

2022

# GLOBAL ORDERS: PAST AND PRESENT

WORKSHOP REPORT



ACADEMY OF  
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES  
IN AUSTRALIA



## ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

### **TITLE**

Global Orders: Past and Present

### **CONVENORS**

Professor George Lawson, Australian National University

Iain MacGillivray, The University of Melbourne

Professor Christian Reus-Smit FASSA, The University of Queensland

### **DATE AND PLACE**

15 - 16 September 2022

Australian National University

This workshop was funded by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, as part of the 2022 Workshops Program. Find out more at: <https://socialsciences.org.au/workshops-program/>

Published April 2023.





# GLOBAL ORDERS: PAST AND PRESENT

**The Global Orders: Past and Present workshop was held at the Australian National University, Canberra, on 15 and 16 September 2022.**

There are few issues of greater significance to contemporary world politics than the changing nature of global order. This workshop explored the sources of, and prospects for, global order by asking what can be learned from past international orders around the world: how they rose and fell, and how they met major challenges. The workshop included specialists from International Relations, International Political Economy, Area Studies, Law, History, and Sociology. This interdisciplinary approach provided a broader frame of reference than is commonly used to assess the changing nature of global order.

Key issues identified in the workshop are summarised here for the benefit of academic, practitioner and public audiences interested in the shifting landscape of global orders.

## PARTICIPANTS

**George Lawson**, Australian National University

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**Glenda Sluga**, University of Sydney, European Union Institute

**Fleur Johns**, University of New South Wales

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**Ann Towns**, Gothenburg University

**Ayse Zarakol**, University of Cambridge



## VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL RECOGNITION

Research into global orders has to increasingly reflect the intricate dynamics of international orders, particularly the interplay between horizontal and vertical recognition within the context of egalitarian and hierarchical membership in international society.

International orders not only encompass this dual vertical/horizontal character, but also function as boundary containers, leading to the exclusion of certain actors who are either misrecognised or entirely unrecognised.

By shedding light on these aspects, research on global orders can contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in international orders and their implications for global politics.

## THE WHERE, WHEN AND WHO OF GLOBAL ORDERING PROJECTS

Research into global orders will benefit from testing concepts such as *international*, *world* and *global order*, from more empirical perspectives. This can be achieved by exploring contextual dimensions, such as the *where*, *when*, and *who* of various ordering projects.


For example, what kind of project in what specific circumstances do actors think they are enacting (i.e. the *where* and *when* of projects)?

Furthermore, it is essential to broaden the understanding of actors engaged in ordering projects beyond traditional elites, such as bankers and financiers. Revolutionary agents, non-state actors, and everyday order-makers should be taken into account to capture the full spectrum of those influencing global orders today.

Contestation over ordering projects often gives rise to disconnections, leading to the dismantling and reconfiguration of existing orders. This observation underscores the dynamic nature of global orders and emphasizes the need to study the transformative processes that occur within them.



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## EPISTEMIC AND SEMANTIC ISSUES

An epistemic issue emerges when examining global orders, wherein actors may share a common semantic structure, such as the 'rules-based international order,' yet maintain distinct positions and political perspectives. Consequently, their understandings of this structure can vary significantly. Related points were also raised around order as a sanitised way of talking about domination, control and conquest, and security as (often) violent projects of dispossession and extraction.



**Related points were also raised around order as a sanitised way of talking about domination, control and conquest, and security as (often) violent projects of dispossession and extraction.**

By critically addressing these related points, researchers can uncover the power dynamics inherent in global orders and challenge the prevailing narratives that may mask underlying dynamics of control and inequality. Through this lens, a more nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding global politics can be attained.

## MAKING SENSE OF GLOBAL ORDERS IN A COMPLEX WORLD

Finally, it is important to reassess how to best to 'group' orders, e.g. by events and moments, by purposes and intentions, by periods and types, etc. This became particularly tricky when discussing the contemporary world where we are faced with complex processes of disassembling and reassembling over multiple scales. This came out most strongly in discussions of 21st century capitalism. ■

## NEXT STEPS

- **Forthcoming edited collection.** Participants will be taking on these discussions by developing an edited collection based on the papers presented at the workshop. Concerted work on this collection will take place following a second, follow-up workshop, which will be held at Gothenburg University, in May 2023.
- **Research Group.** Workshop participants have started a standing group on 'history and theory', which will hold its first meeting at ANU later in 2023. Beginning as a collaboration between ANU and the University of Queensland, we will bring together students and faculty working in this sub-field as a means of generating conference panels, further workshops, academic publications, and more.

## CONTACT

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