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### Realism and Liberalism in Modern International Affairs

Liberalism and realism, as respective international relations theories, are practical when defining world leaders' actions and possible intentions. For example, in 2022, in true liberalistic fashion, the U.S. National Security Council published a 19-page document regarding the US's position in the Indo-Pacific region. The document explains that the Indo-Pacific region is home to U.S. allies such as Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. The region also encompasses over half the world's population, over half the global GDP, and half of projected global economic growth. The Security Council goes on to address some of the region's broader security concerns, mentioning the need to bolster military cooperation as a necessity for prosperity and security in the area, as well as directing efforts to deter climate change as rising tides threaten the safety of archipelagos in the South China Sea. This document's existence in 2022 shows the beating heart of liberalistic ideology is alive and well, as the Security Council points to a need for greater cooperation on all institutional fronts with all our allies who share a mutual interest.

Fast forward to April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, just two years after the U.S. Security Council published its document on why it would be mutually beneficial for all Democratic governments in the region to strengthen their economic and military bonds, President Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met in Washinton DC and, according to the New York Times, agreed to, “- a range of moves on Wednesday to further enhance military, economic and other cooperation

between the two longtime allies as part of the president's efforts to counter China's aggressive action in the Indo-Pacific." The Times report, written by Peter Baker and Michael D. Shear, continues to mention that the U.S. and Japan will develop, "expanded defense architecture with Australia, participate in three-way military exercises with Britain and explore ways for Japan to join a U.S.-led coalition with Australia and Britain." This report further enforces that the Indo-Pacific, arguably the most populated and valuable region in the world, is an area of incredible importance in modern politics and that liberalistic cooperation, institutionalism, and mutual benefit are still at the forefront of thinking in democratic politics.

According to Our World in Data, 50.56% of political regimes globally are some form of electoral or liberal democracy. Given this, realism undoubtedly influences some aspects of the other 49.99% of modern political thought, and you don't have to look far to find it. For example, take the Ukraine-Russia war. During an interview with disgraced former news anchor Tucker Carlson, Russian President Vladimir Putin, an authoritarian leader with realist ideologies, talks about how he has taken it upon himself to recapture land lost by the U.S.S.R. during the collapse of the Soviet Union, stop encroaching Western ideology, and protect Russia from NATO's military capabilities. Putin's motives are clearly driven by power, which can be highlighted by a New York Times article that chronicles Putin's rise. The article discusses Putin's political career, but I'll focus on his speech during the 2007 Munich Security Conference, where, according to the New York Times, Putin said, "One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way," he declared to a shocked audience. A 'unipolar world' had been imposed after the Cold War with 'one center of authority, one center of force, one center of decision-making.' The result was a world 'in which there is one master, one sovereign, and at the end of the day this is pernicious.'" Putin's actions are clearly driven by

paranoia of attack. He expressed those concerns in his 2007 speech in Munich and during his interview with Tucker Carlson in 2024.

NATO, on the other hand, touts in a mission statement that it does have a military but is “committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes.” And continues to say, “If diplomatic efforts fail, it [NATO] has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations. These are carried out under the collective *defense* clause.” NATO clarifies that it exists to ensure peace for its members and prioritizes political resolutions for all disputes regardless of membership. Given this evidence, it’s fair to say that Putin, out of fear of losing power, irrationally believes that NATO is a direct threat to Russian sovereignty and uses this threat as a base argument for increasing aggression in Ukraine.

Through a U.S. Security Council report, U.S.-Japanese relations regarding the South China Sea, and Vladimir Putin's war against imaginary threats, I’ve explained how I believe liberalism and realism are readily observable in modern international politics. There are infinitely more examples ready to be pulled from. However, obviously, the idea is that the fundamental ideologies that started the current world order are still just as relevant today as they were when it all began.

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