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Hanns W. MAULL

Prof. Dr., Senior Fellow, German Institute for International and Security Affairs
(Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik)

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E-mail : bilgi@uidergisi.com.tr

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Global Disorder

Hanns W. MAULL

*Prof. Dr., Senior Fellow, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik),
Berlin, Germany.*

E-mail: Hanns.Maull@swp-berlin.org

ABSTRACT

There is a broad consensus that the old, 'liberal' international order has been eroding for quite some time. This erosion manifests itself in the progressive overextension of important norms and values, as well as international institutions, and the rise of violence in conflict management within and between states. The reasons for these developments lie in a structural mismatch between the dynamics of globalization, on the one hand, and the capacities of politics to respond to them, on the other. A key problem in this context is conceptions of national sovereignty, which are at odds with the realities of a globalizing world. I also argue that the civilian powers were confronted with changes in the international environment that made it exceedingly difficult for them to succeed in their ambition to 'civilize', or transform, world politics.

Keywords: Globalization, International Order, Civilian Power, Power Shifts, Power Diffusion.

Küresel Düzensizlik

ÖZET

Eski "liberal" küresel düzenin bir süredir bozulmakta olduğuna dair geniş bir uzlaşma bulunmaktadır. Önemli normların, değerlerin ve uluslararası örgütlerin giderek daha fazla gerilmesi ve hem ülke içi hem ülkelerarası çatışma yönetiminde şiddetin artması, bozulmanın işaretleridir. Bu durumun nedeni, bir yandan küreselleşme dinamikleriyle öte yandan ona yanıt verecek siyasetin kapasitesi arasındaki yapısal uyumsuzluktur. Bu bağlamda temel sorun, küreselleşen dünya gerçekleriyle uyum olmayan ulusal egemenlik kavramsallaşmasıdır. Bu çalışmada, ayrıca sivil güçlerin, uluslararası ortamda karşılaştıkları değişikliklerden dolayı dünya siyasetini "medenileştirme" veya dönüştürme hırslarında başarılı olmalarının giderek daha fazla zorlaştığı ortaya konmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Küreselleşme, Uluslararası Düzen, Sivil Güç, Güç Değişiklikleri, Güç Yayılımı.

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Introduction

The present international order was under severe stress even before the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States.¹ Political scientists as well as practitioners of international relations have noted the erosion of the international order² for at least a decade, and more recently many observers have concluded that the changes had reached alarming dimensions.³ One of those voices belongs to Henry Kissinger. In his most recent book, *World Order*, Kissinger extensively mapped what has happened to the international order in recent decades.⁴ In short, there is a broad consensus that the old 'liberal' international order (LIO) has been eroding for quite some time. Why this has happened, what will remain of the old order, and what will take its place, however, are still vigorously debated questions. This article attempts to establish some of the causes for the erosion of the international order and to identify some of the characteristics of the current global disorder.

How Does the Erosion of Global Disorder Manifest Itself?

The shift towards global disorder over the last decade has become manifest in at least four dimensions of the LIO: in its normative foundations, its institutions, in numerous policy areas, and in the way conflicts have been managed.

Normative Expansion, Erosion and Re-ideologization of World Politics

The normative basis of the current LIO can be found in the Atlantic Charter of 1941, originally signed by U.S. President F.D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill; it was developed more extensively in the Charter of the United Nations that was adopted at the San Francisco Conference in 1945. Today, those normative foundations are represented by the body of international law that, in turn, draws on a number of different sources: the normative principles of the modern world of nation states, especially the principles of the sovereignty and equality of all states, as well as the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs by others. Those norms first emerged at the Peace of Westphalia in the middle of the seventeenth century; they continue to guide the interaction of states to this day. Other sources on which the LIO draws are the norms of European liberalism in its political (rule of law, individual freedom, human rights, democratic participation in decision-making) and economic (individual property rights, free enterprise, market economy) aspects, and the devastating experiences of the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century, which led to a generalized ban on the threat and use of force in interstate relations (with only a few carefully defined exceptions).

The LIO was designed during World War II and implemented thereafter, but it was quickly superseded by a new development, the rise of the Cold War. As a result, the LIO became part of a larger international order, that of the East-West conflict, which dominated world politics from 1947 to 1989. Only during the last quarter century, after the end of the East-West rivalry, did the LIO take hold – and then rapidly expanded and innovated - as the new, universal international order. Thus, its

1 Not least the then Foreign Minister of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier often used this metaphor, and his use of the term contributed to its popularity.

2 Volker Rittberger et. al, *Grundzüge der Weltpolitik, Theorie und Empirie des Weltregierens*, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2010.

3 Warnings came from former President of Germany Horst Köhler and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Britain David Miliband, among others.

4 Henry Kissinger, *Weltordnung*, Bertelsmann, München, 2014.

normative foundations were deepened and stretched geographically and functionally; that is to say, the scope and range of its principles, norms and rules were extended. At the same time, however, some of these norms lost their binding force and were accordingly weakened. For example, the number of countries that claimed democracy as their domestic political system continued to grow for some time despite some setbacks, but many of these 'new' democracies were in fact hybrid systems. In these systems, 'democracy' was reduced to more or less free and fair elections to acclaim a self-selected leadership. From the point of view of the LIO, these democracies must be considered as defective, as they uphold, at best, a few of the basic principles of a liberal political order.

The number and variations of such hybrid systems have increased in recent years, led by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. From the perspective of political liberalism, considering their similar political orders as authoritarian systems with populist elements, it would be more appropriate to call them 'defective democracies'. Similarly, regarding such hybrid systems as Russia or China as 'market economies' is somewhat misleading from the perspective of economic liberalism: the functioning of markets in those countries is usually not so much related to property rights and the efficient allocation of resources. Rather, their focus is the expansion of the power base of the government and the creation of wealth for certain privileged groups.

Similarly, there has been some ambivalence in the enforcement of human rights in the LIO. On the one hand, the scope of human rights has been greatly expanded over the last two decades, for example by the concepts of 'human security', the millennium development goals, and the doctrine of a 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) for the international community when governments are unable or unwilling to protect their peoples against mass murder. On the other hand, a look at the composition of the UN Human Rights Council⁵ shows how problematic the implementation of these extended human rights is in practice.

Overall, it seems that the liberal normative foundations of the current international order are losing their appeal, and therefore, also some of their support as 'appropriate' binding principles and values. The pressure on them comes from different directions, though all seem to relate to ideational responses to globalization: one direction is the ideologization and 'weaponization' of religious fundamentalism, especially in its extreme forms that do not so much question and challenge Western values as try to eradicate their bearers violently. Those attacks on Western liberal principles and values are sometimes conducted through proxies or are supported by states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar or Iran, but also by non-state (or pseudo-state) actors such as Al Qaida, Boko Haram or the so-called Islamic State. Since it is very unlikely that the appeal of Western liberal principles and values will disappear, but since it is also hard to see how fundamentalist ideologies could be defeated any time soon, the conflicts over values and ideologies will persist. They could be muted into a situation of mutual tolerance and peaceful coexistence below the level of violence, but that unfortunately does not seem likely. Much more plausible is a continuation of violent confrontation, driven by the demographic dynamics of the so-called youth bulge: the large increase in the number of (often quite well-educated) young men, in particular, with dim perspectives for gainful employment and satisfactory social lives in the Middle East and Africa.

5 Countries like Algeria, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, China, Qatar, Cuba, Morocco, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Vietnam are members of the UN Human Rights Council. In these states, human rights are massively restricted and violated. These countries can not be considered as functional democracies. See Bertelsmann Transformationsindex 2016, <http://www.bti-project.org/de/index/>, 5 April 2016 (Accessed 7 July 2017) as well as Freedom House Index 2015, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2015>, 5 April 2016, (Accessed 10 July 2017).

Multiple Crises of Institutions

The second dimension of the erosion of the LIO is related to its institutions. There is hardly any international organization that is not stuck in a more or less severe crisis, starting from the United Nations and the so-called Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank and IMF), through the World Trade Organization (WTO), regional organizations such as the African Union, the Arab League, or ASEAN in Southeast Asia, and of course the European Union, to national political institutions. As with the normative foundations of the LIO, however, the picture is more complicated and contradictory than this bold statement suggests. For example, the number of international organizations continues to grow, and there has been a veritable explosion of transnational (i.e. non-governmental) organizations. Many international organizations have also seen their competences, as well as their budgets and personnel, expanded. As in the case of its normative foundations, the international institutional expansion that the LIO has undergone since 1990 assumed aspects of a severe overstretch and thus turned out to be a symptom of the current international order's weakness, rather than its strength.

Precarious, fragile, disintegrated, and disintegrating states constitute a particularly problematic part of this crisis of institutions.⁶ Fragile statehood is as much a cause as it is a consequence of the normative erosion of the international order and the crisis of its institutions. In other words, political orders interact across their boundaries in ways that appear mutually reinforcing. The interactions between growing state fragility and the erosion of international order show that such feedback processes can happen horizontally (e.g., between different regional orders) as well as vertically (e.g., between fragile states and regional order). In principle, the interactions between different orders can be mutually stabilizing, of course, as well as destabilizing, but feedback processes with opposite effects (i.e., disorder in one order spilling over into others in ways that enhance, rather than undermine, them) seem rare. This suggests that the arrangement of orders has synchronizing effects beyond their own boundaries, although those effects might be small or insignificant: effective orders are usually able to impose control over their interactions with the outside world and thus contain the impact of destabilizing influences. Under conditions of eroding orders, however, tendencies of dissolution will easily spread across orders and engender synchronized, systemic disturbances. Precarious statehood could thus trigger risks of war and economic destruction as well as the emergence of war economies, catalyzing famine and mass migration.

Cumulative Deficiencies of Politics as Cause and Consequence of Global Disorder

The third dimension in the erosion of the LIC relates to the specific problems of national and international institutions discussed above, but is broader. Institutions are only part of the broader realm of politics, in which collectives determine how they want to live together. In this perspective, it is the lagging performance of politics that results in global disorder. Societies look to politics, and to their political leaders and institutions, to find protection from risks and dangers and enhance their welfare. Moreover, under certain circumstances, most notably free and fair elections, a free press, and the rule of law, politics may provide societies with the means to participate in decision making, and thus have a say in how they want to shape their future.

⁶ See CITI Global Perspectives and Solutions: Global Political Risk 2016, 2016, <https://www.citivelovecity.com/citigps/ReportSeries.action?recordId=48>, 8 April 2016 (Accessed 8 June 2017)

If politics is able to meet the expectations of its collective or national society, it will gain in legitimacy and authority. Yet the crises of institutions, especially those at the state level, suggest that this is but rarely the case nowadays, be it internationally or nationally. In many areas of politics and at all its levels, what collectives expect from politics and its institutions and what politics can deliver, appears to be seriously drifting apart.⁷ Adequate responses to challenges and demands are postponed; problems thus accumulate, and when necessary adjustments are undertaken, they are often initiated too late, too slowly, and at too limited a scale. Such failures of politics to live up to expectations and respond to challenges risks turning into a vicious circle: insufficient responses in turn produce disappointed expectations, further widening the gap between expectations and the results of politics. This will tend to weaken the legitimacy and authority of political leaders and institutions, eroding or even undermining public trust in politics. As a result, the ability of politics to deliver will be damaged, further exacerbating the vicious circle. The cumulative deficiencies of politics thus are both a cause and a consequence of global disorder: the crisis of politics and institutions, which reflects their inability to meet collective demands and expectations, will result in the loss of legitimacy, trust and authority, which in turn will hamper politics yet further. Cause and effect are linked and feed on each other, while countervailing influences often are too weak to prevent this vicious circle. The political developments in the United States in recent years provide an exemplary illustration of such a vicious circle: the dysfunctional way in which American politics have developed over the last decades ultimately produced a president who is expected by his core supporters to blow up the Washington establishment and its way of conducting politics. Those supporters may well see their wishes granted, but they are unlikely to be satisfied with the consequences.

The Violent Implementation of Conflicts: Terrorism and State Violence

The last evidence for an eroding international order comes from the statistics of violence, which suggest that violent conflicts are on the rise again. From 1990 until recently, the end of the Cold War provided the world with a huge bonus: the number of violent conflicts and casualties decreased considerably. In recent years, however, this trend has reversed.⁸ Though the level of casualties caused by wars during the Cold War was still significantly higher than during the last few years, since 2010 the relevant statistics show a rapid increase of the number of casualties in all forms of organized violence within and between states.⁹ The rising use of force to promote one's own group's interests and ideologies in conflicts with other groups represents a particularly important and alarming symptom of erosion in international order. Nor are these phenomena confined to terror organizations and the parties in civil wars: during the last 16 years, the United States in Iraq, Russia in Ukraine and the People's Republic of China in the South China Sea all violated the ban on the unilateral use of force that is central to the Charter of the United Nations and therefore to the present international order. They overthrew and replaced a government through military intervention (as the U.S. did in Iraq in 2003), annexed and infiltrated territories (as Russia did in the Crimea as well as in Eastern Ukraine), or attempted to

7 Hanns W. Maull, "Von den Schwierigkeit des Regierens in Zeiten der Globalisierung", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 65, No 31-32, 2015, pp. 34-39.

8 Erik Melander, *Organized Violence in the World 2015*, Oslo, 2015, p. 9 and passim, http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61335_1ucdp-paper-9.pdf 2016 (Accessed 8 June 2017)

9 Three forms which can be seen in the data record of the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO) are as follows: state-centered violence (also wars between states or civil wars between a state and rebels), non-state violence (also conflict between the IS and Kurds in Syria) as well as unilateral violence (for example, genocide in 1994 in Rwanda).

change the territorial status quo unilaterally through the projection of force (as China did in the South and East China Seas). According to the Charter of the United Nations, the use of force is permitted only in situations of individual or collective self-defense or with explicit authorization by the UN Security Council as a means to enforce compliance with international law by a state that has violated it. Only in the case of China's change of the territorial status quo in the South and East China Sea has the projection of force not yet resulted in casualties. The intervention in and occupation of Iraq, and the subsequent civil war, however, have so far cost the lives of approximately 242,000 people, while the confrontation in Eastern Ukraine has so far claimed the lives of roughly 10,000 people.¹⁰

What Led to the Current International Disorder?

There are, in sum, very good reasons to worry about a significant erosion of international order: the principles and norms of the old LIC seem to be losing their strength, its institutions in disarray, and its political foundations, which are anchored at the national level in politics that appear to be severely stressed, wobbly. The deficiencies that we have discussed so far reflect shortcomings of politics and leadership – shortcomings that cannot be pinned only on traditional great powers, such as the United States, Russia, and China, but also on 'civilian powers' such as Germany and the European Union. Neither Germany nor, perhaps more appropriately, the EU was able to halt the tide of erosion. Explanations for this failure are to be found in many different areas: the limited weight of civilian powers in a world still dominated by Westphalian powers and traditional geopolitical thinking; deficiencies in leadership and, indeed, a lack of 'actorness' in the case of the EU, whose Common Foreign and Security Policy has rarely lived up to its ambition; and specific policy mistakes, i.e., the lack of a political follow-up after the military intervention in Libya in 2011. In the following pages, we take a closer look at the changed context of international relations in which the civilian powers have found themselves over the last few decades. In a nutshell, I argue that the civilian powers were confronted with changes in the international environment that made it exceedingly difficult for them to succeed in their ambition to 'civilize', or transform, world politics.

Globalization: The Dynamics of Scientific-Technological Innovations

The principal reason for the dismal current state of international order is the rapid and universal advance of science and technology. New scientific insights into how the world functions allow the development of new technologies to fulfill individual and collective needs and desires, and solve collective problems. Ian Morris has vividly demonstrated how dramatic this exponential development of technological power in recent years has been from a long historical perspective:¹¹ the graphic presentation of his data about what he calls the 'social development' of humankind since the beginning of history around 14,000 B.C.E. to the year 2000 C.E. shows an almost completely vertical increase of the technological potential of humankind since the second half of the nineteenth century.¹²

¹⁰ See Iraq Body Count, <https://iraqbodycount.org/>, 5 April 2016; Office of the United Nations High Commissionaire for Human Rights: Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 December 2014-15 February 2015, <http://ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/9thOHCHRreportUkraine.pdf>, 6 April 2016 2016 (Accessed 8 June 2017)

¹¹ Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules— for Now, The Patterns of History, and What They Reveal About the Future*, New York, Picador, 2010.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

This explosion of technological power made possible the dramatic expansion in material well-being and wealth that the world – and most importantly, the industrialized countries of the West – has experienced in recent decades, but it also entails huge risks of destruction, as the two world wars in the twentieth century demonstrated. In any case, the explosive expansion of technology, which continues to accelerate, already has affected, and will continue to affect, comprehensively and dramatically, the lives of all individuals and societies on earth. In other words, the world has been undergoing economic, social, cultural, and political change at a historically unknown speed and scope.

Those processes of comprehensive societal change are commonly defined and analyzed under the heading of globalization. Yet globalization is a very old phenomenon; what is characteristic of its present phase, and what causes the current strain on the LIO, is not the phenomenon of globalization per se, but the rapidity and depth of its penetration into our individual and collective lives and its disruptive force.¹³

Ideological Responses to Globalization

The progressive realization of our scientific-technological potential enhances the possibilities of action by individuals, who are relatively more empowered. At the same time, however, it also tends to weaken the normative foundations of the LIO through its corrosive effect on social integration: the ties that hold societies together are weakened as the freedom of individuals to act grows. By making use of new technological possibilities available to them, individuals are able to escape or at least loosen the traditional ties that bind them to family and local contexts of identity and feelings of security. Yet this empowerment and the enhanced margins of freedom it provides also have a downside: the loss of support and security that the traditional ties of tribe, family and territory offered. Globalization thus encourages a search for new collective identities and new ideological and religious answers to elementary questions of meaning.

One such answer to the upheavals and transformations of societies in the age of accelerated globalization is nationalism. Despite the revival of religious fundamentalisms of all shades and creeds, nationalism remains the dominant ideology of modernity. It allows elites to direct and channel the enhanced action potential of the individual into collective endeavors of society and transfer this accumulated potential of individuals and their technological roles into the enormous power and destructive potential of the modern nation-state. Those in authority can then use this potential to enhance their position internally as well as externally.

Nationalism is a profoundly ambivalent phenomenon. On the one hand, it provides the ideological breeding ground for exalted and monistic interpretations of sovereignty – the most important principle of the Westphalian international order that, as we have seen, continues to enjoy an elevated position in the LIO, as well. Those who claim to represent the state can use sovereignty to rationalize, justify, and abuse the demand for more power. On the other hand, nationalism in its different expressions, including those that link it with religion, clearly does help keep societies together as ‘nations’ and thus responds to the erosion of societal integration resulting from the advances of globalization by creating new, greater societal contexts and identities. Finally, through the notion of

13 David Held et. al., *Global Transformations, Politics, Economics and Culture*, Stanford, California, Polity Press, 1999 is still an essential text on globalization.

a right to self-determination, nationalism is connected to the liberal ideas of freedom, the market economy, democracy and human rights. Nationalism as ideology thus also contains emancipatory and participatory components. In this way, it can be linked rather easily to the other normative foundations of the current LIO, such as freedom, social justice, and even the non-use of force.

Concentration of Power, Shift of Power, Diffusion of Power

Globalization encourages both the concentration and the diffusion of power. Thus, world military expenditure and the destructive power of nuclear weapons are still heavily concentrated. Similarly, a few big companies dominate many global markets. The position of the United States as the world's leading power has been based on the concentration of a broad variety of diverse power resources in the hands of its government. China is rapidly closing the gap with the United States, however, due to its growing economic clout, but also to the advances of its diplomatic and military power over the last decade. The reputation of the United States as the world's most important power was significantly damaged, however, by its wanton invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the world economic crisis in 2008 that was the result of the previous 'excessive exuberance' in U.S. financial markets. The election of Donald Trump and the erratic course of U.S. foreign policy under his leadership have further contributed to the decline of U.S. influence and legitimacy, significantly weakening the country's power in world affairs and accelerating the rise of China into a position of global leadership.

The decline of America and the rise of China and others such as Russia, Brazil and India are often interpreted as a shift of power between great powers. Yet one of the important characteristics of the current international order is the diffusion, rather than a shift, of power, due to a significant overall increase in the number of relevant actors over the last decades. This is true for all kinds of actors, from the total world population and the number of states and international organizations to transnational civil society actors such as Amnesty International or Al Qaida and transnational corporations.¹⁴ Thus, more and more actors are able to shape world affairs and the development of world order to a significant degree, even if their respective approaches will naturally differ widely. The overall result is a diffusion of power in world politics: even extraordinarily powerful global actors like the United States or China are therefore individually losing some of their power to shape the future, as they encounter increasingly complex problems and contexts with many other actors with the ability to obstruct, whose veto power needs to be taken into consideration and accommodated. Somewhat paradoxically, globalization therefore enhances both global integration and fragmentation, both the concentration of power and its diffusion. In fact, those seemingly contradictory phenomena may even be connected through a kind of dialectic relationship, in which more integration encourages more fragmentation.

Thus, at the top of the power hierarchy of world politics we find tendencies of power concentration as well as both a power shift and diffusion. All things considered, however, it seems that the processes of power diffusion are the most significant. The power shifts from the Western powers like the United States, the European Union, and Japan to 'new powers' like China, Russia, or India may also be interpreted as processes of power diffusion – something which finds its formal expression in the shift from the G7/8 format to the G20 format of world summits; similar developments may be found

14 Hanns W. Maull, "Welche Akteure Beeinflussen die Weltpolitik?", Karl Kaiser and Hans-Peter Schwarz (eds.), *Weltpolitik im neuen Jahrhundert*, Bonn, Schriftenreihe der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2000, pp. 369-382.

in many other political contexts, as the number of veto players and relevant actors increases who must either be integrated in the preferred management approach to international conflicts or, alternatively, effectively sidelined. In addition, there is the fundamental imbalance between the destructive exercise of power to obstruct cooperation, which is often rather easy to achieve, and the implementation of constructive approaches to problems that depend on creating cooperation. Probably it was always easier to destroy than to build, but today it may be much easier, given the enormous destructive power that even a few determined individuals could muster.

Conclusion

Global disorder thus ultimately results from a mismatch between the powerful dynamics of globalization and its disruptive impact on our individual and collective lives, on the one hand, and the deficiencies of politics in trying to respond to those dynamics, on the other hand. This is true across the spectrum, from local politics to world politics.¹⁵ The mismatch will sometimes be small and temporary, indeed it may not even exist at all in particular circumstances, as politics will sometimes quite successfully meet demands, even rising expectations, by adapting its possibilities successfully. Yet, under the circumstances of globalization, the current situation of politics in general and the international order in particular appears marked by a problem of structural overload. The crisis of institutions briefly described above appears to have its roots in this overload, in this gap between what politics is expected to do and what it can deliver. Moreover, the overload of politics under the conditions of the globalization feeds on itself, as it tends to undermine political authority and legitimacy and ultimately to damage confidence and trust in politics, exacerbating the crisis of the politics yet further.

In other words, globalization seems to entrap societies and world politics in a dilemma. On the one hand, globalization advances the ‘revolution of rising expectations’ and thus increases the demands on politics. On the other hand, finding and implementing appropriate political answers to those demands, and more broadly to the opportunities and challenges thrown up by globalization becomes more difficult, given the number of veto players and the frequently complicated nature of the issues that often will involve transboundary interdependencies and thus require international cooperation.

Those difficulties are compounded by two further aspects that contribute to this situation of mismatch between the demand for and the supply of governance. The first aspect is the visceral rejection of supranational solutions to political problems in many countries on the grounds of sovereignty violations. Such objections are frequently justified in terms of national security interests, but this ignores the many very real interdependencies between societies in the realm of security. More realistically, the objections often serve to camouflage vested societal interests at the core of national politics. The result is often political inertia, particularly when the difficulties are rooted in transboundary problems and thus would require transboundary solutions. Misguided national sovereignty reservations can easily interfere with the development of political institutions and the decision-making processes that are adequate to the nature of the problems encountered. In this light, the ideology of nationalism represents a deep-seated obstacle to the ‘civilizing’ of world

15 Maull, “Von den Schwierigkeiten des Regierens in Zeiten der Globalisierung”.

politics: it can be mobilized easily and very effectively to obstruct appropriate political responses to international problems. Yet this obstructive power of nationalism seems based on a misleading and misguided interpretation of sovereignty that might be called 'fundamentalist'. In this fundamentalist interpretation, sovereignty is indivisible and absolute: it is an end in itself.

Yet, it is entirely possible to re-interpret sovereignty as a means to the end of collective well-being – a right and a collective choice that can be exercised differently in different circumstances by those who represent the nation. Despite the hugely increased importance of civil society actors and transnational corporations, the central place of nation states at the core of the international order and world governance remains entirely unchallenged: so far, nothing can and will take its place. Global governance can only succeed with and through nation states, not against them. The challenge to strengthen an international order in disarray and to steer it through a difficult period of transition is not to replace the authority of nation states by some form of world government, but for the states to reconcile themselves to new, more constructive interpretations of sovereignty that are politically compatible with the demands of globalization. It is such a new, 'post-modern' interpretation of sovereignty that has been a key achievement of Germany and the European Union as civilian powers.