

Responsible Statecraft in Post-Liberal International Society

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Contemporary international politics appears beset by an ongoing process of fragmentation and increasing inter-state competition. The liberal order, as the dominant normative framework for post-Cold War international society, is weakened by the dual challenges of resurgent authoritarian powers and the fragility of liberal values domestically. In this context, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 upended rules and norms for the systemic control of violence, suggesting a potential turn towards a more disorderly power politics. Viewed pessimistically, this post-liberal context suggests a contracting scope for multilateral cooperation, though conversely a potentially increased role for more ad hoc and pragmatic forms of statecraft. Critically examining the form, tools and scope of contemporary statecraft is thus an important theoretical and empirical task, for this period of global transition.

This workshop aims to draw from some of the concepts and debates of the international society tradition to explore the implications of the 'post-liberal' context, for evolving practices of statecraft and conceptions of responsibility in world politics. Statecraft entails the careful calibration of the state's political and material resources to achieve specific foreign policy outcomes. State conduct remains a key driver in the evolution of international society, both in the transgression and obsolescence of existing international norms, and in the construction of new ones.

When existing norms of international society are placed under greater stress, how might states act responsibly with regard to their own national interests, the prevention of violence and in maintaining cooperation on key issues of global concern? Are traditional practices of statecraft sufficient to maintain orderly inter-state relations in the current context, or are newer innovations required? Moreover, how might shifts in statecraft affect global justice concerns – at either the inter-state or the human level? In addressing these broad questions, the workshop seeks to explore ways in which states might use the available tools of statecraft, to at the very least mitigate disorder, and/or to potentially regenerate existing or develop new multilateral frameworks for addressing global problems.

The workshop seeks contributions that cast light on theoretical, empirical and normative themes within contemporary statecraft. The workshop may be of particular interest to scholars working on practice theory, global ethics, foreign policy analysis, constructivism and English School theory.

Questions for exploration may include (but are not limited to):

- Is statecraft an appropriate analytical concept for a highly interconnected, relational world politics?
- What new practices of statecraft are emerging to address the challenges of the post-liberal world?
- Could ad hoc forms of statecraft potentially be more desirable in a pluralist world, than more comprehensive systems of norms associated with the liberal order?
- How are innovations in contemporary statecraft, as a response to the post-liberal context, generating new norms in international society?
- Is statecraft intrinsically limited to the pursuit of narrow national interests, or could it be linked to more ambitious internationalist ends such as inter-state or global justice?
- How might responsible statecraft be understood in a post-liberal context? To whom is this responsibility directed?
- What are the responsibilities of great powers in contemporary international society?
- Has the post-liberal context engendered new forms of statecraft amongst non-aligned states?
- What are the current prospects for foreign policy contributions to human rights and human security agendas?