Liberal Approaches

John M. Owen

The Oxford Handbook of International Security
Edited by Alexandra Gheciu and William C. Wohlforth

Print Publication Date: Mar 2018
Subject: Political Science, International Relations, Political Theory
Online Publication Date: Apr 2018 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198777854.013.8

Abstract and Keywords

Liberalism always has been concerned with the security of the individual against violence and deprivation. Liberal approaches to international security focus on institutions, or collectively held rules, as mediating between material variables and international outcomes. States are arenas of contestation among individuals and groups, and differ according to their institutions. International realms are distinguished by the number, type, and membership of institutions. The realms are linked: liberal democracies construct and maintain liberal international institutions. As the increase of peaceful, wealthy democracies since the Second World War shows, these states have relatively secure citizens and enjoy comparative international success. In the future, the liberal order could be weakened by the ongoing rise of nonliberal China; escalations of transnational terrorism; and alienation from liberalism within the wealthy democracies. Future liberal security scholarship should attend to differences among non-democracies; causal links between domestic and international institutions; and the co-evolution of states and the international environment.

Keywords: liberalism, institutions, democracy, regime type, individuals, interdependence, peace, Kant

A century ago, liberals wanted to overturn the existing global order. Today, they want to retain and extend it. Liberalism's conservatism is a tribute to its hard-won success over the past century. Visions once chimerical—of stable peace in Europe, a world free of formal empires, high economic interdependence among most states, low global military spending—were realized over the course of the twentieth century and have come to seem normal.

The global liberal order is built upon ideas that have come to be put into practice as *institutions*, or established, broadly recognized rules or ways of conducting social interaction. These ideas derived from liberal theory and scholarship over the centuries, and indeed an emphasis on institutions is what diverse liberal social-scientific approaches to international security have in common. Some liberal scholars stress domestic institutions, such as constitutionalism, democracy, and capitalism.[1] Others stress international institutions

that regulate economic transactions, human rights, weapons proliferation, and other activities. The broad liberal tradition in International Relations recognizes both levels of analysis, and indeed is open to endogeneity between the two—for example that democracies trade more with one another and that the resulting higher national income reinforces democracy (Russett and Oneal 2001).

Liberals generally see institutions as causes. They are not the only causes of security outcomes, or even always the chief ones. Institutions do not erase material power or its effects. But they do mediate between power and outcomes. Liberal approaches to international security imply the counterfactual: add, remove, or alter institutions, and states will be more or less secure, have more or fewer wars, fight more or less destructively. Thus, when liberals think about the future of international security, they think not only of shifts in material power but also of change and continuity in domestic and international institutions. The remarkable material gains of China since the 1980s are bound to be consequential, but for liberals China's domestic institutions are likewise crucial. What China does with its increasing power, including how far it abides by or tries to change international institutions, turns in part on whether it remains a Market-Leninist state or becomes a multi-party democracy.

(p. 101) 8.1 Liberalism and Security

In (IR) scholarship, liberalism often is thought to be uneasy with security or high politics, more at home with political economy or low politics. In fact, security always has been a central concern of liberal political theory. The security that concerns liberalism, however, is first that of the *individual*, particularly his or her person and property. National and international security are instrumental to individual security (Owen 2010b). Of course, liberalism is also concerned with the individual's liberty, but liberals argue that, under the right institutions, liberty and security complement rather than compete with one another. Liberals differ as to what those institutions are, but one prominent account, seen in the late eighteenth-century thinkers James Madison (2003: 319) and Immanuel Kant (1983: 126), argues for institutions that balance self-interested actors.

8.1.1 Institutions

Social scientists tell a number of stories about institutions. Sociologists take a top-down or structural approach, in which institutions open certain options for agents and close others (Powell and DiMaggio 2012). Economists take a bottom-up approach, in which agents construct and use institutions to lower transaction costs and make interaction more efficient (Coase 1960). Liberalism's approach is closer to that of the economists. Individuals build institutions to serve their preferences. Without institutions, IR would be disordered and rife with inefficiencies contradicting the interests of powerful and weak alike. In some times and places institutions are imposed by the powerful upon the weak, and produce fear and conflict; thus the Athenians' aphorism in Thucydides' famous Melian Dialogue: "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they

must" (Thucydides 1998: 352). In other times and places institutions are freely agreed upon by all and produce trust and cooperation. States themselves are complexes of institutions, some nested in others, some informal and evolving. Not the unitary rational actors envisaged by realism, states are instead arenas of competition among societal actors, each with different utility functions. Who wins the competition affects the state's foreign policy, and so domestic institutions matter a great deal.[2] States come in two ideal types. Constitutional or liberal regimes are mutually agreed upon by freely-choosing individuals and allowing those individuals' preferences to influence foreign policy; they provide individual security, liberty, prosperity. Despotic or authoritarian regimes are imposed from above, block citizen influence on foreign policy, and produce insecurity, servitude, and poverty.

An early division among liberal thinkers concerned whether liberal institutions scale up to the international level—whether sovereign liberal states can build rules and practices that safeguard the security and liberty of each. Hobbes and Rousseau say no, and **(p. 102)** are categorized as realists. Locke leaves room for more international cooperation in the state of nature. Kant goes further and argues that liberal international institutional architecture is actually inevitable, but only among republics, that is, states that separate the legislative from the executive power. Kant's influence endures, both for the comprehensiveness of his vision and his prediction of the democratic peace, or the absence of war among liberal democracies (Doyle 1983; Russett 1994; Owen 1997; Cederman and Gleditsch 2004). Recently, Deudney (2008) has pushed the logic further and argued that today's destructive technologies will drive humanity toward a global federation.

Institutional complexes, then, span the international and domestic realms. Here is where we see most starkly that institutions are inescapable but that not all institutions are the same. Not every state is Bismarck's Germany, nor are all international systems like that of Europe in the late nineteenth century. Some states are more like the Third Reich, some systems more like the nightmare of Europe 1939–45. Some states are more like today's Federal Republic of Germany, some systems like today's European Union. The quality of interaction among liberal states will be different from that among nonliberal states, or that between liberal and nonliberal states. Liberal states build among themselves what each has within its borders: institutions that share information, reduce transaction costs, build trust, and encourage agents to invest in relationships for mutual gain. Nonliberal states have less inclination or ability to build and remain in such relationships, because they are constitutionally prone to arbitrariness (Gaubatz 1996; Martin 2000; Lipson 2013). Liberal states show little sign of trying to counter-balance America's unprecedented global military dominance; nonliberal states such as Russia and China have taken such steps, albeit gingerly (Owen 2000/2001).

Skeptics argue that institutions are consequences, not causes: states that want to cooperate for reasons of interest do so, and institutions are simply the result of their cooperation (Mearsheimer 1994). Liberalism can grant a selection effect: it is liberal democracies that tend to form, remain in, and comply with liberal international institutions. But those same international institutions feed back into their member states and strengthen their

domestic institutions and preferences. Were the particular rules of international institutions inconsequential, non-democracies would not be so wary of liberal institutions, nor would democracies spend so many resources trying to influence them (Koremenos et al. 2001).

8.1.2 Liberalism and Its Alternatives

Liberalism's differences with realism are straightforward. Realism insists that the human race is trapped in a world where might makes right and insecurity is pervasive and perpetual. The best that can be achieved is a stable distribution of power (be it bipolar, multipolar, or unipolar), and attempts to break out of this system will only make matters worse. Liberalism finds those claims excessively pessimistic, and insists that some types of institutions can and do mitigate the problems described by realism. Some versions of liberalism contain an implicit teleology, in which the human race is destined to pull itself out of the dangerous state of nature, if only gradually. Other versions simply maintain that it is possible for people to make the world more or less peaceful, depending on (p. 103) who has power, what their preferences are, and how capable they are of learning. What liberals agree on is that institutions make the difference.

Liberalism and realism also differ as to the efficacy of liberal democracy in international politics. When it comes to navigating the perils of diplomacy, traditional realism regards liberal democracies as deficient because they constrain executive action by popular will and law (Kennan 1951; Lippmann 1997; Tocqueville 2002: 217–18). Structural realists, by contrast, abstract from domestic regime type, implying that liberal-democratic institutions are inconsequential. Recent liberal scholarship argues that liberal states enjoy security advantages in the international system. They do not fight one another (see the earlier reference to Kant), and tend to win the wars they do fight—either because they fight better or because they are wiser about which wars to fight (Lake 1992; Reiter and Stam 2002). Their superior ability to reveal information about their capabilities and preferences (Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001) allows them to focus on fewer potential enemies. Public choice literature adds that the right institutions give individuals incentives to innovate, invent new technologies, increase productivity, and create opportunities for others in their societies; those institutions are generally liberal-democratic ones (Rosenberg and Birdzell 2008; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012).

Liberalism stands in a different relation to constructivism. The two paradigms have in common an emphasis on norms and ideas and greater hope in long-term peace and cooperation than does realism. But liberalism, like modern realism, is a rationalist theory. The agents for liberalism are individuals rather than states, but liberalism is methodologically individualist and takes actors' preferences as exogenous. Social interaction reduces to bargaining over goods. Institutions themselves are a product of bargaining. Constructivism, by contrast, is holistic, taking preferences to be endogenous to or derived from social interaction; institutions, for constructivists, structure preferences and bargaining (Wendt 1992; Fearon and Wendt 2002). Although liberal scholarship allows for states' preferences to change through interaction—how else to think about the change from the

Third Reich to the Federal Republic of Germany?—in its treatment of individuals, liberalism is necessarily rationalist.

Furthermore, whereas constructivism sees norms as socially constructed, liberalism sees at least norms concerning the good life as given or natural. For liberals, human beings value individual security and liberty more highly than other goods, such as fame, religious devotion, art, or even power. When states do not achieve international cooperation, liberalism regards it as a puzzle (and looks to institutions for the solution). Constructivism, at least not its radical form, denies human nature as such, positing instead that identities and desires are plastic and contingent.

8.2 Liberalism, Institutions, and the Future of International Security

What do liberal approaches imply about the future of international security? Liberalism directs our attention to change and continuity in institutions both domestic and (p. 104) international. Change the institutions, and the world may come to resemble the war of all against all depicted by realism. Maintain, broaden, and deepen extant liberal-democratic institutions, and the current order should persist. Change and continuity matter at both the domestic and international levels, because the two levels influence each other.

What changes institutions, then? Institutions are path-dependent, inasmuch as they tend to pay increasing returns to their members and the opportunity costs of defecting from them tend to rise over time (Ikenberry 2001). So stability is built into any institutional complex. Yet, institutions change. Some scholars argue for gradual evolution: a set of interacting agents find that some new problem is not adequately addressed by existing institutions; agents formulate various ideas for addressing the problem; they try out some of these ideas; the winning ideas—those that appear to powerful actors best at addressing the problem, or most consistent with the existing matrix of institutions and habits—become institutionalized (Hodgson 2002). Others argue for abrupt change: a crisis emerges, disrupts normal patterns of interaction, and presses or enables agents to build new institutions (Legro 2005). For the sake of simplicity, I only consider the latter source of change. International history suggests two general types of crisis that can alter institutions:

1. Power shifts, e.g., triggered by major-power wars such as the Napoleonic Wars or the World Wars of the twentieth century (Ikenberry 2001; Gunitsky 2014).
2. Sustained economic crises, such as in the 1870s (which wrecked the emergent norm of free trade in Europe) and the 1930s (which did the same and also helped fascism supplant liberal democracy) (Findlay and O’Rourke 2007).

One type of power shift I consider is “traditional,” a textbook case of power transition: the rise of China and concomitant relative decline of the United States. The second type is non-traditional: transnational terrorism, or the continuing ability of non-state actors to

threaten the security of dozens of states. I also consider a type of economic distress, one less dramatic than that of the 1930s but possibly as consequential: the continuing stagnation of the native working classes in most Western countries.

8.2.1 Global Power Shifts

Liberalism recognizes that in an anarchical international system, differences in states' power to hurt and conquer other states is crucial. But the purposes to which states put their power matter as well, and domestic and international institutions directly affect those purposes. Hence the spectacular economic growth of China since the 1980s is bound to be consequential for international security not simply because Beijing can convert its new wealth to military power, but because the country's persistent Leninist political system increases the probability that it will put its power to purposes contrary to those of the United States. America remains the world's only military superpower and (p. 105) doubtless will do for some time to come (Brooks and Wohlforth 2008), but by definition it is declining in material terms relative to China.

Global power shifts advanced the liberal world order in the twentieth century. The Second World War devolved power from Western Europe to the United States and the Soviet Union; each superpower built an international order that competed against that of the other (Lake 1996). In Western Europe and Japan, the United States simultaneously promoted liberal democracy within states (Owen 2010a) and spun a cobweb of international rules regulating relations among states (Ikenberry 2012). US allies relinquished their empires in exchange for American guarantees of security and stable economic growth. The United States protected not only the territorial integrity of these states but also their liberal-democratic regimes. The US-sponsored order was far more coercive in poor countries and regions; there, where the Soviets were actively competing for elite and mass loyalty, Washington did not trust democrats to be liberal and anti-Soviet, and supported authoritarians who stayed out of the Soviet camp and opened themselves to trade and investment (Poznansky 2015). As the USSR began to liberalize itself in the late 1980s, more and more Third World elites began to sour on socialism and anti-Americanism and to embrace the liberal international order (Owen and Poznansky 2014). Thus the globalization of the 1990s.

China accepted many of the economic aspects of the liberal institutional order, and grew at a spectacular rate after the 1970s. Measured in constant US dollars, the Chinese economy is on track to surpass the American economy sometime in the next two decades (World Bank 2016). In both international trade and finance, China already is a global player: it is the world's biggest exporter (World Trade Organization 2016), and in 2015 launched the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as an alternative to older US- and Europe-dominated international financial institutions. China's military spending in 2014 was 1.9 percent of its GDP, compared to 3.5 percent of GDP for the United States. China's ruling Communist Party (CCP) does not seem interested in building the country into a global military superpower. Instead, it appears most concerned to secure the country's access to raw materials, assert what it sees as China's rights in the East and

South China seas, and challenge long-standing US military and political predominance there.

China is no liberal democracy. The CCP clearly is determined to maintain its monopoly on political power, and under Chairman (and Chinese President) Xi Jinping has identified liberal democracy as a serious ideological threat emanating from the West.

The rise of Market-Leninist China is important for several reasons. First, the CCP could try to alter, directly or indirectly, some of the liberal characteristics of the global complex of institutions that the West has underwritten for decades. China has prospered under the current complex, and one could ask why the CCP would seek to change a system under which it is winning. But it is clear that the Chinese leadership believe international institutions to be biased in a liberal direction and suspect that the West uses them to contain China. Human rights institutions are the most obvious case. China's representatives on the UN Human Rights Council have promoted "universality," or the avoidance of singling out individual countries, and also rules giving heavy agenda (p. 106) influence to the state under review (Nathan 2015: 164–7). The China-sponsored AIIB attaches fewer conditions to loans than the Western-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

Second, China's ongoing success as an authoritarian capitalist state could lead elites in other states in Asia and beyond to conclude that the "China Model" is viable or even superior to liberal democracy (Halper 2010). A number of studies find that the intermittent but significant growth in the number of democracies over the past centuries is partly a result of international diffusion (Brinks and Coppedge 2006). Authoritarianism spreads as well (Ambrosio 2010; Gunitsky 2017). The rise of China could roll back liberal democracy in East Asia and elsewhere. State elites could conclude that the China Model offers the quickest and best route to economic growth. They also could be attracted to the China Model simply because of China's prestige.

Thus two vital questions liberalism will ask about international security in the coming years are: Will China continue to rise? And, will it liberalize by allowing opposition parties and meaningful political competition on the state and national level?

8.2.2 Terrorism

The rise of transnational terrorism since 2001 constitutes a different kind of global power shift. The so-called Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and other jihadist entities are not states, and certainly have far less power than the United States, France, India, and others. But they do have what Thomas Schelling called the "power to hurt," that is, to damage countries' populations and property without defeating them on the battlefield (Schelling 1966). Hence these networks have the power to terrorize populations and topple governments. An al-Qaeda attack in Madrid in 2004 almost certainly helped doom the Spanish government of José María Aznar. Each government understands that if it is judged by its constituents to have failed to stop a terrorist attack, it may be voted out of office. Hence the expensive security measures in so many countries today, from heightened airport security to greater monitoring of private communication to violations of civil liberties; and thus

two long wars led by the United States (Afghanistan and Iraq). Transnational terrorists can and do impose enormous costs on rich, powerful states.[3]

Discontent with Western domination has existed as long as Western countries have had empires. Only recently has that discontent been mobilized and channeled into terrorist networks that penetrate the Western countries themselves. This power shift is heavily driven by technological change: cheap communication and international travel make it possible for militant leaders to disseminate their messages widely, recruit and train, and plant cells virtually anywhere. Jihadist terrorism is also not likely to disappear any time soon, because its causes are robust. The deep cause is a prolonged legitimacy crisis in many Muslim-majority countries, particularly in North Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia over the right way to order society. On one level, there are two sides, Islamists and secularists. Within the Islamist camp are a number of (p. 107) competitors—Sunni *versus* Shia, pro- *versus* anti-Western—who show no sign of giving up (Owen 2015).

Sharia is not going to become the law of the land in Western countries. Rather, the threat to liberal institutions from ongoing jihadist terrorism comes from efforts by threatened liberal democracies to defend themselves. Terrorists' use of cyberspace to communicate, recruit, spy, and move money has provoked already capable Western intelligence agencies to develop new capabilities and norms. In the United States since September 2001 the federal government has assumed new powers, including to gather meta-data on all telephone calls; to torture terrorism suspects; to kill US citizens suspected of terrorism without due process; and to compile, by opaque procedures and without appeal, lists of Americans who are prohibited from flying. Some of these powers have been rescinded or modified. But a trade-off familiar to liberal democracies remains real: in times of threat, a liberal-democratic government is under great pressure to shed the institutional constraints that make it what it is—transparent, predictable, accountable, and legitimate. Some officials or departments in the government will be tempted to exploit the insecurity to grab more power than is warranted (Eddington 2015). Indeed, for liberal IR theory, long-term national and international security depend on liberal-democratic institutions within states. An additional trade-off appears, then, between short-term security (served by increasing monitoring and intrusiveness by police and intelligence) and long-term security (served by decentralizing power). If the jihadist threat is not ended or contained, the international liberal order could weaken.

8.2.3 Sustained Economic Stagnation in the West

The third potential threat to liberal institutions, not entirely separable from the first two, emanates from within liberal democracies themselves. It is a loss of confidence among large segments of their publics in the liberal international order. Majorities continue to support liberal democracy *within* their countries, although populist-nationalist political parties and candidates have been rising and attracting anti-democratic extremists. The chief threat is to the *international* side of liberalism: the long-standing aspiration to free movement of goods, capital, and labor.

Liberal Approaches

As discussed in Section 8.2.1, globalization is a liberal project. It accelerates technological and managerial innovation and raises aggregate wealth. It may undermine itself, however, inasmuch as economic openness always creates losers as well as winners. Workers in economic sectors in which their country is at a comparative disadvantage lose their jobs and find their lives disrupted. Losers from globalization will naturally try to reverse it; thus economists' theory of endogenous protectionism, in which international trade is self-undermining (Treffler 1993). Insofar as their governments do not adequately address their grievances, globalization's losers will provide opportunities for new political movements and parties. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, to the surprise of many political analysts, the international liberal order appears weak in its heartlands of Europe and North America. In the United States in 2016, one of the (p. 108) two major parties nominated a populist who seemed determined to end America's role as underwriter of the global liberal order. In Europe, a majority of voters in the United Kingdom voted to withdraw their country from the EU, while populist parties showed greater strength in Continental Europe than at any time since the 1930s.

Some analysts attribute the rise of populist nationalism to the distribution of gains and losses from globalization. The losers are working-class natives with falling prospects for higher paying jobs and stable careers for themselves and their offspring. In the United States, supporters of Donald Trump in the Republican state primary elections tended to be white and to lack a university education. Between 1990 and 2013 the employment rate of this population group fell from 76 percent to 68 percent. These also are the people who believe that neither political party pays them any attention (Thompson 2016).[4] Economist Branko Milanovic finds that the global "upper middle class"—corresponding to the working and middle classes in rich countries—is the only segment of society that has lost from the freer movement of goods, labor, and capital since the 1980s. Globalization has lifted millions of people out of poverty, but those between the 70th and 95th percentiles of wealth in Figure 8.1 (reproduced from Milanovic n.d.) might be less inclined than those above the 95th percentile to celebrate.

Automation, resulting from liberalism's attachment to technological innovation, also bears some blame for the shape of this curve (Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2011). Yet it is a mistake to reduce the political turmoil of the 2010s to economics. Liberal internationalism is also a cultural phenomenon (Hunter and Yates 2002): it presses a kind of (p. 109) rootlessness upon people and societies; it either erases or denigrates and trivializes local differences and traditions, reducing them to tastes in food, music, and art that are then mashed together and recombined. The culture of globalization is well-suited to cosmopolitan elites—professionals in banking, business, law, academia, foundations, and so on—but not to those who, by necessity or choice, stay in one place. The latter know well enough that globalizers tend to assume a moral authority and to look down on their more rooted counterparts as quaint at best and barriers to progress at worst.

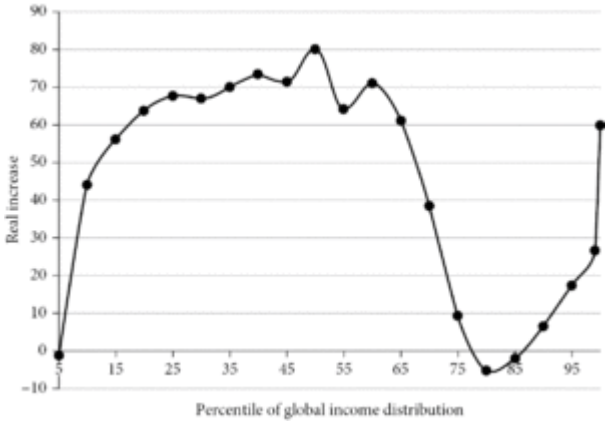

Figure 8.1 Change in real income between 1988 and 2008 at various percentiles of global income distribution (calculated in 2005 international dollars)

Note: The vertical axis shows the percentage change in real income, measured in constant international dollars. The horizontal axis shows the percentile position in the global income distribution. The percentile positions run from 5 to 95, in increments of five, while the top 5% are divide into two groups: the top 1% and those between the 95th and 99th percentiles.

International liberalism always has brought these stresses, but some analysts believe the wealthy liberal countries are near a collective tipping point. Perhaps one immediate cause is the waves of immigration that hit the United States (from Latin America) and Western Europe (from the Southwest Asia, North Africa, and Eastern Europe) in recent years. The populist-nationalists are in full-throated opposition to this immigration and appeal to a more ethnically homogeneous past. Another immediate cause, perhaps, was the renewal of jihadist terrorism in 2015–16, with murderous attacks in Paris, Brussels, California, and Florida. Those attacks, coupled with accelerated immigration from the Middle East, aggravated the sense many had of feckless and unaccountable governing elites

In any case, rising political opposition to globalization in its countries of origin bears watching. No doubt remedies are available, and the rejiggering of political coalitions may yield creativity. Still, liberal theory itself says that democracy is a social contract; if enough individuals believe the contract has been violated, they may revoke it and seek a new one. If a return to Hitler's Europe is highly unlikely, a return to Bismarck's—with more nationalism and attention to relative gains—is more imaginable than it was in the 1990s.

8.3 The Future of Liberal Approaches

What of the future of liberal scholarship about security? Liberalism has made enormous contributions to the study of security by treating institutions not as a mere consequence of cooperation, but as causes of it. The literatures on democratic peace, economic inter-

dependence, and international institutions and cooperation fall squarely in the liberal tradition: all argue that institutions are consequential and imply that people and governments have real choices.

The liberal paradigm has weaknesses. Like any rationalist tradition, it has difficulty dealing with downward causation from institutions; it cannot adopt constructivism's holism. This means that liberalism's version of hegemony must be limited to such phenomena as direct coercion and paying for international public goods (such as keeping open global commons such as sea and air routes and the Internet); liberalism shies away from what Steven Lukes calls the second and third faces of power (the power to set agendas and to mold others' preferences) (Lukes 1974). It is prone to dismiss critiques of liberal hegemony from the left and the right (Schmitt 2008).

(p. 110) Within its limits, however, liberal IR scholarship has much to contribute over the coming years to the academic study of security. An ongoing trend to complicate Kant's simple dichotomy by explicating distinctions among both liberal and nonliberal institutions should continue. A descent from high theory reveals a staggering variety of institutional complexes around the world. Some countries that formally qualify as liberal-democratic could come up short in various ways, and others that might not qualify as liberal-democratic could nonetheless exhibit some of the properties associated with liberalism. Elman (2000) argues that presidential and parliamentary democracies are different. Potter and Baum (2015) argue that democracies with more opposition parties tend to be more restrained from using force. Dafoe and Weiss (2015) argue that non-democratic governments also incur audience costs when they make threats; if so, then one putative advantage of liberal democracies partly disappears. Narang and Talmadge (2017) argue that civil–military relations differ across both democracies and non-democracies, with consequences for international security.

More important still, liberal approaches to security also ought to focus more on explaining changes in institutions—domestic, international, or both. First, liberal scholars should try to endogenize the various types of event that can trigger institutional change. Liberal internationalism is bound to create losers, and those losers are bound to try to repay internationalism by ending it. We can extend the endogeneity question to the tectonic global power shift to China. After all, the CCP implemented its semi-liberalizing reforms to make China a wealthy and secure country, and succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. Had China remained mired in Maoism, it would be difficult to see the power shift we are seeing and the resulting challenge to liberal internationalism. Harrison and Mitchell (2013) argue that the predominance of the West is under threat, but not liberal internationalism itself; rather, rising powers will carry on the system under which they rose.

Second, although most liberal scholars would recognize a partial congruence between domestic and international institutions—liberal democracies participate in more liberal international institutions—we know too little about this congruence. What is it about liberal states that render them a better fit for liberal internationalism? By what mechanisms do liberal international institutions strengthen democracy within countries? How do these

mechanisms break down? Although some institutional complexes, such as the EU (European Union) and NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), require that new members be liberal democracies, the same clearly is not true of many other liberal international institutions. Most countries, including some prominent non-democratic ones such as China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia, are members of the WTO (World Trade Organization). Greece and Turkey were members of NATO while going through authoritarian periods during the Cold War (and in the 2010s Turkey descended again into authoritarianism). Will the liberal international complex of institutions pull China into political reform? That has been the long-term hope of liberals, and South Korea, Taiwan, and Chile were all authoritarian countries that liberalized as they participated in the global economy. On the other hand, will the CCP hang on to power and pull international institutions in its direction?

(p. 111) Third, and related, liberal scholarship should explore more fully and rigorously evolutionary logic to explain change and continuity. Evolution lurks in the shadows of much work on institutions. Although some liberal scholarship may tell a stylized story of rational agents designing institutions to solve collective problems, most scholarship in fact points to such mechanisms as competition, learning, and copying. In other words, institutions emerge and spread by an evolutionary process, in which the fittest institutions survive and unfit ones die away. Agents scour the world for information about which policies and institutions work best and either copy those that do or, if they find "best practices" threatening, build defenses against them. Some studies of institutional and normative change are explicitly evolutionary (Kahler 1995; Florini 1996). Tang (2013) argues that the world has evolved from an offensive-realist to a defensive-realist one.

Evolutionary logic is more realistic than standard rationalism, inasmuch as it assumes that agents' rationality is bounded (Simon 1982). Agents have limited resources, including information, cognitive ability, and time. Bounded rationality means that institutions may be imperfectly copied, sub-optimal, and produce unintended consequences. Thus evolution need not imply any teleology or progress. Evolution also presumes political competition within and among states, and hence eludes a perennial realist charge of utopianism. It is the elites' need for security that drives them to look for information about which institutions work best and to imitate success. Nor need evolutionary logic imply that states are selected out of the international system. States do die (Fazal 2011), but much more typically they adapt; it is policies and institutions that die.

Finally, evolution does not necessarily exclude differences in power and interest. In biology, evolutionary theory has come to recognize the ability of agents to shape their environments and thereby alter which phenotypes (traits) are selected for. Beavers build dams to solve local problems (to increase food supply and protect themselves from predators), but dams in turn select for beavers who know how to build them. Organisms and environment co-evolve (Lewontin 2001; Odling-Smee et al. 2003). Just so, leaders of powerful states may shape their social and material environments in ways that select for and against particular institutions. The United States has co-evolved with the international system by

building liberal internationalism; China and other rising powers may attempt to do the same.

An explicit and rigorous evolutionary approach would focus scholars' attention on mechanisms of change and help advance our ability to address questions such as the effects of the rise of China on liberal internationalism and vice versa; the sources and regional consequences of Russia's descent back into authoritarianism; the effects of US relative decline on democracy and liberal internationalism; and the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East and its consequences for security in the region. For liberals, these questions about the links between domestic and international institutions are questions about security—the security of the international community, nations, and the individuals that compose them. Domestic and international institutions clearly have evolved and will continue to do so. So should liberal approaches to international security.

References

Acemoglu, D. and J. Robinson. 2012. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. London: Profile Books.

Ambrosio, T., 2010. Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion: Concepts, Dynamics, and Future Research. *International Studies Perspectives*, 11(4): 375–92.

Brinks, D. and M. Coppedge. 2006. Diffusion is No Illusion: Neighbor Emulation in the Third Wave of Democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(4): 463–89.

Brooks, S. G. and W. C. Wohlforth. 2008. *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Brynjolfsson, E. and A. McAfee. 2011. *Race against the Machine*. Digital Frontier Publishing.

Cederman, L. E. and K. S. Gleditsch. 2004. Conquest and Regime Change: An Evolutionary Model of the Spread of Democracy and Peace. *International Studies Quarterly*, 48(3): 603–29.

Chow, D. C. K. 2016. Why China Established the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank. *Ohio State Public Law Working Paper* 333. *Available at:* **http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2737888**, accessed April 15. 2016.

Coase, R. H. 1960. The Problem of Social Cost. In *Classic Papers in Natural Resource Economics*, pp. 87–137. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Crawford, N. 2014. U.S. Costs of Wars through 2014: $4.4 Trillion and Counting. Typescript, Boston University. *Available at:* **http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/figures/2014/Costs%20of%20War%20Summary%20Crawford%20June%202014.pdf**, accessed June 24, 2016.

Dafoe, A. and J. C. Weiss. 2015. Authoritarian Audiences in International Crises: A Real-History Survey-Experiment of Diversionary Incentives and Audience Costs in China. Typescript, Yale University.

Deudney, D. 2008. *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Doyle, M. W. 1983. Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 12(3): 205–35.

Eddington, P. 2015. The Patriot Act Is Not Fit for Purpose. Nor Is Its Replacement. *Newsweek* (June 1, 2015). *Available at:* **http://www.newsweek.com/patriot-act-not-fit-purpose-nor-its-replacement-337970**, accessed July 5, 2016.

(p. 113) Elman, M. F. 2000. Unpacking Democracy: Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Theories of Democratic Peace. *Security Studies*, 9(4): 91–126.

Fazal, T. M. 2011. *State Death: The Politics and Geography of Conquest, Occupation, and Annexation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fearon, J. D. 1994. Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes. *American Political Science Review*, 88(3): 577–92.

Fearon, J. and A. Wendt. 2002. Rationalism v. Constructivism: A Skeptical View. In W. Carlneas, B. Simmons, and T. Risse (eds.), *Handbook of International Relations*, pp. 52–72. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Findlay, R. and K. H. O'Rourke. 2007. *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Vol. 51). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Florini, A. 1996. The Evolution of International Norms. *International Studies Quarterly*, 40(3): 363–89.

Gaubatz, K. T. 1996. Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations. *International Organization*, 50(1): 109–39.

General Office, Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 2013. Document No. 9. Beijing. *Available at:* **https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation**, accessed June 22, 2016.

Gunitsky, S. 2014. From Shocks to Waves: Hegemonic Transitions and Democratization in the Twentieth Century. *International Organization*, 68(3): 561–97.

Gunitsky, S. 2017. *Aftershocks: Great Powers and Domestic Reforms in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Halper, S. 2010. *The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Basic Books.

Harrison, E. and S. M. Mitchell. 2013. *The Triumph of Democracy and the Eclipse of the West*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hodgson, G. M. 2002. The Evolution of Institutions: An Agenda for Future Theoretical Research. *Constitutional Political Economy*, 13(2): 111–27.

Hunter, J. D. and J. Yates. 2002. In the Vanguard of Globalization: The World of American Globalizers. In P. L. Berger and S. P. Huntington (eds.), *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*, pp. 323–57. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ikenberry, G. J. 2001. *After victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ikenberry, G. J. 2012. *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kahler, M. 1995. *International Institutions and the Political Economy of Integration*. Washington, CD: Brookings Institution Press.

Kant, I. 1983. To Perpetual Peace, a Philosophical Sketch. In I. Kant,*Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, ed. Ted Humphrey. Indianapolis: Hackett (first published 1795).

Kennan, G. F. 1951. *American Diplomacy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Koremenos, B., Lipson, C. and Snidal, D. 2001. The Rational Design of International Institutions. *International Organization*, 55(4): 761–99.

Lake, D. A. 1992. Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War. *American Political Science Review*, 86(1): 24–37.

Lake, D. A. 1996. Anarchy, Hierarchy, and the Variety of International Relations. *International Organization*, 50(1): 1–33.

Legro, J. W. 2005. *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

(p. 114) Lewontin, R. C. 2001. *The Triple Helix: Gene, Organism, and Environment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lippmann, W. 1997 (1922). *Public Opinion*. New York: Free Press.

Lipson, C. 2013. *Reliable Partners: How Democracies Have Made a Separate Peace*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lukes, S. 1974. *Power: A Radical View*. London: Macmillan.

Madison, J. 2003. Federalist No. 51. In Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist*. Signet (first published 1788).

Martin, L. 2000. *Democratic Commitments: Legislatures and International Cooperation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mearsheimer, J. J. 1994. The False Promise of International Institutions. *International Security*, 19(3): 5–49.

Milanovic, B. n.d. Global Income Inequality by the Numbers: In History and Now. Typescript. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Moravcsik, A. 1997. Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics. *International Organization*, 51(4): 513–53.

Murray, C. 2012. *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010*. Crown Forum.

Narang, V. and C. Talmadge. 2017. Civil–Military Pathologies and Defeat in War: Tests Using New Data. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, forthcoming.

Nathan, A. J. 2015. China's Challenge. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(1): 164–7.

Odling-Smee, F. J., K. N. Laland, and M. W. Feldman 2003. *Niche Construction: The Neglected Process in Evolution* (No. 37). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Owen, J. M. 1997. *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Owen, J. M. 2000/01. Transnational Liberalism and U.S. Primacy. *International Security*, 26(3): 117–52.

Owen, J. M. 2010a. *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510–2010*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Owen, J. M. 2010b. Liberalism and Security. In Robert A. Denemark (ed.), *The International Studies Encyclopedia*. John Wiley.

Owen, J. M. 2015. *Confronting Political Islam: Six Lessons from the West's Past*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Owen, J. M. and M. Poznansky 2014. When Does America Drop Dictators? *European Journal of International Relations*, 20(4): 1072–99.

Packer, G. 2005. *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Potter, P. and M. Baum. 2015. Information, Popular Restraint, and the Democratic Peace. Typescript, University of Virginia.

Powell, W. W. and P. J. DiMaggio (eds.), 2012. *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chiacgo: University of Chicago Press.

Poznansky, M. 2015. Stasis or Decay? Reconciling Covert War and the Democratic Peace. *International Studies Quarterly*, 59(4): 815–26.

Putnam, R. D. 2015. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Reiter, D. and A. C. Stam. 2002. *Democracies at War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rosenberg, N. and l. E. Birdzell. 2008. *How the West grew Rich: The Economic Transformation of the Industrial World*. New York: Basic Books.

Rousseau, J.-J. 1997. *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (first published 1762).

(p. 115) Russett, B. 1994. *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Russett, B. M. and J. Oneal. 2001. *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*. London: W.W. Norton.

Schelling, T. C. 1966. *Arms and Influence*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Schmitt, C. 2008. *The Concept of the Political: Expanded Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (first published 1932).

Schultz, K. A. 2001. *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy* (Vol. 76). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Simon, H. A. 1982. *Models of Bounded Rationality: Empirically Grounded Economic Reason* (Vol. 3). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Tang, S. 2013. *The Social Evolution of International Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thompson, D. 2016. Who Are Donald Trump's Supporters, Really? *The Atlantic* (March 1). *Available at:* **http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/03/who-are-donald-trumps-supporters-really/471714/**, accessed June 23, 2016.

Thucydides, 1998. *The Landmark Thucydides*, ed. Robert B. Strassler, trans. C. W. Crawley. New York: Free Press (composed 411 **BC**).

Tocqueville, A. de 2002. *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (first published 1835).

Treffler, D. 1993. Trade Liberalization and the Theory of Endogenous Protection: An Econometric Study of U.S. Import Policy. *Journal of Political Economy*, 101(1): 138–60.

United Nations Development Program. 2002. *Arab Human Development Report*. New York: United Nations Publications.

Wendt, A. L. 1992. Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics. *International Organization*, 46(2): 391–425.

Wildau, G. and T. Mitchell. 2016. China GDP growth slips to 6.7% as stimulus eases slowdown. *Financial Times* (April 15). *Available at:* **https://next.ft.com/content/faa4576c-0203-11e6-9cc4-27926f2b110c**, accessed June 23, 2016.

Woodward, B. 2004. *Plan of Attack*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

World Bank. 2016. **http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-PPP-based-table**, and **http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD**, both accessed June 22, 2016.

World Trade Organization. *Available at:* **http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountryPFView.aspx?Country=CN&**, accessed June 22, 2016.

The Worries about China's Slowing Growth. *Economist* (January 19, 2016). *Available at:* **http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2016/01/economist-explains-11**, accessed June 22, 2016.

Notes:

(1.) One highly prominent account reduces liberal IR theory to the analytical priority of domestically generated preferences over international structures and interaction (Moravcsik 1997). Clearly such preferences are important to liberalism, but the broad liberal tradition, traceable at least to Kant, stresses the centrality of institutions within and among states.

(2.) The interwar debate between the realist Carl Schmitt and the liberal Harold Laski continues to reward today's reader. See Schmitt (2008).

(3.) Neta Crawford (2014) estimates that, as of 2014, the War on Terror cost the United States $4.4 trillion (including wars and homeland security). Notwithstanding that Iraq had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks, those attacks clearly made the war more likely; see e.g. Woodward (2004); Packer (2005).

(4.) For deeper treatments of this group see Murray (2012); Putnam (2015).

John M. Owen

John M. Owen is Ambassador Henry J. and Mrs. Marion R. Taylor Professor of Politics, University of Virginia.