

What was the liberal order?

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This is a collection of 18 essays, many by well-recognized public figures, that have appeared in Foreign Affairs Magazine. The first five appeared between World War II in 1951, as the New World order was being established, followed by four from the second Clinton administration, five from the Obama administration and for very recent, dating from the Trump election in 2016.

The editors have made a conscientious effort to include different points of view. The three articles from the January/February issue of 2017 refer to each other in expressing different perspectives on where the world order is headed.

This collection of essays provides a sweeping history of the liberal era in foreign policy. The earliest articles, which date from the darkest hours of World War II, express optimism for the outcome of that war and lay the foundation for a world order to be put in place after the war. Roosevelt introduced the term "United Nations" in December 1941 as a more encompassing version of the Atlantic Alliance. Throughout the war he referred to the allies as United Nations, but allowed it to be much broader than simply a military arrangement. To put it most succinctly, Roosevelt envisioned implementing an American-led New Deal for the entire world. The Bretton Woods conference and then the foundation of the United Nations put the machinery in place. The 1951 article by Nelson Rockefeller addresses the sense of obligation for foreign aid, initially put forth by Pres. Truman as Point 4 of his 1949 state of the union address.

The turn of the millennium represented a high point of American power. The Soviet Union had fallen. NATO expanded its mission beyond merely the defense of the countries in the alliance. It took on more of the role of a world policeman.

Donald Trump selection may have prompted the publication of this book. Trump has openly questioned the United States' altruistic but expensive contribution to the defense of the entire free world, and has questioned whether or not the United States is getting a fair shake from its trade partners.

This is a useful overview of all these issues. A five-star effort.

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1942 The Economic Tasks of a Postwar World.....	Alvin H. Hansen and C. P. Kindleberger
1945 Bretton Woods and International Cooperation [Excerpt].....	Henry Morgenthau, Jr.
1949 The Illusion of World Government [Excerpt].....	Reinhold Niebuhr
1951 Widening Boundaries of National Interest [Excerpt].....	Nelson A. Rockefeller
1996 The Myth of a Post-Cold War Chaos [Excerpt].....	G. John Ikenberry
1997 The Real New World Order.....	Anne-Marie Slaughter
1998 Globalization and Its Discontents: Navigating the Dangers of a Tangled World.....	Richard N. Haass and Robert Litan

1999 NATO at Fifty: An Unhappy Successful Marriage: Security - Means Knowing What to Expect.....	Michael Howard
2014 The Unruled World - The Case for Good Enough Global Governance.....	Stewart Patrick
2014 The Return of Geopolitics - The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers.....	Walter Russell Mead
2014 The Illusion of Geopolitics - The Enduring Power of the Liberal Order.....	G. John Ikenberry
2016 The Reform Reformation - International Organizations and the Challenge of Change.....	Tine Hanrieder
2016 The End of the G-20 - Has the Group Outlived Its Purpose?.....	Rebecca Liao
2017 Will the Liberal Order Survive? - The History of an Idea.....	Joseph S. Nye, Jr.
2017 Liberalism in Retreat - The Demise of a Dream.....	Robin Niblett
2017 The Once and Future Order - What Comes After Hegemony?.....	Michael J. Mazarr
2017 Trump and the World Order - The Return of Self-Help.....	Stewart M. Patrick

A mathematician will tell you you cannot solve an equation, and a statistician will say he cannot build a regression leaving out important variables. There are many variables that politicians do not want to include in their analyses.

Here, for example, is a list of words that do not appear anywhere among these 18 essays:

- Venezuela
- gold
- fertility
- shrinking population
- Islam
- inflation
- moral hazard
- rent seeking

A lot is made of the World Bank and IMF, and central banks in general. In particular, many authors make the point that these multinational organizations pulled together to calm the crisis in 2008. That much is true – they did so by making massive loans through newly created fiat money in order to keep the system going. No author makes the point that seems quite clear by now, in 2017, that this precedent for granting relief to imprudent lenders created a moral hazard. They went on making stupid loans. The banks also relieved governments of even a felt obligation to balance their budgets. Every country in the developed world has allowed its budget to get more and more out of balance. World debt is ballooning.

Another point that is not made is the declining birthrate. One author mentions in passing that Japan is aging. That vastly understates the problem. Populations of North Asian and European descent have fertility rates on the order of 1.5, well below the 2.1 level required to sustain a population. Just as debt is ballooning, and off the books debts such as future pension obligations, the people whose salaries would be taxed to repay those debts are simply not being born.

One article does address the problem of ever expanding bureaucracy. The article makes the assumption that the bureaucrats are all trying to do their best, but they are simply saddled with a cumbersome structure. It is more than that. The bureaucrats are interested in their own jobs, perpetuating their salaries more than solving whatever problem they have been given to do.

Every mention of global warming among the 18 articles assumes the problem to be both real and urgent. The IPCC represents bureaucracy at its worst. A vast number of careers throughout the world depend on global warming being real. Many scientists say that there has been no measurable increase in average global temperatures since the year 2000. Just for saying so they lose their jobs and their papers are refused for publication. An increasing number of them are angry enough to publish books. Even if global warming turns out to be real, the IPCC's treatment of dissenting scientists is a scandal. It calls into question the altruism, the good intent of employees throughout the network of multinational organizations. Are they working for the good of humanity, or simply "doing well by doing good?"

The politics of the 1930s and 40s reflected the scientific thinking of the time. Dr. Skinner and Watson of Harvard were promoting behavioralism, the "Standard Social Science Model." Nurture was everything, nature was nothing.

Progressives in the United States believed that observed inequality among elements of the US population could only be due to prejudice and legal impediments. Swede Gunnar Myrdal's 1954 "An American Dilemma" expressed that view, which led to a decade of sweeping changes in American law designed to improve the lot of her Black citizens.

Westerners believed in their own civilization. They believe that the rest of the world should, and for the most part wanted to emulate the West. It is obvious that the rest of the world wanted to participate in Western wealth. We in the West knew that our wealth was a product of our scientific method, freedom of inquiry, education and political system. We assumed that the rest the world would want these prerequisites as well.

We observed that Europe pulled itself up very quickly with the aid of the Marshall plan. We incorrectly assumed that the rest of the world might do the same.

We believed that the problems of the Third World could be alleviated by educational programs and capital investment. On a national level the United States implemented Pres. Johnson's War on Poverty, and on the international level it was the major cheerleader for massive foreign aid and massive subsidized lending to underdeveloped countries by the IMF, World Bank and others.

To put it succinctly, we projected our own mentality and ability on the peoples of the rest of the world. They turn out not to be like us. The social scientists who were trying to explain this were ignored and rudely shoved aside. Arthur Jensen's "Social Class, Race, and Genetics: Implications for Education" was hooted down and buried. P. T. Bauer's [\[\[ASIN:0674259866 Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion\]\]](#) was ignored on the international front. African Axelle Kabou and many others in recipient countries wrote about it -- [\[\[ASIN:2738408931 Et si l'Afrique refusait le developpement?\]\]](#). The capstone is [\[\[ASIN:1593680244 IQ and Global Inequality \]\]](#), never refuted but strenuously ignored, which offers the most parsimonious explanation possible for enduring inequality.

They naïvely projected that they could affect wholesale changes in US society and elsewhere with enough determination and money. It did not work. The places that appeared most successful, such as South Korea and Chile, are populated by intelligent people. Foreign money helped them progress, but they probably would have managed without it.

The West has consistently assumed that Muslims are attracted to the same incentives as we are. We assume that if we give them money and housing, they will be grateful. We assume that if we teach them to work, they will find jobs. We assume that if we show them the benefits of democracy, they will want to implement it themselves. Searching our memories as far back as they go, we cannot come up with a single instance in which these assumptions prove true. But yet, liberals are so enamored of their theories that they will not let go. The West was thrilled during the Arab spring to discover that the Arab world really wanted democracy. What a sham! Is there a single democracy to show for this enthusiasm? But, on the other hand, the Muslims do fervently believe their religion and they believe in having children. It is way of the West to harbor the self-destructive belief that children are unnecessary. A lot of foreign aid has gone to family planning – encouraging people in developing countries to have fewer children. The Muslims, by and large, have not bought it. They may have the last laugh as we die out and they take over.

I do not expect every reader of this review to agree with the points I have made above. I would like to encourage acceptance of the proposition that these topics are very relevant to the future of the world, and that leaving them out of the discussion is a mistake.