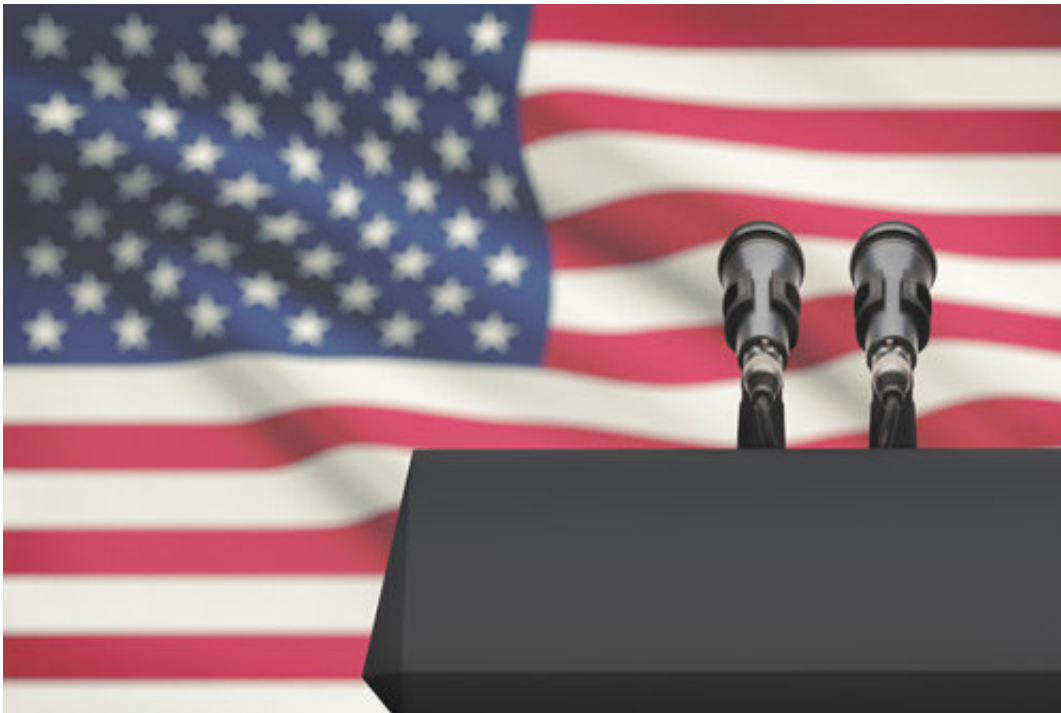


Flawed US-led world order to blame for American political crises at home and abroad

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Credit: City University London

America's attempts to navigate challenges to its global leadership are hampered by a foreign policy mindset that is "Eurocentric, elitist and resistant to change", according to a new paper from a City, University of London academic.

Published in the Chatham House journal *International Affairs*, the paper

also argues the United States' efforts to remain the dominant international power are causing political turmoil at home because the approach creates more and more inequality.

Professor Inderjeet Parmar says America is having problems managing its rivalry with China and other emerging powers because the US-led world order's founding values, established after the Second World War, are not compatible with a diverse network of international powers.

He concludes that the US-led liberal international order - a set of rules, organisations and values that dominate global economics and politics - was rooted in core principles that are "subliminally racialised, elitist and imperial".

To investigate the issue, Professor Parmar analysed literature describing US involvement in South Korea between 1945 and 1953, including in the Korean War, and compared this with US foreign policy towards China since the late 1970s.

He said: "The principal goal of the US-led liberal world order is to preserve American interests by incorporating wealthy and powerful individuals and elite groups from other nations into the system.

"Since 1945, the United States has done this with a combination of force, as in the Korean War, and socialisation, like its promotion of US values in China.

"China is too strong to be engineered to American tastes and because US [foreign policy](#) is not flexible enough to incorporate diverse powers, China will continue to challenge the USA's leading global position.

"Yet, the elite alliances between US and Chinese groups - at state and parastate levels - are not geared to serving the interests of the broad mass

of either Americans or Chinese, suggesting further political instability.

"With public discontent in the United States beginning to become clear, we should expect domestic and international political crises to deepen."

Domestic turmoil

Professor Parmar argues the US-led world order allowed certain sections of American society to become richer until the 1970s, after which the global strategy and its domestic political settlement began to unravel as manufacturing moved overseas or jobs disappeared due to automation.

The City academic points to the election of President Donald Trump, support for Bernie Sanders' left-wing anti-establishment campaign and movements like the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street as examples of growing political anxiety and the virtual collapse of political elite legitimacy.

A new theory about US power

Professor Parmar challenges the political theory known as liberal internationalism. He says it describes how the US became the world's dominant power, but argues the theory adds legitimacy to an unequal system.

Instead, he proposes a revised version of the early twentieth-century theory "ultra-imperialism", which says elites in different countries form alliances to create stability, prevent conflict and benefit the ruling classes.

"The US approach aims to develop market-orientated societies and attract elites from other nations by showing the economic benefits of

integration with the US-led world order, but it does not aim to create genuine change for the masses," he said.

As an example, Professor Parmar explains the US rebuilt modern South Korea after the Second World War, through domestic political violence and the Korean War, by fostering a ruling elite that was friendly with the US.

In addition, the US has developed a "carefully crafted" relationship with China, which has willingly adopted US economic practices and become more embedded in the "global market and the US-rules based system".

Professor Parmar says over the past 40 years there has been an increasing number of American foundations, think tanks and university branches opening in China, promoting western economics and values like limited government, civil society, and the rule of law.

"Supporters of the US-led order assume domestic and international political crises are resolvable within the current system but I argue this is not the case," he said.

"The system was founded to promote the ideals of a ruling minority and was not designed to prevent inequality associated with class, race and gender."

The article, titled *The US-led liberal order: imperialism by another name?*, was published in a special edition of *International Affairs*, co-edited by John Ikenberry (Princeton University), Professor Inderjeet Parmar (City) and Professor Doug Stokes (University of Exeter).

More information: Inderjeet Parmar. *The US-led liberal order: imperialism by another name?*, *International Affairs* (2018). [DOI: 10.1093/ia/iix240](https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix240)

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