ORDER – WHAT ORDER? THE ONTOLOGY OF SOCIAL ORDER AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF WORLD POLITICS

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ORDER AND WORLD POLITICS

• A buzzword: there is an epochal shift
  • Liberal order, international order, world order, global order
  • The problem of order in anarchy
  • Not much cumulative progress

• To what extent the concept of order helps us to understand, explain and steer these changes?
  • No agreed meaning: ‘the lack of an agreed upon meaning is a source of policy and analytic confusion’.
  • “I would do well not to use the term order at all”

• Can we understand the essence of order – or increase our understanding of it in any helpful ways?

• Two sources of confusion / essential contestation
  • ontological
  • normative
The Concept of Order

• A buzzword but no agreed meaning:
  • “I would do well not to use the term order at all”

• Two sources of confusion / essential contestation
  • ontological
  • normative

• Three ontological dimensions
  • Objective
    • ‘a disposition of things in relation to each other according to a pattern’
  • Subjective
    • Always an intention
  • Intersubjective
    • The intention must be shared (collective)
Normative Orders

• Is order always good (vs. chaos, disorder)
  • Or is there always some kind of order (and we need to find out what it is)

• What values?
  • Order itself – ”stability” – upon which other values can be built
  • Minimal values – avoidance of violence and wars
    • At least large-scale wars between the major powers
    • Basic trust in agreements ”Pacta sunt servanda”
  • Liberal values, justice

• The question of legitimacy
  • Lack of contestation is not the same as legitimacy
Transformation of the International Order

• The historical development of the international order
  • Realists: cyclical
    • Distribution of power, power cycles
  • Liberals: linear
    • The steady growth of institutions, multilateralism, international law, human rights, free trade, democracy

• Symptoms vs. underlying causal factors
  • Lack of consistent theories or historical contingencies

• Possible explanations
  • Political economy – global crisis
  • Decline of reason
  • Decline of empathy (<- social media?)
Material or ideational forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material forces</th>
<th>End of the Liberal Order</th>
<th>Liberal Order will Prevail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Power shifts: the rise of illiberal powers, China</td>
<td>- The US will stay the hegemon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Technological changes, malfunctions of the state</td>
<td>- The liberal order will materially benefit all – wealth creates freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideational forces</td>
<td>- The rise of nationalism / tribalism</td>
<td>- Progress of reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack of legitimacy</td>
<td>- Collective identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>