization. A decade later, the Great Recession started as the American subprime crisis; and another decade later, the financial crisis transformed into a crisis of world order⁴⁰. The consequences of this led Wolfgang Streeck to the verdict that 'the manageability of democratic capitalism has sharply declined in the last years'⁴¹. This results in a high degree of economic and political uncertainty, political disorder and a new alienation of the masses from politics.

The declining manageability of global capitalism also affects the single post-Cold War superpower that sustained this order. The second proposed empirical entry point is hence the long-term challenge of the role of the US as the linchpin of the LIO. Two related elements are crucial here: First, there is an ongoing discussion about the possible decline of American power and leadership in the global political economy⁴². This decline has a longer history, but is most symbolically represented in the 'abdication' of its global leadership role by the current US administration⁴³. The rising inability of the US to sustain a liberal international order centered on its own power becomes visible in a number of dimension: e.g. the persistent problems of the Afghanistan and Iraq interventions in the last decade; the largely failed incorporation of Russia and China into the LIO since the end of the Cold War⁴⁴; or the domestic backlashes against the leadership role of the US and resulting paralysis of parts of American foreign policy already present during the Obama years, e.g. in the strategically crucial Middle East⁴⁵. All of these developments point out that, even though American leadership and centrality did not vanish, they are at least threatened if we take into

38 Hyman P. Minsky, *Stabilizing an unstable economy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

39 Panitch and Gindin, *The making of global capitalism*.

40 Tooze, *Crashed*.

41 Streeck, 'The post-capitalist interregnum', p. 90.

42 See: Jan Fichtner, 'Perpetual decline or persistent dominance? Uncovering Anglo-America's true structural power in global finance', *Review of International Studies* 43:1, 01/2017, pp. 3-28; Sean Starrs, 'American Economic Power Hasn't Declined-It Globalized!', *International Studies Quarterly* 57:4, 12/2013, pp. 817-830. For an opposite view see Fareed Zakaria, *The post-American world* [Release 2.0] (New York/London: W.W. Norton&Company, 2011).

43 Ivo Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *The empty throne: America's abdication of global leadership* (New York: Public Affairs/Hachette, 2018).

44 Michael Mastanduno, 'Partner Politics: Russia, China, and the Challenge of Extending US Hegemony after the Cold War', *Security Studies* 28:3, 2019, pp. 479-504.

45 Andreas Krieg, 'Externalizing the burden of war: the Obama Doctrine and US foreign policy in the Middle East', *International Affairs* 92:1, January 2016, pp. 97-113.

account the multiple challenges arising out of the end of the Cold War and the crisis of the LIO.

Second, the rise of China poses a direct challenge for the American-led LIO in the 21st century⁴⁶: China offers a version of managed or state-directed capitalism that stands in contrast to a version of neoliberal globalization that the US championed for a long time⁴⁷. Furthermore, Chinese leaders seem to embrace a not yet fully elaborated, but certainly clearer vision of global leadership than the current US administration⁴⁸. The rise of a flexible, but at the same time party-controlled model of 'Sino-Capitalism'⁴⁹ in combination with a more assertive foreign policy under Xi Jinping make the Chinese challenge a long-term process that undermines core pillars of the LIO.

Both of these developments - American leadership decline as well as the rise of China - directly contribute to the crisis of the LIO. In combination with the first described trend of the rise of financialization, both empirical entry points illustrate the role of long-term processes in understanding the crisis of the LIO better. The superiority and indeed manageability of global capitalism as the economic basis of the LIO and the role of the US as the *primus inter pares* of this order have been challenged through the crisis of the LIO and need therefore to be studied from a process-oriented, long-term perspective.

State-level: Differentiating the organic from the conjunctural

The second Gramscian crisis dimension - organicity - can be located within the growing national-international divide that corrodes the LIO from within. An organic crisis is different from 'everyday' political crises that do not imperil the operating principles of world order. I argue here that what sets apart an organic from a conjunctural crisis in the case of the LIO is the simultaneous crisis of the inter- (or trans-) national *and* national levels of world politics. The interconnection of both distinct levels of global political interaction constitutes the necessary condition to speak of a fundamental crisis of the LIO. This argument reflects the importance of what Robert Cox dubbed 'forms of state'⁵⁰ for questions of world order. Without the unit of the national, an inter-or transnational political-economic structure is hardly thinkable, let alone analysable. Similarly, Ikenberry describes modern world order formation as a bottom-up process, guided by the idea of powerful states to 'lock in' their newly

46 Thomas J. Christensen, *The China challenge* (New York/London: W.W. Norton&Company, 2016); Jacques Martin, *When China Rules the World* (London: Penguin, 2009). For a more skeptical take see Allan, Vucetic and Hopf, 'The Distribution of Identity'.

47 Christopher McNally, 'The Challenge of Refurbished State Capitalism', *dms-der moderne Staat* 6:1, 2013, pp. 33-48.

48 Jacob Mardell, 'The 'Community of Common Destiny' in Xi Jinping's New Era', *The Diplomat*, October 2017.

49 Christopher McNally, 'Sino-Capitalism: China's Reemergence and the International Political Economy', *World Politics* 64:4, 10/2012, pp. 741-776.

50 Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders', p.127.

acquired power by sharing some of it with other states through (supranational) order-building⁵¹. In this sense, American post-war power was locked in through the build-up of what we call the LIO today. It is hence central to connect what happens on the national level - in the US, but also across major other states within the hemisphere of the LIO - with the international aspect of crisis.

What follows from this is that a conjunctural crisis would then affect only *one* of those two levels. A good example of such a conjunctural crisis is the first phase of the G.W. Bush administration at the beginning of the century: its tendency towards an unipolar governance mode after 9/11 and during the Iraq-invasion led to a stretch of some core LIO principles such as international security cooperation⁵². But it was not accompanied by a deep crisis of the American (and other) states around the world as one can argue for today's global situation, marked by the permanent crisis of the Trump administration and global (rightwing) populist backlashes against different aspects of the LIO⁵³. The Iraq-crisis of the Bush years can hence be described as conjunctural, because it did not fundamentally question both, the national and international underpinnings of world order.

Different from this conjunctural moment, the current of the LIO can be very well understood as organic. I described some of the crisis tendencies of the international sphere in the previous section. On the national level, we could witness how in the last years state leaderships and their electorates were alienated along several lines: the massive state interventions in saving quasi-bankrupt banks or whole economies; the controversial ways in which the politics of a 'new constitutionalism'⁵⁴ were reinforced, especially in EU-governance; the global spread of practices of 'neoliberal authoritarianism'⁵⁵ or 'neo-illiberalism'⁵⁶ and the rise of 'post-truth politics' in the decade since the Great Recession⁵⁷ are some of the most important ones. The effect of these crisis processes is a growing divide between electorates and elected on a world scale that results in the rise of anti-systemic, mostly rightwing populist parties that question core principles of the LIO. While in some instances, those anti-systemic forces even came into government, all of them do represent to some degree a major threat to pillars of the LIO such as the idea of international solidarity (especially in the case of migration and refugee politics) and the rejection of a role model of liberal democracy.

51 G. John Ikenberry, *After victory: Institutions, strategic restraint, and the rebuilding of order after major wars* (Princeton: University Press, 2001).

52 G. John Ikenberry, 'Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5:2, 2005, pp. 133-152.

53 See e.g.: Jean-François Drolet and Michael Williams, 'Radical Conservatism and Global Order: International Theory and the New Right', *International Theory* 10:3, 11/2018, pp. 285-313.

54 Stephen Gill and A. Claire Cutler, eds., *New constitutionalism and world order* (Cambridge: University Press, 2014).

55 Ian Bruff and Cemal Burak Tansel, 'Authoritarian neoliberalism: Trajectories of knowledge production and praxis', *Globalizations* 16:3, 2016, pp. 233-244.

56 Reijer Hendrikse, 'Neo-illiberalism', *Geoforum* 95, 2018, pp. 169-172.

57 Jane Suiter, 'Post-truth Politics', *Political Insight*, December 2016, pp. 25-27.

By openly and often aggressively re-defining national interest and putting it first, these social forces are undermining the foundational credos of the LIO on the national level. The deep divide of electorates all around the world, extreme levels of polarization and a sharp turn to rightwing parties are comparable to earlier severe crises of political systems after major financial crises⁵⁸. The type of crisis on the national level is hence one of the rise of national populism and the alienation of represented and representers that accompanies it. On both levels, the national and international, I thus argue that the present crisis is more than just a conjunctural adjustment. The organicity of the crisis lies in its disruptive force vis-à-vis principles, institutions, practices and the legitimacy of the LIO beyond everyday political disputes. The new strength of national populism has barely spared a country in the last decade: The results of this sweeping rise have already shown their critical effects on the LIO if we think of Brexit and the Trump administration, but also the Brazilian and some European cases exemplify this trend very well.

An adequate way of empirically assessing this organicity is to connect the multidimensionality of national and international developments in a sound way. The relation between populist backlashes on the national level and the articulated policies on the international level are related. I propose three aspects as being central to a comprehensive analysis of this link.

The first one is what can be called a political economy of global populism. As recent studies suggest, the difference in national political economy setups⁵⁹ as independent variables influence the 'type' of populism that is likely to emerge⁶⁰. The type of (populist) backlashes states are experiencing are hence quite different. They do furthermore have different effects on the LIO: a rightwing-chauvinistic backlash might rather question principles like international (liberal democratic) solidarity or security cooperation, while a leftwing-populist backlash would rather challenge economic openness as a part of the LIO. The link between political economic models, the type of populist backlash and the different challenges for the LIO are an important factor in understanding the link between national and international developments.

The second central aspect is the ideational factor that underlies the politics of a new nationalism in times of globalization. Discourses and narratives that build the basis for a resurgence of this nationalism are not only restricted to Trump's 'America First', but can be

58 Manuel Funke, Moritz Schularick, and Christoph Trebesch, 'Going to extremes: Politics after financial crises 1870-2014', *European Economic Review* 88, 2016, pp. 227-260.

59 Or differences in growth models, see Lucio Baccaro and Jonas Pontusson, 'Rethinking Comparative Political Economy: The Growth Model Perspective', *Politics & Society* 44:4, 06/2016, pp. 175-207.

60 Dustin Voss, 'The Political Economy of European Populism: Labour Market Dualisation and Protest Voting in Germany and Spain', *LSE Europe in Question Discussion Paper Series* No. 132, March 2018; Philip Manow, *Die Politische Ökonomie des Populismus* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018).

seen across the globe: a rhetorical revival of past national glory and strength can be observed in Putin's use of Tsarist rhetoric⁶¹, Erdogan's regular recourses to Ottoman history⁶² or Xi Jingsong's notion of a 'rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'⁶³. These and other discourses do not only strengthen inward-looking (national) politics and programs, but also outward-looking (international) critiques of a LIO that is vitally built around the concept of American preeminence. The crisis of a hegemonic constellation can then, in a Gramscian manner, also be understood and analysed as the crisis of the supporting narratives of this constellation. The double nature of nationalist discourse as legitimizing national renaissance and international re-ordering makes it particularly interesting for analysing the organicity of the current crisis that incorporates both relevant levels. The nationalist discourse is hence the glue that connects national and international aspects of this crisis and that can be empirically assessed.

The third aspect is tightly related to the second one and concerns the *material* side of the national-international nexus. While the discursive aspect looks into the construction and impact of narratives on the deconstruction of the LIO, the material aspects are related to the behavior of actors. This concerns on the one hand the behavior that undermines the well-functioning of institutions of the LIO such as the WTO and the current US administration. On the other hand, the proactive construction of alternative pathways of international policy-making are also part of these developments of undermining the LIO, for example the example of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As Andreas Møller Mulvad⁶⁴ argues, the BRI is itself the material side ('accumulation strategy') of a broader Chinese hegemonic renewal that he dubs 'Xiism': in order to challenge the LIO, the discursive imaginary of a 'Chinese Dream' needs to be complemented by (material) strategies like the BRI. Those strategies are crucially affecting and altering the national-international nexus that is important for analysing the organicity of the crisis. The analysis of these - reactive or proactive - material strategies and behavior is hence a necessary analytical step to grasp the actual erosion of the LIO. In other instances, these material changes could be a retreat from global institutions like the WTO and a re-orientation towards bilateral trade agreements in the light of American isolationism⁶⁵. Both examples, the BRI and the American degradation

61 Sean Cannady and Paul Kubicek, 'Nationalism and legitimation for authoritarianism: A comparison of Nicholas I and Vladimir Putin', *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5, 2014, pp. 1-9.

62 Hakan Ovunc Ongur, 'Identifying Ottomanisms: The Discursive Evolution of Ottoman Pasts in the Turkish Presents', *Middle Eastern Studies* 51:3, 2015, pp. 416-432.

63 William A. Callahan, 'China's "Asia Dream": The Belt Road Initiative and the new regional order', *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 1:3, pp. 226-243.

64 Andreas Møller Mulvad, 'Xiism as a hegemonic project in the making: Sino-communist ideology and the political economy of China's rise', *Review of International Studies* 45:3, July 2019, pp. 449-470.

65 Jeffry Frieden, 'The Backlash against Globalization and the Future of the International Economic Order', in: Patrick Diamond (ed.), *The crisis of globalization: Democracy, capitalism and inequality in the twenty-first century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 43-52. Here: p. 48.

of the WTO have indeed domestic sources that penetrate the international sphere: in the case of the BRI it is the outsourcing of domestic overcapacities that increases the pressure on the state to create international possibilities for battered SOEs; in the case of the WTO it is the Trumpian promise of 'America first' that drives a fundamental opposition course to any trade agreements that might disadvantage (if only superficially) American interest. Taken together, the three areas of possible empirical investigation - the political economy of global populism, the discursive and material foundations of the erosion of the LIO - lead the way to a better understanding of the national-international nexus as the basis for the organicity of the crisis of the LIO.

Societal level: Studying the source of morbidities

The study of the foundations of the 'morbidities' of the crisis of the LIO is far from being 'only' a study of symptoms, as the original Gramscian quote might suggest. I understand morbidities not only as anecdotal evidence that does not allow for a systematic study of the crisis. In fact, a comprehensive account of the crisis of the LIO cannot be restricted to grand narratives and international politics, but needs to incorporate different spheres of the societal reality of the crisis. As already mentioned, a transition period between hegemonic constellations is, in Gramscian terms, likely to produce unexpected and sudden disruptions of everyday political life. It is this disruption of the 'normal' that creates the analytical framework within which morbid symptoms can be analysed.

The incorporation of these morbidities offers two additional benefits for a thorough crisis analysis: First, it provides us with the opportunity to engage in very concrete empirical groundwork of what the crisis of the LIO actually looks like 'in real life'. This complements the macro-and meso-oriented perspectives that are occupied with more abstract, aggregated phenomena of the crisis. Second, the micro-perspective best exemplifies the mentioned necessity to analyse the crisis of the LIO *for itself* instead of other asynchronous perspectives that interpret crisis phenomena from the past or future of an existing order. The study of 'morbid' symptoms that fall outside the scope of the old order is the ideal venue for this undertaking.

This analysis of morbid symptoms is a multidisciplinary undertaking. As emphasized by Gramsci, an organic crisis manifests itself in different societal spheres, e.g. in politics, culture and the economy⁶⁶. The crisis itself is thus not only one of economics and international politics, but also one of cultural and social dimensions as overall rising political distrust, declining legitimacy of mainstream political actors and the rise of cynicism in political culture suggests.

66 Filippini, *Using Gramsci: A New Approach*, p. 88.

The morbidities arise in what scholars have called the 'common civic identity'⁶⁷ of the LIO, which evolves around shared 'norms and principles, most importantly political democracy, constitutional government, individual rights, private property-based economic systems, and toleration of diversity in non-civic areas of ethnicity and religion'⁶⁸. These principles are closely tied to the embrace of capitalism as core principle of societal exchange that 'has produced a culture of market rationality that permeates all aspects of life'⁶⁹ and that is at the heart of a common civic identity of the LIO. But, as has already been argued for some time, this distinct type of 'market civilization'⁷⁰ also creates contradictory dynamics in cultural and political life that undermine the affirmation of a common civic identity: Arlie Russell Hochschild⁷¹ describes the underlying sources of the deep cultural and political divides that threaten to tear apart the social fabric of the US; Oliver Nachtwey⁷² shows how neoliberal marketization creates a socially dysfunctional revolt against the liberal society in Germany; Imogen Tyler⁷³ describes various forms of resistance to the logic of 'neoliberal governmentality' in post-crisis Britain and Wendy Brown argues that 'with market values, neoliberalism assaults the principles, practices, cultures, subjects, and institutions of democracy understood as rule by the people'⁷⁴ in the Euro-Atlantic sphere. All of these accounts capture some of the crucial moments of a transformation of Western societies that undermine the radiance of a common civic culture and identity.

Within this environment, morbid symptoms appear. They manifest themselves e.g. in 'illiberal backlashes' as seen in Central and Eastern European countries that were previously hailed as experimental space for neoliberal policy scripts⁷⁵. We see morbid symptoms also elsewhere: for the first time since the Second World War a rightwing-populist party joined the German parliament in 2017; the unexpected departure of the UK from the EU was spearheaded by political forces around UKIP that were deemed marginal in British politics at best; an openly xenophobic candidate from the French Front National makes it to the presidential run-off in 2017 and all over from Brazil to the US and Italy, political outsiders and

67 Deudney and Ikenberry, 'The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order'.

68 Deudney and Ikenberry, 'The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order', p. 193.

69 Deudney and Ikenberry, 'The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order', p. 193.

70 Stephen Gill, 'Globalisation, Market Civilisation, and Disciplinary Neoliberalism', *Millennium* 24:3, 1995, pp. 399-423.

71 Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York/London: The New Press, 2016).

72 Oliver Nachtwey, *Die Abstiegs-gesellschaft: Über das Aufbegehren in der regressiven Moderne* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016).

73 Imogen Tyler, *Revolting Subjects. Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (London/New York: Zed Books, 2013).

74 Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), p. 9.

75 Aron Buzogány and Mihai Varga, 'The ideational foundations of the illiberal backlash in Central and Eastern Europe: the case of Hungary', *Review of International Political Economy* 25:6, 2019, pp. 811-828.

polarizing anti-establishment figures enter public offices with agendas that often directly oppose values and norms of the LIO. These examples can be deemed 'morbid' as they express some of the underlying cultural and identity-related contradictions that evolved under the umbrella of a liberal world order, but do not fit the idea of a common civic identity. The growing skepticism against the benefits of neoliberal globalization, migration and sometimes democratic decision-making undermine the ideational support for the LIO directly and indirectly.

An appropriate empirical strategy to assess the connection between the described cultural fault lines and the resulting morbid symptoms of a common civic culture are tools of 'everyday narratives' in political economy (PE) research⁷⁶. In contrast to an elite-focus that dominates critical research in (I)PE, a focus on everyday narratives allows to understand 'how political orders are justified and contested in everyday sites'⁷⁷ and in the public sphere. This qualitative and discourse-oriented perspective on 'grand' topics of world politics - like the crisis of the LIO - allows us to understand how people make sense of a crisis of world order and how these changes are perceived. Over time, everyday narratives can serve as an instrument of detecting changes in attitudes, experiences and discourses about themes that are directly related to a common civic culture. Important themes that have already been researched in this respect are, for example, the legitimization of austerity in different countries through everyday narratives⁷⁸, changing discourses about migration⁷⁹ and more macro-societal narratives contesting the power of global financial centers (and hence partly also global finance)⁸⁰. All of these themes - austerity, migration, global corporate power - are discursively eroding the cultural and sociological fundament of the LIO. In order to assess these effects, the empirical entry point of an everyday IPE is highly useful as it bridges the abstract and concrete dimensions of the crisis of the LIO. The corrosion of the common civic identity of the West has hence to be researched more on the ground, where societal change is feeding into the changes we can observe on the level of international politics.

76 Liam Stanley and Richard Jackson, 'Introduction: Everyday narratives in world politics', *Politics* 36:3, 08/2016, pp. 223-235.

77 Stanley and Jackson, 'Introduction', p. 231.

78 Liam Stanley, "'We're Reaping What We Sowed': Everyday Crisis Narratives and Acquiescence to the Age of Austerity", *New Political Economy* 19:6, 2014, pp. 895-917; Leonard Seabrooke and Rune Riisbjerg Thomsen, 'Making sense of austerity: Everyday narratives in Denmark and the United Kingdom', *Politics* 36:3, 2016, pp. 250-261.

79 Katherine Tonkiss, 'Experiencing transnationalism at home: Open borders and the everyday narratives of non-migrants', *Politics* 36:3, 2016, pp. 324-337; Georg Löffmann and Nick Vaughan-Williams, 'Narrating identity, border security and migration: critical focus groups and the everyday as problematic', *Critical Studies on Security* 5:2, 201, pp. 207-211.

80 Andrew Baker and Duncan Wigan, 'Constructing and contesting City of London power: NGOs and the emergence of noisier financial politics', *Economy and Society* 46:2, 2017, pp. 185-210.

4. Conclusion and Prospects

The occupation with the crisis of the LIO is not only keeping academics busy. The RAND speaks in a current report on the state of the LIO of a 'liberal overreach' that endangers the future of world order⁸¹ and the report of the yearly Munich Security Conference even cites Gramsci in order to find words for the state of things⁸². The interregnum that signifies the slow end of the LIO as we knew it fuels analytical enthusiasm and fears of a possible world in chaos and disarray at the same time. The framework sketched in this paper commences from the notion that this interregnum is the new reality of world order and that this reality needs analytical tools to steer research efforts and enable empirical research into its different characteristics.

I used three crisis characteristics originating in Gramsci to delineate different dimension of the crisis of the LIO. From a 'macro'-perspective, I discussed the long-term processes of change in global capitalism and the changing role of American hegemony that is closely aligned with it. The side effects of a highly financialized form of neoliberal globalization contribute to instabilities in financial markets that have spillover effects on all parts of the global economy and societies as exemplified in the crisis-decade since 2008. Hence, I proposed as empirical entry points for the processuality of the crisis to study closer the trajectories of financialization and neoliberal globalization as well as the long-term challenges to American hegemony in order to 'connect the dots' of a macro-oriented crisis narrative.

On a more 'meso'-level I described the national-international divide that is a consequence of a resurgence of national populism around the globe. I argued that the organicity of the crisis has to be located in precisely this concurrent crisis of the national and international aspects of world order. I suggested three empirical entry points - the political economy of global populism and the material as well as ideational factors of a re-nationalization - for a better understanding of the organicity of the crisis. I put the emphasis of the paper on this level since the rise of national populism is in many ways the core process that currently erodes institutions and norms in the LIO. I also believe that this is the empirically most fruitful area of research since it covers many of the crisis dimensions of world order.

Finally, I proposed to analyze a 'micro'-level of abstraction which are the sociological and cultural underpinnings of the morbid symptoms we witness in the crisis. I argued that the 'common civic identity' bolstering the legitimacy and practice of the LIO is slowly eroding and that this process creates a fundamental mismatch between the old norms and values of a

81 Michael J. Mazarr et al. (RAND), 'Measuring the Health of the Liberal International Order', *RAND Corporation*, 2017.

82 Munich Security Conference, 'The Great Puzzle: Who Will Pick Up the Pieces?', *Munich Security Report*, 2019, p. 16.

liberal world order and the preferences and attitudes its constituents. While one can hold against this that this match never really existed, we can at least think of a type of passive consent that the citizens of the Western hemisphere showed towards the LIO. If this is still the case can be analyzed through the empirical entry point suggested above, i.e. by studying everyday narratives of the crisis and how these change the attitudes of people towards the LIO. The results are summarized in Table 1.

- INSERT TABLE 1 HERE -

The contribution of this paper is hence a parsimonious, but comprehensive framework that will hopefully inspire more research that will go beyond 'managing the deterioration'⁸³ of the LIO and open up the discussion about the possibilities and limits of global change for academics and policy-makers alike. After all, the paper's framework should not be understood as a complete account of the crisis of the LIO, which is a long-term, multidisciplinary and complex undertaking. What this paper seeks to kickstart is the development of empirically useful analytical tools to understand the crisis of the LIO itself. This also implies a more rigorous and analytically restrained approach to questions of a future world order: a redirection of research efforts into understanding the present instead of predicting the future is a promising strategy to produce better insights into the social dynamics that are drastically changing the face of world order and the societies around the globe. Thinking along these lines with Gramsci helps us to make sense of what might at times seem incoherent and morbid.

83 Richard Haass, 'How a World Order Ends. And What Comes in Its Wake', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2019.

References

Allan, B.B., S. Vucetic and T. Hopf, 'The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China's Hegemonic Prospects', *International Organization* 72:4, Fall 2018, pp. 839-869.

Allison, G., 'The Myth of the Liberal Order', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018.

Anderson, J., 'American Hegemony after 11. September: Allies, Rivals and Contradictions', *Geopolitics* 8:3, 10/2003, pp. 35-60.

Arrighi, G., *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21st century* (London: Verso, 2008).

Baccaro, L. and J. Pontusson, 'Rethinking Comparative Political Economy: The Growth Model Perspective', *Politics & Society* 44:4, 06/2016, pp. 175-207.

Baker, A. and D. Wigan, 'Constructing and contesting City of London power: NGOs and the emergence of noisier financial politics', *Economy and Society* 46:2, 2017, pp. 185-210.

Bieler, A. and A.D. Morton, 'A Critical Theory Route to Hegemony, World Order and Historical Change', *Capital&Class* 28:1, 03/2004, pp. 85-113.

Breslin, S. 'Global Reordering and China's Rise: Adoption, Adaptation and Reform', *The International Spectator* 53:1, 2018, pp. 57-75.

Brown, W., *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), p. 9.

Bruff, I. and C. B. Tansel, 'Authoritarian neoliberalism: Trajectories of knowledge production and praxis', *Globalizations* 16:3, 2016, pp. 233-244.

Buzogány, A. and M. Varga, 'The ideational foundations of the illiberal backlash in Central and Eastern Europe: the case of Hungary', *Review of International Political Economy* 25:6, 2019, pp. 811-828.

Callahan, W.A., 'China's "Asia Dream": The Belt Road Initiative and the new regional order', *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 1:3, pp. 226-243.

Cannady, S. and P. Kubicek, 'Nationalism and legitimization for authoritarianism: A comparison of Nicholas I and Vladimir Putin', *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5, 2014, pp. 1-9.

Christensen, T.J., *The China challenge* (New York/London: W.W. Norton&Company, 2016).

Colgan, J.D. and R. O. Keohane, 'The Liberal Order is Rigged', *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2017.

Cox, R.W. and T. Sinclair, *Approaches to world order* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996).

Cox, R.W., 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations', *Millennium* 12:2, 1983, pp. 162-175.

Cox, R.W., 'Social Forces, States and World Orders', *Millennium* 10:2, 1981 pp. 125-155.

Daalder, I. and J. M. Lindsay, *The empty throne: America's abdication of global leadership* (New York: Public Affairs/Hachette, 2018).

De Graaff, N. and B. van Apeldoorn, 'US–China relations and the liberal world order: contending elites, colliding visions?', *International Affairs* 94:1, January 2018, pp. 113-131.

Deudney, D. and G.J. Ikenberry, 'The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order', *Review of International Studies* 25:2, April 1999, pp. 179-196.

Drolet, J.F. and M. Williams, 'Radical Conservatism and Global Order: International Theory and the New Right', *International Theory* 10:3, 11/2018, pp. 285-313.

Duménil, G. and D. Lévy, *Capital resurgent: Roots of the neoliberal revolution* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Duncombe, C. and T. Dunne, 'After liberal world order', *International Affairs* 94:1, January 2018, pp. 25-42.

Dunne, T. and T. Flockhart, eds., *Liberal world orders* (Oxford: University Press, 2014).

Fichtner, J., 'Perpetual decline or persistent dominance? Uncovering Anglo-America's true structural power in global finance', *Review of International Studies* 43:1, 01/2017, pp. 3-28.

Filippini, M., *Using Gramsci: A new approach* (London: Pluto Press, 2017).

Frieden, J., 'The Backlash against Globalization and the Future of the International Economic Order', in: Patrick Diamond (ed.), *The crisis of globalization: Democracy, capitalism and inequality in the twenty-first century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 43-52. Here: p. 48.

Funke, M., M. Schularick and C. Trebesch, 'Going to extremes: Politics after financial crises 1870-2014', *European Economic Review* 88, 2016, pp. 227-260.

Gill, S. and A. C. Cutler, eds., *New constitutionalism and world order* (Cambridge: University Press, 2014).

Gill, S., 'Globalisation, Market Civilisation, and Disciplinary Neoliberalism', *Millennium* 24:3, 1995, pp. 399-423.

Gindin, S. and L. Panitch, *The making of global capitalism: The political economy of American empire* (London: Verso, 2013).

Gramsci, A., *Selections from the prison notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

Haass, R., 'How a World Order Ends. And What Comes in Its Wake', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2019.

Haass, R., *A world in disarray: American foreign policy and the crisis of the old order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017).

Hall, S., *The hard road to renewal* (London: Verso, 1988).

Hendrikse, R., 'Neo-illiberalism', *Geoforum* 95, 2018, pp. 169-172.

Hochschild, A. R., *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York/London: The New Press, 2016).

Ikenberry, G.J., 'The end of liberal international order?', *International Affairs* 94:1, January 2018, pp. 7-23.

Ikenberry, G.J., *Liberal Leviathan: The origins, crisis and transformation of the American world order* (Princeton: University Press, 2011).

Ikenberry, G.J., 'Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5:2, 2005, pp. 133-152.

Ikenberry, G.J., *After victory: Institutions, strategic restraint, and the rebuilding of order after major wars* (Princeton: University Press, 2001).

Krieg, A., 'Externalizing the burden of war: the Obama Doctrine and US foreign policy in the Middle East', *International Affairs* 92:1, January 2016, pp. 97-113.

Löfflmann, G. and N. Vaughan-Williams, 'Narrating identity, border security and migration: critical focus groups and the everyday as problematic', *Critical Studies on Security* 5:2, 201, pp. 207-211.

Manow, P., *Die Politische Ökonomie des Populismus* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018).

Mardell, J., 'The 'Community of Common Destiny' in Xi Jinping's New Era', *The Diplomat*, October 2017.

Martin, J., 'Morbid Symptoms: Gramsci and the Crisis of Liberalism', in Mark McNally, ed., *Antonio Gramsci* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 34-54.

Martin, J., *When China Rules the World* (London: Penguin, 2009).

Martin, J., 'Hegemony and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Gramsci', *History of the Human Sciences* 10:1, 02/1997, pp. 37-56.

Mastanduno, M., 'Partner Politics: Russia, China, and the Challenge of Extending US Hegemony after the Cold War', *Security Studies* 28:3, 2019, pp. 479-504.

Mazarr, M.J. et al. (RAND), 'Measuring the Health of the Liberal International Order', *RAND Corporation*, 2017.

McNally, C., 'The Challenge of Refurbished State Capitalism', *dms-der moderne Staat* 6:1, 2013, pp. 33-48.

McNally, C., 'Sino-Capitalism: China's Reemergence and the International Political Economy', *World Politics* 64:4, 10/2012, pp. 741-776.

Minsky, H.P., *Stabilizing an unstable economy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

Møller Mulvad, A., 'Xiism as a hegemonic project in the making: Sino-communist ideology and the political economy of China's rise', *Review of International Studies* 45:3, July 2019, pp. 449-470.

Møller Stahl, R., 'Ruling the Interregnum: Politics and Ideology in Nonhegemonic Times', *Politics & Society*, 2019, pp. 1-28.

Munich Security Conference, 'The Great Puzzle: Who Will Pick Up the Pieces?', *Munich Security Report*, 2019, p. 16.

Nachtwey, O., *Die Abstiegs-gesellschaft: Über das Aufbegehren in der regressiven Moderne* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016).

Nordin, A. H. and M. Weissmann, 'Will Trump make China great again? The belt and road initiative and international order', *International Affairs* 94:2, March 2018, pp. 231-249.

Ongur, H.O. 'Identifying Ottomanisms: The Discursive Evolution of Ottoman Pasts in the Turkish Presents', *Middle Eastern Studies* 51:3, 2015, pp. 416-432.

Overbeek, H., 'Transnational Historical Materialism', in: Ronan Palan, ed., *Global political economy: Contemporary theories* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.168-183.

Parmar, I., 'The US led liberal international order is in crisis', OUP Blog, January 2018.

Peterson, J., 'Present at the Destruction? The Liberal Order in the Trump Era', *The International Spectator*, 53:1, 2018, pp. 28-44.

Porter, P., 'A World Imagined: Nostalgia and Liberal Order', *Cato Policy Analysis* No. 843, June 2018.

Schwarzmantel, J.J., *The Routledge guidebook to Gramsci's prison notebooks* (London/New York: Routledge, 2015).

Seabrooke, L. and R. Riisbjerg Thomsen, 'Making sense of austerity: Everyday narratives in Denmark and the United Kingdom', *Politics* 36:3, 2016, pp. 250-261.

Stanley, L. and R. Jackson, 'Introduction: Everyday narratives in world politics', *Politics* 36:3, 08/2016, pp. 223-235.

Stanley, L., 'We're Reaping What We Sowed': Everyday Crisis Narratives and Acquiescence to the Age of Austerity', *New Political Economy* 19:6, 2014, pp. 895-917.

Starrs, S., 'American Economic Power Hasn't Declined-It Globalized!', *International Studies Quarterly* 57:4, 12/2013, pp. 817-830.

Stuenkel, O., *The BRICS and the future of global order* (London: Lexington Books, 2015).

Streeck, W. 'The Post-Capitalist Interregnum', *Juncture* 23:2, 2016, pp. 68-77.

Suiter, J., 'Post-truth Politics', *Political Insight*, December 2016, pp. 25-27.

Taleb, N.N., *The black swan: The impact of the highly improbable* [2nd edition] (New York: Random House, 2010).

Tonkiss, K., 'Experiencing transnationalism at home: Open borders and the everyday narratives of non-migrants', *Politics* 36:3, 2016, pp. 324-337.

Tooze, A., *Crashed: How a decade of financial crises changed the world* (New York: Viking, 2018).

Tyler, I., *Revolting Subjects. Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (London/New York: Zed Books, 2013).

Vermeiren, M., 'The Global Imbalances and the Contradictions of US Monetary Hegemony', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 13:2, 6/2010, pp. 105-135.

Voss, D., 'The Political Economy of European Populism: Labour Market Dualisation and Protest Voting in Germany and Spain', *LSE Europe in Question Discussion Paper Series* No. 132, March 2018.

Womack, B., 'International Crises and China's Rise', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 10:4, 2017, pp. 383-401.

Zakaria, F., *The post-American world* [Release 2.0] (New York/London: W.W. Norton&Company, 2011).

Level of analysis	Gramscian crisis dimension	LIO crisis dimension	Empirical entry points	Example references
Global Political Economy	<i>Processuality</i>	Contradictions of American hegemony	Financialization	Tooze 2018
			Long-term challenge through contenders (China)	Christensen 2016
State	<i>Organicity</i>	National-International divide	Political economy of global populism	Manow 2018, Voss 2018
			Discursive factors of re-nationalization	Callahan 2016
			Material factors of re-nationalization	Mulvad 2019
Society	<i>Morbidity</i>	Foundations of Western "Civic Identity"	Everyday narratives of crisis	Stanley and Jackson 2016

Table 1: Overview Analytical Framework