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Is there a Manifestation of Order or Disorder in the Present World? Analyse logically and in line with global realities.

Order is central to the notion of an international society. Without order there can be no society. And without society there can be no civilized life. This is one of the most central themes of the English School, which has recently seen a strong renaissance in international relations scholarship. Two assumptions are thus essential to this tradition of thought: that order does indeed exist in international politics, and that this order is desirable. Both assumptions are, at least to some extent, reasonable. Of course, some type of order exists, even in an allegedly anarchical post-national realm. Otherwise there would be nothing but endless chaos and conflict. And, of course, order has its positive dimensions, for it provides the basis for stability and the rule of law. To say that there is a disorder would mean total anarchy that more or else exists in a dystopia (the one which we see in authoritarian states like North Korea).

In contemporary times, however, we have seen certain levels of disorder take place in state relations, particularly among the great power states. The level of mistrust between state leaders have caused them to take certain actions that are more or less to the detriment of all, this can be attributed to globalisation. The actions of the United States and China in a trade war shows the level of cordiality and cooperation between states. The US has had rifts and the United States has shown remarkably little respect for these laws and the international institutions that are related to them. Washington withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, the Land Mine Ban Treaty, the Biological Weapons Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the ABM Treaty, and the newly established International Criminal Court. The US treatment of suspected Al-Qaeda detainees in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay is said to violate the Geneva Convention. The same is asserted for the increasingly sweeping surveillance practices within the United States. Perhaps most significantly, the recent war against Iraq violated international law because it lacked a respective resolution from the UN Security Council. Recent US violations of international law clearly come as a blow to international society.

Recent US violations of international law clearly come as a blow to international society. Can one still speak of a meaningful international order if it can be so easily transgressed and replaced with new rules or no rules at all? Bull would undoubtedly answer in the affirmative, pointing out that the element of disorder always looms large and that any legal system gets violated at times. This in itself does not question the system, for without transgressions there would be no need for rules at all. With regard to US behaviour, Bull would probably stress that each state has different interpretations of existing legal, moral, and operational rules. And Washington did, of course, believe that it fully adhered to the Geneva Convention and that no additional UN Security Council resolution was needed to make the war against Iraq just and legal. This in itself is significant, Bull would point out, for by indicating a just cause, or at least a pretext for war, the respective state is keen to be seen as playing by the rules. The fact that it feels it owes others states an explanation of its conduct is itself indicative of the importance of rules and patterns, even if the state in question violates many of them.

Following Bull, the task now consists of figuring out whether the rules of international law are sufficiently observed to allow for the existence of an international order. Alternatively, one can go one step further, again with Bull, and contemplate how order may be able to exist independently of international law and international institutions. Consider how a new political order may be emerging, a pax Americana so to speak, an order that stands, at least in part, in contradiction to the old body of international laws and institutions. Michael Ignatieff of a ‘global hegemony whose grace notes are free markets, human rights and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known’. Order would thus emerge from the American-led promotion of certain ‘common’ interests. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, perfectly captured this source of order. He admitted that states act in self-interested ways. But at the same time he stressed that ‘our self-interest and our mutual interests are today inextricably woven together’. One would be hard pressed to find a better summary of the English School's attempt to demonstrate that common interests make it possible for order to emerge even in an anarchical international system and a world driven by power politics.

The notion of shared interests as a source of global order can be questioned. One can point out, for instance, that the self-interest of the United States and Britain is not necessarily the same as those of many developing countries.