

Info

## Graphic

July 2020

### Author

Dr. Stéphanie Martel

# Unpacking the “Crisis” of the “Rules-Based International Order”: Competing Hero Narratives and Indo-Pacific Alternatives

---

# MYTHS ABOUT RBIO

Three myths about the crisis of the Rules-Based International Order (RBIO) need to be debunked.

1

RBIO is a self-evident "thing" with a fixed, consensual meaning.

2

The RBIO is threatened by clearly identifiable challengers.

3

The RBIO being threatened is a bad thing, while good actors have a responsibility in preserving it.



# CLASH OF NARRATIVES

The crisis of the Rules-Based International Order (RBIO) is a clash of narratives. There are two main types of RBIO narratives.



MARVEL

**MARVEL** narratives dominate the debate. They paint stakeholders in **black and white terms**, draw firm boundaries between insiders and outsiders, and portray a **lack of compliance as inferior** and/or evil.



MANGA

**MANGA** narratives offer an **alternative**. They eschew radical Othering, **convey self-responsibility and betterment**, empathy, constructive leadership, and emphasize the value of **pluralism**.



# SCENARIOS

**The Rules-Based International Order (RBIO) clash of narratives could result in four main scenarios (or a combination of them), from least to more likely:**

1

The dominant liberal Marvel narrative triumphs against alternatives that lose steam and are marginalized as a result of an intensification of stigmatization. China and Russia are firmly integrated into a liberal international order.

2

There is a resurgence of multilateralism, supported by a global shift in favour of Manga narratives, and new forms of transnational solidarity emerge, supported by democratic states.

3

Marvel narratives intensify on all sides, and Manga narratives stagnate and lose steam. The world is split into distinct international orders with competing sets of rules.

4

Marvel and Manga narratives co-exist. Because of a stalemate in multilateral venues dominated or snobbed by great powers, new minilateral initiatives for cooperation emerge among like-minded states to mitigate the effects of big power rivalry and tackle specific problems.

