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EDITED AND REVIEWED BY  
Thania Isabelle Paffenholz,  
Inclusive Peace, Switzerland

\*CORRESPONDENCE  
Bhawna Pokharna  
✉ bhawnap@rediffmail.com

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# Editorial: Peace, democracy and liberal international order

Bhawna Pokharna<sup>1\*</sup> and Sarika Dubey<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science, Government Meera Girls College, Udaipur, India, <sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science, Prayag Mahila Vidyapith Degree College, Prayagraj, India

## KEYWORDS

peace, democracy, liberal international order, cold war era, post-Cold War era

## Editorial on the Research Topic

### [Peace, democracy and liberal international order](#)

The modern nation-state was established by the Treaty of Westphalia, acknowledging the sovereignty of nations and non-interference in each other's domestic affairs, thus laying the foundation for the modern international system. The post-World War I settlements and establishment of the League of Nations were an attempt to create a world order based on democratic principles and liberal values. The post-World War II era was marked by a liberal international order built around the economic liberalization, multilateralism, security cooperation, and democratic solidarity of the USA, Western European countries, and Japan (Ikenberry, 2017). The interface of the Soviet-led communist bloc presented a challenge to the values of the liberal international order, which the world faced for more than five decades. These five decades were dominated by the US and its western allies on the one hand and the Soviet Union and its communist allies on the other. They waged global political, economic, and military competition with each other. Meanwhile, the Non-Aligned Movement also made its presence felt in the tight bipolar world, becoming a catalyst for third world unity. The historic end of the Cold War led to the creation of a new world order, which was polycentric with US dominance. The period witnessed an expanded NATO, a well-integrated European Union and ASEAN, a well-established WTO, and groups like G-20 and G-7 taking center stage of this order.

After the tumultuous changes in international relations at the end of the 20th century, the advent of a new world order with China at its helm was witnessed. With its massive economic rise, military advancement, and capabilities, coupled with strong and powerful leadership, China was able to become a significant global player in the international arena. China rejects the international order led by the US and its allies, which it says is discriminatory, unjust, and unequal and establishes the superiority of a few over many. China's rise in the international order has renewed the threat of a cold war between the US and China, which has implications for the existing liberal international order. The Russia-Ukraine war has also added another dimension to the present global order, centering both Asia and Europe in global politics.

Asia, Europe, and the USA differ in their views on decoupling from authoritarian regimes like Russia and China so as to defend the core values of the liberal international order (Kundnani, 2018, 2024). This has led the USA to forge an alliance to respond to China's challenge with a more inclusive approach. China seems to want to build an order that reflects its own interest, having a legitimate aspiration from a realist perspective rather than a liberal perspective (McGregor, 2024). For some, it is again the beginning of

great power competition and the adaptation of multipolarity (Cooper, 2020). In the present context, it seems that nationalism is the most powerful ideology on the planet; it invariably triumphs over liberalism whenever the two clash (Mearsheimer, 2017). The current multipolar order is a realist-based international order that plays an important role in managing the global economy, handling arms control, and addressing common problems like climate change. Both China and the USA are supposed to lead bounded orders and will compete with each other (Mearsheimer, 2017).

The Russia–Ukraine war gave the Russia–China axis an opportunity to develop further. China has declared Russia to be their most important strategic partner. The two powers have pledged to maintain and promote the China–Russia comprehensive partnership. The Russia–China axis is posing some new challenges to the present global order. The power game among the new and old players of international relations compels us to evaluate its impact on international order. The Research Topic, “*Peace, Democracy, and the Liberal International Order*,” endeavored to explore new challenges to the liberal international order posed by China’s rise, the war in Ukraine, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

In “*Democracy, Sovereignty, and security: Understanding the normative approach of Third parties involved in Moldova and Ukraine*,” Albulescu discusses the process of political settlement in Transnistria and the Donbass region. Liu’s “*Civilians at War: Focusing on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and scrutinising the Doctrine of Non-Combatant Immunity*” explains the Israel–Palestine conflict, the killing of innocent people, and their right to life. Morgado and Hosoda, in their article “*A Pact of Iron: China’s Deepening of the Sino-Russian Partnership*,” analyzes the deepening of Sino-Russian relations and its impact on world order. The last article of the Research Topic, “*Thoreau Civil Disobedience for Concord, Massachusetts: Global Impact*” by Reddy, is a very contemporary article if its purpose and objective are counted.

Thus, the Research Topic examines the myriad challenges to the liberal international order, with the Russia–China axis shaping the current global order. The ideals of democracy and sovereignty were held supreme when the former Soviet empire collapsed and newly independent states were taking shape. Non-combatant immunity also holds importance in the liberal international order; any breach of that leads to the collapse of the system. The ideals of non-violence and civil disobedience can fight any war and emerge victorious. Lastly, the Russia–China axis has posed challenges for the liberal international order and will be used as an anti-Western platform to strengthen China’s position in the global scenario. However, China’s wish to augment its economic and trade position could compel it to forge close ties with the western world.

## Author contributions

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## Conflict of interest

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