

A Critical Analysis of the Liberal International Order: From Hegemony to Multipolarity

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Abstract—People generally understand that the liberal international system came about after World War II and reached its peak around 1990. As the Soviet Union or what is called the Eastern campus fell apart, it paved the way for the US-led Western nations to take over and become the main driving force in international politics, changing the dynamics of the international system, and shifting the way things work on the global stage, moving from a bipolar into a unipolar system, making the United States the sole power. In addition, spreading the political and economic principles of liberal international order where the foundation of the system is shaped by these two fundamental pathways. However, over the last few years, the United States has encountered certain difficulties in upholding its dominance and advocating for its established system. The economic path might be manageable, but the political approach of democratic peace seems to be creating more divisions around the world. Difficulties, such as the emergence of influential regional players such as China and Russia, as well as the war in Ukraine, which is not just a regional conflict but a trial for the position of the existing global system. Therefore, the paper sheds light on the challenges confronting the current international order and the role of American leadership by analyzing historical developments, geopolitical dynamics, and ideological shifts, and the paper aims to illuminate the intricacies of this transition.

Keywords—Hegemony, International system, Liberal international order, Multipolarity, Unipolarity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, there has been a gradual increase in interest in the so-called Liberal International Order. This increased curiosity has ignited conversations on a range of platforms, spanning from academic environments to public discussions. There are several general factors that revived the attention, such as the rise of regional powers such as China and Russia. After the Cold War, a central strategic aim for the United States was to alter the internal political systems of both Russia and China, with the intention of including them within an international order that the United States was leading. American decision-makers believed that by encouraging Russia and China to adopt similar values and systems as the US, they could reduce the likelihood of these countries pursuing significant changes or challenges on a regional or global scale. Hence, American policymakers pursued strategies of interaction, tailored separately for each nation. With Russia, they implemented more forceful approaches to bring them into the American liberal order – a path that proved challenging for the Russians to embrace. Conversely, in dealing with China, a more flexible approach was taken, focusing on economic and security cooperation.

The United States evaluated the relative importance of each country within its dominant regional structure. China emerged as a crucial player in maintaining American influence in East Asia, while also possessing enough power to potentially weaken it. Bringing China into the fold was a key objective, prompting the United States to extend favorable conditions. On the other hand, Russia held neither a critical role in overseeing America's dominance in Europe nor the capability to undermine it. A lot of experts suggest that China's rise poses a significant and lasting challenge to the existence of the order. Furthermore, the most recent focus on the Liberal International Order came about in light of Russia's specific military action in Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022.

Furthermore, the challenges faced by the liberal order are centered on geopolitical shifts, the influence of globalization, economic grievances giving rise to new versions of populism and nationalism, and Western nations prioritizing their interests over the values and organizations they initially established. Although even with the chaos caused by world war, economic downturns, and the emergence and decline of fascism and totalitarianism, the global liberal endeavor managed to endure. My argument is that could it also manage

to tackle the current challenges as it has done in the past? I also link the change in liberal democracies to the highly uncertain and ever-changing outside world. In my view, the increase in what it calls liberal authoritarianism in Western countries can be connected to the rise of new influential players and their ambitions for greater independence. This trend became evident with the start of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict.

The international order through history went into several periods of change caused by the rise and decline of great powers and hegemonies who established and controlled its norms and rules. This study centers on the contemporary international structure that was shaped by the United States, revealing its facets following World War II and persisting for the past 70 years. This arrangement is commonly referred to as the liberal international order. In our ever-changing world, understanding the shift of the liberal international order from a single dominant structure to a more diverse, multipolar arrangement has become an essential area of exploration. This study seeks to explore the current state of the global liberal international order, closely examining how it has changed and shifted away from its fundamental principles and values. These shifts have given rise to a number of challenges that call into question the United States' longstanding superiority as an essential promoter of the liberal framework. The paper aims to address and accomplish the following research questions and objectives:

- How has the liberal international order undergone transformation?
- What specific challenges arise for the United States' dominance within the contemporary liberal international order?
- To explore the alterations that have occurred within the framework of the liberal international order
- To identify the challenges, facing the US domination of the international system.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research followed a qualitative approach, where secondary data were gathered through the examination of pertinent academic sources, particularly books, scholarly articles, and online materials that hold significance for this study. Thematic analysis was employed to examine the data, focusing on selecting and organizing meaningful themes. This choice was made because of its adaptability and suitability for the qualitative nature of the research paper. Thematic analysis involves the identification of recurring patterns or themes within qualitative data (Clarke, 2006). Unlike many qualitative approaches, thematic analysis is not bound to a specific philosophical or theoretical viewpoint (Leavy, 2014). This flexibility is a significant advantage, particularly considering the diversity of research. Furthermore, a historical perspective was employed to trace the evolution of the liberal international order over time. This method enables the examination of historical events to draw insights and forecast future developments.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the world of global politics, an international order can be seen as a prevailing pattern of interaction among various actors. Just like it has occurred in the past, the responsibility of setting up an international order has typically been taken on by a dominant or hegemonic state. Invariably, this state strives to create specific codes of conduct for global interactions that others may choose to adopt, whether willingly or not. Hence, an international order can be seen as a more casual system that functions somewhat like a global authority in the absence of a formal world government. The biggest overarching change in global politics throughout the past 200 years could be referred to as the rise of liberalism. This remarkable journey has seen liberal democratic states progress from being weak and relatively unknown in the late 1700s to becoming the most influential and affluent countries in the world. This transformation has not only elevated the West but also propelled the liberal capitalist system of economics and politics to a position of global dominance. Liberal internationalism presents a perspective of an open, rule-centered system where countries engage in trade and collaboration to achieve shared benefits. Those who embrace liberal ideals see a world where both regular people and governments naturally want to work together for a better future. This entails sharing fundamental interests in forging a collaborative global arrangement based on principles of restraint, mutual understanding, and equal sovereignty (Ikenberry, 1999). However, in a study by Makei (2023), throughout the past 100 years, the liberal international venture has undergone changes and periodically found new ways to present itself. The liberal international concepts endorsed by “Woodrow Wilson” were expanded and adopted by “Franklin Roosevelt” and “Harry Truman.” The liberal order was essentially established after the two global wars and in the aftermath of the Cold War, the main sponsor was the United States also supported by various other Western countries. They supported a setup of a variety of organizations, rules, and shared norms that were thoughtfully crafted to make sure the mistakes of the 1930s would not be repeated, and work toward building a world that embraces peace, prosperity, and the values of democracy. Over time, the LIO was built upon the foundation of international bodies such as the United Nations; global financial institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization; security partnerships such as NATO; informal collectives such as the G7 and the G20; numerous international agreements and accords; and a host of other formal and informal connections and tools. Taken together, these structures have an impact on almost every aspect of life on the planet.

After World War I, the initial attempts to build a liberal international order emerged, driven by the well-known concepts put forth by “Woodrow Wilson.” Wilson's idea was for a world setup centered on a global collective security entity, where independent countries would collaborate to maintain peace among territories. The Wilsonian perspective was built on the principles of free trade, countries determining their own destinies, and faith in positive worldwide

advancements. It was a vision of a united world in which countries trade and interact with one another within a legal framework that promotes an organized global community. Wilson believed that creating a world of stability and peace required a fresh foundation built upon nations that practiced liberal democracy, governments that were accountable and followed the rule of law were viewed as critical building blocks for a world order characterized by peace and fairness (Alstyne, 1961). In his war speech, Wilson argued that “a steadfast concert of peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations” (Wilson, 1917). Wilson also grasped the importance of creating a liberal order that was wide-ranging and accepting in its structure and membership, he believed all states could join the League regardless of their regimen type. The way Wilson saw it, this seeming conflict could be resolved by bringing all aggressive nations under control through a collective security setup. He believed, over time, countries with non-democratic systems would gradually change to become democratic and, in the end, adopt the rules and norms of the liberal international order, at that time, the early phase of the liberal international system started as a plan to construct an order that could provide a safe haven for liberal democracies, allowing them to exist and flourish in a tranquil setting. The heart and soul of Wilson’s vision for liberal internationalism was the League of Nations, which served as its core structure and representation, but it failed to sustain peace and security of the nations.

The significant disruptions caused by the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War paved the way for the United States to take the lead once again in trying to establish a liberal order, an updated version of the Wilson liberal vision that could face the modern existential array of threats.

Smith (2012) argued that the way the American order unfolded after the Second World War has been somewhat restricted in its political impact and reach across different regions around the globe, this was partly due to the context of bipolar competition, where the United States encountered constraints from Soviet influence in various regions across the world. The central structure of the order was mainly centered in North America, Western Europe, and Japan. During that time, the Soviet Union held influence over the second world, whereas the third world became a contested arena caught between the East–West conflict. The dominant order led by the US, or the “Western” powers was intertwined within a broader balance-of-power framework. However, in the aftermath of 1989 when the Soviet Union fell apart, a fresh era unfolded. The United States discovered itself positioned as the solitary superpower on the worldwide platform, resulting in a system where it stood alone at the top. This situation provided the US with an opportunity to establish itself as a global force without rivals. The dynamics underwent a transformation, shifting from a balance of power to a focus on advancing the Western liberal order without competitors, the dynamics changed and shifted from the balance of power to promoting for the Western liberal order. Hence, the United States leaned on liberalism as a significant foundation to expand its sphere of influence, This

underlines the fact that the core of American hegemony is rooted in the principles of liberalism, ultimately classifying it as a liberal hegemony, when considering both the form of government and interactions between nations. To be part of the central group within the US-led system, a country needs to have a democratic government and an economy driven by market forces. Hence, the United States emphasizes on liberal democracies, trying to transform all kinds of regimens into democracies and market-driven economies to enjoy membership in the liberal club and to assure their loyalty. Moreover, according to John Ikenberry (2009), the emergence of unipolarity has stirred up debates and increased uncertainty worldwide regarding the agreements and structures of the liberal order, casting a shadow of controversy over American power. When the Cold War ended, the United States’ prominent role in the global distribution of capabilities stood out as one of the most noticeable characteristics of the international landscape. No other major country has experienced the same level of advantages in terms of resources – such as military strength, economic power, technological advancement, and geographic position. However, as unipolarity becomes more prominent, it also brings about a change in the fundamental way order and rules are established in the realm of global politics. Power is now centered on the dominance of a single state, rather than maintaining a balance or equilibrium. This marks a shift in the landscape, a departure from the norm that could potentially pose challenges to less powerful and secondary states.

The United States often used the rule-based order as a tool to promote Western hegemony, there were instances where it did not strictly adhere to the rules and laws it helped create. Notably, there were doubts about its commitment to its principles such as multilateral decision-making, collectivism, and global cooperation. During and after the Cold War, the United States often acted on its own without much regard for the United Nations framework. It exercised its power unilaterally, engaged in several instances of regimen change, imposed sanctions unilaterally, and engaged in military interventions in different areas around the globe without the approval of the United Nations, but still maintained its formal commitment to the charter system. In early 1992, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz issued a paper that came to be referred to as the Wolfowitz Doctrine, this document later served as the basis for what we now recognize as the Bush Doctrine. The document entailed that a part of the American mission is to demonstrate to potential rivals that they do not have to strive for a larger role or adopt a more aggressive approach to protect their legitimate interests (Tyler, 1992). The confidential paper argued in favor of a world where a single superpower holds sway, its position sustained through constructive actions and military solid capabilities, deterring any nation or coalition from dominating region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power and contest American leadership (Kristol, 2000). This viewpoint dismisses the idea of a collective approach and turns it into a classic principle of offensive realism.

The US adopted a hawkish foreign policy approach without taking into consideration the national security of other states, regional and global security, and stability framework (Furedi, 2022). Altered the global system with its distinctive perspective, placing emphasis on military strength, the US has roughly 750 military bases around the globe in addition to that, forming security partnerships that held a significant influence in shaping the prevailing dominance. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO lost its original purpose which it was about deterring communist expansion. Moreover, went through an identity crisis. The reason for the organization's existence became uncertain when the Soviet Union threat disappeared. The cooperative institutions could have been redirected toward different objectives (Wallander, 2000). Conflicts such as in Yugoslavia led the alliance to create ways to get involved in smaller disputes through limited interventions. The United States, along with NATO, weaponized the idea of human rights as a reason to intervene in various places, claiming the responsibility to protect through the R2P principle. NATO as an instrument of the United States, believed it had the ability and the right to intervene even without getting approval from the UN Security. Before 1991, there was a convenient explanation for any acts of aggression, invasion, or atrocities – the looming Russian threat and the notion of an “evil empire.” However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, a fresh rationale was needed to justify such actions.

This is where the concepts of humanitarian intervention and the just war theory came into play. The concept of just war theory involves finding moral reasons to justify an invasion, making it more defensible. According to Michael Walzer's book: *Just and Unjust War*. In the United Nations Charter, it is stated that launching aggressive wars without UN Security Council authorization is not allowed, and other basic points are also highlighted. However, he goes on to list the cases where he believes exceptions could apply (Walzer, 2015). The US strategically employed the concepts of just war and R2P, later shaping the Bush Doctrine, to validate its interventions and military operations in different nations. This ranged from bombing Serbia to the invasion of Afghanistan, and the controversial war against Iraq aimed at toppling its regimen, all the way to intervening in Libya (Chomsky, 2003).

There are two interpretations of the R2P doctrine. The first is the official United Nations version, established through a UN General Assembly resolution in 2006. If a nation is facing internal oppression and there's a push for intervention, the deployment of external military force cannot occur without the approval of the Security Council. This represents the established R2P approach (United Nation, 2007). The other version comes out of a Canadian commission headed by Gareth Evans, the Evans Commission version of R2P, published in 2001 as the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, is almost the same as the official version, with one key difference. There is a paragraph in it that says regional military alliances can carry out military interventions in their own region without the authorization of the UN Security Council. Hence,

in this case, the intervention in Kosovo would not be “illegal” because NATO, a regional alliance, carried it out.

Who is the one regional military organization that can do such interventions? Well, NATO. What is their region? Not the North Atlantic, which is in the name, but the world. Hence, R2P means keeping to the UN Charter with one exception, which is that NATO can invade and destroy any country that it wants, as it did in Yugoslavia. NATO, of course, means the United States. We have humanitarian intervention, which means we can attack anyone we want because we say that it is humanitarian, and it is given legitimacy because the UN had an R2P resolution supporting it, except it said you cannot do it without a UN Security Council resolution, but that is a minor difficulty. Moreover, the same thing with the war on terror doctrine which was implemented in the national strategy of George W Bush. As Colin Powell explained, the NSS declared that Washington has a “sovereign right to use force to defend ourselves” from nations that possess weapons of mass destruction and cooperate with terrorists, the official pre-texts for invading Iraq. The obvious reason for invading Iraq is still conspicuously evaded: Establishing the first secure US military bases in a client state at the heart of the world's major energy resources.

As old pre-texts collapsed, President Bush and his colleagues adaptively revised the doctrine of the NSS to enable them to resort to force even if a country does not have WMD or programs to develop them. The “intent and ability” to do so is sufficient. Another example was when the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 was precisely to threaten the territorial integrity and political independence of Afghanistan. The U.S. did not respect the Taliban government's wishes, when the Taliban asked for proof that al Qaeda was there, the U.S. provided none (Charney, 2001). After the US initiated a series of airstrikes that unfortunately led to the loss of many civilian lives, the Taliban government surprisingly expressed willingness to collaborate with the US in capturing Osama bin Laden and other members of al-Qaeda. However, the US did not pay attention to this suggestion and proceeded with the option of military action. This decision was shaped by the perspective of “Donald Rumsfeld,” who held the position of US Secretary of Defense at that time. As he expressed it, “we don't negotiate surrender.” In essence, the US wanted to flex its muscles and intimidate everyone to demonstrate their power and role as the punisher.

The wars initiated solely by the US were in violation of the UN charter and international law. Tragically, they led to the loss of countless innocent lives, the displacement of millions, the widespread destruction of nations, and a disruption of global security, sparking fear and uncertainty across the world. The United States has been accused of crimes against humanity, but they have always escaped and have never been prosecuted, even when the US agreed to abide by the rulings of the World Court, they made certain to include a condition that would exempt them from liability for the duties outlined in the UN Charter or the Charter of the Organization of American States [OAS] (Rajan, 1959).

This is the passage that the United States included when they agreed to come under the authority of the World Court in 1946. These principles form the basis of contemporary international law. The United States immediately emphasized that it would not be restricted by either the UN Charter or the OAS Charter. Consequently, they believe that they have legal permission to engage in acts such as war crimes or even genocide. Following a long and strenuous journey spanning 37 years within the U.S. Senate, the United States eventually endorsed the genocide convention in 1988. Nevertheless, they included a condition stating that the convention's rules did not extend to the United States. Regarding the Yugoslav charge against NATO in 1999, the International Court of Justice tribunal permitted the United States to separate itself from the accusation. This occurred because the Yugoslav accusation contained the word "genocide," and based on U.S. law, the country is authorized to undertake actions classified as genocide (Simma, 1999). Overall, the United States possesses the legal freedom to commit various crimes, as recognized by the international legal framework, which is bound by this guideline. Because the World Court does recognize the rule that if a country does not willingly adhere to court decisions, they cannot face legal proceedings. That is how the system is built up. No other country in the world possesses the capability such as the United States to cause widespread harm and violence, whether through military actions or sanctions, across various regions.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. The Challenges of the Liberal Hegemonic Order

The liberal hegemonic order encountered several obstacles from its inception after 1945, and it was able to navigate and persist through them. However, over the past 30 years, emerging challenges have gradually eroded the underpinnings of the liberal order. The strength of the United States and its allies has diminished compared to their earlier state when they established the system. Primarily, the liberal order is currently grappling with a significant internal crisis. In the era of the Cold War, the order led by the United States fostered a feeling of unity among liberal democracies. These nations believed that their alliance not only provided them with greater physical security but also enhanced their economic stability through collaboration, and mutual benefits. During the initial decades after the war, people recognized that being a part of this order meant residing in a space where their societies could flourish and be shielded, both politically and economically. As the Cold War ended, the core values of liberalism began to fade away within Western democratic societies. In addition, the social aim of the order was weakened by the increasing feelings of economic instability and grievances. Over the years, a range of issues has surfaced, encompassing the growth of inequality, economic slowdown, financial hardships, and the fragmentation and deadlocks in the realm of politics. Ever since the 2008 financial crisis, the economic well-being of workers and middle-class individuals in the United States and other Western democratic nations

has remained relatively stagnant (Norris, 2016). The increase in trade and interdependence that followed the Cold War has not necessarily led to improved incomes and life prospects for many segments of Western liberal democracies. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed underlying problems in the United States, such as an unbridgeable wealth disparity where the top 1% of Americans possess significantly more wealth than the entire bottom 50%. There is also the pervasive influence of money in politics through lobbying, campaign donations, the revolving door, and media manipulation. Alongside this, systemic racism has been highlighted, evident in instances of police brutality against African Americans and hate crimes targeting Asians. (Sajadi, 2022).

Milanovic's well-known concept of the "elephant curve" depicts the varied gains across the global system in the past 20 years. Most of the increases in real per capita income are concentrated within two distinct groups. One group includes workers in nations such as China and India who have engaged in low-end manufacturing and service roles. Despite starting with very low wages, they have seen substantial improvements in their earnings, even though they still fall within the lower tier of global income distribution. This is the hump of the elephant's back. The second group consists of the wealthiest 1%, and even more notably, the top 0.01%. These individuals have witnessed significant growth in their wealth. Visualized as an elephant's trunk, this represents the upward extension of income (Milanovic, 2016). For some years now, the United States has been facing a situation where its national debt surpasses its gross domestic product (GDP). This challenge is compounded by the trade deficit, particularly in relation to countering China. The US national debt has escalated to a staggering 30 trillion dollars. The debt-to-GDP ratio has transitioned from 106% during the trump presidency to around 131% under the Biden administration. This situation is inevitably impeding growth. In the most favorable scenario, the US can anticipate only slow economic growth, while the worst-case scenario involves a recession that the country is already heading toward. This all points to the US facing significant fiscal strain in the realm of Western liberal democracies, the concept of liberal internationalism has taken on the traits of neo-liberalism, essentially becoming a framework for global capitalist interactions. The deep-rooted essence of liberal internationalism has gradually diminished. The societal goals that were once closely tied to the liberal order have undergone a transformation. Nowadays, the significance of these purposes is not as clear as it used to be (Keohane, 2017).

The US endeavors to promote democracy and establish a secure global order founded on liberal principles such as freedom, tolerance, individual reasoning, autonomy, and universalism but has not achieved its desired outcome. The international-based order shifted into a Western-oriented political structure that primarily serves the interests of the United States and its allied nations, and the notion of a ruled-based order is no longer functioning. Consequently, this has sparked discontent among many of the states, especially in the global south. The US consistently punishes nations that do not adhere to its rules through economic sanctions

military interventions and regimes overthrown. This approach contradicts the principles of liberalism, which emphasize embracing diversity, tolerance, and the idea of coexisting peacefully with others. As described in the book "America's Deadliest Export: Democracy" written by US author William Blum, after the end of World War II, the United States has been actively involved in attempting to overthrow more than 50 foreign governments. Notably, a significant portion of these governments had originally been democratically elected. At least 30 countries' democratic elections were grossly interfered with and more than 50 foreign leaders were assassinated (Blum, 2013).

For years, the United States has been involved in causing political unrest in Latin America, contributing to events referred to as the "Arab Spring," and initiating color revolutions in parts of Eurasia. These actions have caused significant humanitarian crises and, additionally, have even played a part in the rise of terrorism and extremism (Mearsheimer, 2014). At present, it continues to reap benefits by coercing its allies to fan the flame of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Moreover, the nature of US-style democracy appears to prioritize dominance over equality. US politicians often adhere to self-interested principles such as "America first" and "winner-takes-all" (Sachs, 2018). An America that acts unilaterally disregards international regulations and does not hesitate to forsake its own advocated ideals, such as the principles of a market economy and free trade (Mastanduno, 2009). Richard Nixon surprised US allies by independently terminating Bretton Woods. Similarly, during his initial term, Ronald Reagan unilaterally abandoned arms control and detente, and George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq went against the strong objections of allies, including a crucial partner like Germany. Furthermore, Donald Trump unilaterally declared the withdrawal from the Iran nuclear program. However, in each case, US officials later realized the need to mend relationships, acknowledging that the ethical foundation of their dominance had been compromised and required rebuilding. According to Bruce Cumings, "hegemony means not having to say you're sorry." (Cumings, 1999). This American attitude toward the international system caused dissent and discontent among its members, eventually prompting secondary states to seek out alternative options.

Another issue arises from the growing influence of Russia and China, as for Russia, it embarked on a journey to renew its influence in the region, particularly within the former Soviet states. Initiated efforts to strengthen its economy and redefine its foreign policy approach, striving to establish a unique position in the global arena that does not necessarily align with Western norms. Putin several times has expressed the idea that Western values differ from those of Russia, and the Russia has its own distinctive culture and civilization. In addition, the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine can primarily be seen as a clash between Russia and Western nations. Over the past decade, the United States has made efforts to bring about changes in governments within regions influenced by Russia.

This task has proven to be intricate, and the latest case involves Ukraine, which has escalated into a state of conflict.

Russia holds significant influence over the global economy due to its role as a major exporter of oil and gas, as well as being a significant contributor to the international food supply in addition to its military power. Hence, it can bring about shifts in the global geopolitical landscape. Therefore Western powers are making persistent efforts to weaken Russia both politically and economically through the war in Ukraine as Russia imposed a clear threat to the American image as the leader of the international system. Furthermore not complying with its rules and demanding reformation of its institutions which this attitude encourage other states to revolt over the system, Even with the imposition of strong sanctions by the west and the continuation of the Ukrainian conflict into its 2nd year, the Russian economy remained resilient. Surprisingly, the West is grappling with internal social challenges, and political uncohesiveness because of reduced Russian energy supplies and the expenses related to backing Ukraine. Notably, the conflict has sparked a renewed and strengthened collaboration between Beijing and Moscow, as both the Chinese and Russian president described their relationship as "friendship with no limits" (Wei, 2022) which establishes a foundational context for the effective and lasting pursuit of the interests of the broader global population. As for China, the United States cannot tolerate a state that cannot be intimidated the way Europe for example can be intimidated, a state that does not follow US order becomes a threat and that is what the American policymakers always referred to as the Chinese threat which is about their economic growth.

China has consistently upheld its autonomy and has never been part of the American sphere of control, it has its own military capacity without leaning on the United States military support and embracing its own unique values distinct from those of the Western world. In the last few decades, China established a system of financial and economic institutions and networks that is seen as an alternative to the American-ruled system. Institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Global Development Initiative, and BRICS have been established to bring together countries from various parts of the world into their framework. These institutions provide economic development prosperity and an increase in the quality and welfare of the people, the acronym BRICS stands for Brazil, Russia, China, India, and South Africa. An economic group founded in 2009 to focus on economic development, one of its initiatives is to conduct trade and purchase commodities using their local currencies in addition to the BRICS currency, ditching the use of the dollar. More than 40 nations have shown a keen inclination to participate in this initiative. Among them, countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates stand out as major energy producers on a global scale. Particularly noteworthy is Saudi Arabia's contemplation of selling oil to China using the Chinese yuan. This shift has the potential to impact the value and position of the dollar, especially if they decide to adopt alternative currencies (Reuters, 2023). Moreover, China serves as a sanctuary for nations that suffered and seeking to circumvent American sanctions. Countries such as Venezuela, Iran, Syria,

and Cuba have not only negatively impacted the economies and well-being of these countries but have also significantly disrupted the worldwide economic balance.

China's approach emphasizes mutually beneficial business relationships with other nations, irrespective of their political systems, and refrains from interfering in their internal matters. Many nations in the global South have experienced the impacts of Western colonialism and the challenges posed by financial institutions. China's extensive investment projects provide these countries with notable benefits. For example, in Africa, China constructed schools, hospitals, railroads, and other facilities to enhance the infrastructure. In addition, they have set up numerous vocational schools across Southeast Asia and Africa, aimed at training students in cutting-edge Chinese technologies, these effective Chinese technologies aim to integrate these nations and their progress into the China BRI-based system. China's efforts extend to impacting both Europe and oil-producing countries in the Middle East. Moreover, China is assuming a significant role in diplomacy and the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes. Notably, China has played a crucial part in facilitating the normalization of Saudi-Iranian relations, a milestone that the United States had been unable to achieve in the previous 30 years. Furthermore, initiated negotiations with a peaceful approach to ending the conflict in Ukraine but it was rejected by the United States. This enhances the credibility of having confidence in China's future policies when it comes to participating in resolving conflicts and disagreements among nations, especially the Russian Ukrainian one which the United States constantly discouraged diplomacy and focused on weaponry. China's transition from being a follower of established rules to a creator of new rules has naturally eroded the dominance of Western political influence (Sakwa, 2023).

B. Abbreviations and Acronyms

When the United States had the opportunity to restart the liberal international endeavor in the 1940s, it did not initially aim to change its fundamental principles. Roosevelt and his fellow leaders found themselves promoting a fresh, more seasoned perspective on the liberal international order. Roosevelt wished to bring a touch of practicality to its functioning by creating a more organized role for the major powers, like Wilson's approach. It would be a global system where the major powers collaborate to ensure peace and stability worldwide. The United States would play a leading role in establishing the order, but it would be a collaborative and collective effort to run it. The idea of universal rights and protections gained more prominence within the ideological vision. FDR's Four Freedoms (freedom of speech and worship, freedom from want and fear) became the defining principles for this fresh perspective on the liberal international order (Kimble, 2018). In addition to these universal rights and protections that were embedded in the order, the United States focused on other dimensions of the order, such as the economy, open markets, and security to keep the most significant share of it to remain a sustainable power.

The essence of American liberal dominance was also characterized by its dedication to overseeing a globally open economic system. The approach to achieve this goal involved making the world more open and accessible to the United States. After the Second World War, the United States was concerned about regions in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East being under the dominance of an unfriendly power and closed off to American influence. Particularly during the Cold War period, the task of countering the spread of communist ideology involved efforts to shape states into liberal democracies and prevent the influence of the Soviet Union; furthermore, there was a genuine conviction not only in the Western hemisphere but also in European and Asian cities that the alliance of free nations was more than just a temporary defensive coalition against the Soviet Union. It was seen as the early stages of a political community, a united fate shared among its members (Garton, 2005).

The United States took active steps to open the world economy and establish institutions and partnerships with the aim of creating a lasting and widely accessible global order. Furthermore, its dedication to overseeing and governing economic interactions among nations was demonstrated through international agreements housed within institutions such as Bretton Woods, GATT, IMF, and the WTO. These institutions and agreements were designed to grant governments the capacity to manage and oversee economic openness, to make sure that it aligned with the stability of their own economies and policies aimed at achieving full employment (Ruggie, 1982). Alongside creating enduring global organizations, aimed to establish a sense of order based on a framework of collaborative multilateral governance. Governments would still hold the main authority, yet they would structure their interactions through lasting regional and worldwide institutions. These institutions would play various roles. They would make cooperation easier by offering spaces where continuous negotiation and interaction could take place. This led to an extraordinary endeavor spanning economic, political, and security realms to establish effective multilateral institutions (Ruggie, *Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution*, 1992).

In essence, these strategies were designed to establish and validate the dominant position. First to position the United States as the primary supplier of goods, trade, and economic prosperity to industrialized nations who are part of their bloc. Moreover, security is guaranteed by a web of one-on-one partnerships (such as the hub-and-spoke setup in Asia and agreements of free association) as well as larger group collaborations (such as NATO, the Rio Pact, ANZUS, AUKUS, and the Five Eyes) (Nesmarshnyi, 2023). Nevertheless, the realms of economy and security merely serve as the groundwork; across different historical eras, the United States has played a role in advancing global governance across diverse functional domains. For instance, processes such as decolonization, ensuring strategic stability, preventing nuclear proliferation, global management of the Internet, addressing the challenges of climate change were pursued to insure the allegiance of the alliance. In addition, it also acted as a deterrent for any nation that might not

adhere to the established international rules or attempt to reshape them. The United States held various tools, including sanctions, embargoes, and, if necessary, military intervention, to discourage such actions. As Clark mentioned in his book *Hegemony in International Society*, hegemon's legitimacy relies on two primary factors: First and foremost, its legitimacy flourishes when significant choices involve the active involvement of various stakeholders and second, its credibility can be elevated by achieving positive results, meaning by generating more substantial quantities of public benefits (Clark, 2011). Furthermore, in a hegemonic order, status-quo states willingly adhere to the established "rules of the game" set by the dominant power and put into practice. As pointed out by Gilpin, secondary states are likely to follow a global leader if they see the current order as legitimate and beneficial, and if they feel more comfortable with the stability of things as they are, rather than the uncertainties that change can bring (Gilpin, 1983).

V. CONCLUSION

The liberal international order was built and emerged after the Second Global War by the United States which was the only dominant power. Many other nations, they were left drained with widespread devastation and countless lives lost. The US emerged from the war without bearing significant burdens or costs. The main objective was to establish a system rooted in liberal principles, united identity, and common ideology, aiming to prevent devastating wars and promote cooperation and harmony among nations through multilateralism, free markets, and democratic values. Over time the international order began to evolve in another dimension. After 1989 the United States found itself the sole power in the international arena, it went from power balance and competition to projecting and advocating its own system. It seemed that a unipolar era was on the horizon, and liberal internationalism evolved into a more extreme form, transforming into a liberal hegemony centered around the United States and its Western partners. The rule-based order started to be utilized to advance the interests of the Western political sphere, showing a lack of tolerance toward external challenges, even though it maintained verbal endorsement for diversity tolerance and openness, it inherently led to the adoption of containment strategies against possible competitors and regional powers. The approach of the United States has consistently leaned on tools of coercion, such as military force, interventions, and the overthrow of regimens directly or indirectly through staged coups in various regions, many of these decisions were made unilaterally, going against international laws and institutions.

This conduct created disturbances globally, making it clear that the objective of promoting democracy and safeguarding human rights was less about adhering to rules and more about asserting dominance, often known as American exceptionalism. In the past decade, the American hegemony faced several challenges the most significant is the peaceful rise of China and its economic power that has already exerted

an impact on numerous nations through mutual benefit and non-intervention policies, and their norms become prominent and acceptable by most of the countries even the one that is considered an ally of the US. Providing a haven for those who have suffered under the liberal American order. Playing a crucial role in diplomatic efforts and negotiations, a path that the US discouraged and relinquished in favor of a focus on weaponry and conflicts. One of the factors that revealed the vulnerability of the existing system is the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which has evolved into a proxy war and, in some ways, a second Cold War between Russia and the Western powers, the United States asserted its commitment to protect and defend democracy in Ukraine and provided different types of support to Ukraine, from mobilizing its allies, particularly NATO, to offer substantial supplies of diverse weaponry and financial assistance. Simultaneously, it imposed harsh sanctions on Russia, with the purpose of crippling and weakening the Russian position. However, it appears that, up to this point, these tremendous efforts that have been going on since early 2022 have not achieved the desired outcomes. The Russians still have the upper hand in this war, the sanctions that were enforced did not lead to the collapse of the Russian economy.

This can be attributed to the fact that, crucially, the international community did not heed the directives of the United States this time. Only Europe and Japan aligned themselves with the U.S. sanctions, which combined they represent a small fraction of the global population. Russia still maintains access to the rest of the world, which constitutes a significant portion. This has undeniably impacted the perception of the United States as the primary superpower and has cast doubts on its credibility and dependability as the principal protector. The international system is presently in a transitional phase, moving away from a single dominant power toward a multipolar structure. Emerging and regional powers are seeking to engage and secure their roles within this system. These powers are not necessarily aiming to replace the United States but are striving for a multipolar system that can cater to the interests of all, rather than a system dominated by the US. The United States appears to be struggling to maintain its position as the sole superpower and control its rivals. Hence, it might be wiser to embrace a new approach that emphasizes collaboration, mutual trade, security, and proactive diplomacy, rather than relying on containment and militarism, and this would help to enhance and sustain global development and to solve serious threats that humanity faces such as climate change, pandemics, and food security.

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