

The existing liberal international order cannot be saved...

Published: January 12, 2026, 11:26 pm

Martin Wolf has just [noted on the FT website](#) that:

Today ... the liberal international order is sick. As Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2018 states, "Democracy is in crisis." For the 12th consecutive year, countries that suffered democratic setbacks outnumbered those that registered gains.

Before adding:

Under Mr Trump, the US also questions the fabric of international co-operation – security treaties, open markets, multilateral institutions and attempts to address such global challenges as climate change. It has, instead, proclaimed its intention to look after its own interests, even at the direct expense of longstanding allies.

And noting that:

Nor is the underpinning of the world economy in better shape. The economy may be recovering, but no significant trade liberalisation has occurred since China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001. Brexit will also prove to be an act of deglobalisation.

Then concluding

Those who believe in the symbiosis of democracy, a liberal world economy and global co-operation simply have to find all this more than a little scary.

Before arguing that:

The liberal international order is crumbling, in part because it does not satisfy the people of our societies. Those who attend Davos need to recognise that. If they do not like Mr Trump's answers – they should not – they need to advance better ones.

The overall goal Wolf has in saying all this is as, as the headline notes, that:

[Davos] delegates need to consider what is to be done to save the [liberal international] model from wreckage

Now Martin Wolf is no fool, but he's very clearly asking the wrong question. What is clear is that the liberal international model as was is, as I noted yesterday, dead. So the only question to be asked is not what can save the existing, and deeply corrupted, liberal international order that is beyond salvation as a result, but what better order might replace it?

I am glad Wolf agrees the parrot is nailed to its perch. But it's pointless to pretend it is alive as a result, and that is what he is still doing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vuW6tQ0218>