REVIEW ESSAY

Ukraine, Intervention, and the Post-Liberal Order

James Pattison

Decolonizing Human Rights, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 250 pp., cloth $105, paperback $34.99, eBook $28.

Promoting Justice across Borders: The Ethics of Reform Intervention, Lucia M. Rafanelli (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 280 pp., cloth $74, eBook $72.99.

Solferino 21: Warfare, Civilians and Humanitarians in the Twenty-First Century, Hugo Slim (London: C. Hurst, 2022), 328 pp., cloth $24.95, eBook $16.99.

The international reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been unprecedented. Western states, including the United States and U.K., have supplied substantial, sophisticated arms to Ukraine; Russia has been subject to an unparalleled level of cyberattacks;[1] there has been an extensive sanctions regime; and the UN General Assembly has invoked its Uniting for Peace resolution for the first time in four decades. We have also seen major shifts in the foreign policies of European states, including Germany hugely increasing its defense spending, Sweden and Finland applying to join NATO, and Switzerland moving away from neutrality. Russia's invasion is the most significant event in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and it is taking place at a time when the liberal international order that has dominated since 1945 appears to be waning. The rise of

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China and other non-Western states, along with the growth of far-right populist movements within key liberal democratic states, challenges shibboleths of liberalism and the prevailing global order. We may be moving toward a post-liberal order that is less characterized by Western dominance and liberal norms.

The features of the post-liberal order are up for debate. According to pessimistic predictions, we are heading toward a more realist, anarchic order with high levels of conflict between major powers and their proxies, where international laws and normative concerns have little influence.[2] For others, the post-liberal order is likely to resemble a more communitarian, sovereigntist order that reflects a multipolar world and allows scope for normative concerns, albeit with a distinctive statist flavor.[3] The more optimistic predict that the liberal international order will linger on but in a somewhat diminished form, as the major Western powers, especially the United States, retain predominance and global influence, and voters in liberal states generally eschew far-right authoritarian leaders.[4]

The war in Ukraine provides an important indication of the contours of a post-liberal order and highlights several potential ethical issues that may arise as the world changes. The books under consideration in this review essay—*Solferino 21*, *Decolonizing Human Rights*, and *Promoting Justice across Borders*—help to navigate three issues in particular. First, what sorts of interventions, if any, can be justified in response to situations such as the one in Ukraine? Second, and more fundamentally, how can such interventions be justified in the face of the potential weakening of the basis of universalist claims in a post-liberal order? Third, what should the priorities of states be if the post-liberal order features even more global challenges and, as a result, creates a greater need for states to prioritize between situations?

Ukraine, the Post-Liberal Order, and Reform Intervention

In *Solferino 21*, Hugo Slim reflects on the state of humanitarianism in the twenty-first century, drawing on the experiences of Henri Dunant—one of the founding figures of modern humanitarianism—in the Battle of Solferino of 1859 to consider the current and future dilemmas facing humanitarians. *Solferino 21* is a brilliantly written book: it is accessible, informative, provocative, and offers helpful summaries of contemporary warfare and humanitarianism.

In the first section, Slim outlines ten major features of contemporary wars, before going on to consider the ethical challenges posed by the next generation

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of warfare. Slim examines the moral problems posed by artificial intelligence (AI) and space wars, which will be familiar to many readers of this journal. Interestingly, and somewhat presciently, he also suggests that as we move away from a unipolar world, we may once again see a reemergence of "big wars" that are less lawful and more awful, noting that Russia's new security strategy shows that it is determined to protect Russian "cultural values" against Westernization.

The second section on civilians in war is the most enlightening. Slim argues that civilian deaths are often exaggerated by humanitarian organizations for self-interested reasons. Instead of focusing solely on deaths, Slim places much more emphasis on the social disaster of war, showing how war harms civilians in multiple ways. But he takes care to not simply view civilians as victims. He argues that civilians in conflict have far more agency than we often think. They engage in activities such as protests, protective accompaniment, clandestine rescue, and mutual aid, as we have seen in Ukraine, where civilians have been actively resisting the invasion, from patrolling the streets to blocking roads with their bodies.

In the third section, Slim considers the current humanitarian aid system, including the familiar debate between those advocating for a leading role for international actors and those calling for greater localization (he is sympathetic to the latter). In doing so, he highlights the "big aid" model of humanitarianism, where contemporary humanitarianism is dominated by elaborate bureaucracies that go beyond providing urgent, life-saving assistance, and possess extensive development mandates that aim to create liberal democratic societies. This is where Slim is at his most provocative—and least persuasive. He argues that international organizations should step back and cut down on bureaucracy; rather than Western agencies directly providing aid themselves, they should instead take the role of a supporting organization that helps local bodies. In addition, he argues that humanitarians may need to limit their objectives to helping those in most extreme need, rather than the big aid model that includes, for instance, programming for gender equality, LGBT rights, and the welfare state (although he is careful to note that he shares these goals personally). In a post-liberal order, the broader ambitions of Western humanitarianism, he argues, risk being viewed as "interference" (p. 205). Yet a more stripped down, less bureaucratic, and more multilateral aid system would, I think, be even more problematic, insofar as it would overlook major injustices stemming from gender and LGBT inequalities, lack sufficient accountability and reporting, and be stymied by political conflicts about where to react.

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What should be done in response to the potential big wars that Slim warns of—and that the situation in Ukraine has at times threatened to become—and more generally in response to armed conflict and creeping authoritarianism worldwide, if those more pessimistic about the post-liberal order are right? This brings us to the books by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim and Lucia Rafanelli.

In *Decolonizing Human Rights*, An-Naim's main objective is to criticize the human rights regime and humanitarian intervention. The human rights regime, he claims, has been hijacked by the North Atlantic colonial powers (which, for him, include Russia) to protect their own hegemony and strategic interests. The human rights regime focuses on a conception of human rights—civil and political rights—that is too limited and that concentrates too much on coercive enforcement. It is better, he argues, to let populations self-determine, choosing which view of human rights they want, and for compliance with human rights to emerge through persuasion.

An-Naim spends much time rehearsing familiar and somewhat tired critiques of the limits of humanitarian intervention. As readers of this journal will already know, humanitarian interventions can sometimes be unsuccessful, be influenced by national interests, be selectively undertaken, set problematic precedents, and their effectiveness can be difficult to judge—An-Naim reminds us again of these objections. But despite these concerns, the vexing thing about humanitarian intervention—and what has generated so much debate over the past four decades—is that on occasion it still seems not only morally permissible but obligatory. Indeed, in contrast to the general thrust of the book (and somewhat confusingly for this reader), An-Naim implies in a few passages that UN Security Council–authorized humanitarian interventions might be justifiable and that intervention to tackle genocide can be warranted (pp. 65, 66).[5] Nevertheless, generally for An-Naim, all coercive measures to enforce human rights are off the table. This includes even the least coercive measures, such as naming and shaming, which, beyond being "totally futile and counter-productive" (p. 57), obscure the neocolonial dependency that coercive diplomacy relies upon, as postcolonial states are vulnerable to pressure by former colonial powers.

If repressed populations were, in fact, free to self-determine, and if persuasion and dialogue were always feasible and successful means of tackling egregious violations of human rights, An-Naim's noncoercive solution would be attractive. But it seems highly unlikely that these measures will always work. And what is more, if the pessimists are right, the post-liberal order may increase repression and further

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limit opportunities for persuasion and cultural dialogue. How, then, should the international community—or at least states and other actors wanting to tackle violations of basic human rights—respond?

Here is where Rafanelli's book, *Promoting Justice across Borders*, comes in. The book is interesting, original, and very well-grounded in political philosophy. It takes us away from the often empirically limited and dated discussions of the ethics of humanitarian interventions to consider other measures that can be launched in response to rights violations. Her focus is "reform intervention." This is a broad term, covering lots of measures; it involves "any deliberate attempt to promote justice in a foreign society" (p. 2; emphasis removed). By focusing on less violent and risky types of intervention, Rafanelli persuasively argues that "intervention is not always as dangerous (morally or otherwise) as we're used to believing" (p. 56).

On the face of it, a defense of reform intervention might appear to license regime change by powerful actors. But Rafanelli carefully builds a typology of reform intervention to guard against this concern. To start with, the reforms can be piecemeal. And, in contrast to regime change, reform interventions may oppose only *some* elements of the recipients' existing institutions ("oppositional interventions"); or they can simply bypass the recipients' existing institutions ("extrainstitutional interventions"); or they can work through recipients' institutions ("intrasystemic interventions"). Regime change is justified, Rafanelli argues, only in cases where the recipient is "fully illegitimate." For regimes that have partial legitimacy, regime change would be unjustified. In such cases, oppositional intervention is the most coercive form of action permissible.

There is more to the typology. Reform interventions vary not just in (1) how much they work with the recipients' institutions but also in (2) how coercive they are. At one end of the scale, reform interventions can be "totally controlling," where the recipients have no agency to contravene the wishes of the interveners, such as, Rafanelli suggests, the structural adjustment programs by the IMF and World Bank in the 1980s. Toward the other end of the scale are "slightly controlling interventions," which make it possible for recipients to act against the interveners' wishes without undermining their own nonvital interests. Here she gives the example of the U.S. trade deal signed with Oman that pushed labor reforms in Oman (Oman could have rejected the deal). Further down the scale still are "noncontrolling measures," which, in their attempt to influence recipients, have no control over the recipients. She presents two interesting examples here. The

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first is Tostan, which is an international NGO that runs community empowerment programs in Western Africa that work against practices such as female genital cutting and child marriage. Tostan enters into a community only after being invited and teaches in local languages, using traditional African teaching techniques. The second example is the response to S.B. 1070, the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, a strict anti-immigration law passed in Arizona, while it was making its way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Mexico issued an amicus brief that was joined by seventeen other Latin American countries, with the aim of improving the rights protections of their nationals, and of those of Latin American descent, in Arizona. Rafanelli argues that, in doing so, both Tostan and the signatories of the amicus brief aimed to improve rights protection in another state through persuasion alone, recognizing the recipients of their influence "as worthy interlocutors" (p. 38).

In developing this typology, Rafanelli is animated by concerns about Western dominance, colonialism, and self-determination, in a similar vein to An-Naim. But unlike An-Naim, she argues that reform interventions can in fact *bolster* recipients' collective self-determination by challenging "the colonial and other geopolitical hierarchies that rob societies on their bottom rungs of self-determination" (p. 6). Indeed, in what is the most interesting and important part of the book, Rafanelli rightly questions the notion that reform interventions are necessarily colonial, which is sometimes found in simplistic and poorly informed and limited discussions of intervention. These discussions, somewhat ironically, focus too much on Western interventions and overlook interventions by non-Western powers, such as by Tanzania in Uganda in 1979 and by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Sierra Leone in the 1990s.

Rafanelli takes the point further still, showing that interventions can be used *against* geopolitically powerful states. For instance, the Latin American submission to the U.S. Supreme Court and the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign (which aims to change Israeli policy through nonviolent means), "directly challenge [colonial] hierarchies: they consist of historically less geopolitically powerful, non-White, non-Western actors taking action against historically powerful White, Western actors" (p. 178). They are therefore "counter hegemonic in the anti-colonial sense" since the interveners come from a less privileged position in colonial hierarchies than those that are subject to the intervention. Not all reform interventions, of course, follow this pattern. But Rafanelli also plausibly argues that even if they are conducted by those from a more privileged position,

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reform interventions can still avoid being subject to concerns of neocolonialism if they practice toleration and treat the recipient's institutions as legitimate.[6] This provides an important counter to those who equate intervention (often, and especially, humanitarian military intervention) with neocolonialism, missing the nuances and the potential interventions that are less subject to this concern.

What would reform intervention mean in Ukraine? Rafanelli argues that in general there should be a presumption in favor of counterhegemonic interventions that defy existing historical and geopolitical hierarchies. Presumably, this would apply to the regional hierarchies in Eastern Europe, and so support (at least some of the) Western action to help Ukraine retain its sovereignty. The typology of reform intervention also helps us to address whether measures to help promote the key values of the liberal international order might be justified. This includes reform interventions to promote democracy in states that are authoritarian (such as Russia and Belarus)—or in states that are leaning toward authoritarianism but still have partial or substantial legitimacy (such as Orbán's Hungary).

Rafanelli also suggests that intervention in *fully* legitimate states can be justified, in contrast to the predominant view in international political theory that being a legitimate state precludes the state from being subject to permissible intervention. The sorts of interventions that can be justified in fully legitimate states are, as one might expect, limited to those that attempt to work with the recipients' institutions and can help to improve justice within the recipient societies (specifically, systemic interventions and extrainstitutional ones that are not forceful). Here Rafanelli considers the decision by European states to refuse to send drugs to the United States that would be used to implement the death penalty, and rightly concludes that they were justified.

I believe that similar measures could be used to tackle growing authoritarianism in liberal states. That is, there could be justifiable reform interventions both to defend liberal values in a post-liberal order and to maintain the liberal international order. These could take the form of noncontrolling or slightly controlling (that is, not coercive or not very coercive) interventions and work through recipients' existing institutions and be undertaken by lesser powers. This could take the form, for instance, of African or Latin American states attempting to educate groups (such as those with which they have links) in the United States and Europe that may otherwise support authoritarian, anti-democratic parties. The liberal international order has, of course, overseen huge problems, from the failure to tackle global poverty and climate change properly to the wars in Iraq and

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Afghanistan, and could be significantly improved. Yet the specter of a post-liberal order where the norms of sovereignty are undermined even more and liberal values are eschewed in favor of authoritarian ones, such as that predicted by the pessimists, seems even more problematic. The liberal international order—at least the *liberal* part of it (if not necessarily Western hegemony)—seems worth defending, and certain reform interventions to help ensure justice in the longer term might be required to avoid an even worse order. Although a post-liberal order may be inevitable, reform interventions might be used to ensure that any future global system has more of the features of a lingering liberal international order than of a realist, anarchic order or a sovereigntist, communitarian one. The reform interventions deployed to do this would challenge both existing forms of domination by Western powers and new forms of domination by rising powers, such as the Chinese debt-trap diplomacy, and would aim to defend key liberal international values and institutions, such as democracy and the rule of law.

Relative Liberalism and the Post-Liberal Order

The notion of reform intervention to assist Ukraine, to tackle authoritarianism, and to defend the liberal international order might face another major challenge in a post-liberal order. An-Naim highlights this challenge, emphasizing throughout his book that liberal action to defend liberal values, contrary to its claims of universality, is in fact "liberal relativism." The challenge is this: without a universalist basis, how can liberals enforce their values on others who do not endorse them?

Concerns about liberal relativism are often given short shrift by political philosophers who endorse metaethical foundationalism, the view that there are foundational, universalist moral truths.[7] But as we potentially move toward a post-liberal order, worries about liberal relativism should be taken more seriously. First, those who endorse foundationalism should be worried since claims by Western actors to be acting in the name of universal, foundational moral truths will look increasingly parochial if a post-liberal order no longer features Western liberal hegemony and contains several rival claims to moral truth. For these foundational universal "truths" to have influence—for them to be put into practice by states—they need to be endorsed and internalized, such as in the form of international norms that exert compliance pull. But the potential influence of such truths may be weaker in

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a post-liberal order, in the face of increased contestation and allegations of Western parochialism.

Second, those who endorse universal principles on the basis of *anti*-foundationalism should also be worried by liberal relativism in a post-liberal order. Anti-foundationalists hold that, although there are no objective moral truths, there can still be moral values that are relative or universally agreed upon. For example, to generate universal principles, John Rawls famously invokes the notion of an "overlapping consensus." Despite diverse comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines with different religious and philosophical bases, Rawls argues that there can be agreement—an overlapping consensus—on the substance of certain issues, such as human rights.[8] As I understand him, An-Naim shares this vision: there can be an international overlapping consensus on certain issues, generating universal principles, achieved by a combination of internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue. However, in a post-liberal order, particularly according to the more pessimistic predictions, the existing consensus on values such as basic human rights and international order could begin to unravel. Russia's intervention in Ukraine, and the silence of various important actors, such as China, Brazil, Pakistan, and India, threatens the overlapping consensus about the inviolability of state sovereignty. In addition, the consensus around basic human rights is likely to become far weaker as authoritarians increasingly argue that basic human rights can be violated in many more cases and challenge whether various populations are rightful holders of human rights.[9] In a post-liberal order, relativism about such norms—An-Naim's notion of liberal relativism—looks increasingly likely.

Where do these threats to universalism leave the justifications of measures such as reform intervention—actions to support human rights and democracy globally? For An-Naim, the answer seems clear: In the face of liberal relativism, such actions are impermissible. It is not permissible to force your values on others.

This assessment seems too quick. Liberals can still defend their values, even if (1) liberalism is relative and one endorses anti-foundationalism, and (2) some of the more pessimistic predictions about the post-liberal order materialize. It is a common mistake (although not among moral philosophers)[10] to equate relativism with passivity or the tolerance of evil, and to hold the view that relativism subscribes to the acceptance of egregious practices happening beyond the borders of one's state. Relativists *can* condemn wrongful practices taking place in other states, such as egregious civil and political injustices and severe deprivation. For

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relativists, the basis for condemning egregious practices such as mass atrocities does not stem from universal moral principles, but rather from one's moral code. For instance, liberal relativists could condemn the genocide of the Jews by the Nazis even though Nazis did not share the same moral code.

To be sure, this is not to claim that, on anti-foundationalist defenses of liberal values, states (such as powerful Western states) are morally permitted to ignore others' views and to engage in coercive action in other states on a whim. Their action should be justified according to their relevant, relative moral code. For instance, reform intervention would have to meet the relevant, often exacting, criteria found in prevailing moral codes about the ethics of foreign policy, which may often require states to act legally according to international law, to possess authorization from a legitimate body, and to seek others' views.

Moreover, given the metaethical modesty of anti-foundationalism in not endorsing objective moral truths, it seems necessary to consider other viewpoints and to seek consensus, as An-Naim, Slim, and Rafanelli all emphasize.[11] This may mean that nonviolent forms of reform intervention to advance liberal values should be favored over risky, coercive measures.[12] The moral uncertainty involved may also mean that it is even more important that those undertaking reform interventions to defend the liberal international order or liberal values should seek out the views of those likely to be affected by the action. Doing this will allow them to better understand the likely impacts of the action, to ensure that the recipients support it, to seek out other viewpoints, and to establish a consensus in order to be as confident as is possible that the decision to act is the right one.

As such, even in the face of liberal relativism, it can be justifiable to undertake intervention to defend the liberal international order and key liberal values in other states, including in those of the Western powers that are falling short of maintaining liberal justice, through measures such as reform intervention by lesser powers.

Humanitarianism and Prioritization

Ukraine has received an unprecedented level of attention and resources from Western states, many of which have been opening their borders to refugees from Ukraine. Although praiseworthy, it also highlights the radical injustice of states' previous reluctance to accept nonwhite refugees. For instance, Kiril Petkov, the Bulgarian prime minister, said of the Ukrainian refugees that

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"These are not the refugees we are used to. These people are Europeans . . . these people are intelligent, they are educated people. . . . This is not the refugee wave we have been used to, people we were not sure about their identity, people with unclear pasts, who could have been even terrorists."[13] More broadly, the response to Ukraine highlights how states are prioritizing the efforts to resist Russia and largely overlooking other major crises. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the World Health Organization, has questioned the world's focus on Ukraine, claiming that crises elsewhere are not being properly considered. He has challenged whether "the world really gives equal attention to Black and white lives," given that the ongoing conflicts in Tigray, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Syria, with their huge toll for civilians, have received only a "fraction" of the attention devoted to Ukraine.[14]

Related closely to these concerns about double standards is the issue of the opportunity costs. An-Naim argues that the false promise of humanitarian intervention distracts from the urgent task of developing an effective remedy against all human rights violations. The crux is that, unfortunately, decisions to focus on one type of response or to prioritize one crisis often have opportunity costs for other responses and crises, as states are either unable or unwilling to fulfill all their global responsibilities. In the post-liberal order, especially according to the more pessimistic predictions, these opportunity costs are likely to be even greater, as there are more crises to respond to but fewer responders willing to act. Those who are willing to act are likely to face calls to do more but have fewer resources with which to do it and will endure tough choices about which areas to focus on. For instance, should the potential financial and diplomatic resources used for interventions (including reform interventions) to promote civil and political rights be better used elsewhere, such as to tackle socioeconomic deprivation, climate change, or disease? Would, for instance, the huge resources spent arming Ukraine be better deployed tackling communicable diseases facing the global poor? Consider here the U.K.'s £1.6 billion contribution of aid (at the time of writing) to Ukraine, when it has cut its overall aid budget to 0.5 percent of GDP.[15]

Some of the dynamics involved in assessing prioritization are highlighted by Slim in his discussion of civilian experiences. Slim argues that the labeling of armed violence as "war" is political. He notes that whereas the violence in countries such as Mexico, Honduras, Brazil, and South Africa is framed as mere "criminality," despite the extremely high number of violent deaths and warlike

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conditions, traditional gang violence in South Sudan and Boko Haram's cattle raiding in Northeast Nigeria is labeled as "war." Slim also argues that not only has the number of direct civilian deaths from war been falling but so too has the number of indirect deaths—civilian deaths from hunger, disease, impoverishment, or inhuman treatment in detention. These indirect deaths are often far greater than the excess mortality that directly arises from war, as civilians die from famine, starvation, and the collapse of health systems, meaning that they lose access to routine treatment and die early deaths from war's effects.

If indirect deaths are the main harms of war, and the direct deaths are lower than we often appreciate, this further highlights the importance of considering whether financial and diplomatic resources are best spent launching and responding to wars, or whether humanitarian efforts should instead be invested elsewhere, such as in global health, where the preventable death tolls from communicable and noncommunicable diseases are huge—often significantly outweighing those caused by warfare. Should tackling disease—and more generally promoting socioeconomic rights—be the greater focus?

This brings us back to An-Naim's book. An-Naim is critical of the UN and the human rights treaty-based system for marginalizing socioeconomic rights, which he thinks have been relegated to "an inferior status" in the two additional Covenants in favor of civil and political rights. He blames the liberal view of human rights for this move; for focusing on negative rights and those that are justiciable; and for overlooking the positive obligations required for economic, social, and cultural rights that are often framed as merely "aspirational."

This is a limitation of Rafanelli's book, which is in large part focused on reform interventions made to protect civil and political rights rather than to achieve socioeconomic ones.[16] This marginalization is a challenge that defenders of the liberal international order will need to confront. I believe that the best defense of a nonliberal global order is that it might do much better in terms of socioeconomic rights, even if civil and political rights would be under greater threat. To counter this, advocates of the liberal international order need to consider how they can link their defenses of the liberal international order not simply to the protection of democracy and other civil and political rights but also to the advancement of socioeconomic rights, and to better understand how the liberal international order can be more just in this regard.

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Notes

[1] Matt Burgess, "Russia Is Being Hacked at an Unprecedented Scale: From 'IT Army' DDoS Attacks to Custom Malware, the Country Has Become a Target like Never Before," *Wired*, April 27, 2022.

[2] John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (Spring 2019), pp. 7–50.

[3] Amitav Acharya, "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order," *Ethics & International Affairs* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2017), pp. 271–85.

[4] G. John Ikenberry, "The End of Liberal International Order?," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018), pp. 7–23. Also see Tanya A. Börzel and Michael Zürn, "Contestations of the Liberal International Order: From Liberal Multilateralism to Postnational Liberalism," *International Organization* 75, no. 2 (2021), pp. 282–305; Constance Duncombe and Tim Dunne, "After Liberal World Order," *International Affairs* 94. no. 1 (2018), pp. 25–42; Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Stephanie C. Hofmann, "Of the Contemporary Global Order, Crisis, and Change," *Journal of European Public Policy* 27, no. 7 (2020), pp. 1077–89; and Mohammed Nuruzzaman, "Why BRICS Is No Threat to the Post-War Liberal World Order," *International Studies* 57, no. 1 (2020), pp. 51–66.

[5] At other points, however, An-Naim implies that UN Security Council–authorized interventions are impermissible (pp. *x*, 123).

[6] Rafanelli also notes that, in certain cases, the value of toleration can be outweighed, such as when basic rights or interests are urgently in need of protection and interveners are justifiably confident that they will be successful.

[7] According to foundationalism, there are objective moral truths that derive from natural law, rationality, or human nature. From core "truths," the rest of a moral theory is often developed. For example, from his foundationalist claims about agency and human nature, Alan Gewirth derives a complex system of governance and human rights. See Alan Gewirth, *Reason and Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). There are also foundationalist defences of intervention. See, for instance, Carla Bagnoli, "Humanitarian Intervention as a Perfect Duty: A Kantian Argument," in Terry Nardin and Melissa S. Williams, eds., *Humanitarian Intervention: NOMOS XLVII* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 117–42; and Heather Roff, *Global Justice, Kant and the Responsibility to Protect: A Provisional Duty* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[8] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, exp. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[9] See James Pattison, "The International Responsibility to Protect in a Post-Liberal Order," *International Studies Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (2021), pp. 891–904, for discussion of the implications of the post-liberal order for the responsibility to protect.

[10] See Chris Gowans, "Moral Relativism," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Archive, Summer 2019 Edition., ed. Edward N. Zalta, last updated April 20, 2015, plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/moral-relativism.

[11] Uwe Steinhoff, *Self-Defense, Necessity, and Punishment: A Philosophical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2020).

[12] Morally risky action should not be completely precluded, however. See William MacAskill, Krister Bykvist, and Toby Ord, *Moral Uncertainty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). These authors defend the equivalent of an expected value calculation to deal with moral uncertainty (in contrast to certain versions of the precautionary principle, which may preclude all action).

[13] Kiril Petkov, quoted in Associated Press, "Europe's Different Approach to Ukrainian and Syrian Refugees Draws Accusations of Racism," CBC News, February 28, 2022.

[14] Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, quoted in Associated Press, "WHO Chief Blames Racism for Greater Focus on Ukraine than Ethiopia," *The Guardian*, April 13, 2022.

[15] The need to prioritize in the case of mass atrocities is highlighted in Luke Glanville and James Pattison, "Where to Protect? Prioritization and the Responsibility to Protect," *Ethics & International Affairs* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2021), pp. 213–25. Glanville and I explore these issues further in Luke Glanville and James Pattison, *Prioritizing Global Responsiblites* (book manuscript in progress). Prioritization questions are most frequently considered in the field of global health. See, for instance, Bridget Pratt, Mark Sheehan, Nicola Barsdorf, and Adnan A. Hyder, "Exploring the Ethics of Global Health Research Priority-Setting," *BMC Medical Ethics* 19, no. 94 (2018); and Jennifer Prah Ruger, "Global Health Justice," *Public Health Ethics* 2, no. 3 (2009), pp. 261–75.

[16] To be sure, Rafanelli notes that there are rights to a minimum level of welfare and the resources necessary to flourish, and that people are entitled to an equality of opportunity. Nevertheless, the reform interventions that she focuses on concern civil and political rights.

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Abstract: The conflict in Ukraine indicates some of the features of a potential post-liberal order and raises several potential ethical issues that may arise for international interventions as the world changes. What types of interventions, if any, are justifiable in response to situations such as the one in Ukraine? Can interventions be permissible given the potential undermining of universalist claims that are often used to support them? How should states prioritize between situations if there is an even greater number of global challenges in a post-liberal order? Three new books—*Solferino 21* by Hugo Slim, *Decolonizing Human Rights* by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim, and *Promoting Justice across Borders* by Lucia Rafanelli—can help to navigate these questions. Drawing on their insights, this essay argues that reform interventions can be justified to defend the liberal international order, that intervention can be defended from a relativist basis, and that socioeconomic rights should be given greater priority.

Keywords: humanitarianism, intervention, liberal international order, reform intervention, relativism, post-liberal order, Ukraine

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