

Orders of Exclusion: Great Powers and the Strategic Sources of Foundational Rules in International Relations, by Kyle M. Lascurettes. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. 353 pp.

Orders of Exclusion combines the disciplines of international relations and history to explain why powerful states “defend or advance such different order visions across space and time” (p.3). Lascurettes contends that the primary motivation of great powers is the *exclusion* of particular actors from world politics during times of *order change opportunity*, which are unique windows of time where the international order can be adjusted. He explains this throughout the book by using a theory called “*ordering-to-exclude*.” Lascurettes tests this concept by analyzing nine historical cases spanning three centuries, ranging from the 1648 Westphalian settlements to the 1990 diplomacy that brought about the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Lascurettes’ Ordering-to-Exclude concept is built upon four hypotheses that form the core arguments of the book. First, great powers aim to rewrite the prevailing geopolitical order’s rules because they want to inhibit the rise of a powerful adversary that threatens their supremacy and security. This means that when great powers recognize a looming threat “on the horizon,” the dominant power will seek to combat the challenging power with an objective of preserving a status quo that favors the dominant power. Second, the dominant power would amend the principles of the international order to curtail the rise of the ascendant competitor. An example of this would be a great power’s endorsement of rules that attack and denigrate the threat’s internal political organizations. Third, great powers can pursue two distinct responses depending on the nature of the challenge they face. If the challenge is a state-level, conventional military threat, then only shallow changes limited to behavior rules will be advocated. However, if the threat is ideological, unconventional, and unpredictable, profound alterations to the status quo order targeting both behavior and membership rules will be enacted. Fourth and finally, in the absence of any novel or significant threat, great powers will advocate for order continuity. If great powers have continuously benefitted from a system that has served their interests for an extended period, there is no reason to propose significant alterations to the prevailing order.

Aside from these hypotheses, Lascurettes’ Order-to-Exclude Theory also postulates three tangible pathways for “excluding” a perceived adversary. These are 1) “*Commonalities for Contrast*”, which is when a great power collaborates with other states that share similar characteristics and advocate behavior or membership rules inimical to a perceived threat; 2) “*Triggering Tripwires*”, in which a great power appeals to allies by invoking specific ideas in an effort to gain support for a revision of the current order in a way that will curtail an adversarial power’s op-

opportunities to challenge the status quo order; and 3) *Severing Social Power*, a great power's initiation of new foundational order rules to subvert the "social sources" of the threat's power.

Out of numerous profound characteristics of Lascalettes' work, historiographical, historical, and ideological aspects of his theory, in particular, carry importance in the field. At the historiographical level, the book is an artful application of Hegel's dialectical method. More than the mere mention of specific works, Lascalette's work cunningly harmonizes elements of the thesis and antithesis—the IR theories of realism, constructivism, institutionalism, and liberalism—which eventually found their culmination in Lascalettes' Order-to-Exclude Theory. While readers may notice similarities with other theories, "Ordering-to-Exclude Theory," in reality, "both embraces and rejects elements of the major paradigms in IR theory" (p.11). Moreover, while other works "have focused on the consensus-driven origin of order," its greatest departure from these is "the pride of place it affords to competition and conflict in the production of international order." Exclusion is "the propelling motivation for foundational rule-building at important historical junctures" (p.8).

Speaking of history, the historical narrative of *Orders of Exclusion* is admirable for its frankness and interpretation. Although Lascalettes is no historian, he understands the importance of getting straight to the point, which has made the book an enjoyable read. Because his work looks at great power competition and the origins of order from an exclusionary viewpoint, revisionist arguments on different order change opportunities in history have naturally emerged.

Finally, and perhaps his most outstanding innovation, is his argument that ideology is comparable to—or even more significant than—state-level threats. Because contrary ideologies "can come to inflict costs on even the most dominant of actors materially," Lascalettes says, they "have often felt threatened at least as much by contrary *ideologies* . . . as they have by other traditionally powerful *states*" (pp. 9, 43).

The 21st-century great power competition between the United States and China has brought about Ordering-to-Exclude efforts between these two powers, leaving the Indo-Pacific Region conflicted. While China sees the American decline in relative power as an order change opportunity, the US is using its significant influence and vast alliance network to preserve the current order and maintain America's superior position in it.

Under the status quo, President Biden's moves to consolidate US power, preserve the stability of the global economy, and reassure allies of America's commitment to upholding international law and the freedom and openness of the Indo-Pacific (pathway #1) has partly succeeded in excluding China. Moreover, President

Biden's utilization of international law (e.g., UNCLOS) to highlight China's frequent violations of accepted norms compels other states to unite with them in opposing China (pathway #2), which in turn helps to preserve American power in the current system.

Unfortunately for Washington, most nations in the Indo-Pacific are leaning towards the Beijing. They are resisting American pressure, thereby allowing China to continue leveraging its partnerships in Asia and Africa. China's advancement of an "agnostic capitalist" order is increasingly expanding China's bilateral relationships worldwide. Under this vision, the liberal order's foundational rules of great power supremacy, economic openness, and collective security are retained. However, domestic conditions for membership (e.g., government welfare of its citizens, recognition of human rights, and maintenance of free and representative political institutions) are no longer requisite factors for being an accepted member of the international order. What makes this vision so dangerous, especially to American power, are the numerous benefits an "agnostic capitalist" system provides to governments and rulers that are inconvenienced by the liberal norms promoted by the United States.

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