

The Self-Defeating Liberal International Order: Organized Hypocrisy and the Legitimacy Deficit

Paradoks Tatanan Internasional Liberal: Organized Hypocrisy dan Defisit Legitimasi

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Abstrak:

Studi ini berargumen bahwa Liberal International Order (LIO) bersifat *self-defeating*, yakni kemundurannya lebih banyak disebabkan oleh faktor endogen daripada faktor eksogen. Faktor endogen utama yang diidentifikasi adalah *organized hypocrisy* dalam LIO, yaitu kondisi di mana norma-norma fundamental LIO, khususnya self-determination dan non-interference, secara bersamaan dijunjung tinggi dalam wacana namun secara sistematis dilanggar dalam praktik oleh para pendukungnya sendiri. Dengan menggunakan kerangka *organized hypocrisy* yang dikembangkan oleh Stephen C. Krasner, studi ini menganalisis pelanggaran norma tersebut melalui empat modalitas: *convention, contract, coercion, dan imposition*. Studi ini selanjutnya berargumen bahwa *organized hypocrisy* tersebut berkontribusi pada defisit legitimasi LIO, yang tercermin dari menurunnya kepercayaan terhadap institusi PBB, persepsi global yang semakin tidak menguntungkan Amerika Serikat sebagai pendukung utama LIO, serta perilaku negara-negara yang secara aktif mencari alternatif institusional seperti BRICS. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif berbasis *desk research*, studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa LIO *self-defeating* secara struktural: ambisi liberalnya yang ekspansif menghasilkan tindakan-tindakan yang merusak norma kedaulatan yang menjadi fondasi legitimasinya sendiri.

Kata-Kata Kunci: Liberal International Order, Organized Hypocrisy, Self-Defeating, Legitimacy Deficit, Self-Determination, Non-Interference.

Abstract:

This study argues that the Liberal International Order (LIO) is self-defeating, with its deterioration driven more by endogenous than exogenous factors. The principal endogenous factor identified is the LIO's organized hypocrisy, a condition in which the order's foundational norms, particularly self-determination and non-interference, are simultaneously upheld in discourse and systematically violated in practice by its own principal proponents. Drawing on the organized hypocrisy framework developed by Stephen C. Krasner, this study analyzes norm violations across four modalities: convention, contract, coercion, and imposition. It further argues that this organized hypocrisy contributes to a legitimacy deficit within the LIO, as evidenced by declining trust in the United Nations, an increasingly unfavorable global perception of the United States as the order's principal proponent, and the behavior of LIO beneficiaries who are actively seeking institutional alternatives such as BRICS. Employing a qualitative desk-based research method, this study concludes that the LIO is structurally self-defeating: its expansive liberal ambitions generate actions that undermine the sovereign norms upon which its own legitimacy rests.

Keywords: Sistem Internasional Liberal, Organized Hypocrisy, Paradoks, Defisit Legitimasi, Self-Determination, Non-Intervensi.

Korespodensi:

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Introduction

This study is primarily concerned with an 'order'. Mearsheimer defines order as an organized group of international institutions that help govern the interactions among the member states (Mearsheimer, 2019, pp. 10–11). Meanwhile, Kissinger provide broader definition that enlarge definition of order from simply a group or institution, but the just arrangements and the distribution of power, upheld by commonly accepted rules and a balance of power that governs interactions among states (Kissinger, 2014, p. 4). Meanwhile, Bull explain that order mean those patterns or dispositions of human activity that sustain the elementary or primary goals/value of social life among mankind as a whole (Bull et al., 2012, p. 19). Furthermore, International order means a governing arrangement among states (Sørensen, 2011a, p. 28). Unlike Mearsheimer's definition, which focuses on institutions that govern international interactions, this study draws upon a broader conception of order as the patterns, arrangements, and values that govern relations among states, within which institutions constitute merely one fragment where the liberal international order resides.

LIO is widely adopt begin in the post war era underpinned by The United States and its partner (Ikenberry, 2018, p. 20). Scholar argue that the minimalist definition of LIO is an open, rule- and institutional based international system in which state trades and cooperate to achieve mutual gains (S. E. Goddard et al., 2024, p. 3; Ikenberry, 2009; Koivisto & Dunne, 2010, p. 618). Meanwhile, the maximalist definition is the international arrangements that incorporates liberal social purpose, economic and political rights and democratic decision making procedures (S. E. Goddard et al., 2024, p. 3).

To understood LIO we need to underscores that it originate from the liberal idea of the individual liberty and rights, consequently shaping markets, democracy, and human right (Barnett, 2021, pp. 15–16). It thereby furthers to the emergence free trade and market economy, human right democratic governance, and self-determination state actor, all governed through legal institutional frameworks (Aydin, 2021; Duncombe & Dunne, 2018; S. E. Goddard et al., 2024, p. 3; Ikenberry, 2009; Kornprobst & Paul, 2021, pp. 1309–1310). This value so pivotal in state interaction, so much so that it became an accepted international norm in conducting international relations. Institutionally, this norm manifested

in its early stages in the United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institution namely General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) and World Trade Organization (WTO), which subsequently evolved and institutionalized into various UN institution, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, NATO, and various multilateral agencies (Amadi, 2020, p. 2; Wiener et al., 2026). Even other successful regional integration if not wholly, at least partially are based on the LIO value as reflected in European Union and Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Wiener et al., 2026).

LIO is expansive in nature, owing to liberal theory of peace: liberal institutionalism, economic interdependence theory, and democratic peace theory, to the point that its goal was to embedding states in international institutions, integrating them into the global economy, and fostering their transition toward liberal democracy (Mearsheimer, 2019, p. 23). It gave justification for its proponent to keep expanding the order's reach, intervening in the domestic affairs of states that they regarded incompatible with liberal order—a practice that, paradoxically, undermined the sovereign equality that the liberal order itself professed to uphold. This is what Mearsheimer warn as the fatal flaws of the liberal international order in practice: intervening on turning other countries into liberal democracy, creating hyper globalization that generates significant production cost, and producing sovereignty and national identity problem that arise from failed efforts to liberalize other states (Mearsheimer, 2019, pp. 31–43).

The flaws that Mearsheimer identified in the LIO were among the reason reasons why LIO deteriorating, a condition that has not gone unnoticed in the scholarly literature. A growing body of literature have expressed their concern on deteriorating condition of Liberal International Order (LIO) with varied terms, From deeply contested (Lake, 2026), deep trouble (Mearsheimer, 2019, p. 7), crisis (Ikenberry, 2018, p. 7; Sørensen, 2011b), under pressure (Börzel & Zürn, 2021), declining (Barnett, 2021, p. 3; Kundnani, 2017), deep contestation (Wiener et al., 2026), and in trouble (Kornprobst & Paul, 2021). By virtue of various reason, from nationalistic and xenophobic treats “others” or “outsider as inferior, the pushback on free trade and globalization, until the rise of liberally defined as authoritarian regime (. i.e. China and Russia) (Börzel & Zürn, 2021; Ikenberry, 2018; Wiener et al., 2026). This sufficiently demonstrates that the deteriorating condition increasingly evident.

If we delve further into the causes of LIO deterioration, we can find that the existing literature implies rather than explicitly states that the determinants of LIO deterioration can be categorized into exogenous and endogenous dimension (S. E. Goddard et al., 2024, p. 2). The exogenous factors include the surge Islamic Fundamentalism, revisionism in Russia, the rise of China, the antiglobalization movement, and the proliferation of right-wing populism and nationalism in Europe and the US (Adler-Nissen & Zarakol, 2021; Börzel & Zürn, 2021, p. 283; Boyle, 2016, p. 37). Among these, Russia and China receive the most prominent attention as the principal external challengers to the LIO (Götz & Merlen, 2019; Kanet, 2018; Schweller & Pu, 2011; University of Bari et al., 2020; Weiss & Wallace, 2021). However, some scholar contested Altair argues that the narrative of US Liberal International Order being challenge by China is little conceptual and less empirical, while Clunnaun similarly contend that this power (specifically Russia) are not opposed to LIO (Clunnaun, 2018; Johnston, 2019).

Yet, the exogenous threat may have been overstated. Acharya criticized the assumption that the main challenge to LIO would come from the emerging powers (he refers to China, Russia, and India). Paradoxically, at a time when emerging powers are not performing at the strongest, as China economy slows and Russia remain isolated by sanctions, the liberal order appears to be imploding. As evidenced by Brexit and Trump victory, this demonstrating that the principal threat to the LIO is not external challengers, but the growing disillusionment within LIO itself (Acharya, 2017, pp. 271–272).

This endogenous dimension is further elaborate by scholar who examine the structural contradictions within LIO's value itself. Barnett argue that liberalism inherent individualism resulting a transformation that has narrowed the space for shared humanitarian values (Barnett, 2021, p. 16), impacting the raise of state actor that populist, nationalist, anti-globalization whose ascendance has contributed to the broader declined of LIO. The fade of LIO is exacerbate by the promotor if LIO itself not solely the external aspect (Ikenberry, 2018, p. 8; Lake, 2026). US the hegemon of liberal International Order has regularly violate the value of LIO itself, especially the self-determination and peaceful resolution of conflict (Koivisto & Dunne, 2010, p. 617; Wiener et al., 2026) through the numerous military intervention. This causes implies that LIO reflect irresolvable contradiction inscribed in the in its own architecture, the order cannot reproduce itself without intervening in non-liberal states, and it cannot intervene without

violating the sovereign equality upon which its own legitimacy rests (Mearsheimer, 2019).

Despite the richness of this literature, a conceptual gap remains. Existing literature explains wide range of LIO deterioration, it tends to treat these drivers as either exogenous or endogenous without fully theorizing their underlying connection. Moreover, internal contradictions are often framed as contingent policy failures rather than as inherent features of the order itself. As a result, the literature has yet to fully conceptualize the LIO as structurally self-defeating. This study addresses this gap by advancing a structural account of how the LIO's own logic undermines its normative foundations. Goddard et al. caution that well-intentioned liberal institutions operating in a word of divers interest and values, are often ultimately self-defeating (S. E. Goddard et al., 2024). This argument also reinforced by Mastanduno, saying that contemporary liberal order seems to favor self-defeating rather than self-reinforcing (Mastanduno, 2019, p. 6). These insight finds a parallel in Knill et all, who employing different terminology, argue that stable liberal order become self-destabilising (Knill et al., 2025). Both have common approach, that Liberal International Order (LIO) deterioration owes more to endogenous factors than the exogenous. This article advances the approach, arguing that the LIO is structurally self-defeating: its inherently expansive liberal ambitions, compounded by the paradoxical conduct of its principal proponents, generate actions that violate the sovereignty and non-interference norms upon which the order's own legitimacy rests.

Self-Defeating Liberal International Order

To demonstrate the self-defeating character of the Liberal International Order (LIO), this study employs the concept of organized hypocrisy', a framework developed by Stephen C. Krasner. Organized hypocrisy is the existence of durable principles and norms, which were also frequently compromised (Krasner, 1999). Employing Krasner organized hypocrisy framework does not proceed arbitrarily, but rest on considered theoretical grounds.

Decoupling Theory initially appears plausible, as LIO proponents do seem to be gradually diverging from the order's accepted norm in practice. However, it treats this divergence as a deliberate institutional strategy rather than a structural contradiction within the order itself. This study do not argue that LIO proponents consciously perform norm adherence while acting otherwise. Rather,

it argues that the LIO structurally cannot sustain itself without violating its own foundational norm, a condition that decoupling theory is neither designed nor equipped to explain.

Norm contestations theory by Wiener warrants careful consideration as a plausible alternative. However, this theory limited to explain why norms are interpreted and disputed differently, capturing the process through which states contest norm via contention, objection, questioning and deliberation (Wiener, 2014; Wiener et al., 2026).. Its analytical focus remains on interpretive disagreement among actors, rather than on the structural condition in which the same actor both endorses and violates the same norm. This theory cannot adequately explain what this study seeks to demonstrate: not to dispute over the meaning of norms, but a persistent gap between what the LIO's principal proponent declare and what they actually do. Krasner's organized hypocrisy, by contrast, provides precisely this structural causal account, explaining why norm violation within LIO is not occasional but systematically reproduced.

The organized hypocrisy occur because international system is an environment in which the logics of consequences dominate the logics of appropriateness (Krasner, 1999, p. 6). The logic of consequences understands political behavior as the product of rational calculation, in which actors make decisions based on their efforts to maximize a given set of material and ideational preferences (Krasner, 1999, p. 5). Under this logic, institutions and outcomes reflect the power and interests of actors rather than the internalization of shared norms. In contrast, the logic of appropriateness understands political action as governed by norm, rules, roles, and identities that define what constitutes appropriate behavior in a given situation (Krasner, 1999, p. 5). Actors operating under this logic do not ask how they can best maximize their interests, but rather, given their identity and role, how they ought to act in a particular circumstance.

These two logics are not mutually exclusive, but, in the international system, the logic of consequences tends to dominate, as rulers navigate multiple and often conflicting roles, contradictory international norms, and significant power asymmetries among states (Krasner, 1999, p. 6). It is precisely the tension between these two logics that produces what Krasner terms organized hypocrisy: a condition in which rulers verbally endorse prevailing international norms in accordance with the logic of appropriateness, while simultaneously violating those same norms when the logic of consequences demands it.

This study applies organized hypocrisy to the LIO, arguing that its two liberal foundational norms, self-determination and non-interference, are simultaneously upheld in discourse and systematically violated in practice by the order's own principal proponents. The application of Krasner's framework to the LIO reveals something more consequential than mere policy inconsistency: it exposes a structural condition in which the order cannot sustain itself without undermining itself. While Krasner originally directed organized hypocrisy at the Westphalian sovereignty model, this study reorients the framework toward the LIO's normative architecture, examining how these two norms are similarly sustained in discourse yet systematically violated in practice. To structure this examination, the study adopts Krasner's four modalities of norm violation — convention, contract, coercion, and imposition — as its analytical lens, reapplying them to the LIO's core norms of self-determination and non-interference in the sections that follow. By applying organized hypocrisy to LIO's core norms, this study advances a more targeted explanation of how the liberal order's own promoters generate the conditions of its deterioration.

After employing organized hypocrisy to analyze the structural condition of the LIO, this article further draws upon the concept of legitimacy to assess the impact of the LIO being identified as organized hypocrisy. In this research legitimacy is not defined as the right to rule of international institutions toward international society (Buchanan & Keohane, 2006, p. 407; Hurd, 1999, p. 381; Keohane, 2011). Rather, legitimacy is understood as the societal acceptance of political decisions and political orders as well as the belief of the subjects of rule in legitimacy (Zürn, 2004). This is consistent with Barnett's definition of legitimacy, it is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definition (Barnett, 2021, pp. 5–6). Together, these two definitions situate legitimacy not in the institutions but in the eyes of those ordered by it.

Through this conception of legitimacy, this study argues that LIO being defined as organized hypocrisy contributes to the legitimacy deficit of the state toward the order. A legitimacy deficit occurs when the rules are only weakly supported by societal beliefs, or are deeply contested (Beetham, 2012, p. 123), which is increasingly characterized the LIO in the contemporary world. Other terminology as a comparison is a crisis of legitimacy, a critical turning point when

decline in an actor's or institution's legitimacy forces adaptation (through re-legitimation or material inducement) or disempowerment (Reus-Smit, 2007, p. 45). This study argues that the LIO has not yet reached a legitimacy crisis as argued by Ikenberry (Ikenberry, 2018), since its declining legitimacy has not yet forced adaptation or disempowerment. The LIO remains in the phase of legitimacy deficit. Through this causal scheme, the LIO is self-defeating: structurally constituted as organized hypocrisy due to its expansive liberal values that violated norm of self-determination and non-interference, compounded by the paradoxical conduct of its own proponents, it contributes to legitimacy deficit among states toward the order.

This study employs a qualitative research method to analyze reason of Liberal International Order (LIO) deterioration. This study employs a desk-based research approach. Barbara Bassot defined desk-based research approach as a research where the data is gathered indirectly from existing sources without direct contact with research subjects (Bassot, 2022). Bassot notes, desk-based research is well-suited to studies where the subject matter is sensitive, politically complex, or otherwise inaccessible through conventional empirical methods (Bassot, 2022).

Data were drawn from three categories of sources (Bassot, 2022). Primary sources include official government statements, presidential speeches, ministerial press releases, and policy documents. Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed academic journal articles, scholarly books, and institutional reports. Tertiary sources, including academic databases and digital repositories, were used to identify and locate relevant primary and secondary materials. This source, then assesses for reliability, potential bias, and quality prior to inclusion. The collected data were then synthesized into a coherent analytical narrative structured. Divergent findings across sources were acknowledged and interpreted accordingly, with validity ensured through triangulation across official documents, academic literature, and media sources (Bassot, 2022)

Liberal International Order and its norm

This section briefly introduces the value underpinning the Liberal International Order (LIO), then examines in depth the value that undergone significant deterioration and reflects the organized hypocrisy characterizing the current LIO. From the introduction section, we could generalize that across the

literature, the liberal international order is best understood as an open, rules-based system built around free-markets, liberal democracy, and cooperative security that operate under multilateral institutions, and largely constructed and led by Western powers after 1945 (Deudney & Ikenberry, 1999; S. E. Goddard et al., 2024; Ikenberry, 2009; Koivisto & Dunne, 2010; Lake, 2026; Wiener et al., 2026).

David A. Lake et al. further elaborates the definition by asserting The LIO is comprised of norms of sovereignty (states as formal equals, national self-determination, non-intervention), security (collective efforts, Geneva Conventions, non-aggression, territorial integrity), open markets (free trade and capital mobility, but not migration), and politics (democracy, human rights), all embedded in multilateral institutions that gave members a measure of voice (Lake, 2026). From Lake elaboration, this study will focus on within sovereignty and security norm, as these represent the foundational architecture of the international order, its expansive nature is argued creating more contestation resulting it become more prominent sites of organized hypocrisy, particularly under conditions of intensifying great power competition.

Self-determination and non-intervention central to LIO, due to both ensuring the state is equal, and keeping the international order in anarchy (contrast with hierarchy), in the sense that neither state hold higher authority in international relations except the state itself. Self-determination often resides on the discussion of nationalism and Westphalian Sovereignty, however, do not undermine that the idea is closely related with liberal values of individual liberty. Self-determination is the right to be different and to enjoy a meaningful degree of control one's own life, individually and collectively, as well as the right to participate in the affairs of the larger state (Hannum, 2011, p. 67). Furthermore Self-determination is implies that that self-identified nations ought to have control of their own states (Alamsyah, 2021; MacFarlane & Sabanadze, 2013, p. 611).

Next is the principles of non-intervention, which corelate with self-determination, as explained by Lowe, the principle of non-intervention holds that every state has the right to determine its own destiny free from external interference (self-determination), while all other states and international organizations bear a corresponding duty to respect and not impede that choice (Lowe, 1994, p. 68). In essence, non-intervention refer to that sovereign states shall not intervene in each other's internal affairs (Naigen, 2016). Liberal

international order, based on non-intervention norm, interventions in the name of banishing tyranny and promoting democratic forms of governance might be considered 'offensive' (Reus-Smit, 2013, p. 1067).

Self-determination and non-intervention are mentioned on LIO institutions. It is United Nations in UN Charter article 1(3) stated that the purpose of United Nations is "To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples. For Non-intervention, the principle is more salient, and the article that most commonly refer to this norm was UN Charter article 2 (4) (Aloupi, 2015, p. 576; Lowe, 1994; Naigen, 2016) that states "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state". UN General Assembly Resolution 2131, the Charter does not explicitly set out a general obligation of non-intervention, stated that "No State has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State" (Lowe, 1994).

Taken together, the norms of self-determination and non-intervention form the foundational architecture of the LIO, codified in its most authoritative institutions and documents. However, its fundamental norm and rules are no longer shared creating truly anarchic politics, unpredictable, and potentially violent (Lake, 2026). Yet as subsequent sections will demonstrate, these norms have been selectively observed and systematically violated by the very powers that champion them, constituting what Krasner (1999) terms organized hypocrisy. It is precisely this gap between proclaimed norms and actual conduct that this study seeks to examine.

Liberal International Order: an organized hypocrisy

This discussion begins with demonstrating a Liberal International Order as an organized hypocrisy, a condition which its proclaimed norms and actual conduct is often misaligned, not occasionally, but structurally conducted by its own proponent. This study acknowledges that organized hypocrisy within the LIO is not exclusively attributable to the United States. However, the United States is deliberately selected as the primary empirical referent because it occupies a structurally distinct position as the order's principal architect, financier, and enforcer. Its conduct therefore carries disproportionate analytical weight in determining whether the order's foundational norms are upheld or

violated in practice. Furthermore, demonstrating organized hypocrisy in the conduct of the order's most powerful proponent is analytically sufficient to establish that the phenomenon is structural rather than incidental. The following discussion examines this organized hypocrisy across four modalities: convention, contract, coercion, and imposition.

Scholar have been long recognized liberal International Order hypocrisy (S. Goddard, 2025; Lawson & Zarakol, 2023; Millar, 2024). Millar, in particular, emphasizes that hypocrisy is animated and elided by an investment in a particularly liberal vision of politics and international order (Millar, 2024). Drawing upon Krasner organized hypocrisy approach, there are four modalities of norm violation that representing organized hypocrisy, it is through convention, contract, coercion and imposition. The LIO as an organized hypocrisy will be explain through these modalities.

The first modality is convention. Convention refers to voluntary agreements in which rulers make commitments to follow certain kinds of practices involving relations between rulers and ruled within their own borders; commitments that are not contingent on the extent to which other signatories honour the same accord (Krasner, 1999, p. 30). Even though the majority of countries are embedded in the Liberal International Order, as seen through UN membership (193 member states), IMF (191 member states), and World Bank (189 member states) (International Monetary Fund, 2026; United Nations, 2026; World Bank, 2023), the membership in these institutions does not translate into consistent adherence to the liberal norm they enshrine.

The most relevant illustration of convention-based organize hypocrisy is the conduct of the so-called protector of LIO itself, the United States. Rather than reinforcing the multilateral conventions, the United States has recurrently defected from them when domestic political interests so demanded. In Donald Trump first term US announced to withdrew from Paris Climate Agreement and the Trans-Partnership (Council of Foreign Relations, 2017). In his second term, Donald Trump announced withdrawal from the World Health Organization, the the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and 66 International Organizations, Conventions, and Treaties (The White House, 2025a, 2025b, 2026). This withdrawal demonstrates a fundamental contradiction with the norm of multilateral cooperation at the heart of LIO, revealing that for its

principal proponent, commitment to the order foundational conventions has always been conditional, not constitutive.

This conditional commitment is equally evident in US conduct toward the norms of self-determination and non-intervention. US has been violated this norm in multiple action, but this discussion will demonstrate through the recent case of US and Venezuela. On 3 January 2026, the United States captured Venezuelan president Nicholas Maduro and its wife, claiming it as the effort to creating peace, liberty, and justice for the great people of Venezuela (Senate Democrats, 2026). Ted Picconne assert that US action shows another blow to international order, undermining democratic principles and international law, while demonstrating US resource-driven interventionism and U.S. regional dominance for its national interest (Anderson et al., 2026). Russia Ambassador, Vassili Nebenzia, insist that there was no justification for US domination by force and accuses US allies of hypocrisy and double standards (Landale, 2026). This is not surprising as Lawson et. al argues that LIO is guilty of double standard (Lawson & Zarakol, 2023, p. 207). It is no wonder that Many Afghans who allied with liberal forces have been left to face Taliban rule, countless migrants seeking refuge in liberal countries perish at their borders (Lawson & Zarakol, 2023, p. 216), strong support toward Ukraine but not toward Palestine even though the atrocities is feasible, and condemning Iran even though U.S. itself who delivering the first blow.

What these cases collectively reveal is a shift in the character of hypocrisy itself. Pedro Abramovay acknowledges that U.S. is indeed living in hypocrisy of its foreign policy. However, what trump did recently shift productive hypocrisy to destructive hypocrisy. The previous drives genuine improvement toward stated ideals, while the later that merely disguises brutality without offering any benefit to those it oppresses (Abramovay, 2026). What U.S. did, accelerated by Trump, contributed to the collapse of the rule-based order credibility. More trouble still, this is exercised when the Global South growing frustrated at hierarchial global dynamics and demanding fair treatment in the international system (Abramovay, 2026).

The second modality, contract, reveals a similar pattern on norm violation, though through a different institutional mechanism. A contract is an agreement between two or more rulers, or a ruler and another international actor, such as an international financial institution, that is mutually acceptable, Pareto-

improving, and contingent. Contracts are always consistent with international legal sovereignty. Indeed, the ability to enter into agreements is one of the advantages of international legal sovereignty (Krasner, 1999, p. 33). This study considers Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as the embodiment of LIO organized hypocrisy that confront its fundamental norm of self-determination and non-intervention. United Nation Embrace R2P in 2005 through General Assembly Resolution Number A/RES/60/1 number 138-139. These doctrines hold that every state bears a fundamental responsibility to protect its citizen from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity. When a state fails to fulfill this obligation, the international community is authorized to intervene, including through military force, to prevent mass atrocities (Evans & Sahnoun, 2002).

Since its adoption, R2P has been invoked in various conflicts. It was first applied in 2011 to response Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi violent crackdown on local protest. Authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1973, this marked the first military intervention conducted under R2P doctrines. However, despites successfully overthrown Qaddafi, the intervention failed to bring its primary aim of protecting population. A series of civil conflict contribute to greater violence and chaos. In 2012, when UN attempted to invoked in Syria conflict, China and Russia vowed to never again permit UN to do similar countermeasure that violating member country sovereignty. Until recently, R2P sidelined as the doctrine shattered due to what they did in Libya (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). This demonstrates that although LIO has formally adopt non-intervention norm through Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter, there is structurally effort to act contradictory with the accepted norm. It is conducted through contract modalities in the shape of UN General Assembly Revolutions about R2P. This effort does not emerge arbitrarily. It is rooted in the democratic theory advanced by the liberal order, which argues that expanding to expanding democracy is essential to achieving sustainable peace.

Among the four modalities, coercion and imposition represent the most direct and forceful means which the LIO violates its own foundational norm, reflecting it organized hypocrisy. Coercion occurs when a powerful state threatens sanctions to compel a target to compromise its domestic autonomy, leaving it worse off regardless of whether it complies or resists. Meanwhile, imposition occur when the target is so weak it retains no meaningful choice and must simply accept externally dictated structures or face elimination (Krasner,

1999, pp. 32–36). It is worth noting that these forms of norm violation are not new. From 1990 onward, the US and its allies conducted multiple military and coercive operations that violated the norms of self-determination and non-interference, including Operation Desert Storm (Iraq/Kuwait, 1991), Operation Restore Hope (Somalia, 1992–1993), Operation Uphold Democracy (Haiti, 1994), Operation Deliberate Force (Bosnia, 1995), Operation Allied Force (Kosovo, 1999), Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan, 2001), Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003–2011), Operation Inherent Resolve (Syria, 2014–present), Operation Southern Spear (Venezuela, 2026), and the joint US-Israel military operation against Iran what Donald Trump called operation Epic Furry (2026).

The case of Iran most clearly illustrates the progression from coercion to imposition within the LIO's organized hypocrisy. The coercive phase began with UN Security Council Resolution 1737 (2006), led by the United States, which imposed arms embargoes, assets freeze, travel bans, a restriction on nuclear-related technologies. These measures were temporarily suspended following the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, only to be fully re-applied in September 2025 following Iran's continued non-compliance with its nuclear obligations (United Nations, 2025). When diplomatic coercion proved insufficient, the U.S. held joint attacks with Israel towards Iran. The operation that Donald Trump coined as 'Operation Epic Furry', aimed to "destroy Iranian offensive missiles, destroy Iranian missile production, destroy [Iran's] navy and other security infrastructure," and, finally, ensure that Iran "will never have nuclear weapons," that killing Supreme Leader of Iran Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (Rubinstein, 2026).

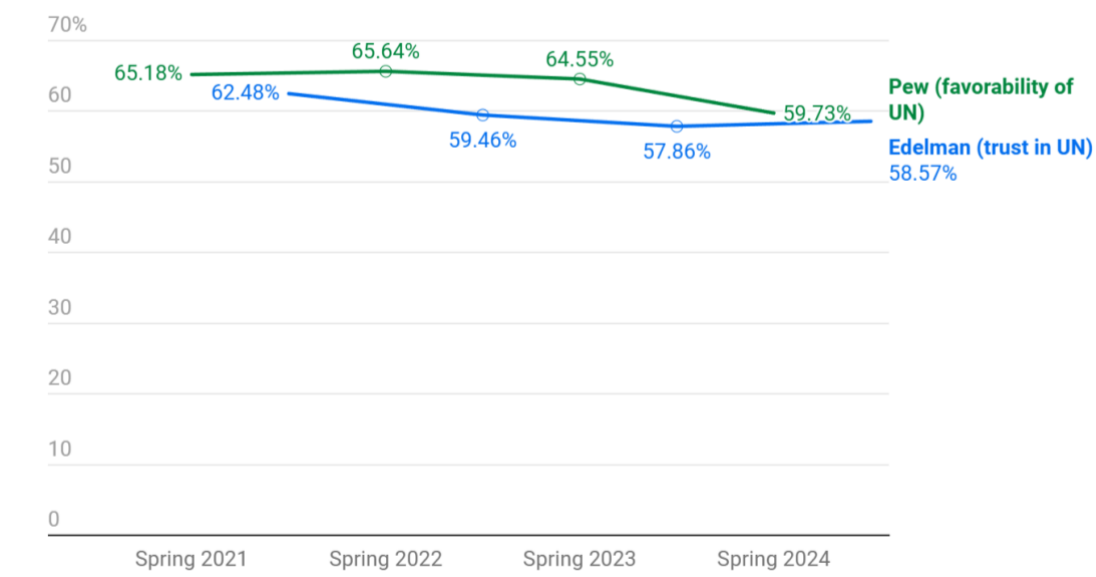
The Iran case shows that LIO's organized hypocrisy is not accidental but structural. The UN Security Council, which ideally upholds self-determination and non-intervention, produced resolutions that directly undermined those very norms. Meanwhile, military intervention demonstrates that even though LIO proponents formally adopt self-determination and non-intervention norms, it does not consistently serve as the basis for their decision. They claimed to agree with the norms, but when that norm found misaligned with their interest, they will leave it behind. This is precisely what Krasner means by organized hypocrisy, not occasional inconsistency, but a durable structural condition in which norms are endorsed in discourse and violated in practice.

Liberal International Order Deficit of Legitimacy

The organized hypocrisy structurally inscribed in the LIO, as demonstrated in the preceding section, carries measurable consequences for the order's legitimacy. This section examines those consequences across three dimensions: the declining trust in LIO's principal institution, the eroding credibility of its principal proponent, and the behavioral exit of states toward alternative arrangements.

The first-dimension concern institutional legitimacy. Data compile from Pew Research and Edelman has shown that global trust of United Nations has entered a phase of gradual but persistent decline. Compared to 2022 when trust stood above 60%, the following years shows the downward trend, with global trust toward UN reaching below that threshold. Even though the decline is relatively modest but the deficit of legitimacy is persist (Trithart & Romier, 2025). This is consistent this study earlier that LIO be better characterized as facing deficit rather than crisis, which trust toward UN has not collapsed, but eroded. Trithart and Romier emphasize that this decline potentially caused by the strain of major international events, such as COVID-19 pandemic, Russia Invasion of Ukraine and the war in Gaza; declining trust in national institutions; and the rising influence of far-right, anti-globalist political movement(Trithart & Romier, 2025).

Figure 1. Public perception of the UN, 2021-2024

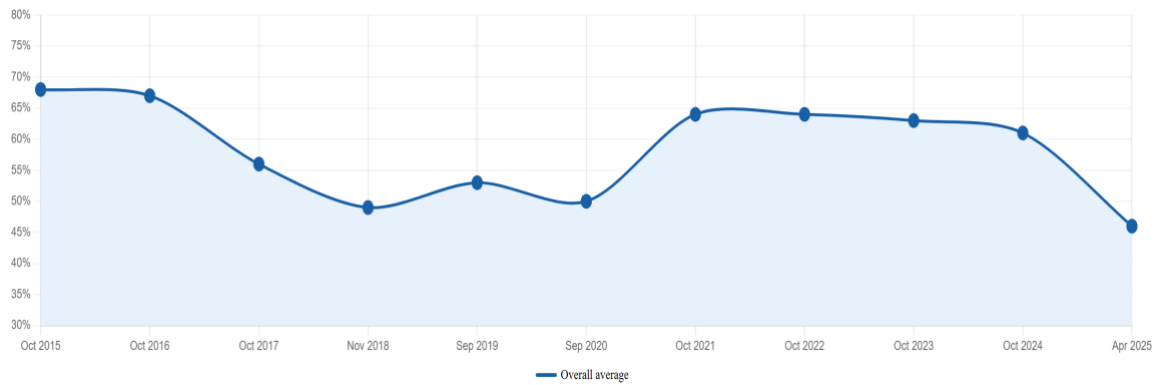


Source: (Trithart & Romier, 2025)

The second dimension concern the credibility of the U.S. as the LIO's principal proponents which also warrants careful scrutiny. When respondents in like-minded nations were asked whether the United States serves mostly as a force for stability in the world, the results were striking: France, the United Kingdom, and Canada returned scores of only 1.5, 1.8, and 1.4 out of 10, respectively, signaling profound skepticism toward American reliability as both a strategic partner and a stabilizing force. Perhaps more revealing is the erosion of confidence in the United States as a guardian of democratic values. Despite its long-standing self-conception as the preeminent champion and self-appointed sheriff of global democracy, public belief that the United States actively protects democracy has collapsed even among its closest allies. In Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France, respondents awarded scores of only 1.8, 3.4, 2.5, and 2.1 out of 10, respectively. These findings suggest that American credibility, both as a stabilizing power and as a defender of democratic governance, is under considerable strain even within the coalition of nations it has historically led (Wiederkehr & Doherty, 2026).

Furthermore, the 2025 Democracy Perception Index, which surveyed more than 110,000 respondents across 100 countries, reveals a striking reversal in global perceptions of American power. The United States, long regarded as the world's leading democratic force, has fallen to a net global perception score of -5%, crossing into negative territory for the first time and now ranking below China, which stands at +14% (POLITICO, 2025). Taken together, these findings suggest that the United States is no longer perceived as a net positive force in the eyes of a global majority, a development with profound implications for its credibility as a proponent of democratic order.

Meanwhile, a poll conducted by IPSOS measuring the percentage of respondents believe America will have positive influence on world affairs, drawn from 26-29 countries, reveals a sustained decline from October 2015 to April 2025. The proportion holding a positive American positive influence on world affairs view peaked in Oct 2015 with 68% and the lowest is in April 2025 at 46%. This is reflecting a broad and deepening erosion of confidence in American global influence across the decade (Jackson, 2025).

Figure 2. IPSOS survey on U.S. reputation across the world

Source: (Jackson, 2025)

The third dimensions concern behavioral consequences. The organized hypocrisy within the LIO has impacted to the LIO beneficiaries active seeking to secure themselves through alternative institution. It does not significantly demonstrate their complete disbelief with current LIO, but demonstrates the deficit of legitimation toward LIO is apparent. The legitimacy deficit then seen in the growing member of BRICS which is argued opposed to current LIO. At the October 2024 summit in Kazan, the original five BRICS members welcomed four new members: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE. In January 2025, Indonesia became the bloc's tenth member. Nine other nations have been officially designated as partner countries, and some two dozen have either been invited to join or expressed interest in doing so. BRICS now makes up roughly half of the global population and more than 41% of world GDP by purchasing power parity (Norton, 2024; Patrick et al., 2025). Russian Foreign Ministry representatives described the BRICS framework as "a viable alternative to a world living by someone else's alien rules," while Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed emphasized BRICS as a platform where Global South interests "may be respected and upheld" (Patrick et al., 2025). Then it is not the existence of BRICS that eroding LIO, but rather LIO organized hypocrisy that has led its beneficiaries to seek alternative to secure their interest.

Conclusion

This study argues that Liberal International Order is self-defeating, and that it defeats not from exogenous factors but endogenous ones. This study further argues that the principal endogenous factor is LIO's organized hypocrisy

contribute to deficit of legitimacy. It constitutes an organized hypocrisy because the order principal norms, self-determination and non-interference, are simultaneously upheld in discourse and systematically violated in practice by the order's own principal proponents. The LIO has demonstrated this organized hypocrisy across four modalities: convention, contract, coercion, and imposition. It has been shown that LIO proponents recurrently violate the consensual norms of self-determination and non-intervention, even constructing responsibility to Protect doctrine as a means of institutionally justifying such violation. Numerous interventions conducted through coercion and imposition have likewise been applied contradictory self-determination and non-intervention.

This structural contradiction engenders legitimacy deficit, understood at this study as the erosion of the societal acceptance of political decisions and political orders as well as the belief of the subjects of rule in legitimacy. Accordingly, through examining the decline of trust in the UN, the increasing unfavorable perception over of the US, and the behavior of LIO's beneficiaries who are actively seeking institutional alternative, this study concludes that LIO is self-defeating. This conclusion suggests that any meaningful account of LIO deterioration must look inward, toward the contradictions inscribed in the order's own architecture, rather than outward toward the challengers it has long blamed for its decline.

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