

## Coalition Building in a Post-Western World: Three Challenges

*By Sophie Eisentraut*

Western states are losing their dominance over the management of global affairs — and thus over the preservation and renewal of the rules-based liberal international order. The West's ability to set and enforce international rules, collectively help solve the world's problems, and ensure the continued provision of global public goods will increasingly depend on its capacity to forge effective coalitions with non-Western countries.

Many of these countries include authoritarian regimes, states that lack the resources to meaningfully engage with the West, and leaders that identify the existing liberal international order with Western dominance. The West may best tackle these challenges by capitalizing on the diversity of its ties — economic, political, and cultural — to non-Western states; focusing on issues viewed favourably by small non-Western states and where efforts of institution-building cannot be dismissed as acts of Western imposition; and actively embracing methods of promoting democracy and protecting human rights that find the support of democratic rising powers.

Multilateralism has always been about coalition building and finding compromises among states. Yet, for the past two and a half decades, the West has had a relatively easy play in this — thanks to the United States. Its unrivalled military, economic, and soft power provided the West with considerable leverage over the design of international structures and helped its leaders push a Western agenda within international forums. U.S. dominance helped the West overcome resistance by non-Western countries and induced a sufficient amount of global support for a rule-governed international order, open markets, and even for strengthening human rights and democracy — all crucial elements of the liberal international order.

These times are over. Without support from non-Western countries, the traditional West will struggle to uphold and shape the international order and its defining elements. One reason is the much-noted power shift in international politics — the re-emergence of non-Western competitors, China and Russia in particular. While neither of them can unilaterally impose alternative sets of rules, these countries may certainly obstruct Western order-building and -maintenance efforts. China and Russia have surely demonstrated their capacity and willingness to do so — not least with the increasing use of their veto in the UN Security Council, which seriously undermines effective responses to global security crises. But non-Western powers need not actively obstruct Western policies. They can do just as much damage by remaining inactive. Climate



change is but one challenge that cannot be effectively tackled without the support of non-Western powers, whose new economic might produces mighty carbon footprints.

While they receive the lion's share of attention, the most powerful among non-Western states are not the only ones that may obstruct Western projects. In fact, the weaker ones among them also possess considerable leverage — the leverage of their number. Internal divisions prevent these states from dictating their own sets of rules. Yet, their power to obstruct decision-making is real. Nowhere has it been more apparent than in trade negotiations; the latest round, the Doha Round, was launched in 2001 but divisions between West and non-West have since prevented its conclusion. In the long run, the design of international institutions should work in the favor of non-Western countries. As scholars have shown, majoritarian decision-making is not only the dominant voting rule in international institutions; new organizations also disproportionately opt for majoritarian procedures (and to a lesser extent unanimity rule) rather than weighted voting, which has hitherto privileged the West.<sup>1</sup> But even where voting power is weighted, as in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), non-Western states have slowly but gradually increased their influence.

The Obama administration's actions were already premised on the idea that U.S. power was fading. Less concerned about *capability*, the Trump administration has now made it abundantly clear that under its current administration, the United States is no longer *willing* to assume global leadership. Rather, it sees a duty for others to do more, including traditional U.S. allies in the West and in non-Western states alike. In the future, the burden of setting and enforcing rules, of confronting threats and providing global public goods will thus have to be shouldered by a much broader set of states — both from inside and beyond the West. If Western countries, European states in particular, want to retain the liberal thrust

of the current order, coalition building with like-minded non-Western states will thus acquire a new level of importance.

## Challenges of Engaging Non-Western States

Engaging the non-West entails several obstacles. Three characteristics of these states pose particular challenges. First, many non-Western countries are ruled autocratically. These states do not share many of the global policy objectives that the West holds so dear, most importantly spreading democracy and human rights. Second, many non-Western leaders perceive the liberal international order and its main institutions as instruments of Western dominance. These countries are wary that cooperation within the current framework of order favors the West above all else. And third, many non-Western states are small countries that lack the capacity for meaningful global engagement. While each characteristic poses a unique challenge to coalition building, their effects are interrelated. In order to successfully reach out to non-Western countries, the West has to properly understand the nature of these challenges and devise adequate strategies to tackle them.

### *The Authoritarian Challenge*

Western states have always depended on cooperation with countries that did not comply with standards of democratic rule and respect for human rights. Yet, the need for sensitive diplomatic engagement has greatly increased with two developments: the rise and growing assertiveness of authoritarian great powers, China and Russia in particular, and a general trend of democratic backsliding, which is slowly but steadily tilting the global balance of power in favor of dictators.

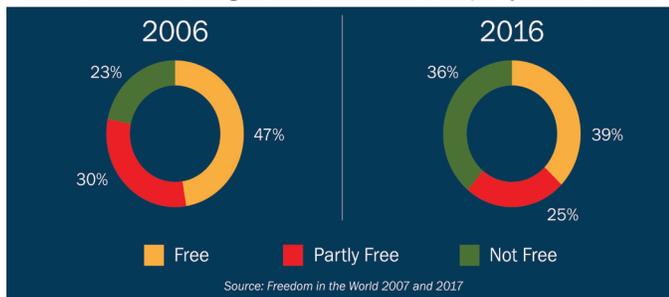
As non-democratic great powers have entered central forums of international cooperation, like the G20, their impact on outcomes has increased substantially. The more general trend of democratic decline, in turn, has produced an international climate in which “the interests and values of illiberal states are seen as equal, if not more important,

1 See Michael Zürn and Matthew Stephen, “The View of Old and New Powers on the Legitimacy of International Institutions.” *Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2010, pp. 91–101; Daniel J. Blake and Autumn Lockwood Payton, “Balancing Design Objectives: Analyzing New Data on Voting Rules in Intergovernmental Organizations.” *Review of International Organizations*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2014, pp. 377–402.

to global public opinion.”<sup>2</sup> More than before, the West has to engage with the concerns of autocrats. While one need not subscribe to the dire view that autocracies are generally unreliable and on average more likely to initiate conflicts (up to the point of war),<sup>3</sup> cooperation with these regimes is difficult for several reasons.

## Democratic Decline Since 2006

World's inhabitants living in countries that are free, partly free, or not free



Most importantly, it hinders advances on issues that belong to the political core of the liberal international order: the fostering of democratic rule and respect for human rights. Unsurprisingly, studies have shown that bad human rights performers are little inclined to bolster international rules intended to defend human rights around the world.<sup>4</sup> The process of establishing the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has shown that autocracies do not only try to prevent criticism of human rights infringements in individual countries; they also seek to frustrate the setup of global institutions that may effectively work to achieve this aim. Instead, these regimes coalesce to bolster autocratic rule. In fact, illiberal regimes have become increasingly bold in shielding each other from external pressure and criticism.<sup>5</sup> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is one forum that

serves this purpose. Their domestic setup induces autocrats to contest or skilfully re-interpret many of the elements of the international order that Western states perceive as its liberal core.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, illiberal regimes resist the West's attempts to condition international respect for state sovereignty and non-interference on states' domestic respect for human rights. This conflict regularly surfaces in debates about the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

But regime type differences do not only impede cooperation on traditional liberal policy objectives. The implicit ideological conflict informs other topics as well and bears the permanent risk of jeopardizing cooperation — even on issues that have little to do with human rights or democracy. The Iran nuclear deal is a rare example of successful cooperation between major Western and non-Western powers where political regime differences and other sources of disagreement were successfully overcome. Yet, it is clearly an outlier. Time and again, powerful autocrats have thwarted Western attempts to solve intra-state crises, fearing (not without reason) that the West might ultimately be out for regime change. Fearful of the precedent this might set for their own regimes, dictators have often sat on the fence (China on North Korea) or even fomented the conflicts in question (Russia in Syria).

## Problems of Capacity

Limited diplomatic resources are another obstacle to engaging non-Western states. Most attention in recent years has been devoted to the growing assertiveness and diplomatic skill of a few great powers, which enter international negotiations with large and well-equipped delegations. Yet, the great majority of non-Western states cannot match the resource endowments of their powerful peers. These countries lack the administrative and financial capacities that are needed to develop and articulate strong national positions. In fact, many of them succumb to the burden of covering the growing number of issues on the global agenda. As a result, they struggle to meaningfully engage with other states on a broad range of items.

2 Michael J. Boyle, "The Coming Illiberal Order," *Survival*, Vol. 58, No. 2, 2016, pp. 35–66.

3 See, for instance, Andrea Kendall-Taylor, "How Democracy's Decline Would Undermine the International Order," Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2016; Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

4 See Steven Seligman, "Politics and Principle at the UN Human Rights Commission and Council (1992–2008)," *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2011, pp. 520–541; Simon Hug and Richard Lukács, "Preferences or Blocs? Voting in the United Nations Human Rights Council," *Review of International Organizations*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2014, pp. 83–106.

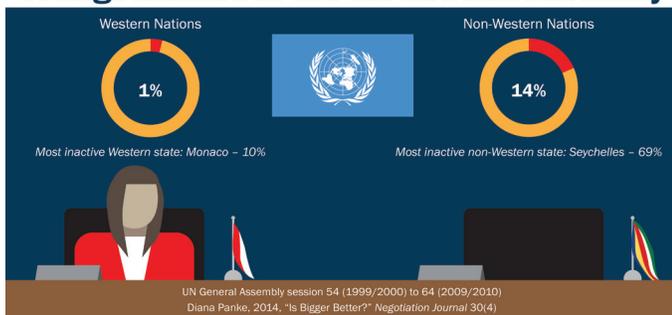
5 See Christian von Soest, "Democracy prevention: The international collaboration of authoritarian regimes," *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 2015, pp. 623–638.

6 See Boyle, "The Coming Illiberal Order."

For the West, this is a problem. It means that many states that may share interests with Western countries do not participate on issues of common concern. Diana Panke has shown that small states, namely the many countries with limited budgets and understaffed missions, participate less actively in voting in the UN General Assembly (UNGA).<sup>7</sup> Disproportionately often, these states have non-Western origins, rendering voting absence a much bigger problem beyond the West than it is among Western countries (see figure below).<sup>8</sup> Among those who are particularly inactive — participating in less than 50 percent of the votes — are democratic states like Tuvalu and Kiribati. While they are small island countries, their votes each have the same weight as that of China. They should hence not be lost.

Moreover, absenteeism among non-Western states is not only common when it comes to voting, but also with regard to participation in international negotiations (where some countries never raise their voices) and candidatures for seats in international organizations. Put differently, where membership is restricted and based on elections, as in the UNHRC and the UN Security Council, some states never seek a seat.

## Voting Absence in the UN General Assembly



Small non-Western states may attempt to compensate for their capacity shortages by joining larger groups of non-Western countries. In fact, small states have the most to gain from joining a group. It provides them with privileged access to information and analysis

7 Diana Panke, "Is Bigger Better? Activity and Success in Negotiations in the United Nations General Assembly," *Negotiation Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 2014, pp. 367–92.

8 The figure is based on the voting behavior of 189 countries. The group of Western states includes all members of the European Union, EFTA countries, European microstates, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel.

they could not have acquired on their own.<sup>9</sup> Entering negotiations in a group rather than alone also provides these states with much greater bargaining leverage. Yet, while countries tend to choose groups with which their interests overlap broadly or with which they share particularly vital concerns, these states will be bound by group solidarity even where their preferences diverge. Group loyalty may thus impede mutually advantageous agreements on many issues of common concern.

Group solidarity can have bizarre effects: Iran taking the stage in the UNGA to discuss the *Report of the Human Rights Council* on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is certainly such a case.<sup>10</sup> After all, NAM does not only include fellow autocrats but also largely democratic states like Botswana, Mongolia, and Panama. Similarly, loyalty with the G77 frequently induces African and Asian countries to actively oppose (or fail to support) the European Union on human rights decisions in the UNGA.<sup>11</sup> Nuclear proliferation is another topic where Western states and some members of NAM may share an interest in stronger non-proliferation efforts but collaboration is complicated by the adversarial rhetoric adopted by NAM's leaders. Official NAM positions suggest little room for compromises.

Inactivity and detrimental bloc politics facilitated by states' capacity shortages are hardly new phenomena. Yet, they are particularly daunting challenges in a time when the need to forge cross-regional coalitions has increased substantially.

## Frustrations with the West

Another serious obstacle to coalition building is a sense of Western domination common among non-Western states. Put differently, non-Western countries are often unwilling to seek common ground with Western ones because they perceive the liberal international order and its main institutions as means

9 See Ronald A. Walker, *Multilateral Conferences: Purposeful International Negotiations*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, here p. 120.

10 Iran did so in 2015.

11 See Richard Gowan and Franziska Brantner, "A Global Force for Human Rights? An Audit of European Power at the UN," European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2008.

of Western dominance.<sup>12</sup> According to this view, international institutions work in favor of the West and every Western effort to cooperate inside this framework is an attempt to continue imposing its will. Again, these sentiments are far from new — they are deeply rooted in historical experiences of Western colonialism and imperialism. In recent years, however, these sentiments have been expressed more vocally and have found assertive spokespeople among powerful non-Western states.

“ **The declining attractiveness of the West plays into the hands of those who seek to capitalize on adversarial stances between Western and non-Western states.** ”

The rise of powers beyond the West has enhanced non-Western states' frustration with their lack of representation and voice in international institutions. Rather than reflecting the new distribution of power, these institutions continue to privilege the West. But soaring resentments about an international order that disproportionately favors the West is also due to a general decline in Western legitimacy. Among other things, this drop is the result of disastrous entanglements in Iraq and Afghanistan, methods of spreading Western values that are often perceived as intrusive, and a general failure of the West to change international institutions and agendas in line with non-Western demands.

As a result, cooperation inside the existing international framework has become rather difficult. This is evidenced by decreasing support for Western initiatives, institutional deadlock, and a series of attempts at counter-institutionalization. As Gowan and Brantner show, in only two decades, the EU has lost substantial support on human rights votes inside the UNGA. More specifically, within only two decades, it has lost the support of about a quarter of

UN member states.<sup>13</sup> This is accompanied by frequent institutional deadlock as a result of insurmountable tensions between Western and non-Western states.<sup>14</sup> The failure to conclude the Doha Round is a particularly clear example of this. It does not only “delay ... the promised benefits of trade liberalization ... but also undermines the credibility of the WTO”<sup>15</sup> as a whole. Clearly, the declining attractiveness of the West plays into the hands of those who seek to capitalize on adversarial stances between Western and non-Western states. In fact, the continuing relevance of groupings like the G77 and NAM — despite conflicting interests among its members — is certainly linked to group leaders' efforts at exploiting anti-Western sentiments and bolstering an ideological divide between developing non-Western countries and developed Western states.<sup>16</sup> Lastly, non-Western countries have begun to bypass existing arrangements perceived to favor the West by establishing competitor institutions. Among the most prominent are the New Development Bank launched by BRICS countries in 2015 and the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) that was opened in 2016. Both are alternatives to the Western-dominated World Bank and IMF.<sup>17</sup>

Needless to say, the three challenges outlined are interrelated. For instance, capacity shortages and anti-Western impulses both push countries into groupings of states that fortify adversarial bloc politics rather than boost collaboration. Likewise, the growing appeal of illiberal regimes that gets in the way of global liberal policies is certainly fostered by sentiments of Western domination, including Western attempts to universalize its democratic ideals.

<sup>12</sup> See Zürn and Stephen, *The View of Old and New Powers on the Legitimacy of International Institutions*; Hans Kundnani, “What is the Liberal International Order?” German Marshall Fund, Policy Essay No. 17, April 2017. Gowan and Brantner look at the period from 1990 to 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Gowan and Brantner look at the period from 1990 to 2008.

<sup>14</sup> See Amrita Narlikar, “New Powers in the Club: The Challenges of Global Trade Governance,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 3, 2010, pp. 717–728.

<sup>15</sup> Narlikar, “New Powers in the Club,” p. 721; also see Paul Collier, “Why the WTO Is Deadlocked: And What Can Be Done About It,” *The World Economy*, Vol. 29, No. 10, 2006, pp. 1423–1449.

<sup>16</sup> See Yvonne Yew, “Diplomacy and Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Navigating the Non-Aligned Movement,” Harvard Kennedy School, Discussion Paper No. 7, June 2011.

<sup>17</sup> For more examples of parallel and alternative structures promoted by China in particular see Sebastian Heilmann, Moritz Rudolf, Mikko Huotari, and Johannes Buckow, “China’s Shadow Foreign Policy: Parallel Structures Challenge the Established International Order,” Mercator Institute for China Studies, October 2014.

## Tackling These Challenges

If the future of the liberal international order depends on forging broad issue-specific coalitions with like-minded non-Western states, the West needs to tackle the challenges involved. While none of these obstacles is easily overcome, three strategies may help the West — and European countries in particular — to address them. First, Europe can make better use of its bilateral ties to non-Western states. It can use them to engage countries on matters in which they currently do not participate and to reach out to those within larger groups of states that may find that their interests on an issue are better met when working with the West than when sticking to their group. Second, when trying to strengthen the liberal international order, the West should focus more strongly on goals it shares with the large majority of small non-Western states and which are difficult to dismiss as Western imposition. The defense and strengthening of the international rule of law is one such area. Third, to avoid destructive clashes of political systems, the West should cut back on the more blunt and intrusive methods of democracy support and human rights promotion in favor of bottom-up approaches and cooperative engagement that addresses non-Western concerns.

### *Reaching Out to Small States*

In dealing with the problems of capacity shortages, Western states have two tasks. First, they need to successfully mobilize potential partners among non-Western states who currently remain inactive. And second, they need to disrupt bloc politics where members' interests are much more diverse and at least partially aligned with those of the West. To meet both objectives, Western states need a more active and sensitive approach of issue-specific outreach.

In this regard, reaching out to the first category of states, the inactive, is surely the easier task. Even achieving that states get involved rhetorically — that is, if they publicly position themselves on a topic on which they would have otherwise remained quiet — is a success. It can send a strong signal to other non-Western countries that preferences are more diverse and that there is an alternative to adversarial

bloc confrontation. But Western states should not only target states' rhetoric but also their actions. They could, for instance, support good human rights performers in running for a seat on the UNHRC. At the moment, flagrant human rights abusers are elected to the Council simply because they have no contenders. Many electoral democracies in particular never compete for a seat.<sup>18</sup> Yet, this requires that the West itself stops subverting competitive elections by nominating only as many candidates as there are seats to be filled. It did so only recently when it allowed France to withdraw from the race to join the UNHRC this fall, leaving Spain and Australia as the guaranteed winners of the Council's two Western seats.

The more difficult task confronting Western states is to turn members of non-Western state groupings into issue-specific allies. Yet, European countries have a unique advantage they may well exploit more actively: they can rely on an unrivalled diversity of bilateral ties to most countries in the world, including trade and aid relationships, but also historical, cultural, and linguistic links. Clearly, these are assets in the process of outreach. They provide invaluable channels for sensitively addressing non-Western states' concerns. Examples that the West may build upon are the recent U.K. effort to make more of its Commonwealth ties by boosting cooperation on countering violent extremist ideologies. Similarly, France's dense ties to other French-speaking countries within the framework of The International Organization of la Francophonie may build on already existing commitments to cooperate on conflict prevention and peacebuilding as well as the promotion of the rule of law, human rights, and democracy.

Outreach includes better awareness-raising — providing a state with better information where its group's representatives take stances that may conflict with the country's interests. In most cases, however, getting others on board will be more complicated. It will require targeted diplomatic efforts to single out individual states and convince them first, that their interests are better met in an alliance with the West, and second, that diverging from their group on one occasion does not preclude it from aligning with it in

18 See Ted Piccone, "Assessing the United Nations Human Rights Council." Brookings, May 2017.

another case. The West needs to further intensify its diplomatic outreach along these lines. This includes accepting that it has to work on an issue-by-issue basis with the states that will undercut it elsewhere.

## *Addressing Anti-Western Sentiments*

To engage non-Western states in constructing a sustainable international order, the West should capitalize on issues where non-Western states are favorable and where efforts of institution-building cannot be dismissed as acts of Western imposition. Preserving and enhancing the international rule of law is the most obvious case in point. In fact, a large constituency of non-Western states are small countries. That most of them seek changes to the international order does not mean that they seek to replace Western dominance with domination by non-Western powers. States that are small and lack the power to impose their will generally prefer the power of law over the law of the powerful.<sup>19</sup> The continuously strong support for the UN Charter, which emphasizes the principle of sovereign state equality, is marked proof. When it comes to empowering international rule of law as an alternative to domination by either Western or non-Western states, the West can likely rely on the strong support of small non-Western countries.

In this regard, the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) serves as best practice.<sup>20</sup>

The process of establishing the ICC shows that when it comes to working toward a rules-based international order, small non-Western states may not only be highly supportive; they

may also be powerful change agents. In fact, it was an alliance of Western states (most of European countries) and small and middle powers from various regions of the world that successfully lobbied for the Court. This like-minded group not only transcended traditional bloc affiliation but also included many nongovernmental organizations. With the adoption of the Rome Statute, the ICC's founding treaty, in 1998 the group sought to ensure that in the humanitarian field, the power of law was strengthened over the law of the powerful.

While today similar efforts to build bridges will likely face a much tougher climate, there is still a lot to learn from the ICC. Most importantly, it shows the importance of properly engaging (small) states from all the world's regions. To gather support for the ICC, the like-minded group convened a series of regional conferences where states could voice their concerns and gather information on the changes proposed. As Nicole Deitelhoff has shown, states' impression that their concerns were being recognized was key to the successful vote on adopting the Statute. Moreover, the ICC case highlights the need to engage those who are silent. In fact, the Statute's adoption became possible because a silent majority that had been thought to oppose the Court finally turned up in its favor.<sup>21</sup>

## *Dealing with Dictators*

The new global power of dictators is a challenge for concerted action on human rights and democracy. Hence, stronger back-up by another constituency is becoming increasingly vital: democratic rising powers. While their domestic political structures should make them natural allies of the West, states like India and Brazil have frequently sided with autocrats when it comes to fostering human rights and democracy. These countries may share the Western desire for an international order based on democratic rule and respect for human rights, yet reject the West's offensive methods for bringing about this sort of order. Given their historical experience with Western meddling in states' domestic affairs, they are particularly allergic to anything that smells of foreign intervention.

“ **Making globalization more socially sustainable may serve as a common thread for joint human rights engagement among Western and non-Western states.** ”

19 See Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemma: Small States in International Politics," in Christine Ingebritsen, Iver Neumann and Sieglinde Gsthl (eds.), *Small States in International Relations*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006, pp. 55-76, here p. 58.

20 See Nicole Deitelhoff, "The Discursive Process of Legalization: Chartering Islands of Persuasion in the ICC Case," *International Organization*, Vol. 63, No. 1, 2009, pp. 33-65.

21 See Deitelhoff, "The Discursive Process of Legalization."

Brazil, India, and South Africa, three of the BRICS, have shown a general resolve to take responsible action in cases of massive human rights violations. In 2011, they enabled the passing of Security Council Resolution 1973 that established a no-fly zone over Libya to protect civilians against attacks by the Qadhafi regime. Yet, the fact that what was meant to take all necessary measures to protect civilians became an act of regime change has seriously diminished rising powers' willingness to support similar efforts in the future.

“**Europeans should better exploit the manifold bilateral ties that connect them with non-Western states.**”

To win democratic rising powers as partners and thus revive liberal values in international politics, the West should take these states' concerns seriously. It should further scale back on the more intrusive elements of democracy promotion and human rights support. It should focus its activities on countries and issues where improvements find relevant domestic support and which allow for cooperative and facilitative approaches that democratic rising powers will support.

The West should also pay more heed to the preoccupation of non-Western countries with economic and social rights. A new emphasis in this regard may help Western human rights support to regain legitimacy beyond the West. This emphasis may also resonate at home; concerns about social and economic rights will likely regain traction within Western societies as well. After all, recent years have shown how seriously Western societies are struggling with social inequality. The aim of making globalization more socially sustainable may well serve as a common thread for joint human rights engagement among Western and non-Western states.

In order to reduce the potential for ideological proxy wars in fields where mutual wins between autocracies and democracies are feasible, the West should favor bottom-up approaches of democracy and human rights support as well as quiet high-level diplomacy over public shaming and other types of

highly visible top-down pressure. Liberal values may still be furthered behind the scenes even if they lose some visibility in high-level interaction. Moreover, effective civil society structures — once in place — may be much more durable pillars of democracy and human rights support. In this regard, Mazarr has highlighted the “dense global networks of experts, activists, businesses, and nonprofits operating within the framework of the liberal order,”<sup>22</sup> that have come to operate quite independently of the ups and downs of high-level politics.

## Dispersed Leadership

The global diffusion of power has raised serious concerns about Western leadership in the global realm and the West losing sway over the agenda and structure of the international order. By openly flaunting its reluctance to lead, the current U.S. administration has added to these worries. Yet, the emergence of a post-Western world does not disempower the West: European states can still engage in the development of rules, contribute to problem-solving, and further the provision of global public goods — and thus contribute in a meaningful way to preserving and reshaping the liberal international order. In fact, in a post-Western world, leadership is more dispersed: it is a matter of effective coalition building.

Clearly, building alliances with non-Western states entails several challenges. As European states start to better prepare for them, three strategies may help them: first, Europeans should better exploit the manifold bilateral ties that connect them with non-Western states; second, they should stronger embrace projects favored by the large constituency of rather small non-Western countries — the strengthening of the international rule of law being a particularly promising one; and third, they need to adjust their approach to promoting democracy and human rights in order to win the support of democratic rising powers.

<sup>22</sup> Michael J. Mazarr, “The Once and Future Order: What Comes After Hegemony?” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2017.

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## About the Author

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## About the Future of the Liberal International Order

GMF's initiative on the future of the liberal international order seeks to preserve the open, rules-based system the transatlantic allies built together — and to develop a comprehensive action plan to reform and strengthen it. We must address today's political and economic turbulence in a manner that is attuned to long-term economic, technological, political, and power dynamics. Before we can act, we also need to understand what is happening. What liberal international order are we defending? What are the driving forces (from populism to technology to globalization) behind the fraying consensus and what scenarios could lead the international order to unravel or adapt? What can we learn from history? Are there models for success we can learn from? All of these questions and more inform our work on the liberal international order, and our aim to identify a way to reinforce and adapt it.

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