A few useful videos

On the Liberal World Order

● **From the Council of Foreign Relations – What is the Liberal World Order?**
October 2020
Around seventy-five years ago the Liberal World Order emerged from the aftermath of WWII. This liberal system, in the sense that it operates on rules that are - in theory - applied to each country equally, encourages each country to be democratic and to open its economy to the rest of the world. It gave rise to international institutions like the United Nations, The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.
https://education.cfr.org/learn/video/what-liberal-world-order

● **A shorter version, with a delicious German accent** - **What is the rules-based international order and is this its end? | DW News**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjPa-fB55eE

On illiberal democracies

● **Michael Ignatieff: Liberal vs. Illiberal Democracies – Carneguie Council for Ethics in International Affairs**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b62rK4WthE

Europe after the end of the liberal international order

EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS ecfr.eu

Commentary, 16 April 2025 - Mark Leonard , Director

Throughout Europe, US president Donald Trump is seen as a chaos-monger with a reverse Midas touch: everything he touches ends up worse than he found it. Yet despite his anachronistic views on most issues, he is the perfect embodiment of our era.

In 2021, I authored *The Age of Unpeace*, which argued that we need to start reimagining the rules of international relations for an era of hyper-connectivity. All the institutions and arrangements that were supposed to bring us together, I observed, were instead being weaponised. Today's global politics is like a marriage gone wrong. In a failed marriage, shared items like a holiday home, the pet dog or children can be used by one estranged partner to harm the other; similarly, trade, the internet, energy sources, supply chains, migration flows, critical raw materials and cutting-edge technology can be used to exercise geopolitical influence and inflict pain.

In this new world, I noted, the boundaries between war and peace have been eroded. We were wrong to think that we had secured a golden age of peace at the end of the cold war. In reality, there was violence everywhere, but it came in the form of sanctions, export controls, energy cut-offs, election interference and weaponised migration—all of which stopped short of formal war.

Just a few months after my book came out, Vladimir Putin launched Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Since then, much of the world's attention has focused on the traditional elements of war and the need to defend against Russian tanks, planes and missiles. Analysts and policymakers drew on the lessons of the past, rather than focusing on the novelty of the situation. Yet the war in Ukraine has always been unique—a strange hybrid of the 19th and 21st centuries, featuring soldiers and trenches but also sanctions, drones, AI and a contest for influence on social media.

The Trump administration has thrown all the old certainties into a blender and liquified them. Gone is any clear distinction between war and peace, allies and enemies, national and private interests, or left and right

US president Joe Biden, French president Emmanuel Macron and German chancellor Olaf Scholz responded to Russia's aggression by trying to recreate the old order. But especially since Trump's re-election, it has been obvious that we need a new way of looking at the world. The Trump administration has thrown all the old certainties into a blender and liquified them. Gone is any clear distinction between war and peace, allies and enemies, national and private interests, or left and right. With Trump launching a trade war against the rest of the world, attempting to extort minerals from Ukraine, and threatening the territorial integrity of Greenland and Panama, the old rules of international order no longer apply.

Unfortunately, this is not just about "disorder," which would imply that there is some basic agreement on what "order" looks like. There isn't. Thinking about international order has been completely overtaken by events. For years, governments muddled through crises rooted in hyper-connectivity and interdependence—from the 2008 market crash to the Syrian refugee crisis to the pandemic—leaving policymakers unable to win their citizens' confidence. Many resorted to emergency measures and states of exception; but now, so many exceptions have been made that the international rulebook looks like Swiss cheese. It has become an exceptions-based order, rather than a rules-based one.

Trump understood this. He tapped into the popular frustration with elites who pretended that they had all the answers, yet consistently failed to do what they had promised. Americans are catching up to many others around the world who had always thought that the liberal international order was a con—much like the Holy Roman Empire, which was neither holy nor Roman nor an empire. The liberal international order couldn't be called liberal after the atrocities at Abu Ghraib or Guantánamo Bay; it couldn't be called international when many parts of the world were still mired in civil wars; and owing to these failings, it couldn't be called an order.

As Europeans rearm to confront Russian aggression, they also need to figure out how to survive in the age of "unpeace" that Trump, Putin, Chinese president Xi Jinping, and other strongmen are ushering in. One of the biggest challenges will be to make interdependence feel safe again. Supporting Ukraine and re-thinking our economic models to deal with trade wars may be necessary, but they are not sufficient. We also need to think hard about migration, welfare and health policies, and how politicians communicate with their constituents. In other words, Europeans need a new way of doing politics—one that restores people's sense of control.

What is the rules-based order? How this global system has shifted from 'liberal' origins – and where it could be heading next

The conversation, March 17 2025 - **Andrew Latham** Professor of Political Science, Macalester College

The phrase "international rules-based order" has long been a fixture in global politics.

Western leaders often use it to describe a framework of rules, norms and institutions designed to guide state behavior. Advocates argue that this framework has provided the foundation for decades of stability and prosperity, while critics question its fairness and relevance in today's multipolar world.

But what exactly is the international rules-based order, when did it come about, and why do people increasingly hear about challenges to it today?

The birth of a universal vision

The rules-based international order, initially known as the "liberal international order," emerged from the devastation of World War II. The vision was ambitious and universal: to create a global system based on liberal democratic values, market capitalism and multilateral cooperation.

At its core, however, this project was driven by the United States, which saw itself as the unmatched leader of the new order.

The idea was to replace the chaos of great power politics and shifting alliances with a predictable world governed by shared rules and norms.

Central to this vision was the establishment of institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These institutions, alongside widely accepted norms and formalized rules, aimed to promote political cooperation, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and economic recovery for countries damaged by war.

However, the vision of a truly universal liberal international order quickly unraveled. As the Cold War set in, the world split into two competing blocs. The Western

bloc, led by the United States, adhered to the principles of the liberal international order.

Meanwhile, the Soviet-led communist bloc established a parallel system with its own norms, rules and institutions. The Warsaw Pact provided military alignment, while the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance managed economic cooperation. The communist bloc emphasized state-led economic planning and single-party rule, rejecting the liberal order's emphasis on democracy and free markets.

Emerging cracks

When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, the liberal international order appeared to have triumphed. The United States became the world's sole superpower, and many former communist states integrated into Western institutions. For a brief period, the order's universal vision seemed within reach.

By the 1990s and early 2000s, however, new cracks began to appear.

NATO expansion, the creation of the World Trade Organization and greater emphasis on human rights through institutions such as the International Criminal Court all closely aligned with Western liberal values. The spread of these norms and the institutions enforcing them appeared, to many outside the West, as Western ideology dressed up as universal principles.

In response to mounting criticism, Western leaders began using the term rules-based international order instead of liberal international order. This shift aimed to emphasize procedural fairness – rules that all states, in theory, had agreed upon – rather than a system explicitly rooted in liberal ideological commitments. The focus moved from promoting specific liberal norms to maintaining stability and predictability.

New challenges to the status quo

China's rise has brought these tensions into sharp relief. While China participates in many institutions underpinning the rules-based international order, it also seeks to reshape them.

The Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank illustrate Beijing's efforts to establish alternative frameworks more aligned with its interests. These initiatives challenge existing rules and norms by offering new institutional pathways for economic and political influence.

Meanwhile, Russia's actions in Ukraine – especially the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the 2022 invasion – challenge the order's core principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Western inconsistencies have long undermined the credibility of the rules-based order. The 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, widely criticized for bypassing international norms and institutions, exemplified a selective application of the rules. This double standard extends toward Washington's selective engagement with international legal bodies and its inconsistent approach to sovereignty and intervention.

An uncertain future

Supporters argue that the rules-based order remains vital for addressing global challenges such as climate change, pandemics and nuclear proliferation.

However, ambiguity surrounds what these "rules" actually entail, which norms are genuinely universal, and who enforces them.

This lack of clarity, coupled with shifting global power dynamics, complicates efforts to sustain the system.

The future of the rules-based international order is uncertain. The shift from "liberal" to "rules-based" reflected an ongoing struggle to adapt a complex web of rules, norms and institutions to a rapidly changing international environment.

Whether it evolves further, splinters or endures as is will depend on how well it balances fairness, inclusivity and stability in an increasingly multipolar world.

This article is part of a series explaining foreign policy terms commonly used, but rarely explained.

Reinventing liberalism for the 21st century

The Economist, Sep 13th 2018 (Extracts - Introduction and part of the conclusion)

I Reinventing liberalism for the 21st century

IN SEPTEMBER 1843 James Wilson, a hatmaker from Scotland, founded this newspaper. His purpose was simple: to champion free trade, free markets and limited government. They were the central principles of a new political philosophy to which Wilson adhered and to which *The Economist* has been committed ever since. That cause was liberalism.

Today liberalism is a broad faith—far broader than it was to Wilson. It has economic, political and moral components on which different proponents put different weights. With this breadth comes confusion. Many Americans associate the term with a left-wing belief in big government; in France it is seen as akin to free-market fundamentalism. But whatever version you choose, liberalism is under attack.

The attack is in response to the ascendancy of people identified by their detractors, not unreasonably, as a liberal elite. The globalisation of world trade; historically high levels of migration; and a liberal world order premised on America's willingness to project hard power: they are all things that the elite has sought to bring about and sustain. They are things the elite has done well out of, congratulating itself all the while on its adaptability and openness to change. Sometimes it has merely benefited more visibly than a broad swathe of lesser souls; sometimes it has done so at their expense.

Populist politicians and movements have won victories by defining themselves in opposition to that elite: Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton; Nigel Farage over David Cameron; the Five Star Movement over the Brussels bureaucracy; Viktor Orban over George Soros, who was not actually running in the Hungarian elections last April but personifies that which Mr Orban despises, and is Jewish to boot. The populists deride the leaders of the past as obsessed with bossy political correctness and out of touch with what matters to ordinary people; they promise their voters the chance to "take back control". Meanwhile rising powers—as well as Russia, which though in decline is still dangerous—seek to challenge, or at least amend, the liberal world order. And in the near future the biggest economy in the world will be China, a one-party dictatorship. In all these ways the once-barely-questioned link between economic progress and liberal democracy is being severely put to the test. *The Economist* marks its 175th anniversary championing a creed on the defensive. (…)

Liberals need to shake themselves out of this torpor. And they need to persuade others of their ideas. All too often, in recent years, liberal reforms have been imposed by judges, by central banks and by unaccountable supranational organisations. Perhaps the best-founded part of today's reaction against liberalism is the outrage people feel when its nostrums are imposed on them with condescending promises that they will be the better for it.

Liberals also need to look at the degree to which self-interest blunts their reforming zeal. The people who produce and promulgate liberal policy are pretty well enmeshed with the increasingly concentrated corporate elite. Its well-heeled baby-boomer bloc is happy to get pensions that economic logic says it should forgo. If there is a greater liberal stronghold than the international institutions which liberals need to reform, it is the universities that they need to reappraise, given the urgent need to support lifetime learning. Liberals have gained the most when they have taken on entrenched power. Now that means attacking both their current allies and their own prerogatives.

VI A call to arms

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Liberalism -for a B/L Class

Whigs ≠ Tories

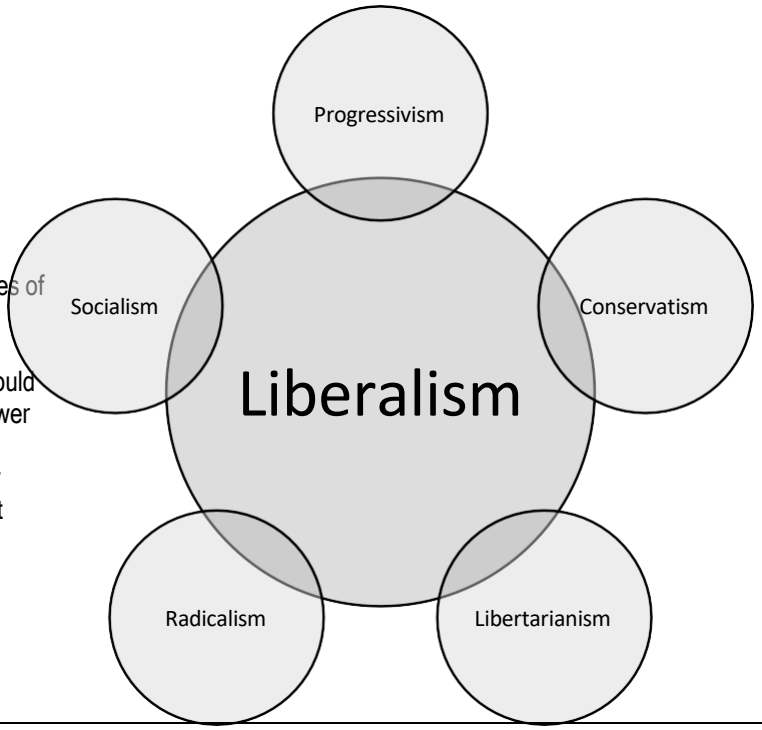
Liberals ≠ Conservatives

Cambridge Dictionary, entry "liberal"

Respecting and allowing many different types of beliefs or behaviour.

Believing in or allowing a lot of personal freedom, and believing that society should change gradually so that money, property, and power are shared more fairly.

Believing in or allowing a lot of freedom for businesses to buy, sell, and make money without many rules or limits, and with low taxes.



Classical liberalism

- Roots in the 17th century. Kinship with Enlightenment. Context: absolute monarchy.
- Classical liberalism = 18th and 19th centuries.
- Emphasis on *liberty*, both economic and political.
- Famous example: Manchester School (mid-19th century), led by Richard Cobden and John Bright (cf. Anti-Corn Law League), which emphasised free trade and laissez- faire capitalism.
- Cf. agenda of "Peace, retrenchment [smaller government] and reform" defended by British nineteenth-century Liberals, especially William E. Gladstone.

❖ **Political aspects: societal & cultural questions**

- John Locke (1632-1704), *Two Treatises of Government*, 1689.
- John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), *On Liberty*, 1859.

- Emphasis on individual rights, e.g. freedom of religion, freedom of speech.
- Protection against encroachments from the government, seen as a potential threat, e.g. protection against arbitrary imprisonment (habeas corpus), forced enrolment in the army.

From: Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen, 1789

Le but de toute association politique est la conservation des droits naturels et imprescriptibles de l'Homme. Ces droits sont la liberté, la propriété, la sûreté et la résistance à l'oppression. [Article 2]

Nul homme ne peut être accusé, arrêté ou détenu que dans les cas déterminés par la loi et selon les formes qu'elle a prescrites. [Article 7]

Nul ne doit être inquiété pour ses opinions, même religieuses, pourvu que leur manifestation ne trouble pas l'ordre public établi par la loi. [Article 10]

From: Constitution of the United States of America, Bill of Rights, 1791

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. [First Amendment]

No soldier shall, in time of peace, be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law. [Third Amendment]

❖ Economic aspects

- Adam Smith (1723-1790), *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776.
- David Ricardo (1772-1823), *On the principles of political economy and taxation*, 1817.

- Free markets: self-regulation of markets / invisible hand → government regulation seen as harmful.
- Free trade ≠ mercantilism, protectionism.

From: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776

As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in the support of domestic industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of the greatest value; every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. [Chapter "Of restraints upon importation from foreign countries of such goods as can be produced at home".]

[About regulations of apprenticeships] The property which every man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing this strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper, without injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred property. It is a manifest encroachment upon the just liberty, both of the workman, and of those who might be disposed to employ him. As it hinders the one from working at what he thinks proper, so it hinders the others from employing whom they think proper. To judge whether he is fit to be employed, may surely be trusted to the discretion [choice] of the employers, whose interest it so much concerns. The affected anxiety of the lawgiver, lest they should employ an improper person, is evidently as impertinent as it is oppressive. [Chapter "Of wages and profit in the different employments of labour and stock"]

In the midst of all the exactions of government, this capital has been silently and gradually accumulated by the private frugality and good conduct of individuals, by their universal, continual, and uninterrupted effort to better their own condition. It is this effort, protected by law, and allowed by liberty to exert itself in the manner that is most advantageous, which has maintained the progress of England towards opulence and improvement in almost all former times, and which, it is to be hoped, will do so in all future times. [Chapter "Of the accumulation of capital, or of productive and unproductive labour"]

❖ An example of classical liberalism in the 21st century

From: "Is the Economist left- or right-wing?", *The Economist*, 26 April 2017
https://medium.economist.com/is-the-economist-left-or-right-wing-2e04700ac76

Some readers, particularly those used to the left-right split in most democratic legislatures, are bamboozled by *The Economist*'s political stance. We like free enterprise and tend to favour deregulation and privatisation. But we also like gay marriage, want to legalise drugs and disapprove of monarchy. So is the newspaper right-wing or left-wing?Neither, is the answer. *The Economist* was founded in 1843 by James Wilson, a British businessman who objected to heavy import duties on foreign corn. Mr Wilson and his friends in the Anti-Corn Law League were classical liberals in the tradition of Adam Smith and, later, the likes of John Stuart Mill and William Ewart Gladstone. This intellectual ancestry has guided the newspaper's instincts ever since: it opposes all undue curtailment of an individual's economic or personal freedom. […] But [*The Economist*'s] starting point is that government should only remove power and wealth from individuals when it has an excellent reason to do so.

Social liberalism

- Context: rising inequality with the Industrial Revolution. Question of the political representation of the working class & rise of trade unions. In the US: Gilded Age (≈ 1870s-1890s) & Progressive Era (≈ 1890s-1920s).
- Social liberalism = early 20th century.
- (Within limits) the government should help individuals achieve their full potential by ensuring equality of opportunity.
- Famous example in the UK: "New Liberalism" represented by David Lloyd George & Liberal welfare reforms, incl. Old Age Pensions (1908), People's Budget (1909), National Insurance (1911) → decline of the Liberal Party in the UK, rise of the Labour Party.
- Famous example in the US: Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909; Progressive Party aka Bull Moose Party in 1912). Cf. also Democrats, esp. Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921, New Freedom), Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933-1945, New Deal), Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969, Great Society) → Democratic Party divided between centrists (e.g. Bill Clinton, Barack Obama) & progressives / socialists (e.g. Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez).

❖ **The evolution in the US**

From: Eric Alterman, "How classical liberalism morphed into New Deal liberalism", *Center for American Progress*, April 26, 2012. www.americanprogress.org/article/think-again-how- classical-liberalism-morphed-into-new-deal-liberalism/

Classical liberalism is synonymous with a faith in reason, which had arisen out of the Enlightenment as a reaction to claims of divine rule by the clergy and royalty of the late Middle Ages. It found expression in the thoughts of many writers across Europe and the British Isles, including John Stuart Mill, John Locke, Baron de Montesquieu, Voltaire, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant, as well as in the political arguments of America's founders, particularly Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and James Madison. Liberal freedoms were primarily freedoms of the mind: freedom of thought, of expression, of religion, and of self-invention without regard to the customs of caste, creed, or crown. Above all, liberalism implied both an ability and a responsibility of people to think for themselves, to create their own destinies, and to follow their own consciences. […]

Over the course of the 19th century, however, the traditional or "classical" understanding of liberalism came to represent a kind of conservatism, as powerful institutions (including, primarily, corporations and trusts) found ways to constrict the freedom of individuals through the onerous working conditions of early industrial factories while at the same time paying tribute to the liberal virtues of self-reliance and freedom to choose one's own path to prosperity. […]

Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt drew on all these traditions when he gave his famous speech on the "Four Freedoms" in his 1941 State of the Union address. There he enumerated what he defined as the rights everyone "everywhere in the world" ought to enjoy. These were "freedom of speech and expression," "freedom of every person to worship God in his own way," "freedom from want," [want: *le manque, le besoin, la pauvreté*] and "freedom from fear." Though it was hardly evident at the time, these foundational four freedoms proved the culmination of a far broader and significant intellectual project. As early as 1932 FDR had proclaimed, "Every man has a right to life, and this means that he has also a right to make a comfortable living." No longer would freedom be defined simply as protection from or against the abusive powers of government – the central idea of classical liberalism. (The philosopher Isaiah Berlin famously defined this as "negative" freedom.) While FDR accepted the importance of protection from an overreaching government, he sought to create onethat could provide "positive" freedoms as well. This entailed providing citizens with the tools they needed to live lives of honor and dignity.

This radical reworking of the American creed could be seen in Roosevelt's near-revolutionary State of the Union address – the last he delivered directly to Congress – on January 11, 1944, in which he called for a "Second Bill of Rights." The key concept in this speech was "security," which FDR now expanded to include almost all areas of life. "Essential to peace," the president insisted, was "a decent standard of living for all individual men and women and children in all nations. Freedom from fear is eternally linked with freedom from want." He demanded a "realistic tax law— which will tax all unreasonable profits, both individual and corporate, and reduce the ultimate cost of the war to our sons and daughters." We "cannot be content," he went on, "no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people – whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth – is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure." Then he listed the new rights he now considered to be fundamental to the American

way of life:
The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the Nation.
The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation.
The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living.
The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad.
The right of every family to a decent home.
The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health.
The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment.
The right to a good education.

❖ The American definition today

From: Pew Research Center / Political typology / "Establishment liberals". November 9, 2021. www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/11/09/establishment-liberals/

Holding liberal positions on nearly all issues, Establishment Liberals are some of the strongest supporters of the current president and the Democratic Party of any political typology group.
While deeply liberal – roughly half describe themselves as either liberal (41%) or very liberal (12%) – Establishment Liberals are the typology group most likely to see value in political compromise and tend to be more inclined toward more measured approaches to societal change than their Progressive Left counterparts. Like other Democratic-oriented groups, most Establishment Liberals (73%) say a lot more needs to be done to ensure racial equality. Yet they are the only Democratic-aligned group in which a majority of those who say a lot more needs to be done also say this can be achieved by working within the current system. […]
On many dimensions, particularly views about the role of government in society, Establishment Liberals are second only to Progressive Left in the uniformity of their liberal positions.
About eight-in-ten Establishment Liberals (83%) say they favor a bigger government providing more services, though in contrast to their Progressive Left counterparts they are more likely to say that government services should be modestly – as opposed to greatly – expanded. Overwhelming majorities in this group also say that government should do more to solve problems (88%), that government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest (86%) and that government often does a better job than people give it credit for (75%).
Nearly nine-in-ten Establishment Liberals (89%) say that compromise is how things get done in politics, higher than the share in any other political typology group. And about eight-in-ten (82%) say the Democratic Party makes them feel hopeful, which is the highest share of any group.
Establishment Liberals are more optimistic about the country and its future than other political typology groups. They are more likely to say they are satisfied with the way things are going and to approve of Biden, and their relatively positive views extend to other attitudes as well.
Establishment Liberals are the only group in which a majority (57%) now say that life in America is better today than it was 50 years ago for people like them. Establishment Liberals also view current economic conditions more positively than those in other typology groups: 48% say that conditions are either excellent (3%) or good (45%), compared with no more than about a third of any other group. And they have a more positive economic outlook than most other groups: 55% say the economy will be better a year from now.From: Timothy Garton Ash [British historian], "A liberal translation", *The New York Times*, January 24, 2009.
Just over 20 years ago [September 4, 1988], a group of leading American intellectuals, gathered by the historian Fritz Stern, placed an advertisement in this very paper [*New York Times*] trying to defend the word "liberalism" against its abuse by Ronald Reagan and others on the American right. It was in vain. Over the last two decades a truly eccentric usage has triumphed in American public debate. Liberalism has become a pejorative term denoting – to put the matter a tad frivolously – some unholy marriage of big government and fornication.
This weird usage leads, at the extreme, to book titles like *Deliver Us From Evil: Defeating Terrorism, Despotism and Liberalism*. But it infects the mainstream too. Asked during a primary debate to define "liberal," and say if she was one, Hillary Clinton [Democratic presidential candidate in 2016] replied that a word originally associated with a belief in freedom had unfortunately come to mean favoring big government. So, she concluded, "I prefer the word progressive, which has a real American meaning." This implies that the meaning of "liberal" must be unreal, un-American, or possibly both. […]
Liberalism is the American love that dare not speak its name.

❖ **The France-United States split**

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_liberalism_in_the_United_States

France	United States
Associated with right-wing ideas	Associated with left-wing ideas and the Democratic party
The State does not interfere in the economy. Society will benefit if the unregulated free market brings prosperity to all. Cf. laissez-faire capitalism.	The State does not interfere in the lives of citizens, whose civil liberties [*droits fondamentaux*], as individuals or as groups, must take precedence.
Economic definition	Political / societal / cultural definition
A liberal in France is often against: ○ Tax rises. ○ State rules and regulations such as a minimum wage. ○ Protectionism (i.e. imposing barriers against the free circulation of goods, e.g. customs). ○ State action that would interfere with competition [la concurrence], e.g. the State saving a business from bankruptcy. ○ Protection of workers, e.g. when they get fired.	A liberal in the USA is often: ○ For abortion: the State should not be able to force a woman to carry a child. ○ For same-sex marriage: the State should not be able to decide who has the right to marry. ○ For the separation of Church and State (e.g. for the teaching of the theory of evolution in schools, against school prayer). ○ Against the death penalty: the State should not have the right to take someone's life.

Definitions in the United Kingdom (Lib-Dems) and Germany (FDP) → closer to the mix of economic and political themes typical of nineteenth-century classical liberalism.

Neo-liberalism

- Rejection of Keynesianism. Context: rise of the welfare state after WW2; perceived threat of the Soviet Union's communism during the Cold War.
- Neo-liberalism = late 20th and 21st centuries.
- Emphasis on *liberty*, both economic and political. Cf. libertarianism.
- Famous example: Chicago school of economics post-WW2 [do not mix up with Chicago school in sociology, which is different and pre-WW2]

- Milton Friedman (1912-2006), *Capitalism and Freedom*, 1962.
- Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992), *The road to serfdom [La route de la servitude]*, 1944.

- From: Milton Friedman, Chapter 1 "The relation between economic freedom and political freedom", *Capitalism and Freedom*, 1962.

It is widely believed that politics and economics are separate and largely unconnected; that individual freedom is a political problem and material welfare and economic problem; and that any kind of political arrangements can be combined with any kind of economic arrangements. The chief contemporary manifestation of this idea is the advocacy of "democratic socialism" by many who condemn out of hand the restrictions on individual freedom imposed by "totalitarian socialism" in Russia and who are persuaded that it is possible for a country to adopt the essential features of Russian economic arrangements and yet to ensure individual freedom through political arrangements. The thesis of this chapter is that such a view is a delusion, that there is an intimate connection between economics and politics, that only certain combinations of political and economic arrangements are possible, and that in particular, a society which is socialist cannot also be democratic, in the sense of guaranteeing individual freedom.

Economic arrangements play a dual role in the promotion of a free society. On the one hand, freedom in economic arrangements is itself a component of freedom broadly understood, so economic freedom is an end in itself. In the second place, economic freedom is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom.

The relation between political and economic freedom is complex and by no means unilateral. In the early 19th century, Bentham and the Philosophical Radicals were inclined to regard political freedom as a means to economic freedom. They believed that the masses were being hampered by the restrictions that were being imposed upon them, and that if political reform gave the bulk of the

people the vote, they would do what was good for them, which was to vote for laissez faire. In retrospect one cannot say that they were wrong. There was a large measure of political reform that was accompanied by economic reform in the direction of a great deal of laissez-faire. An enormous increase in the well-being of the masses followed this change in economic arrangements.
The triumph of Benthamite liberalism in nineteenth-century England was followed by a reaction toward increasing intervention by government in economic affairs. This tendency to collectivism was greatly accelerated, both in England and elsewhere, by the two World Wars. Welfare rather than freedom became the dominant note in democratic countries. Recognising the implicit threat to individualism, the intellectual descendants of the Philosophical Radicals – Dicey, Mises, Hayek, and Simons, to mention only a few – feared that a continued movement toward centralised control of economic activity would prove *The Road to Serfdom*, as Hayek entitled his penetrating analysis of the process. Their emphasis was on economic freedom as a means toward political freedom.
Events since the end of World War II displays still a different relation between economic and political freedom.
Collectivist economic planning has indeed interfered with individual freedom.
As liberals, we take freedom of the individual, or perhaps the family, is our ultimate goal in judging social arrangements. […] In a society freedom has nothing to say about what an individual does with his freedom; it is not an all embracing ethic. Indeed, a major aim of the liberal is to leave the ethical problem for the individual to wrestle with. The "really" important ethical problems are those that face an individual in a free society – what he should do with his freedom. There are thus two sets of values that a liberal will emphasise – the values that are relevant to relations among people, which is the context in which he assigns first priority to freedom; and the values that are relevant to the individual in the exercise of his freedom, which is the realm of individual ethics and philosophy.

❖ Thatcher & Reagan

- Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 1979-1990.
- Ronald Reagan, President of the United States, 1981-1989. Cf. "Reagan Revolution".

- Economic issues → neo-liberalism, i.e. "small government", deregulation, free trade, anti-communism.
  +
- Political / societal / cultural issues → conservatism, i.e. promotion of the traditional family, "law and order", strong military.

"I like you guys [Republicans] that want to reduce the size of government: make it just small enough so it can fit in our bedrooms." – Josh Lyman, a Democrat, criticises Republicans in the fictional TV series *The West Wing*, S2 E7 "The Portland trip", November 15, 2000.

The 21st century: liberalism in crisis?

❖ A vague term?

From: Timothy Garton Ash [British historian], "A liberal translation", *The New York Times*, January 24, 2009.

In a recent conference at Oxford, with speakers from the Americas, Europe, India, Japan and China, we explored what we deliberately called "Liberalisms." Interestingly, what is furiously attacked as "liberalism" in France, and in much of Central and Eastern Europe, is precisely what is most beloved of the libertarian or "fiscal conservative" strand of the American right. When French leftists and Polish populists denounce "liberalism," they mean Anglo-Saxon-style, unregulated free-market capitalism. (Occasionally the prefix neo- or ultra- is added to make this clear.)
One Chinese intellectual told us that in his country, "Liberalism means everything the government doesn't like." The term is used in China as a political instrument to attack, in particular, advocates of further market-oriented economic reform. Standards of what counts as socially or culturally liberal also vary widely. An Indian speaker wryly observed that in India a "liberal" father is one who allows his children to choose whom they want to marry.

❖ Illiberal democracy

"liberal" democracies ≠ authoritarian or "illiberal" regimes

From: Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy", *Foreign Affairs* 76.6, Nov-Dec 1997, p. 22-43.

The tendency for a democratic government to believe it has absolute sovereignty (that is, power) can result in the centralization of authority, often by extraconstitutional means and with grim results. Over the last decade, elected governments claiming to represent the people have steadily encroached on the powers and rights of other elements in society, a usurpation that is both horizontal (from other branches of the national government) and vertical (from regional and local authorities as well as private businesses and other nongovernmental groups). (p. 30)

If a democracy does not preserve liberty and law, that it is a democracy is a small consolation. (p. 40)

We live in a democratic age. Through much of human history the danger to an individual's life, liberty and happiness came from the absolutism of monarchies, the dogma of churches, the terror of dictatorships, and the iron grip of totalitarianism. Dictators and a few straggling totalitarian regimes still persist, but increasingly they are anachronisms in a world of global markets, information, and media. There are no longer respectable alternatives to democracy; it is part of the fashionable attire of modernity. Thus the problems of governance in the 21st century will likely be problems *within* democracy. This makes them more difficult to handle, wrapped as they are in the mantle of legitimacy.

Illiberal democracies gain legitimacy, and thus strength, from the fact that they are reasonably democratic. […] Democracy without constitutional liberalism is not simply inadequate, but dangerous, bringing with it the erosion of liberty, the abuse of power, ethnic divisions and even war. (p. 42-43).

❖ Liberalism and the rise of populism

From: "Reinventing liberalism for the 21st century", *The Economist*, "*The Economist* at 175" issue, 13 September 2018.

In September 1843 James Wilson, a hatmaker from Scotland, founded this newspaper. His purpose was simple: to champion free trade, free markets and limited government. They were the central principles of a new political philosophy to which Wilson adhered and to which *The Economist* has been committed ever since. That cause was liberalism.

Today liberalism is a broad faith—far broader than it was to Wilson. It has economic, political and moral components on which different proponents put different weights. With this breadth comes confusion. Many Americans associate the term with a left-wing belief in big government; in France it is seen as akin to free-market fundamentalism. But whatever version you choose, liberalism is under attack.

The attack is in response to the ascendancy of people identified by their detractors, not unreasonably, as a liberal elite. The globalisation of world trade; historically high levels of migration; and a liberal world order premised on America's willingness to project hard power: they are all things that the elite has sought to bring about and sustain. They are things the elite has done well out of, congratulating itself all the while on its adaptability and openness to change. Sometimes it has merely benefited more visibly than a broad swathe of lesser souls; sometimes it has done so at their expense.

Populist politicians and movements have won victories by defining themselves in opposition to that elite: Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton; Nigel Farage over David Cameron; the Five Star Movement over the Brussels bureaucracy;Viktor Orban over George Soros, who was not actually running in the Hungarian elections last April but personifies that which Mr Orban despises, and is Jewish to boot. The populists deride the leaders of the past as obsessed with bossy political correctness and out of touch with what matters to ordinary people; they promise their voters the chance to "take back control". Meanwhile rising powers – as well as Russia, which though in decline is still dangerous – seek to challenge, or at least amend, the liberal world order. And in the near future the biggest economy in the world will be China, a one- party dictatorship. In all these ways the once-barely-questioned link between economic progress and liberal democracy is being severely put to the test. *The Economist* marks its 175th anniversary championing a creed on the defensive.

Unlike Marxists, liberals do not see progress in terms of some Utopian *telos*: their respect for individuals, with their inevitable conflicts, forbids it. But unlike conservatives, whose emphasis is on stability and tradition, they strive for progress, both in material terms and in terms of character and ethics. Thus liberals have typically been reformers, agitating for social change. Today liberalism needs to escape its identification with elites and the status quo and rekindle that reforming spirit.

❖ "Liberal elites"

"Liberal elites" is a pejorative term used especially in the United States to criticize the left. The right denounces the hypocrisy of the left, who pretend to be inclusive (e.g. caring about minority rights), while in fact dominating many areas, especially intellectual professions, thus forming an economic elite. The

broader criticism is that the promise of meritocracy is broken by the very people who pretend to defend it. This "liberal elite" is thus allegedly capable of imposing its cultural agenda, including "woke" attitudes and "cancel culture", on the rest of the country, who feel they can no longer voice their opinions freely. Hence a certain kind of right-wing ideology which claims that it speaks for "the people" by saying out loud what everybody thinks but is too afraid to say.

Here is an example from F*ox News*:

'Over the last decades we've taken over whole professions and locked everybody else out,' Brooks wrote of the liberal elite in America. The column detailed how the 'educated class' imagine themselves as the 'forces of progress and enlightenment' to appease their own egos, as part of a broader tale that paints them as enlightened and Trump supporters as bigots and fools. Brooks pointed out that in the media world that was once a working-class profession, Ivy League and other elite-level college graduates have come to dominate major newsrooms. 'When I began my journalism career in Chicago in the 1980s, there were still some old crusty working-class guys around the newsroom. Now we're not only a college-dominated profession, we're an elite-college-dominated profession,' he wrote. Brooks wrote that members of the liberal elite 'also segregate ourselves into a few booming metro areas: San Francisco, D.C., Austin and so on.' The 'educated class' dominance also extends to politics on a national level, he wrote. 'Armed with all kinds of economic, cultural and political power, we support policies that help ourselves.'

www.foxnews.com/media/anti-trump-nyt-writer-shocks-column-bashing-elite-self-dealing-jerks-were-the-bad-guys

Fox News reacts to the following column: David Brooks, "What if we're the bad guys here?", *The New York Times*, August 2, 2023. www.nytimes.com/2023/08/02/opinion/trump-meritocracy-educated.html

❖ Post-liberalism

From: Peter Smith & Michelle R. Smith, "What is postliberalism? How a Catholic intellectual movement influenced JD Vance's political views", *PBS*, 4 September 2024.

For the "inside view", see: Adrian Pabst and John Milbank, "What is postliberalism now?", *The New Statesman*, 13 December 2024.

Postliberals share some longstanding Catholic conservative views, such as opposition to abortion and LGBTQ+ rights.

But where Catholic conservatives of the past have seen big government as a problem rather than a solution, the postliberals want a muscular government — one that they control.

They envision a counterrevolution in which they would take over government bureaucracy and institutions like universities from within, replacing entrenched "elites" with their own and acting upon their vision of the "common good." Depending on who's talking, a postliberal regime change could involve encouraging childbearing, easing or removing church-state separation, banning pornography for adults and children alike, reimposing laws limiting business on the Sabbath, supporting private-sector unions and strengthening safety nets for the middle class.

You can listen to Adrian Pabst defining Post-Liberalism here
https://institut-thomas-more.org/2024/10/29/quest-ce-que-le-post-liberalisme/ Institut Thomas More = Information HERE