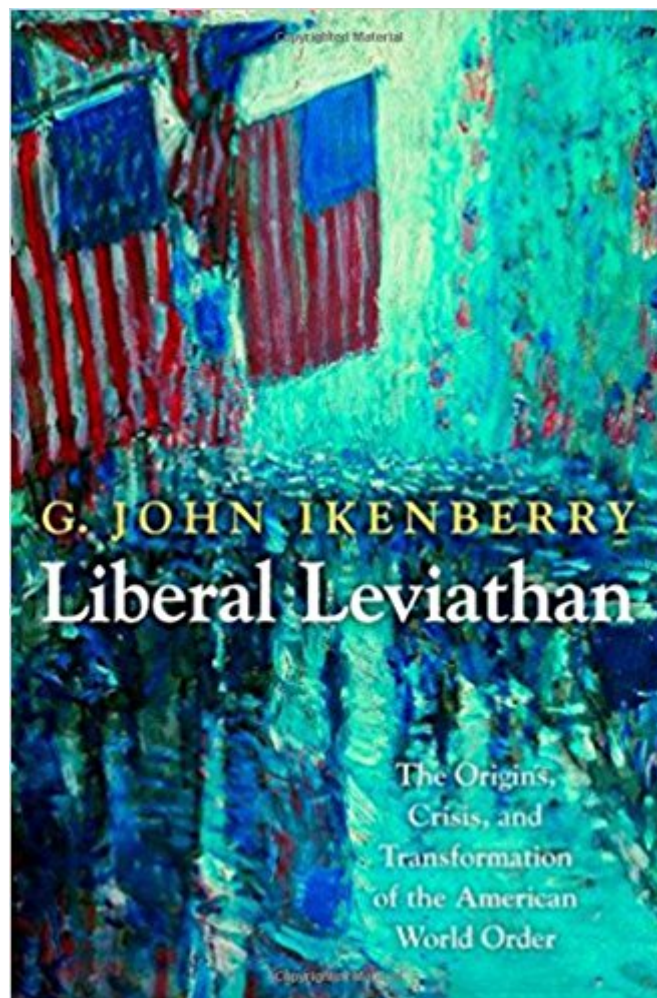


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# Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, And Transformation Of The American World Order (Princeton Studies In International History And Politics)



## Synopsis

In the second half of the twentieth century, the United States engaged in the most ambitious and far-reaching liberal order building the world had yet seen. This liberal international order has been one of the most successful in history in providing security and prosperity to more people. But in the last decade, the American-led order has been troubled. Some argue that the Bush administration, with its war on terror, invasion of Iraq, and unilateral orientation, undermined this liberal order. Others argue that we are witnessing the end of the American era. Liberal Leviathan engages these debates. G. John Ikenberry argues that the crisis that besets the American-led order is a crisis of authority. A political struggle has been ignited over the distribution of roles, rights, and authority within the liberal international order. But the deeper logic of liberal order remains alive and well. The forces that have triggered this crisis--the rise of non-Western states such as China, contested norms of sovereignty, and the deepening of economic and security interdependence--have resulted from the successful functioning and expansion of the postwar liberal order, not its breakdown. The liberal international order has encountered crises in the past and evolved as a result. It will do so again. Ikenberry provides the most systematic statement yet about the theory and practice of the liberal international order, and a forceful message for policymakers, scholars, and general readers about why America must renegotiate its relationship with the rest of the world and pursue a more enlightened strategy--that of the liberal leviathan.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 2011: Top 25 Books "[A]mbitious and thought-provoking."--Gideon Rachman, Financial Times "International orders guide how major powers interact with one another and with less powerful states: how they cooperate and compete in trade and security and when and why they respect one another's sovereignty. Ikenberry's important book tackles this complex subject, giving readers a deep understanding of the factors that determine the type of international order. . . . Liberal Leviathan is a valuable guide to understanding the factors that will determine its eventual shape."--Foreign Affairs "Liberal Leviathan is a brilliant inquisition into the nature of international order, politics of unipolarity, and substance of United States foreign policy. . . . Drawing equally on international relations theory, history, and political theory, Liberal Leviathan offers a probing analysis into the challenges to the current U.S.-led international order and its likely future."--David A. Lake, Global Governance "This is a valuable work of international relations theory."--Choice "Liberal Leviathan is a great review of the state of the art of broad and narrow Realist and liberal theories being discussed in American academia."--CÃfÂsar de Prado, International Affairs "His book lucidly explains how the end of the Cold War allowed the U.S.-dominated Western system to expand to the rest of the world. Ikenberry's account has an intuitive appeal. There's always more than enough chaos to argue that the world is in crisis . . . he writes thoughtfully about the challenge of integrating rising powers into global governance. . . . As a clear and informed synthesis of the existing scholarship on global governance, this book is a success."--David Bosco, American Prospect "Ikenberry's book is a cogently developed argument that builds upon his previous writings and will be a point of reference for the 'international liberal' literature."--Jakub J. Grygiel, Claremont Review of Books "[T]he sheer breadth of the work, the clarity of the presentation . . . and the synthesis of an extraordinary amount of theoretical and historical literature will make the volume an important resource for students and scholars for a very long time."--James M. McCormick, Perspectives on Politics "Ikenberry impresses with his range of concerns, by his drive to formulate clear and parsimonious propositions about interstate relations, and by the pains he takes to express himself with clarity and precision. He announces his lines of argument, develops them, repeats them, and for good measure cross references them."--Michael H. Hunt, Political Science Quarterly "The book elaborates on how America crafted and created 'cooperative security'--arguably the most important innovation in national security in the 20th century."--Wang Yong, Shanghai Daily

"John Ikenberry, America's leading scholar of international affairs, brilliantly relates theory to historical change in his timely advocacy of a new U.S. foreign policy."--Zbigniew Brzezinski, Center for Strategic and International Studies

"Nobody has thought longer or deeper about the nature of the American liberal world order than John Ikenberry. Tough-minded yet visionary and optimistic, this inspirational volume should become required reading for all those tasked with the great responsibility of steering us to safety through the very choppy international waters into which we are now heading."--Michael Cox, London School of Economics and Political Science

"Liberal Leviathan traces the intimate connections between the emergence of a largely liberal international system and the concentration of global power in the United States in the twentieth century. The marriage of power and principle in the United States has been central to the emergence of the liberal order, but Ikenberry shows that it is also corrosive of that order. As a consequence both of U.S. foreign policy activism and gradual shifts in the distribution of world power, the liberal order faces significant new challenges. This book traces alternative paths through which these challenges might be met."--Barry Posen, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

"Liberal Leviathan offers a masterful deliberation on American power, international change, and the global order. It will no doubt take its place as a seminal volume in international relations, one that helps define the debate about emerging changes in the global distribution of power. I can think of few volumes comparable in their conceptual clarity and ambition. A must-read."--Charles A. Kupchan, author of *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace*

"Liberal Leviathan is an ambitious, comprehensive, and deeply learned study of the American-led international political order. I am confident that it will stand as a major and lasting contribution to scholarship and to the public conversation about United States foreign policy. This is a big and important book."--William C. Wohlforth, coauthor of *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy*

Thomas Hobbes wrote in the 16th century that the end of philosophy itself was power. Correctly, I think, John Ikenberry argues it still is. His new book is about the American power. In this rigorously-argued book, he creates a new grand narrative, a new strategic myth. It is useful: the myths like these are indispensable to a smooth functioning of a "linchpin" state like the US. Moreover, he appears trying to supplant the myth developed by the neo-conservative American thinkers. The outcome is unclear to me. There is today a school of 'hard' or 'muscular' liberals, often allied with neo-conservatives, who seek to promote democratic revolution in countries around the world by means that include military force. There is no indication that Ikenberry supports these

'hard' liberals, but his thesis might be open to interpretation. John Ikenberry argues that the American power has been fused with the international order. It now transcends America, it has become global "liberal order". America has become "Liberal Leviathan", which is bigger than America itself. To put his thesis simply, the American liberal hegemony has been a success story. It should continue. Why? He argues that, going forward, the liberal international order led by the US will have a practical appeal for all members of the international community. This is because today we live in a state of security-interdependence and only can be secure through co-operation in a rule-based and open order, which is underwritten by the hegemon of the system- the US. The world needs the US, because it is a kind of "linchpin" which holds this interdependent world together. Ikenberry acknowledges a crisis in this order, but he doesn't think it is lethal to it. He prefers a regenerated American-led liberal order to alternatives. Ikenberry believes in liberalism, even in liberal ascendancy, but he believes in power and hegemony as well. He defines "liberal" very unusually (as open and rule-based order). The book is an interesting fusion of the Liberal Internationalist theory with Realist theory ideas, where the former plays the leading role and the latter (Realist ideas) -- an auxiliary role, though I may be wrong about that. What are the problems with the book? First, in my view, liberalism cannot be defined in categorical terms: tone is more important. If one defends liberalism stridently, one can become intolerant and illiberal in a the blink of an eye. Secondly, in his carefully-chosen title "Liberal Leviathan", as we can see, Lockean liberalism comes first, while the Hobbesian authoritarian 'Leviathan' comes second. Ikenberry's Liberal Internationalist theory has a Lockean flavor. It could be a liability. For John Locke, liberal toleration was a means to truth in religion and morality. Lock defended it, because he believed that it enables humans to find THE BEST LIFE for humankind - he never doubted that there was such a thing. He believed in consensus on true faith. His liberal followers believed in convergence of humankind in universal civilization. They promoted liberal toleration because it was a pathway to the true faith. Lock himself didn't extend toleration to Catholics and atheists because he was not confident that persuasion would lead them into that faith. Similarly, I think Ikenberry believes in a liberal consensus. This is only a hunch, but I think he doesn't really believe any amount of persuasion would lead the Iranian regime 'to see the light'. His book ignores Iran - it is mentioned only in passing, in a short footnote. I was surprised, because Iran, I think, represents one of the biggest practical challenges for the US policy today. Thomas Hobbes saw the world differently from Locke. He didn't care about the true faith. For him, toleration was simply a strategy of peace. Indifferent to belief, the concern of the government was with practice. In this Hobbesian view, the end of toleration was not consensus; it was co-existence, a modus vivendi. This is where I diverge with Ikenberry: he believes in a liberal

consensus, which I think could be a perilous thing. A modus vivendi is probably harder, but, if we understand politics as a process of flexible accommodation between various traditions, is the only way forward. There couldn't be a consensus about values, could it? Despite the liberal ascendancy, there are still many different regimes in the world today: liberal and non-liberal, authoritarian and democratic, and various hybrids of the four. They pursue different paths. I think they are entitled to it. Authoritarian regimes are not always illegitimate. If the policy of the enlightened liberal community, led by the US, will be to make mildly authoritarian regimes (for example like Russia, my former country) to accept a liberal consensus (on this liberal community's terms), the project of the liberal hegemony will mean more conflict, we can be sure of that. I agree with the author that the US have shaped the current international order. I also agree that after the Second World War the US had more power than anybody, it was able to mold the International system to reflect its own image. No question, the US was able to create a milieu of states which were congenial to the US values. So far so good. But I disagree on the original impulse of this enterprise. According to Ikenberry, the US did it because it had been already actively seeking to build an open, progressive, rule-based order. My more cynical view is that the US had simply stumbled upon it. It was irrelevant to the US intention, which was containment. In other words, the postwar American leaders had midwived a globalist containment policy against the Soviet Union. Its by-product was the liberal international order. The international order itself may have had more to do with the American internal politics. For example, the bulk of the foreign policy elite including such figures as Acheson, Dulles, Harriman, Lovett, John McCloy - all recruited from business-internationalist circles. Paul Nitze himself used to be a banker. The elites have always favored the economic "Open door" strategy, which was in essence internationalist and liberal. Another dimension was the political competition between the internationalists and conservative American nationalists. Each side used the rhetoric of global struggle against the Communist threat to promote its favorite projects and to attack its political enemies. In order to govern effectively and logroll with nationalist republicans, the internationalists (both republicans and democrats) found it advantageous to use the policy of global interventionism. This underpinned the globalist containment strategy and the American Cold War consensus out of which the current American-led order has eventually emerged. Finally, Dr. John Ikenberry is an intelligent and focused writer. The book is packed with interesting insights. It is obvious that he had absorbed numerous ideas and writings by other academics and had thought hard on the subject. He makes "liberal internationalism" sounds very palatable; in his interpretation it even appears desirable. Still, I am skeptical. Liberal Leviathan supports a monistic global order. We could find ourselves trapped in a single, all-encompassing world-view. The global liberal democracy could be a

pathway to more conflict. I would recommend this book as a companion volume to John Mearsheimer's "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics", another excellent book, which might look less optimistic and even appear outright dark, but somehow seems to me less monistic.

I've just completed Mr. Ikenberry's excellent book on the development, characteristics, and future of the liberal international order, and the United States role in its' creation, evolution, and future. I have two criticisms. First, I found the book to be a very difficult read; not because of the content (which was superb) but because of the amount of repetition. It felt like every element was repeated again, and again, and again, with slightly different words, to drill the point home. I think that the exact same wisdom could have been imparted in half the space. Second, in discussing the factors which will influence whether the liberal order will continue and how the United States role may change, there was absolutely no mention of the impact of the internet or growing role of social media, other than a few vague references to globalization. I realize that these topics are worthy of entire books all by themselves, but they truly are game changers that were not present when the post-war order was created.

This book reads like a textbook for a class. It is carefully organized, and very general at first, about principles of organization, power, etc. More than halfway through, it begins to deal with the subject in specific terms. I found it interesting, but with much too long an "introduction" to the subject.

Being the seminal book on the topic, it has to be rated high as a must read in International Relations-Given that it is the seminal book on the topic of contemporary liberalism, it's not going to replace your daytime soaps or game shows for wow factor

Ikenberry has much faith in the continuation and longevity of the current world order dubbed by him the American 'liberal hegemonic order' despite beliefs (grounded or not) in the decline of American power to hold on it. The crisis of the system as he sees it is more an authority and leadership crisis than the crisis of the system per se. He also outlines the possible transformations of the system and American response in the light of power transition from the West. I think the challenges to the system posed by the rise of authoritarian states such as China and Russia should not be dismissed lightly. China's attitudes to global governance and American-led system are well described by Shambaugh in his book 'China goes global'. China has the potential to become a revisionist power and makes itself a contending 'pole', making the world unable to resist the needs to accommodate its wishes

and interests. In order to have another perspective on the development of world order, I would like to recommend Charles Kupchan's 'No One's World'. In it he offers a very realistic assessment on the future relations between the West and the rising rest.

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