

# Liberal Features of the Liberal International Order: Tools for the Understanding and Typology of Liberal Elements

Yuki MORITANI

(Doctoral student, Graduate School of Law, Hitotsubashi University)

June 11, 2025

## Abstract

International order is a central issue in international relations, both as an academic discipline and in reality, and an accurate understanding of its concept and real meaning is extremely important. The paper aims to deepen our understanding of the post-World War II international order, also called the “Liberal International Order” (LIO), which is exceedingly complex to understand in its entirety, by focusing on its liberal elements and characteristics. As the LIO is intersubjective, the author does not interpret it from the idea of liberalism but rather inquires as to the elements and characteristics that have been considered “liberal” in existing discussions. The paper develops our understanding of the LIO by categorizing it according to theoretical liberal elements and characteristics of political, economic, social, and international relations.

## Introduction

*The owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering*<sup>1</sup>

—Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

There is much debate about the declines and crises of the post-World War II international order, also known as the Liberal International Order (LIO). The year 2016 is seen as a “historic turning point”<sup>2</sup> in the LIO due to the UK’s exit from the European Union and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States.<sup>3</sup> Even before that, however, concerns about the state of the international order were triggered by trends such as the wave of anti-American politics associated with the increased military presence of the United States after the 2001 terrorist attacks, the rise of non-Western countries such as Brazil, China, India, and Russia since the 2000s, the confrontation between jihadism and Western countries, and the retreat of democracy. While these concerns have been extensively deliberated,<sup>4</sup> in recent years the debate has intensified in the wake of two major issues: the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began in 2022.<sup>5</sup> In this context, the LIO has been repeatedly characterized as being

<sup>1</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. S.W. Dyde (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> G. John Ikenberry, translated by Ryo Asano, “G. John Ikenberry’s Lecture on ‘The International Liberal Order After Trump’ (Japanese Translation): Keynote Speech at the International Symposium ‘The South China Sea Issue and the Future of World Order’ (January 27, 2018),” *Doshisha Law Review*, vol. 70, no. 6 (2019), p. 369.

<sup>3</sup> PHP Institute, *Jiyushugi-teki Kokusai Chitsujo no Kiki to Saisei: Chitsujo Saihenki no Rashinban o Motomete* (PHP Kenkyusho, 2018), p. 32; Naya Masatsugu and Yasuno Masashi, “‘Garasu Saiku’ no Ribberaru na Kokusai Chitsujo,” in *Jiyushugi-teki Kokusai Chitsujo wa Hokai Suru no ka: Kiki no Gen’in to Saisei no Joken*, edited by Naya Masatsugu and Sophia University International Relations Research Institute (Keiso Shobo, 2021), p. 3; Yoichi Funbashi, “Preface,” in Yoichi Funabashi and G. John Ikenberry, eds., *The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism: Japan and the World Order* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2020), p. vii; Yuki Moritani, “The Reconsideration of 2016 Crisis of Liberal International Order: Intersubjectivity and Literature Review as a Method,” *The Journal of Social Science*, 91 (2024b), p. 88.

<sup>4</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “Power and Liberal Order: America’s Postwar World Order in Transition,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 5 (2005), p. 134; G. John Ikenberry, “The Future of the Liberal World Order: Internationalism After America,” *Foreign Affairs*, 90-3 (2011b), p. 57; G. John Ikenberry, “The Illusion of Geopolitics: The Enduring Power of the Liberal Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, 93-3 (2014), p. 80; Marjo Koivisto and Tim Dunne, “Crisis, What Crisis? Liberal Order Building and World Order Conventions,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 38-3 (2010), pp. 619-620; Marko Lehti et al., “Introduction,” in Marko Lehti, Henna-Riikka Pennanen, and Jukka Jouhki, eds., *Contestations of Liberal Order: The West in Crisis?* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> For example, on the Covid-19 pandemic, see Kojo Yoshiko, “COVID-19 to ‘Jiyushugi Kokusai Chitsujo’: Gōi to Kaigi,” *Kokusaiho Gaiko Zasshi*, vol. 120, nos. 1-2 (2021), pp. 339-

in a state of turmoil or crisis. However, attempts to gain a more profound understanding of the inherent nature of the LIO itself have been limited, and ramifications remain indistinct rather than detailed.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it would seem impossible to accurately grasp and comprehensively understand the LIO. International relations is an exceedingly broad and intricate social phenomenon, and there are challenges in both the quality and quantity of the information that can be obtained.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the notion of international order, inclusive of the LIO, is characterized by an elevated degree of intricacy and conceptualization.<sup>8</sup> It is also a dynamic that is constantly in flux,<sup>9</sup> and perhaps only at the time of its ultimate demise will the picture finally be revealed in its entirety.

In the meantime, however, the international order is a central issue both in international relations as an academic discipline and in the reality of international affairs, and a deeper understanding of it is essential for both academic and policy reasons.<sup>10</sup> In fact, it is crucial to try to understand as much as possible at this point in time, given the political significance of the LIO today. Even if it is impossible to grasp the whole picture, it is possible to draw useful implications and make some progress in understanding by identifying important issues and aspects and making supplementary notes, a task that makes academic sense. The liberal elements and characteristics of

---

349; Henry A. Kissinger, "The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order," *The Wall Street Journal* (April 3, 2020) (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coronavirus-pandemic-will-forever-alter-the-world-order-11585953005>, last viewed on March 5, 2024); Hanns W. Maull, "The Coronavirus Pandemic and the Future of International Order," *Survival*, 63-1 (2021), pp. 77-100. Regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine, see Hosoya Yuichi, "Doyō Suru Ribberaru Kokusai Chitsujo," *Gaiko*, no. 72 (2022), pp. 6-11; Dani Rodrik, "Taming the Security Dilemma," *Project Syndicate* (March 9, 2022) (<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/new-world-order-avoiding-zero-sum-competition-by-dani-rodrik-2022-03>, last accessed March 5, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Ikezaki Koichi, "Riberaru na Kokusai Chitsujo no Saikento: G. John Ikenberry no Giron o Tegakari ni," *Hokudai Hogaku Ronshu*, vol. 70, no. 1 (May 2019), p. 90; Yuki Moritani (2024b), *op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> David A. Lake, "Why 'Isms' Are Evil: Theory, Epistemology, and Academic Sects as Impediments to Understanding and Progress," *International Studies Quarterly*, 55 (2011), p. 467; John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Leaving Theory Behind: Why Simplistic Hypothesis Testing Is Bad for International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations*, 19-3 (2013), pp. 435-436.

<sup>8</sup> Hosoya Yuichi, *Kokusai Chitsujo* (Chuo Koron Shinsha, 2012), p. 33; Hosoya Yuichi, "Doyō Suru Ribberaru Kokusai Chitsujo," *Gaiko*, no. 72 (2022), p. 8; Moritani (2024b), *op. cit.*, pp. 91-93.

<sup>9</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020a), p. 40; Aaron McKeil, "On the Concept of International Disorder," *International Relations*, 35-2 (2021), pp. 201-204.

<sup>10</sup> Torbjørn L. Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 4; Moritani (2024b), *op. cit.*, p. 99.

the LIO are particularly noteworthy. The LIO tends to be characterized by instability and crisis in response to the existence and actions of actors who violate liberal values and norms.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, it has been pointed out that the meaning of liberal characteristics and elements is the most unclear aspect of the LIO.<sup>12</sup> In what sense is the LIO an international order with “liberal” features and elements? By addressing this question, this paper provides a step to be taken to gain better understanding of the LIO.

The paper first examines the place of the LIO in international order theory and the confusion surrounding the concept. It then organizes an understanding of the LIO that focuses on liberal features and elements. Since the LIO is intersubjective, this section does not offer an interpretation of the inner reality of the LIO from the idea of liberalism, but rather finds the liberal elements and characteristics of the LIO by reviewing what has been perceived as liberal in existing discussions. Also, instead of comprehensively capturing liberal features and elements, they are organized by classification into four different aspects: political, economic, and social liberal features and elements, as well as liberalism as a theory in the study of international relations.

## I. Discussions on Liberal International Order and the Idea of

### “Liberal” in Reference to International Order

#### 1. Definition and Understanding of International Order

The concept of international order is challenging to comprehend, both within the framework of the LIO and beyond. One of the factors causing this complexity is the diversity of perspectives among the arguments. While an individual’s subjective conception of international order does not inherently reflect its essence, international order cannot be considered entirely objectively or independent of subjectivity. Instead, it is characterized as

<sup>11</sup> Koivisto and Dunne, *op. cit.*, p. 617.

<sup>12</sup> Tsuruoka Michito, “Kokusai Chitsujo o Meguru Kōbō no Jidai: Joron,” *Kokusai Anzen Hoshō*, vol. 45, no. 4 (March 2018), p. 6; Graham Allison, “The Myth of the Liberal Order: From Historical Accident to Conventional Wisdom,” *Foreign Affairs*, 97-4 (2018), p. 125; Hans Kundnani, “The Future of the Liberal International Order,” in Yuichi Hosoya and Hans Kundnani, eds., *The Transformation of the Liberal International Order: Evolutions and Limitations* (Singapore: Springer, 2024), p. 128; Hans Kundnani, *What Is the Liberal International Order?* (Washington, DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2017), p. 1; David A. Lake et al., “Challenges to the Liberal Order: Reflections on International Organization,” *International Organization*, 75 (2021), pp. 229-230.

intersubjective, reflecting the interplay between subjective interpretations and the objective realities of international dynamics. Intersubjectivity, in this context, signifies the collective knowledge of subjects within a society, which exerts a profound influence on their actions, while concurrently being shaped by these very actions.<sup>13</sup>

The establishment of order is predicated on the capacity to discern patterns of mutual behavior and relationships grounded in discernible principles, as opposed to the absence of any coherent rationale. In the field of international relations, the paramount prerequisites for the maintenance of international order are the presence of states as the preeminent actor and the manifestation of a modicum of regularity in states' conduct,<sup>14</sup> alongside a reasonable degree of predictability in the ramifications of their actions.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, translated by Tatsushi Hamausu (Iwanami Shoten, 2001); Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations*, 3-3 (1997), pp. 327-328; Dirk Nabers, "Towards International Relations beyond the Mind," *Journal of International Political Theory*, 16-1 (2020), p. 94; Caitlin Sparks et al., "The Imagination and International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, 66-3 (September 2022), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Ishida Atsushi, "Kokusai Chitsujo," in *Kokusai Seijigaku*, edited by Nakanishi Hiroshi et al. (Yuhikaku, 2013), p. 169; Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Red Globe Press, 2012), pp. 8-21; G. John Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order," *Perspectives on Politics*, 7-1 (March 2009), p. 84. In the first place, the term "international" was coined by Jeremy Bentham in order to denote reciprocal relations among independent nations. Shinoda Hideaki, "*Kokka Shuken*" to *Iu Shiso: Kokusai Rikken Shugi e no Kiseki* (Keiso Shobo, 2017), pp. 53-54; Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 296; Lorenzo Cello, "Jeremy Bentham's Vision of International Order," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 34-1 (2021), p. 50.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Ishida (2013), *op. cit.*, pp.169-177; Bentley B. Allan, *Scientific Cosmology and International Orders* (Cambridge, New York, Port Melbourne, New Delhi, and Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 5; William Bain, *Political Theology of International Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 1; Bull (2012), *op. cit.*, pp. 8-19; Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 31; Ikenberry (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 84; G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 23; Lake et al., *op. cit.*, p. 228; Kyle M. Lascurettes, *Orders of Exclusion: Great Powers and the Strategic Sources of Foundational Rules in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 16; Kyle M. Lascurettes et al., "International Order in Theory and Practice," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies (August 31, 2021) (<https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-673?jsessionid=DF60A43141D8B6F07F09DF55A9367E46?rskey=P0pQss&result=1>, last accessed March 5, 2024); Michael J. Mazarr et al., *Understanding the Current International Order* (RAND Corporation, 2016), p. 7; Georg Sørensen, *A Liberal World Order in Crisis: Choosing Between Imposition and Restraint* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 9; Shiping Tang, "Order: A Conceptual Analysis," *Chinese Political Science Review*, 1 (2016), pp. 30-46.



This understanding is frequently posited as a definition in scholarly discourse; however, in certain instances, attention is directed toward other components that extend beyond the definition's scope. Primarily, while the international order is purported to be dynamic in terms of the actions of its constituents, it is predominantly discussed in the context of the international system, which is regarded as static.<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that an international system is defined as the aggregate of interconnected components comprising actors, rules, institutions, and other elements,<sup>17</sup> and is not synonymous with the international order, which comprises both actual and predictable behavior.<sup>18</sup> The distinguishing characteristics of such systems are frequently attributed to the disparities between eras and civilizations. These civilizations, in turn, are often regarded as the international order, which specifically refers to the international systems of a particular era or geographical location.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, as Michael Clarke observes that warfare manifests at intersections of the international order,<sup>20</sup> the study of war is often intertwined with the examination of great powers.<sup>21</sup>

In such cases, the term "international order" is often used to denote an

<sup>16</sup> Aaron McKeil, "On the Concept of International Disorder," *International Relations*, 35-2 (2021), pp. 201-204.

<sup>17</sup> Donald E. Lampert et al., "Is There an International System?" *International Studies Quarterly*, 22-1 (March 1978), p. 144; Ludwig von Bertalanffy, "An Outline of General System Theory," *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 1-2 (August 1950), p. 135; Ludwig von Bertalanffy, "General System Theory: A New Approach to Unity of Science," *Human Biology*, 23-4 (December 1951), p. 307.

<sup>18</sup> This concept of international system is also different from international regime. International regimes are "principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue area," as defined by Stephen Krasner. International regimes are also static, but are mainly referred to as such in regard to certain policy areas or international issues. On the other hand, the term international system is mainly used in reference to the global level. It can be further noted that international regime refers to the conversion of expectations of states, which is not necessarily considered as an international system. Stephen D. Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables," *International Organization*, 36-2 (1982), p. 185.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Aono Toshihiko, "Kokusai Chitsujo no Hōkai: 1930-nendai no Kiki to Dainiji Sekai Taisen," in *Kokusai Seijishi: Shuken Kokka Taikei no Ayumi*, edited by Ogawa Hiroyuki et al. (Yuhikaku, 2018), p. 107; Shimamura Naoyuki, "<Josetsu> Kokusai Chitsujo to wa Nanika," *Kyōrin Shakai Kagaku Kenkyū*, vol. 39, no. 1 (September 2023), pp. 24-30; Ikenberry (2001), *op. cit.*; Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History* (Penguin Books, 2014); Lascurettes, *op. cit.*; Mazarr et al., *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Clarke, "The Ending of Wars and the Ending of Eras," *The RUSI Journal*, 160-4 (2015), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Cooley and Nexon, *op. cit.*; Alastair Iain Johnston, "China in a World of Orders: Rethinking Compliance and Challenge in Beijing's International Relations," *International Security*, 44-2 (2019), pp. 9-60; Mazarr et al., *op. cit.*; Patrick Porter, *The False Promise of Liberal Order* (Cambridge and Medford: Polity Press, 2020), pp. 32-33.

international system or doctrine that is considered desirable by status quo forces.<sup>22</sup> As Hedley Bull has noted, political and ideological discourses have been formulated with the ideal state of international relations as a benchmark, encompassing a peaceful vision of an enhanced global order.<sup>23</sup>

Firstly, conceptualizing the notion of stability within the context of international relations proves to be a challenging endeavor. As demonstrated above, the influence of political thought has been pervasive, with ancient and medieval thought playing a significant role in shaping the modern conception of the international order and its implementation in international relations.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it has been noted that the function and stability of international relations have been interpreted through analogy with other social spheres. For instance, the domestic analogy posits that propositions observed in the domestic order are applicable to international relations. By contrast, the market analogy suggests that the realization of international cooperation can be understood as analogous to the function of decentralized free market economies.<sup>25</sup>

As previously mentioned, the concept of international order varies depending on the perspective and context, and various connotations and arguments have been intertwined without adequate organization. International order stands as a pivotal concern within the ambit of international relations as an academic discipline, as well as in the praxis of international relations.<sup>26</sup> It has been a catalyst for intellectual curiosity and professional responsibility among scholars engaged in the study of international relations across various eras. However, the diversity of ideas presented has led to the formation of international order theory without sufficient systematization due to the intertwining and accumulation of these ideas. This amalgamation of theories and divergent interpretations of international order contributes to the ambiguity surrounding the LIO concept.

## 2. The Emergence of Liberal International Order Theory and the Prevailing Ambiguity in Its Interpretation

<sup>22</sup> Ishida (2013), *op. cit.*, p. 183; R. J. Vincent, "Hedley Bull and Order in International Politics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 17-2 (1988), p. 199.

<sup>23</sup> Hedley Bull, "International Law and International Order," *International Organization*, 26-3 (1972), p. 584.

<sup>24</sup> Bain, *op. cit.*; Aaron McKeil, "Order Without Victory: International Order Theory Before and After Liberal Hegemony," *International Studies Quarterly*, 67 (2023), p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Ishida (2013), *op. cit.*, pp. 173-211; Ishida Atsushi, "Joron: Kokusai Chitsujo to Kokunai Chitsujo no Kyoshin," *Kokusai Seiji*, no. 147 (January 2007), pp. 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> Knutsen, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

The LIO concept, and the subsequent discourse surrounding it, emerged after the end of the Cold War. This transition was signaled by the Malta Conference in December 1989, and the subsequent articulation of a “new world order” by US President George H. W. Bush in response to the Gulf crisis of 1990.<sup>27</sup> The developments led to new advancements in the ongoing discourse on the concept of international order. For instance, Timothy Garton Ash characterized the LIO as a bid to circumvent the two extremes of European international society, namely violent disorder and undemocratic hegemonic order with the use of force. He contended that Europe after the Cold War should be moving toward the LIO rather than integration.<sup>28</sup>

The LIO, a concept that has emerged as a pivotal subject in the realm of international order theory, has been shaped by a multifaceted interplay of divergent interpretations and deliberations. While the LIO is widely regarded as the post-World War II international order, there exist notable exceptions to this consensus. G. John Ikenberry, a prominent proponent of LIO theory, contends that the international order of the interwar period following World War I also constituted an LIO. He characterizes the LIO as a progressive international order founded on openness and flexible regulations, which does not rigidly adhere to a single form, instead manifesting in various forms tailored to each historical era.<sup>29</sup>

Ikenberry contends that in the aftermath of World War I, when the international order was predicated upon the principle of the balance of power, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States proposed an alternative international order based on institutions such as open diplomacy, peaceful settlement of disputes, and collective security, in accordance with principles of international cooperation, the rule of law, and justice. The LIO defined this way was subsequently established by the Versailles regime.<sup>30</sup>

The prevailing understanding of the LIO is that it is an international order grounded in liberal values, established under the leadership of the

<sup>27</sup>Hosoya Yuichi, “Atarashii Chiseigaku no Jidai e: Reisen-go ni Okeru Kokusai Chitsujo no Tenkan,” in *Atarashii Chiseigaku*, edited by Kitaoka Shinichi and Hosoya Yuichi (Toyo Keizai Shimpou-sha, 2020), pp. 46-50; McKeil (2023), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, “Europe’s Endangered Liberal Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, 77-2 (1998), pp. 52-64.

<sup>29</sup> Ikenberry (2009), *op. cit.*, pp. 72-84; Ikenberry (2020a), *op. cit.*, p. 1; G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2011a), pp. 2-283.

<sup>30</sup> Ikenberry (2009), *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73; Ikenberry (2011a), *op. cit.*, pp. 239-240; G. John Ikenberry, “Debating World Order: Sovereignty, Interdependence, and the Future of Liberal Modernity,” *Oughtopia*, 33-3 (2018a), p. 23; G. John Ikenberry, “The Emerging Great Power Concert? World Order After the Cold War,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies*, 23-4 (1992), pp. 549-550.



United States in the aftermath of World War II, wherein countries can reap benefits from global public goods through multilateral cooperation.<sup>31</sup> However, the intricacies of this understanding are subject to variation, with some arguments positing the existence of distinct forms of LIOs prior to and following the Cold War era.<sup>32</sup> In addition, there are arguments that do not perceive the LIO as a fully established order but rather as a movement towards the realization of an international order.<sup>33</sup> In the course of such discussions, two pivotal elements have emerged as focal points of discourse: the role of the United States as the predominant and hegemonic power, and multilateral international cooperation, particularly within the context of international organizations. The discourse has unfolded in a convoluted manner, reflecting the diverse perceptions regarding the relative significance of these two elements.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. The Importance of Examining the “Liberal” Elements and Characteristics of the LIO

A focus on structures, institutions, and associated components facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the LIO. However, it is crucial to prioritize an examination of values and ideologies that transcend these structural elements. As Mario Koivisto and Tim Dunne have indicated, as well as the international order concept described as “liberal,” LIO destabilization and crises are frequently discussed in response to the existence and actions of actors who do not contribute to liberal values and norms.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, the definition of “liberal characteristics” or “liberal elements” concerning LIOs remains ambiguous.<sup>36</sup> In both academic and policy contexts, there is an urgent need to elucidate the nature of the LIOs’ purported “liberal” characteristics and elements.

In considering the content of the descriptor “liberal,” it would be natural to examine its relevance to the ideas and related values of so-called

<sup>31</sup> For example, see Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane, “The Liberal Order Is Rigged: Fix It Now or Watch It Wither,” *Foreign Affairs*, 96-3 (2017), p. 37; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Will the Liberal Order Survive? The History of an Idea,” *Foreign Affairs*, 96-1 (2017), p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Kojo, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-343; John J. Mearsheimer, “Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order,” *International Security*, 43-4 (2019), pp. 7-8; Bart M. J. Szewczyk, “Europe and the Liberal Order,” *Survival*, 61-2 (2019), pp. 36-37.

<sup>33</sup> For example, Naya Masatsugu, “Rekisho no Naka no Riberaru na Kokusai Chitsujo,” *Asteion*, no. 88 (2018), p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> Moritani (2024b), *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>35</sup> Koivisto and Dunne, *op. cit.*, p. 617.

<sup>36</sup> Allison, *op. cit.*, p. 125; Kundnani (2017), *op. cit.*, p. 1; Kundnani (2024), *op. cit.*, p. 128.

liberalism. However, it is challenging to comprehend the liberal characteristics and elements of the LIO from the perspective of “what liberal ideas and values are.” Consequently, the next section will commence with a concise overview of the principles inherent in liberal internationalism, the theoretical framework that undergirds the LIO. This theoretical framework will then be shown to be an inadequate basis for understanding the LIO in terms of liberalism. Instead, we will demonstrate that a more fruitful approach would be to identify and delineate the specific liberal elements and characteristics of the international order that have been referenced in the related discourse.

## II. Summary of Existing Discussions with a Focus on Liberal Features

### 1. Liberal Internationalism

In the study of the liberal elements and characteristics of the LIO, the relevance of liberal internationalism cannot be ignored. For example, Ikenberry’s more detailed understanding of the LIO is based on the Westphalian system of sovereign states that developed during modernization, and it points to the existence of liberal internationalism as a principle of the LIO. The term liberal internationalism conjures up the image of an open, rule-based international order in which nations engage in trade and cooperation for the common good, with the aim of promoting civil society and global progress through democratization.<sup>37</sup>

Internationalism, although not a predominant theoretical framework, plays a significant role in the discipline of international relations, encompassing both analytical and normative aspects.<sup>38</sup> It presents a vision of the world in which humanity is, and should be, part of a community that is broader than the units of nations and states.<sup>39</sup> Internationalism can be classified into various categories, including hegemonic internationalism,

<sup>37</sup> Ikenberry (2018a), *op. cit.*, pp. 21-29; G. John Ikenberry, “The Future of the Liberal World Order: Internationalism After America,” *Foreign Affairs*, 90-3 (2011), pp. 58-61; G. John Ikenberry, “Why the Liberal World Order Will Survive,” *Ethics & International Affairs*, 32-1 (2018b), pp. 22-24.

<sup>38</sup> Tanaka Hiroaki, “Riberaru Kokusai Shugi no Shuen to Amerika no Taigai Seisaku: Kokusai Shugi no Genkai to Kanosei,” *Miyazaki Kōritsu Daigaku Jinbungakubu Kiyo*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2018), p. 82; Fred Halliday, “Three Concepts of Internationalism,” *International Affairs*, 64-2 (1988), p. 187; Cecelia Lynch, “The Promise and Problems of Internationalism,” *Global Governance*, 5 (1999), p. 85.

<sup>39</sup> Irie Akira, “Kokusai Shugi no Keifu,” *Hikaku Hogaku*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1996), p. 147; Halliday, *op. cit.*, p. 187; Lynch, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

Marxist internationalism, and anti-global internationalism. This then is the context within which liberal internationalism can be situated.<sup>40</sup>

Liberal internationalism is predicated on the assumption that independent societies and self-reliant individuals can collaborate and coordinate for shared objectives, such as peace and prosperity. Liberal internationalism has manifested in various periods since the 17th century and across diverse domains, including politics, economics, and culture.<sup>41</sup>

In the course of deliberations, the LIO has been examined through two distinct lenses: as a universal concept and as a specific foreign policy of the United States. In both cases, liberal internationalism is understood as a concept that aims not only to introduce liberal democracy and a free market economy as a national system, but also to emphasize and promote their introduction worldwide,<sup>42</sup> as well as to achieve peace and prosperity through multilateral international cooperation through international organizations and other institutions. However, the latter approach identifies liberal internationalism with the U.S. foreign policy doctrine that introduced these ideas and considers the power of the U.S. as vital.<sup>43</sup>

The preceding review indicates that the liberal internationalism present in the LIO as an ideological foundation is not unrelated to liberalism. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate, according to this analysis, to attempt a comprehensive understanding of the LIO's liberal elements and characteristics from the perspective of liberal ideology. While there are

<sup>40</sup> Irie, *op. cit.*, p. 149; Haliday, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194; Lynch, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> Irie, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-151; Halliday, *op. cit.*, p. 192; Lynch, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>42</sup> Ian Clark and Christian Reus-Smit, "Liberal Internationalism, the Practice of Special Responsibilities and Evolving Politics of the Security Council," *International Politics*, 50-1 (2013), pp. 38-39; Alexander Cooley, "Ordering Eurasia: The Rise and Decline of Liberal Internationalism in the Post-Communist Space," *Security Studies*, 28-3 (2019), pp. 589-603; Antonio Franceschet, "The Ethical Foundation of Liberal Internationalism," *International Journal*, 54-3 (1999), pp. 466-481; Stanley Hoffmann, "The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism," *Foreign Policy*, -98 (1995), pp. 160-177; Ian Hurd, "The Strategic Use of Liberal Internationalism: Libya and the UN Sanctions, 1992-2003," *International Organization*, 59 (2005), pp. 500-510; Beate Jahn, "Liberal Internationalism: Historical Trajectory and Current Prospects," *International Affairs*, 94-1 (2018), pp. 43-45; Roland Paris, "Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism," *International Security*, 22-2 (1997), pp. 55-59.

<sup>43</sup> Sasaki Yutaka, "Dainiji Sekai Taisen-chu no Rengokoku no Sengo Shori Kosō: 'Riberaru na Kokusai Shugi' ni Motodzuku Sengo Chitsujo no Seido Sekkei to Sono Isan," *Kenkyu Ronso*, no. 85 (2015), p. 3; Tanaka, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-86; Stephen Chaudoin et al., "The Center Still Holds: Liberal Internationalism Survives," *International Security*, 35-1 (2010), pp. 76-77; Richard N. Gardner, "The Comeback of Liberal Internationalism," *The Washington Quarterly*, 13-3 (1990), pp. 23-24; Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz, "Dead Center: The Demise of Liberal Internationalism in the United States," *International Security*, 32-2 (2007), pp. 7-10.

widely shared elements such as individualism, freedom, and tolerance,<sup>44</sup> the particulars of liberalism differ from theorist to theorist and from era to era. As a result, it is deemed that no standardized and orthodox definition or explanation can be found.<sup>45</sup> Rather than being a systematized idea, liberalism, as Duncan Bell has argued, is the sum of arguments that have been approved and categorized as liberal by those who identify themselves as liberals.<sup>46</sup> The influence of the individual's political beliefs and emotional preferences cannot be disregarded in determining which elements or aspects of an argument are liberal. Notably, John Dunn has underscored the significance of hostility to tyranny and cultural aversion to conservatism and tradition in general as crucial factors.<sup>47</sup>

The objective of this paper is not to present the author's own perspective on the concept of international order, but rather to identify its liberal elements and characteristics to facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the LIO concept. To that end, we must identify the liberal elements and characteristics inherent in the LIO, which are characterized intersubjectively by shared abstract ideas.<sup>48</sup> It would be subjective for the author to evaluate the elements found in the LIO discussion based on the idea of liberalism. Instead, an objective analysis of the extant LIO debate is required, with a focus on the elements and characteristics that have been identified as liberal. The most effective method for achieving this objective is a systematic review of previous studies that have examined the understanding of LIO among scholars.<sup>49</sup>

## 2. Categorization of “Liberal” Elements

There have been a number of endeavors to identify elements and

<sup>44</sup> For example, Anthony Arblaster, *The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 7-91; John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future* (Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 32.

<sup>45</sup> Benjamin Constant, translated by Akio Ōishi, “On the Liberty of Moderns Compared with That of Ancients: Lecture at the Royal Athenaeum of Paris in 1819 (Japanese Translation),” *Chukyo Law Review*, vol. 33, nos. 3-4 (1999), p. 173; Michael W. Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics,” *American Political Science Review*, 80-4 (December 1986), p. 1152; Lehti et al., *op. cit.*, p. 5; James L. Richardson, “Contending Liberalisms: Past and Present,” *European Journal of International Relations*, 3-1 (1997), pp. 5-33; Sørensen, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-65.

<sup>46</sup> Duncan Bell, “What Is Liberalism?” *Political Theory*, 42-6 (2014), pp. 689-690.

<sup>47</sup> Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*; Moritani (2024b), *op. cit.*, pp. 91-95; Nabers, *op. cit.*, p. 94; Sparks et al., *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Gene V. Glass, “Primary, Secondary, and Meta-Analysis of Research,” *Educational Researcher*, 5-10 (November 1976), p. 4; Moritani (2024b), *op. cit.*, pp. 93-95; Hannah Snyder, “Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines,” *Journal of Business Research*, 104 (2019), p. 334.

characteristics of LIO. In many such attempts, a typology of liberal elements and characteristics has been developed.<sup>50</sup> For instance, Yoshinobu Yamamoto and others observed that liberal elements exhibit not only multifaceted characteristics but also antagonistic interrelations. They further noted that the extent of realization for each element differs, underscoring the necessity for their categorization into distinct aspects. Yamamoto and others subsequently proposed a categorization of four distinct types.<sup>51</sup> The first category is commercial (economic) liberalism, which emphasizes free trade and an open economy. The second is institutional liberalism, which focuses on the rule of law and international institutions. The third category is value-based liberalism, which respects democracy and human rights, and the fourth is social liberalism, which considers the transnational influence of non-governmental actors.

Furthermore, Hans Kundnani has elucidated the ambiguities inherent in the term “liberal,” categorizing them into three distinct classifications: first, political liberalism in opposition to authoritarianism; second, economic liberalism in opposition to isolationist economism and heavy commercialism; and third, realism and other theories of international relations. Kundnani’s presentation culminated correspondingly in the delineation of three categories of liberalism.<sup>52</sup>

There have also been efforts to organize the LIO concept through a classification by policy area, rather than by liberal elements or characteristics as such. Daniel M. Kliman and Richard Fontaine have proposed five classifications: (1) a trade order that advances the principles of reciprocity and non-discrimination; (2) a financial order that stabilizes currency and finances; (3) a maritime order based on territorial sovereignty and freedom of navigation; (4) a non-proliferation order that contributes to the prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation and the reduction of nuclear testing; and (5) a human rights order rooted in fundamental freedoms and democracy.<sup>53</sup> Further, certain other scholars have proposed three classifications: (1) a liberal economic order that can offer greater benefits

<sup>50</sup> The subject is not constrained by a clear classification; some descriptions are isolated to different aspects in referring to specific liberal elements or characteristics. For example, Lake et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 230-232; Fredrik Söderbaum et al., *Contestations of the Liberal International Order: A Populist Script of Regional Cooperation* (Cambridge, New York, Port Melbourne, New Delhi, and Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> PHP Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Kundnani (2017), *op. cit.*, p. 1; Kundnani (2024), *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel M. Kliman and Richard Fontaine, *Global Swing States: Brazil, India, Indonesia, Turkey and the Future of International Order* (Washington, DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States and Center for a New American Security, 2012), pp. 8-9.



to all participants; (2) a liberal political order that favors democratic governance; and (3) a strategic order that restrains the major powers that caused catastrophic harm in the first half of the 20th century.<sup>54</sup> All of these classifications appear to capture the resulting liberal elements and characteristics separately for each aspect.

The existing classifications have been synthesized in this paper to present four categories: (1) political liberal elements or characteristics; (2) economic liberal elements or characteristics; (3) social liberal elements or characteristics; and (4) characteristics or elements with liberalism as an ideology in international relations (see the table below). The political liberal elements and characteristics primarily encompass an emphasis on human rights and democracy, both domestically and internationally. Economic liberal elements and characteristics include a free-market economy and free trade, including the role of finance. Social liberal elements and characteristics comprise civil society and transnational exchange within society. In the context of liberalism as an ideology or a theory in international relations, the rule of law and international institutions are noteworthy characteristics. The subsequent review of the understanding of the LIO in existing debates will be organized based on this categorization.<sup>55</sup>

**Categorizations of the LIO<sup>56</sup>**

Scholars	Categories								
Author	Political		Economic		Social	IR Theory/Ideology			
Yamamoto et al.	Institutional	Value-Based	Commercial		Social	<div></div>			
Kundnani	Political		Economic					International Relations	
Kliman and Fontaine	Human Rights Order		Trade Order	Financial Order				Maritime Order	Non-proliferation Order
Robert Kagan et al.	Political Order		Economic Order					Strategic Order	

<sup>54</sup> The Global Agenda Council on the United States, *Strengthening the Liberal World Order* (World Economic Forum, 2016), p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> As illustrated in the subsequent summary, the liberal characteristics and elements are complementary and not independent of each other across various classified categories. This is not a completely exhaustive review due to limitations of space and methodology; however, we have endeavored to focus on the most representative and important features and elements to the extent possible.

<sup>56</sup> The Global Agenda Council on the United States, *op. cit.*, p. 6; Kliman and Fontaine, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

### 3. Political Liberal Elements and Characteristics

As one of the most significant components of the LIO, it has been noted that its member countries are democracies, and that democracy has been promoted on an international scale within the LIO.<sup>57</sup> However, as Carl Schmitt has stated,<sup>58</sup> democracy is not inherently synonymous with liberalism. Indeed, there exist democratic political systems that exhibit a disregard for constitutionalism and human rights, often characterized by authoritarian elements.<sup>59</sup> The contemporary understanding of democracy within the LIO framework pertains to liberal democracy, characterized by the implementation of free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the separation of powers.<sup>60</sup>

The emphasis on democracy stems from its being perceived as a political system that fosters and protects human freedom and human rights.<sup>61</sup> This perspective is particularly influenced by the assertion of Francis Fukuyama that history is a progression toward freedom. According to this argument, the universalization of liberal democracy signifies the "end of history," which is conceptualized as the culmination of ideological struggles and the finalization of a particular political system.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, when Wilsonianism is

---

<sup>57</sup> A plethora of arguments have been posited that equate the aggregation of democracies, cooperative systems, and related entities with the LIO. However, these arguments often neglect to emphasize the characteristics of actual interstate relations. In contrast, Ikenberry offers a critique that clearly identifies and challenges these fallacies. Ikenberry (2020), *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>58</sup> Carl Schmitt. *The Historical-Intellectual Situation of Contemporary Parliamentary Democracy and Another Work*, translated by Yoichi Higuchi (Iwanami Shoten, 2015), pp. 20-32.

<sup>59</sup> Larry Diamond, "Elections Without Democracy: Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy*, 13-2 (2002), pp. 23-24; Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, 76-6 (1997), p. 22. The existence of civil liberties is an essential element in the establishment and functioning of such liberal democracies. This is not only what this paper categorizes as political liberal elements and characteristics, but also a significant part of the classification of social liberal elements and characteristics.

<sup>60</sup> Maiko Ichihara et al., "Jūsōka suru Kokusai Chitsujo to Nihon: Kīwādo de Yomitoku Gaikō Kadai," *Gaikō*, no. 71 (2022), pp. 19-20; Larry Diamond, "The Democratic Rollback: The Resurgence of the Predatory State," *Foreign Affairs*, 87-2 (2008), p. 36; Francis Fukuyama, "Liberalism and Its Discontents," *American Purpose* (October 5, 2020).

<sup>61</sup> Naya Masatsugu, "Jiyushugi to Kokusai Chitsujo," *Hitotsubashi Ronso*, vol. 125, no. 4 (April 2001), p. 59.

<sup>62</sup> Suzuki Kazuto, "Nihon wa Riberaru Kokusai Chitsujo no Ninaite ni Narieru no ka," *Kokusai Seiji*, no. 196 (March 2019), p. 128; Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, 16 (1989), pp. 3-4; Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), pp. 3-12; Ikenberry (2020a), *op. cit.*, p. 1; G. John Ikenberry, "The Next Liberal Order: The Age of Contagion Demands More Internationalism, Not Less," *Foreign Affairs*, 99-4 (2020b), p. 137.

identified as the genesis of the LIO, democratic peace emerges as the prevailing norm that dictates relations between democracies will not culminate in warfare.<sup>63</sup> This perspective has also influenced the emphasis on the international diffusion of democracy.<sup>64</sup>

Human rights represent another salient aspect of the LIO, yet controversy persists regarding foreign intervention grounded in the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) doctrine, which stipulates that the international community assumes responsibility for states deemed incapable or unwilling to protect their own citizens. This approach, however, has faced significant opposition from non-democratic countries, particularly authoritarian regimes, due to its perceived implications for national sovereignty and the potential for interference in internal affairs. Critics contend that this has contributed to the destabilization of the LIO's foundational principles.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4. Economic Liberal Elements and Characteristics

In the context of the LIO, free trade emerges as a pivotal economic component, particularly in the 1930s when global economic powers, grappling with the aftermath of the Great Depression, embarked on a strategic maneuver by incorporating neighboring countries into their respective economic spheres of influence, thereby establishing exclusive bloc economies. This historical development is widely regarded as a significant catalyst for the ensuing global conflict, underscoring the paramount importance of a free trade system in fostering peaceful economic relations among nations.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> PHP Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Gideon Rose, "The Fourth Founding: The United States and the Liberal Order," *Foreign Affairs*, 98-1 (2019), pp. 12-14.

<sup>64</sup> However, the United States has also engaged in military intervention for the purpose of democratization. These actions, while often regarded as representation of "liberal interventionism," have also been subject to critical scrutiny, with some commentators terming them as imperialist. For example, Marc G. Doucet, "The International Order of Liberal Humanitarian Intervention," *International Studies Review*, 16-3 (September 2014), pp. 467-472; Zubairu Wai, "The Empire's New Clothes: Africa, Liberal Interventionism and Contemporary World Order," *Review of African Political Economy*, 41-142 (2014), pp. 490-493.

<sup>65</sup> Ikenberry (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 79; Kliman and Fontaine, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9; Kundnani (2017), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> Suzuki Kazutoshi, "Bōeki: Mondai no Tayōka to Riyai no Kōsaku," in *Shinjidai no Gurōbaru Gabanansu-ron: Seido, Katei, Kōi Shutai*, edited by Nishitani Makiko and Yamada Takahiro (Minerva Shobo, 2021), p. 254; Naya Masatsugu, "Chikara no Kōzō to Kokusai Seiji Taisei," in *Kokusai Seiji Keizaigaku: Nyūmon*, edited by Nobayashi Takeshi et al. (Yuhikaku, 2007), p. 69; Nobayashi Takeshi, "Hogo Bōeki o Meguru Seiji to Keizai," in *Kokusai Seiji Keizaigaku: Nyūmon*, edited by Nobayashi Takeshi et al. (Yuhikaku, 2007), p. 126; Seisaku Shinkutanku

Nevertheless, the contemporary free trade regime is not characterized by unrestricted liberalization; rather, it is subject to specific conditions and restrictions.<sup>67</sup> This is particularly evident in the aftermath of the perceived collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 and the oil crises of 1973 and 1979, which led to an increased prioritization of domestic political considerations over the provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.<sup>68</sup> Within the domain of free trade, an economic liberal element or feature of the LIO, discourse frequently gravitates towards the role of the World Trade Organization (WTO), founded in 1995, and the establishment of free trade agreements, whether concluded bilaterally or multilaterally.<sup>69</sup> The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are also identified as the financial institutions that underpin the global free trade regime.<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, the free-market economy is accentuated as the prevailing economic model and is considered to have a role in the protection and development of freedom and human rights.<sup>71</sup> Capitalism, the foundation of a free market economy, contrasts with socialism, in which production and distribution are centrally controlled by the state. Under capitalism, market participants, such as businesses and households, are free to decide their own production and consumption. Private ownership is an important characteristic of a free market.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, openness is regarded as a pivotal attribute of the LIO, with references indicating its role in promoting globalization.<sup>73</sup> A considerable body of scholarship has posited that the

PHP Soken, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>67</sup> PHP Institute, *op. cit.*, p.14.

<sup>68</sup> Naya Masatsugu, "Reisen to Bretton Woods Taisei," in *Kokusai Seiji Keizaigaku: Nyumon*, edited by Nobayashi Takeshi et al. (Yuhikaku, 2007), p. 95; Nagao Satoru, "Gurobaru Reberu no Kokusai Chitsujo no Mosaku," in *Kokusai Seiji Keizaigaku: Nyumon*, edited by Nobayashi Takeshi et al. (Yuhikaku, 2007), p. 242; Nobayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>69</sup> Suzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 254; Nagao, *op. cit.*, p. 246; Kliman and Fontaine, *op. cit.*, p. 8; Kundnani (2017), *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6; The Global Agenda Council on the United States, *op. cit.*, p. 4

<sup>70</sup> Naya Masatsugu, "Chikara no Kozo to Kokusai Keizai Taisei," in *Kokusai Seiji Keizaigaku: Nyumon*, edited by Nobayashi Takeshi et al. (Yuhikaku, 2007), pp. 75-76.

<sup>71</sup> Naya (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 59; Leon Fink, *Undoing the Liberal World Order: Progressive Ideals and Political Realities Since World War II* (New York and Chichester, Columbia University Press, 2022), p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> For example, Kundnani (2017), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Tomáš Sedláček and Oliver Tanzer, "Zoku: Zen to Aku no Keizaigaku – Shihonshugi no Seishin Bunseki" [Olier Lilith and the Demons of Capital], translated by Kaoru Moriuchi and Sanae Hasegawa (Toyo Keizai Shimpō-sha, 2018), pp. 54-55; Nobayashi Takeshi, "'Keizai' no Ronri to 'Seiji' no Ronri," in *Kokusai Seiji Keizaigaku: Nyumon*, edited by Nobayashi Takeshi et al. (Yuhikaku, 2007); Geoffrey M. Hodgson, "Varieties of Capitalism: Some Philosophical and Historical Considerations," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 40 (2016), pp. 951-955; Elaine Sternberg, "Defining Capitalism," *Economic Affairs*, 35-3 (2015), p. 385.

<sup>73</sup> Naya (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 59; Leon Fink, *Undoing the Liberal World Order: Progressive Ideals and Political Realities Since World War II* (New York and Chichester, Columbia University Press, 2022), p. 1.



imbalanced relationship between interrelated democratic systems and free market economies, particularly in the context of globalization, has contributed to the rise of populism, thereby destabilizing the LIO and precipitating the crisis.<sup>74</sup>

## 5. Social Liberal Elements and Characteristics

Civil society has been identified as a pivotal element within the LIO framework. In their seminal work, Daniel Deudney and Ikenberry underscore the necessity for a shared sense of community and a unified identity within the political sphere. They assert that civic identity, defined by its fundamental tenets of democracy, constitutionalism, individual liberties, private property, capitalism, and diversity encompassing ethnicity and religion, plays a pivotal role in this regard.<sup>75</sup> This identity is intricately intertwined with civil society, which is situated between the family and the state. Civil society serves as the domain in which citizens engage in public activities.<sup>76</sup>

Civil society encompasses not only individuals but also social movements and professional communities, community organizations engaged in specific social dialogues (e.g., women, youth, and refugees), and other actors such as nationalist and religious movements. Notably, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are of particular importance in this context. NGOs are social units that seek to play a role in achieving objectives, especially in the areas of peace, development, environment, human rights, and so forth. These altruistic organizations prioritize values over monetary gain.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> For example, Kundnani (2017), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Suzuki, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-122; Naya (2018), *op. cit.*, pp. 23-26; Richard W. Mansbach and Yale H. Ferguson, *Populism and Globalization: The Return of Nationalism and the Global Liberal Order* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 3-20; Vittorio Emanuele Parsi, *The Wrecking of the Liberal World Order*, trans. Malvina Parsi (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 3-4; Dani Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox: Why Global Markets, States, and Democracy Can't Coexist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 184-206; Jack Snyder, "The Broken Bargain: How Nationalism Came Back," *Foreign Affairs*, 98-2 (2019), pp. 54-60.

<sup>75</sup> Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, "The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order," *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1999), pp. 192-195.

<sup>76</sup> Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right (Vol. 2): Outlines of Natural Law and State Science*, translated by Tadashi Kōzuma et al. (Iwanami Shoten, 2021), pp. 75-180; Jens Bartelson, "Making Sense of Global Civil Society," *European Journal of International Relations*, 12-3 (2006), p. 377; Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2003b), p. 18; Mary Kaldor, "The Idea of Global Civil Society," *International Affairs*, 79-3 (2003c), pp. 584-585.

<sup>77</sup> Manuel Castells, "The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (March 2008); Mary Kaldor, "Civil Society and Accountability," *Journal of*



To promote the LIO, the United States has been particularly supportive of and engaged with NGOs and other organizations in various nations. Some activities that confront the U.S. government can be identified, suggesting the proliferation of activities with a universal character.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the actions of citizens and the relationships among actors have become transnational, signifying that the contemporary state of civil society can be designated as global civil society.<sup>79</sup> This global civil society functions as a platform for cross-border activities, negotiations, and lobbying by activists and NGOs on issues such as human rights and the environment, and its role is increasing.<sup>80</sup> However, civil society also encompasses activities by actors who do not prioritize civic identity, such as individual rights and democratic principles. These actors, instead, disseminate hatred, intolerance, prejudice, and ignorance, among other toxic ideologies.<sup>81</sup>

Moreover, influence operations and the dissemination of authoritarianism have been identified as problematic phenomena.<sup>82</sup> A particularly salient instance is the proliferation of false information, as notably observed during the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union in 2016, a pivotal moment in the history of the LIO.<sup>83</sup> The dissemination of false information during this period significantly impacted

---

*Human Development*, 4-1 (2003a), pp. 5-20.

<sup>78</sup> Otsuru (Kitagawa) Chieko, "Chitsujo Hendō no Sohōkōsei: Kihan no Settei to Sono Kōsokuryoku," *Kokusai Seiji*, 147 (January 2007), p. 69.

<sup>79</sup> Kaldor (2003c), *op. cit.*, p. 587; Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society, Globalization, and Global Civil Society," *Journal of Civil Society*, 4-1 (June 2008), p. 20; Krishan Kumar, "Global Civil Society," *European Journal of Sociology*, 48-3 (2007), p. 421; Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "Reconstructing World Politics: The Emergence of Global Civil Society," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 21-3 (1992), p. 393; Mor Mitrani, "Global Civil Society and International Society: Compete or Complete?," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 38-2 (2013), pp. 175-176.

<sup>80</sup> Suzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 117; Kaldor (2003c), *op. cit.*, pp. 590-591; Mary H. Kaldor, "The Ideas of 1989: The Origins of the Concept of Global Civil Society," *Transnational Law & Contemporary Problems*, 9 (1999), p. 487.

<sup>81</sup> Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Kopstein, "Bad Civil Society," *Political Theory* 29-6 (December 2001), pp. 837-865; Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

<sup>82</sup> PHP Institute, *op. cit.*, p.15.

<sup>83</sup> Ikenberry (2019), *op. cit.*, p. 369; Moritani Yuki, "Kokusai Kankei no Jūyō Kadai toshite no Metaverse Kokka no Tōjō: Tuvalu no Metaverse Kokka-ka no Seisaku Risaachi to Kokka Gainen Saikō e no Ippo," *Tsukuba Hosei*, 92 (2024a), p. 53; Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31-2 (2017), pp. 211-236; Alexandre Bovet and Hernán A. Makse, "Influence of Fake News in Twitter During the 2016 US Presidential Election," *Nature Communication*, 10-7 (2019); Ivor Gaber and Caroline Fisher, "'Strategic Lying': The Case of Brexit and the 2019 U.K. Election," *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 27-2 (2022), pp. 460-477; Maximilian Höller, "The Human Component in Social Media and Fake News: The Performance of UK Opinion Leaders on Twitter During the Brexit Campaign," *European Journal of English Studies*, 25-1 (2021), pp. 80-95.

public discourse and civil society activities.<sup>84</sup> This phenomenon has persisted as a concern, with similar observations made during the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States in 2016. Furthermore, Russia and China have been identified as agents in the dissemination and proliferation of disinformation.<sup>85</sup> There have been discernible negative ramifications on the LIO, particularly concerning its social liberal characteristics and elements.

## 6. Liberal Elements and Characteristics as International Relations Theory or Ideology

The LIO's theoretical foundation is rooted in the normative rejection of conventional features of international relations, such as the use of force by revisionist powers, the balance of power, and the sphere of influence. This rejection is particularly pronounced when the role of multilateral international cooperation and international institutions is emphasized.<sup>86</sup> While the theory encompasses a range of concepts,<sup>87</sup> the ideas are broadly contained within the genealogy of liberalism as a school of thought.<sup>88</sup> A pivotal element in this regard is the rule of law. While the resolution of

<sup>84</sup> Emanuel Adler and Alena Drieschova, "The Epistemological Challenge of Truth Subversion to the Liberal International Order," *International Organization*, 75 (2021), pp. 359-86; Henry Farrell and Abraham L. Newman, "The Janus Face of the Liberal International Information Order: When Global Institutions are Self-Undermining," *International Organization*, 75 (2021), pp. 333-358.

<sup>85</sup> Aoi Chiyuki, *Senryakuteki Communication to Kokusai Seiji* [Strategic Communication and International Politics] (Nikkei BP, 2022), pp. 109-205; Mori Satoshi, "Riberaru Haken Chitsujo no Seitōsei no Rekka: Kihan Kōzō kara Mita Kokusai Chitsujo no Hen'yō," in *Kokusai Chitsujo ga Yuragu Toki: Rekishi, Riron, Kokusaihō kara Miru Hen'yō*, edited by Mori Satoshi (Chikura Shobo, 2023), pp. 190-193; Adler and Drieschova, *op. cit.*; Alexander Lanoszka, "Disinformation in International Politics," *European Journal of International Security*, 4 (2019), pp. 227-248.

<sup>86</sup> PHP Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 14; Naya (2018), *op. cit.*, p.18; Hosoya Yuichi, "Riberaru na Kokusai Chitsujo to Nihon Gaikō," *Kokusai Mondai*, no. 690 (April 2020), p. 7; Moritani (2024b), *op. cit.*, pp. 95-98; Szewczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>87</sup> Gabriel Abend, "The Meaning of 'Theory'," *Sociological Theory*, 26-2 (June 2008), pp. 173-199.

<sup>88</sup> Hosoya Yuichi, "Kanyaku-sha Atogaki" [Translator's Afterword], in *Riberaru na Chitsujo ka Teikoku ka (Ge): Amerika to Sekai Seiji no Yukue* [Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order] by G. John Ikenberry, translated and supervised by Yuichi Hosoya (Keiso Shobo, 2012), p. 263; Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization*, 51-4 (1997), pp. 514-547; Bruce Russett, "Liberalism," in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 68-86; Jennifer Sterling-Folker, "Neoliberalism," in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 88-104.

disputes through legal channels is not always guaranteed,<sup>89</sup> the recognition of the rule of law as a norm can be confirmed.<sup>90</sup>

Ikenberry contends that the LIO is a constitutional international order, wherein international organizations assume a pivotal role.<sup>91</sup> This assertion is predicated on the premise that, in the process of establishing a rule-based international order, the predominant powers consent to the limitation of the actions and exercise of power by the constituent states, including their own. These dynamics foster inherent mechanisms within the LIO that encourage opportunities for decision-making and nurture an open political structure, thereby reducing the likelihood of major powers exiting or becoming overly dominant. For a considerable period, prominent international organizations, including the United Nations, have been actively advocating for multilateral international cooperation in a variety of policy domains, such as security, trade, and climate change.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, international organizations have contributed to the international diffusion and promotion of the norms of political, economic, and social liberalism.<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusion

Considering the prevailing perception of the crisis of the LIO at present, it becomes imperative to undertake a comprehensive reexamination of the very essence of the concept of liberal international order. However, accurately and comprehensively grasping the LIO presents a substantial challenge. This paper proposes a novel approach to understanding the LIO by emphasizing the significance of liberal elements and characteristics. Rather than approaching the LIO through the ideological lens of liberalism, this study identifies and delineates elements and characteristics that are

<sup>89</sup> Yanai Shunji, “Kokusai Shakai ni Okeru Hō no Shihai: Kibō, Zetsubō, Tenbō,” *Kokusai Mondai*, no. 666 (November 2017), p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Shinoda Hideaki, “Kokuren to Hō no Shihai no Genzai,” *Kokusai Mondai*, 666 (November 2017), p. 10.

<sup>91</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Persistence of American Postwar Order,” *International Security*, 23-3 (1998-1999), p. 45; G. John Ikenberry, “Is American Multilateralism in Decline?” *Perspectives on Politics*, 1-3 (September 2003), p. 541.

<sup>92</sup> Ueki Yasuhiro, “Riberaru na Kokusai Chitsujo to Kokuren,” in *Jiyushugi-teki Kokusai Chitsujo wa Hokai Suru no ka: Kiki no Gen’in to Saisei no Joken*, edited by Naya Masatsugu and Sophia University International Relations Research Institute (Keiso Shobo, 2021), p. 77; Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane, “The Liberal Order Is Rigged: Fix It Now or Watch It Wither,” *Foreign Affairs*, 96-3 (2017), p. 37.

<sup>93</sup> Susan Park, “Socialisation and the Liberal Order,” *International Politics*, 51-3 (2014), pp. 344-345.

regarded as “liberal” within extant discourses and organizes them into four distinct categories: political, economic, social, and theoretical/ideological international relations.

A more profound comprehension of the LIO engenders a more nuanced understanding of the elements constituting a crisis within it. The term “crisis” is frequently employed rhetorically in academic and policy discourse.<sup>94</sup> However, one should present the issues and problems that are purportedly in crisis along with a sober assessment. For instance, Donald Trump has been frequently mentioned as if his presence alone signifies a crisis in the LIO. Such opinions were seen also during the 2024 presidential election in which Trump was running for his second presidency.<sup>95</sup> However, the approach this paper provides can be used to develop deeper understandings. An examination of the Republican Party’s proposed policy platform for the 2024 presidential election using the approach of this paper can serve to illustrate how the LIO can be conceptualized as following a typology, which in turn facilitates comprehension of the social phenomena at play and enables a more sophisticated examination of the state of the LIO. Of primary concern, then, was the platform’s emphasis on protectionism, which has the potential to disrupt the economic aspect of the LIO. Furthermore, the Republican Party’s rigid stance on immigration has led to complications in the social dimension of the LIO.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, Trump’s security policy can be associated with a balance-of-power security stance that relies on military buildup, which challenges the LIO’s underpinnings as international relations theory.<sup>97</sup>

The crux of the issue with liberal democracy is apparent in Trump’s inability to acknowledge the repercussions of his loss in the 2020

<sup>94</sup> Colin Hay, “Crisis and the Structural Transformation of the State: Interrogating the Process of Change,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1-3 (1999), pp. 317-319; R. J. Holton, “The Idea of Crisis in Modern Society,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, 38-4 (December 1987), p. 502.

<sup>95</sup> See John Gray, “The Trumpian End of the Liberal World Order,” *The New Statesman* (February 7, 2024) (<https://www.newstatesman.com/comment/2024/02/the-trumpian-end-of-the-liberal-world-order>, last accessed September 23, 2024); Gideon Rose, “Isolationism 2.0: Donald Trump and the Future of the Liberal Order,” *The National Interest* (March 5, 2024) (<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/isolationism-20-donald-trump-and-future-liberal-order-209880>, last accessed September 23, 2024).

<sup>96</sup> In the months since Trump has become the 47<sup>th</sup> President, the situation has radically changed. It should be noted that the analysis in this paper focuses on the election period only.

<sup>97</sup> “2024 GOP Platform Make America Great Again!” *The American Presidency Project* (July 8, 2024) (<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/2024-republican-party-platform-2>, last accessed September 23, 2024).



presidential election.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, although this paper focuses on the election period itself, many actions in the first months of his second presidency have severely challenged the core values and the system of liberal democracy. However, his policy document presented during the election, which outlines enhancements to ensure more effective electoral execution in future, aligns harmoniously with the political dimension of the LIO.<sup>99</sup> Here it can be seen how the approach posed by this paper can be employed to provide a nuanced understanding. In this way, the typology serves as a foundation for a more sophisticated analysis of the LIO situation.

In addition to the liberal elements and characteristics of the LIO that are the focus of this paper, the inclusion of additional factors, such as the role of the U.S. as a hegemonic power, would enable a more comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, while this paper structures the LIO according to four categories, it is crucial to recognize the interplay among these categories. Future research should prioritize deepening our understanding of the intricate relationships between the liberal elements and characteristics of the LIO. The approach and organization of this paper, as well as a multifaceted examination of different approaches, are expected to contribute to the advancement and development of efforts toward further understanding of LIO.

The foundational principle of the discipline of international relations is the aspiration for peace.<sup>100</sup> It is a natural expectation that the discipline's wisdom and knowledge will be utilized to address social and policy issues.<sup>101</sup> In the context of the escalating discourse surrounding LIO upheaval and crisis, however, it has been posited that the liberal international order is in fact nonexistent<sup>102</sup> and that the prevailing circumstances do not constitute

<sup>98</sup> Adrian Horton, "‘His Ego Will Not Accept Defeat’: The Story Behind Trump’s Attempt to Steal an Election," *The Guardian* (September 17, 2024) (<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/sep/17/trump-january-6-stopping-steal-documentary>, last accessed September 23, 2024).

<sup>99</sup> The American Presidency Project, *op. cit.*

<sup>100</sup> Onaka Makoto, "Eikoku Gakuhā no Genryū: Igirisu Kokusai Kankeiron no Kigen," *Hitotsubashi Hogaku*, 9-2 (July 2010), p. 255; E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 4-8; Knutsen, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

<sup>101</sup> Steven Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 188; Stephen M. Walt, "Theory and Policy in International Relations: Some Personal Reflections," *Yale Journal of International Affairs*, 7-2 (2012), p. 33.

<sup>102</sup> For instance, Naazneen Barma et al., "The Mythical Liberal Order," *The National Interest*, 124 (2013), p. 56; Rudyard Griffiths, *Is This the End of the Liberal International Order?: Niall Ferguson vs. Fareed Zakaria: The Munk Debate on Geopolitics* (House of Anansi, 2017), pp. 5-10.



a crisis.<sup>103</sup> While these arguments carry significance, the absence of a systematic grasp of the LIO concept, which serves as the fundamental premise of these speculations, constitutes a grave deficiency. It is incumbent upon academia to function as a counterweight to the prevailing currents of society.<sup>104</sup>

Considering the “gathering of the shades of night” of the contemporary international order, this is a moment when the discerning eye of the owl of Minerva can provide a rational analysis that constitutes a timely and significant contribution to the study of international relations.

### [Acknowledgement]

This paper is a translated and slightly modified version of the GGR Working Paper no. 10 published on 13 December, 2024. The author expresses great gratitude and respect to Akihito Kishi for the translation. This paper was developed from the research “The Theoretical Study on the Transformation of Liberal International Order and Sovereign State System” supported by the Project “Training the Next Generation of Law Researchers and Law Teachers” at Hitotsubashi University Graduate School of Law in FY2021. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Maiko Ichihara (Hitotsubashi University) for giving me another chance to present the results. This paper is also part of the results from the research project funded by the Murata Science and Education Foundation, Grant-in-Aid for Research (Humanities) 2023, “Analysis of Factors Contributing to the Diffusion and Suppression of Disinformation: An International Comparative Study of Japan and the United Kingdom.”

---

<sup>103</sup> For example, Endo Ken et al., “Kokusai Chitsujo wa Yuraideiru no ka,” *Kokusai Mondai*, 668 (January–February 2018), pp. 2-3; Columba Peoples, “The Liberal International Ordering of Crisis,” *International Relations*, 38-1 (2024), pp. 3-14; Dominic Tierney, “Why Global Order Needs Disorder,” *Survival*, 63-2 (2021), pp. 116-119.

<sup>104</sup> Max Weber, *Science as a Vocation*, translated by Kunio Odaka (Iwanami Shoten, 2016), pp. 59-60; Bull (1972), *op. cit.*, p. 588.

## Yuki MORITANI Profile

Yuki MORITANI is a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Law, Hitotsubashi University. He teaches as a part time lecturer at the University of Tsukuba, Professional University of Beauty & Wellness, and Tokiwa University. He obtained a master's degree in international public policy from the School of International and Public Policy, Hitotsubashi University.

### 【Translated by】

Akihito KISHI (Undergraduate student, Faculty of Law, Hitotsubashi University)