

“America First” Reimagined: Trump’s Nationalism and the Unravelling of the Liberal International Order

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Abstract:

This paper examines President Donald Trump’s nationalist ideology of “America First” disseminated during his 2016 presidential campaign in the United States (US) and explores how his ideology has conflicted with the liberal international order (LIO) after his electoral success with his strategic ambitions undermining democratic principles. The visibility of Trump’s discontent with the LIO appears in how the US interacts with specific regimes. His government has contradicted its words and actions, undercutting America’s role in key areas such as nuclear non-proliferation, human rights, migration, health, trade, and climate change. The foundation upon which the US has supported and preserved the liberal post-World War II order has now been questioned. Under President Trump, American foreign policy underwent a significant shift, abandoning its previous commitment to providing services to advance democracy worldwide. Donald Trump’s “America First” campaign shows an apparent hegemonic retrenchment, which is evident from the US withdrawal from global leadership, institutional disengagement, transactional diplomacy, and a shift towards unilateralism. The article analyses how the LIO has been directly challenged by President Trump’s aggressive policies and how the decision-making under his presidency has directly conflicted with the foundations of the LIO.

Keywords: Liberal International Order, America First Nationalism, Multilateral Disengagement, Populist Revisionism, Strategic Realignment

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Introduction:

A significant shift in US international and domestic policy occurred after Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 US elections, which not only disrupted traditional diplomatic practices but also raised questions about the viability and sustainability of the Liberal International Order (LIO) (Stokes, 2018). The United States has always supported the LIO and has a long history of fostering global cooperation, multilateralism, and democratic values. Rooted in post-World War II reconstruction and institutional design, the LIO promoted shared sovereignty, open markets, and collective security through alliances like NATO and institutions such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. On the other hand, Trump’s administration demonstrated deviation from these principles, instead choosing a populist, nationalist approach reflected in his “America First” policy. This approach reflected a realist and transactional mindset, where alliances and treaties were judged by short-term economic or political benefit rather than shared values or mutual interest.

This orientation indicated a diminished commitment to global cooperation and a shift toward policies prioritizing US interests, frequently contradicting the LIO’s cooperative principles. For instance, Trump referred to alleged anti-Israel biases and perceived inefficiencies in international organizations when withdrawing the United States from UNESCO and the UNHCR (Finley & Esposito, 2020). The exits were not isolated gestures, but rather emblematic of a broader ideological retreat from multilateral commitments and liberal norms. Donald Trump’s rhetoric during his presidency frequently critiqued globalization, unlawful immigration, and various international treaties and institutions. The US’s transition from multilateral engagement to national self-interest was exemplified by its administration’s repeated obstruction of judicial appointments to the WTO, its withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal, and its severing of ties with the WHO during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This ideological pivot was evident in Trump’s candid criticism of immigration policies, which included his advocacy for a wall

along the US-Mexico border, which he maintained was essential to prevent illicit activities (Medini, 2019). This pivot extended beyond policy shifts. The Trump administration reinforced a political environment that prioritized US sovereignty and limited foreign influence on domestic issues by portraying immigration and international accords as threats to American interests. Such narratives aligned with broader global populist waves, where nativist and protectionist discourses gained traction in states like Hungary, India, and Brazil.

This administration's selective endorsement of democratic values and reluctance to condemn human rights abuses in allied states further emphasized this deviation. For instance, Trump strengthened ties with Narendra Modi's government during India's controversial abrogation of Kashmir's autonomy, while also supporting Israel's actions in Gaza and recognizing Jerusalem as its capital. These moves served geostrategic interests but contradicted universalism embedded in liberal international norms.

Although criticized for weakening alliances, some of Trump's moves were viewed as assertive recalibrations. NATO members modestly increased defense spending, and bilateral relations with Israel and India deepened in response to shared concerns over Iran and China. The Trump presidency arguably undermined the ideological coherence and influence of the LIO by realigning US foreign policy to support specific nationalistic objectives. It also exposed the LIO's overreliance on American leadership and its institutional fragility when confronted with a hegemon unwilling to lead in traditional ways.

Through these realignments and disruptions, the liberal international order faced both an external populist critique and an internal legitimacy crisis. The Trump administration's strategy indicated a diminished commitment to global collaboration and a shift towards policies focused on US interests, often conflicting with the cooperative principles of the Liberal International Order. The resulting uncertainty redefined alliances, challenged multilateral frameworks, and introduced a more fractured and interest-driven global political landscape.

Theoretical Framework

The liberal international order is underpinned by the theoretical foundations of Liberal Institutionalism, which asserts that international cooperation is not only possible but preferable, and that institutions play a critical role in mitigating anarchy in the global system. According to this view, states are rational actors that can benefit from interdependence, rule-based governance, and collective security mechanisms. Scholars such as G. John Ikenberry (2011) argues that the post-World War II liberal order was constructed around US hegemony yet embedded within a web of multilateral institutions and norms that constrained unilateralism and prioritized shared values, including democracy, open markets, and human rights.

Trump’s “America First” doctrine stands in direct opposition to this framework. By retreating from multilateral agreements and undermining institutions such as the WTO, WHO, and UNESCO, the administration signaled a shift toward neorealist principles, which view international relations as a struggle for power among self-interested states in an anarchic world. Trump’s actions, such as withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the Iran nuclear deal, reflect a belief that international commitments constrain state autonomy and disadvantage national interests.

This paper draws on Liberal Institutionalism to argue that Trump’s foreign policy choices weakened the cooperative mechanisms of the LIO, challenged the legitimacy of international institutions, and promoted unilateralism at the expense of global governance. His actions not only disrupted long-standing alliances but also exposed the fragility of the institutional order when dominant powers rejected its foundational norms. The growing skepticism toward multilateralism during Trump’s presidency suggests that without renewed commitment to liberal principles, the LIO faces erosion from within.

Analyzing Trump’s Presidential Campaign

The Washington Post was so concerned about Trump’s claims that it hired a reporter to conduct verification checks on all his

public pronouncements. During his four years in office, it was calculated that he told a total of 30,573 lies (Knott, 2021). He was highly outspoken when speaking at rallies, and neither his handlers nor his counsellors could control the tone of his speech. The national press constantly criticized his presentations. They reported on the roughness of his followers and mentioned how he provoked violence. Trump, time and again, called the media “the enemy of the people” and claimed that they manipulated the press reports (Samuels, 2019). His “Make America Great Again” hats swept the nation and created a cult around him. Trump posters grew majorly across America. He seemed to coastal elites like someone who heard their cries and shared their anger and worries about their class. Their anger found a new leader who understood it. People liked his rage, his angry speeches, and his hatred.

For the second time in history, in just 16 years, minorities voted to elect the President in the 2016 elections. Additionally, this election introduced new dynamics and changes in American history (Vavreck, 2017).

Point	Description
Popular Vote	Hillary Clinton secured 48.2% of the popular vote, while Donald Trump received 46.1%, yet Trump won the most electoral votes.
Influence of social media	The 2016 election marked the first time social media played a significant role in influencing voter behaviour.
Foreign Influence	Foreign entities heavily invested resources in attempting to influence the election outcome.

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Shift in Democratic Voters	A notable portion of traditional Democratic voters shifted away from the party during the election.
Foreign Involvement	The most prominent change in this election was the emergence of foreign interference, primarily in Favor of Trump.

- i. Hillary Clinton won 48.2% of the popular vote, while Trump won 46.1%, but secured the most electoral votes.
- ii. Social media influenced many voters for the first time (Groshek & Koc-Michalska, 2017).
- iii. Foreign countries invested heavily in influencing the elections’ outcome.
- iv. Traditional democratic voters left the party in significant numbers.
- v. The most visible change in the elections was the appearance of foreign involvement, which was anonymously inclining toward Trump.

Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, did not approve of Hillary Clinton, as he had worked with her when she was Secretary of State under Obama (Crowley & Ioffe, 2016). He was convinced that her presidency would strain ties with Russia. Putin was certain that he could negotiate favorable terms with Trump. Trump won unexpected victories by ensuring that the right people heard his message. However, in these elections, Trump did not win the usual way. Instead, he brought attention to several issues that, despite his actions, aligned with the needs of many voters in Middle America. They saw Trump as a voice for the right to life and believed that he would stand with “conservative blue-collar workers” who were afraid of globalisation and immigration (Khan & Hyder, 2016, p. 11). Another thing that made these voters like Trump was his

misogyny (Filipovic, 2017). He often passed misogynistic comments about women. For instance, Megyn Kelly, a Fox News anchor, was criticized by Trump because she was calling him a bad person due to his unethical remarks about women (Yan, 2015). Most of his voters were less educated and shared his hatred for the same people (Cook et al., 2017).

Given the above, Trump won the Electoral College in 2016, securing the total number of votes. This made him the fifth president in US history to have lost the popular vote but still win the election. Trump got 46.1% of the votes, and Hillary Clinton got 48.2%. Hillary received 2,868,686 more votes than Donald Trump (Jacobson, 2017). However, Trump ultimately won by 304 electoral votes to her 227 votes (Ivie, 2024).

Trumpocracy vis-à-vis the Liberal International Order

Donald Trump held office as President in November 2016, and from the start, he posed a threat to the LIO's existing values (Harwood, 2018). Trump was least focused on the LIO and democracy; instead, he was more inclined toward his interests, creating tensions in understanding American objectives for the liberal order. The tensions escalated further because of America's anti-globalist, populist, and nationalist rhetoric. On October 12, 2017, the United States and Israel declared their withdrawal from the United Nations (Harris & Erlanger, 2017). The two countries opposed different anti-Israel resolutions, which the United Nations organization passed in previous years. Nevertheless, viewing the American and Israeli decisions mainly as a reaction to those resolutions would be a mistake. Instead, the US exit from UNESCO shows its dedication to its alliance with Israel.

During the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) address, President Trump vehemently opposed globalism and disregarded the ideas and principles of the LIO, which encourages states to prioritize their national interests over collective global ideas. The address provided Trump a forum to advocate a nationalist perspective, condemning both globalism and illegal immigration, as well as international accords he

considered unfavourable to American interests. Furthermore, during his presidency, the White House expressed intentions to cut off funding for the United Nations as well as organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees which represent the world's commitment to universal ideals of human dignity (Lynch, 2018). President Donald Trump also strongly criticized the World Trade Organization and labelled it a catastrophe. The United States impeded the reappointment of WTO judges amid an imminent dispute settlement crisis. Trump said, “The United States loses cases due to perceived biases in judicial appointments favouring other countries” (Miles, 2018). The Trump administration repeatedly halted the appointment of judges to the WTO Body, which impacted the organization's dispute resolution process and the resolution of trade disputes.

In June 2018, Ambassador Nikki Haley said that the United States would withdraw from the Human Rights Council, citing “*a chronic bias against Israel*” as the primary reason (Novaković, 2022). The US withdrawal was condemned by numerous human rights organizations, which expressed concern that it would hinder international human rights initiatives. This action was perceived as a component of a broader shift in US foreign policy, particularly in light of its interactions with Israel and the Palestinian territories. During a UNGA session on December 19, 2018, the United States, Hungary, Israel, Poland, and the Czech Republic voted against the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM).

The GCM seeks to promote safe and orderly migration while addressing the fundamental causes and respecting migrants' rights. It underscores global collaboration, data acquisition, and the impacts of migration on society (Perocco, 2019). The US withdrawal from the bilateral Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and the Iranian nuclear deal negotiations both harmed the non-proliferation regime and raised concerns over arms control measures and global stability. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Trump imposed embargoes against

members of the International Criminal Court and declared that the United States would withdraw from the World Health Organization (“US Sanctions on the International Criminal Court,” 2020). LIO established the framework for cooperation and shared multilateral governance. Still, Trump altered American political and economic policy to support his America First ideology.

G. John Ikenberry notes that the LIO and US foreign policy objectives under Trump gave three claims (Allison 2018) :(*The Myth of the Liberal Order*, n.d.):

- i. Firstly, the main factor behind the so-called long peace and security between great powers has been the liberal order.
- ii. Secondly, the US tried to get global engagement by promoting this order.
- iii. Thirdly, the main threat to the liberal world order and world peace was posed by American President Donald Trump (Allison 2018) .

After World War II, the United States dominated the LIO; however, Donald Trump’s presidency resulted in complications. The order established the framework for shared international governance and cooperation, which sovereign states guaranteed to adhere to. Trump has altered American political and economic policy in reaction to the country’s considerably weakened competitive position in several sectors (Allison 2018). Trump’s foreign policy and ability to execute its objectives have been redirected from the political context to the capitalist and more global political economy.

It is the responsibility of the state to promote these global necessities, providing domestically based capitalist firms with the greatest possible competitive advantage. However, this does not imply that Trump intended to establish an autocracy in the United States; instead, he sought to utilize state authority to alter the nature of international competition to benefit American business and industry(Frum, 2017). During his campaign, his primary pledge to his working-class supporters was to enhance the comparative advantage of American industries in foreign

markets. He aimed to reintroduce a portion of the manufacturing industry to the US. Although he does not want to isolate America from the rest of the world, he wants American capitalism to surpass its current level of dominance.

The Impact of Trump’s Foreign Policy on Global Relations

Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 elections shocked the international political arena, sparking debates about his “America first” agenda and its potential to undermine the LIO due to its opposition to democratic values, liberal economics, and multilateralism. Trump was focused on “making America great again,” which might be seen as increasing American security and power, enhancing America’s global economic position, and restoring American primacy. According to Trump’s assertion, the United States has no interest in the situations in Crimea, Georgia, and Ukraine where Russian interests are involved, as he believes that Russia does not pose a serious threat (Carbonnel De, 2018).

Trump has made threats to use nuclear weapons to prevent a war against North Korea, disassemble the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or launch a trade conflict with China (Baker & Sang-Hun, 2017). This implied a lack of regard for morals, laws, rights, or values as he did not seem to believe in natural or positive law. He has attempted to impose American values on the rest of the world while simultaneously criticizing American moral traditions. He lacked ideology and aspired to engage in trade business that supported his principles. He vowed to either compel the US to withdraw from the WTO or to ignore any of its decisions that did not favor the U.S (Hopewell, 2017).

Trump’s trade conflict with China is one of the greatest threats to the LIO and a potential risk to global peace, security, and stability. In 2018, President Trump implemented substantial tariffs on Chinese imports worth millions of dollars. In response, China implemented comparable tariffs on products manufactured in the US. The Sino-US trade conflict has adversely affected the diplomatic relationship between the two countries. The US wanted to contain China’s emergence as a

prospective global power, rather than engaging with China and integrating its interests into the LIO through multilateralism. The United States is also establishing geopolitical alliances throughout the Indo-Pacific region, which illustrates the American ambivalence regarding the liberal order's capacity to function, as Ikenberry suggests (2011).

US foreign policy under Trump has taken a sharp turn from delivering its services to promote democracy globally. Trump declared that the US should withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) before he took office as president. This decision was based on the fact that the TPP's policies prioritized the interests of the US, which violated the democratic principles of the LIO (Solís, 2017). He was more determined to implement the same approach with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Thrush, 2018). He imposed travel bans on the nationals of seven major Muslim countries (Why These 7 Countries Are Listed on Trump's Travel Ban, n.d.), and then, under his presidency, the US withdrew from the Paris climate change agreement ("Climate Change," 2020).

Trump's policies have cast doubt on the US's commitment to its traditional affiliations and alliances, leading to intense uncertainty and decreased faith in them. Trump adopted protectionist or mercantilist policies in US trade, claiming to represent and advocate for the personal interests of Americans left behind by previous administrations due to weak economic policies. The Great Recession led to a rise in economic inequality among Americans and a reduction in the size of the middle class. Consequently, Trump garnered significant public support by demonstrating his commitment to America's founding principles. Trump has highlighted US companies investing in Mexico and promised to revive coal mining in the US. Additionally, his blocking of appointments to the World Trade Organization's judicial apparatus has significantly impacted how the US business community plans for the private sector (Garver, 2019).

Trump's foreign policy has prioritized strategic objectives, which have further undermined the liberal international order.

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The United States has maintained consistent fundamental commitments to international cooperation regardless of the political party in power concerning NATO, North Korea, Iran, and immigration for a long time. The ideological consensus that has kept the US committed to these issues has eroded, primarily because democrats have been more concerned with Trump's domestic policy ambitions than with how they impact foreign policy.

The Kashmir issue is a prime example of the United States' geo-strategic objectives under the Trump presidency, as the country has accommodated India's right-wing politics. The Hindutva ideology directly threatens minorities in the state, particularly those in Kashmir (“Hindutva Through the Prism of Hinduism,” n.d.). It illustrates the creation of a country where Hinduism is the dominant force, and how a shift from philosophical doctrine to political tools is used to justify power through a racial hypothesis about Hindu superiority over minorities. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi coming to power in 2014, Hindutva has turned into a worldwide danger, and numerous nations ceased scrutinizing Modi's rough approaches against Muslims.

However, on the other hand, the US kept silent, accommodating Modi's narrative while maintaining alliances of convenience with him (*India*, n.d.). It highlights how imperial ambitions have oppressed democratic values. Similarly, Washington managed its deals with Delhi on economic and strategic grounds. On December 09, 2021, the US hosted the ‘Summit for Democracy’ to promote democratic values and to stop authoritarianism. Ironically, ignoring all inhumane policies that Modi was implementing in India, he was invited. India was also considered an equal party in this summit (Nagda & Choudhury, 2021). . This directly contradicts liberal order values; however, the US failed to acknowledge the matter. Indeed, the US has been actively working to maintain its relationship with India, seeking a powerful ally in South Asia that allows it to keep a check on Chinese hegemony in the region. Furthermore, with India's assistance, the US can continue to monitor counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan, with a particular focus on the Taliban.

The United States advocated a regime change in Venezuela to alter the democratically elected left-leaning government, which promoted a socialist agenda. Washington's involvement in the violent events that resulted in the elimination of left-wing pioneers has reignited concerns regarding the United States' ambitions in that region. This also raises questions regarding the strategy being employed by the nominees to the United States in Venezuela. They have also encouraged their residents to "emphasize the possibility" of emigrating from Venezuela and have suggested that the US-backed Civil War could be used to undermine the left-wing government's dominance.

The Rise of Nationalism and US Foreign Policy

Donald Trump's emphasis on the slogan and strategy "America First" demonstrated his raw political instincts. The post-war US consensus on liberal internationalism and the conviction that the country could achieve absolute gains by adhering to its principles influenced Trump's domestic political agenda. In 2016 and 2017, Trump-like nationalists gained ground in Austria, Germany, France, Greece, Norway, Turkey, the Philippines, and Finland, and their influence is expanding in non-liberal democracies like China, Russia, and Hungary. Determining whether this trend will be irreversible and unavoidable remains challenging, as it could harm the LIO. It may be a direct consequence of the Great Recession, which exacerbated the discontent in liberal democracies and fostered the models proposed by non-democratic regimes.

As a businessman, Trump was well aware of the advantages of cooperation. He was confident in his ability to excel, knowing how to negotiate optimal agreements. He favored agreements allowing the US to renegotiate or withdraw flexibly. His view was that institutions were unnecessary and harmful to nations' economies. Trump operated beyond the established parameters of institutionalism. Liberalism was of the least concern to him, as evidenced by his actions in his foreign policy objectives. He did not endorse the Wilsonian tradition in American foreign policy. He was not a proponent of democracy, the rule of law, or human rights. It was evident during his campaign that he had

little regard for traditional American values and advocated for white supremacy and ethnic nationalism. (Benjamin & Simon, 2017) He labelled immigrants as criminals, rapists, terrorists, and a drain on the economy.

He explicitly questioned the significance of NATO and stated that he may be unable to fulfill the US commitments to America's allies if they do not increase their defence spending. He commended Russian President Vladimir Putin, asserting that “he has firm command of his country” and refused to condemn Russia in Crimea (Andrews, 2015). These discussions, which have been ongoing since he was elected President, have called into question American liberal values. Trump's perspective on international affairs was concerning, as he repeatedly questioned several consistent US foreign policy goals.

Trump's diverse opinions diverge from the principles of liberal order in terms of alliances, trade, and the legitimacy of liberal democracy. By advocating for mercantilism and zero-sum conflicts, his perspective encourages the global resurgence of nationalism. The clarity of Trump's commitment to the liberal order remains questionable. The objectives of Trump's foreign policy remarks do not include the propagation of human rights and democracy. Trump has violated multiple diplomatic protocols and has withdrawn from several significant agreements. Nonetheless, the substance of the liberal response to Trump reveals a profound and two-dimensional divide among America's ruling elite. In economics, this division concerns the most suitable tools for resolving the crisis that began in 2008 but has yet to be fully resolved (*The US Financial Crisis*, n.d.).

The capital wing of the American ruling class preferred open borders, mobile capital, and new trade agreements to secure what they considered the gains of the post-war period. Trump has never opposed global capitalism; instead, he is interested in discussing terms that are advantageous to American markets. Politically, liberals also advocate for ethical transparency with individuals, reject Trump's aggressive nationalism, and are nominally committed to “Green Capitalism” (Beuret & Bloom, 2025, pg. 35). Particularly during Trump's presidency, liberal ideals were unattainable in a capitalist economy.

Potential Benefits of the “America First” Policy

Proponents of Trump’s “America First” policy argue it prioritizes US interests, reduces overreach, and encourages diplomatic resolutions by leveraging economic and strategic pressure. Recent geopolitical events illustrate the potential benefits of these developments. In the India-Pakistan crisis of April 2025, sparked by an attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, the US adopted a hands-off approach, with Trump stating, “They will get it figured out” (Ashtakala, 2025, pg. 5). This restraint, coupled with economic incentives, reportedly facilitated a ceasefire on May 10, avoiding escalation between the nuclear-armed neighbors. Supporters claim this reflects a pragmatic focus on de-escalation without entangling US resources, preserving strategic leverage while encouraging regional actors to resolve conflicts independently.

In the Israel-Iran conflict, intensified by Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear sites in June 2025, the US under Trump avoided direct military involvement, focusing instead on targeted sanctions and diplomatic pressure. Posts on X and reports suggest this approach led to a permanent ceasefire, with some crediting Trump’s decisive economic measures for curbing Iran’s regional ambitions without risking US troops. This aligns with the “America First” emphasis on minimizing military overreach while maintaining influence through non-kinetic means.

Regarding the Ukraine-Russia conflict, Trump’s push for a negotiated settlement, emphasizing an immediate ceasefire, reflects a strategy to reduce US financial burdens while addressing domestic concerns about the prolonged nature of aid. Advocates argue that this focus could stabilize global markets and redirect resources to domestic priorities, aligning with voter sentiment that favors reduced foreign entanglements. These examples suggest that the “America First” ideology may foster stability by incentivizing self-reliance among allies and adversaries, although critics caution that it risks undermining global alliances and emboldening aggressive actors.

Trump’s Foreign Policy: Divergence from Liberal Principles

Donald Trump initiated his first presidential tenure by appointing unconventional candidates to senior foreign policy positions, abandoning numerous others, and publicly criticizing the intelligence agencies (Treverton, 2019). On his third day in office, he withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, as he had previously promised to do. He subsequently withdrew from the Paris Agreement on climate change, emphasizing the implicit threat posed by Islam, and also proposed a travel ban on six Muslim countries (Khan et al., 2019). He continued to post undiplomatic tweets daily and relied on loyal insiders, such as his son-in-law, to oversee challenging diplomatic assignments. Trump demonstrated a lack of regard for human rights principles and appeared to be more at ease with autocrats and strongmen than with advocates for democracy. Trump had a strong affinity for Israel, and his decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was primarily a recognition of America’s long-standing relationship with the Jewish community. Trump initiated additional military operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and authorized the Pentagon to deploy additional forces to Afghanistan to deter the Taliban from achieving their objectives. He did not prevent the US military from allocating additional resources to nation-building at home; the nuclear agreement with Iran remained in effect, and relations with Russia remained unchanged.

Neo-conservatism is prominent in the Trump administration and has repeatedly challenged the foundations of the LIO. For example, John Bolton, a neo-conservative hawk (Lynch & Groll, 2018) and a strong supporter of conflicts like the Iraq War, was appointed National Security Advisor by Trump. Trump’s approach to various domestic issues has shaped US foreign policy into a structure that often contradicts the LIO values. These elements include expanding presidential powers and reducing Congress’s authority to check the President on foreign policy. Trump’s “America first” approach diverges from what liberal internationalist advocates expected for leadership of the liberal international order.

The aggressive nationalism of the Trump administration arguably poses a significant challenge to the core of the liberal international order. It has undermined the United States' status as the leader of the Liberal International Order. Trump's 2017 National Security Strategy reflected a strongly nationalist view of foreign policy. From the beginning, Trump rejected several key agreements and institutions of the liberal international order. He was willing to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2017, which he believed was once unthinkable, as it would prevent the US from managing its domestic affairs (Shear, 2017). Trump also directed the US to exit various international human rights and cultural organizations, including UNESCO (Harris & Erlanger, 2017). Trump has also revoked international accords that aim to safeguard human rights values, nuclear non-proliferation, arms controls, disarmament, global peace, and security. In 2019, he revoked an agreement with the United Nations' Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that the United States had not yet fully approved. The ATT urged signatory states to adhere to their arms sales commitments, emphasizing the necessity to halt violations of arms embargoes and to guarantee that exported weapons are not employed in genocides, human rights abuses, or acts of terrorism: "We will never surrender America's sovereignty to an unelected, unaccountable, global bureaucracy" Trump said in response to the ATT announcement (Chappell, 2019). Trump also declared that the US had left the 1987 nuclear non-proliferation agreement with Russia. A key tenet of global non-proliferation agreements was the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) (Bidgood, 2019). The Trump administration will "begin a review of all international agreements that may still expose the US to purported binding jurisdiction dispute resolution in the International Court of Justice," according to National Security Advisor John Bolton in 2018 (Gaouette & Crawford, 2018).

Conclusion

President Trump's interpretation of the liberal international order does not support the post-1945 US-led liberal order. His terminology differs from that of the previous governance and

the European Union’s vision of a rule-based, democratic global order, with multilateralism as its fundamental principle. The Trump administration has downgraded the values of the liberal international order in its foreign policy objectives (National Security Strategy, 2017). His administration’s ground-level actions showed minimal interest in the principles of the LIO. During his official trips, Trump never spoke about democratic values and human rights violations, and he was against freedom of the press and free journalism.

Under Trump’s presidency, the US has limited its vision of the international liberal order, considering it an obstacle to its national interests. President Trump’s aggressive policies have posed direct challenges to the liberal international order. Trump supported “Brexit,” which contributed to the division of the European Union and raised questions about the United States’ international peace and security alliances, such as NATO. Trump has been criticized for complimenting foreign dictators, and it has been argued that he has dropped democratic promotion from foreign policy goals (*The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony*, n.d.). Trump’s foreign policy objectives seemed doubtful for US alliances and international institutions. Besides all this, his convenience for Israel and special favors to accommodate the Israeli lobby have largely affected the liberal order and have shown evident contradictions with the LIO.

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