

International Politics

Liberalism

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Framing Questions

- Are states still the main actors of the world politics or multinational companies and international organizations have eroded states' centrality?
- Define liberalism and its diversity
- Explore the links between liberalism and universalism
- Examine the role of free trade and international commerce on global politics
- Reflect upon the possible future trajectories of global liberal institutionalism
- Examine main scholarship on the contemporary liberal internationalism: Scholars examines here: Emanuel Kant, Nicolas de Condorcet , Alexis de Tocqueville , Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt , John Rawls, John Ikenberry, John Mearsheimer, Robert Keohane, Fredrik Hayek, Francis Fukuyama, Joseph Nye



Overview of Developments I

- For more than 200 years liberal internationalism has been on the march. By the close of 20th century it was said to be triumphing

- At the end of WWII the US and its allies build a new world based on multilateralism, cooperative security, democratic solidarity and American leadership
- Today this liberal project seems to be in crisis. Doubt on finding common solutions to common problems
- Surprisingly the retreat from LI comes from the very states that were its promoters and stakeholders hitherto
- European project has been the greatest embodiment of LI triumph, but this has encountered problems like reactionary nationalism, stagnant economies, refugees crisis etc.
- Russia began to challenge the legitimacy of institutions in the West. China has started to advance its own vision of modernity: Capitalism without democracy



Overview of Developments II

- LI is born in 18th and 19th centuries along with Western democracy
- Born out of Renaissance and Enlightenment ideals
- Monarchic systems in Europe gave way to parliamentary democracies and republics
- US and French revolution were the main launch pads
- Liberal democracy in the past 2 centuries has expanded out of its nation-states to become international
- LI is a family of at times conflicting doctrines



Elements of Liberal Institutionalism I

- 1. Openness to trade and commerce. Primacy of economic development as sources of mutual gain and peace.
- Pacts of restraint. Co-binding! To involve and restraint partners, keep each other in check
- 2. Rule-based international order based on institution. Engage in rules, order and institution building.
- Institutions are useful to states: because they reduce transaction costs, overcome uncertainty and establish channels for commerce and exchange (Robert Keohane)
- Rules also help the stronger states to get legitimacy, support and acquiescence of weaker states
- 3. Liberal democratic solidarity. History, geography and shared values are some of elements that bring countries together. Democratic peace zones.
- 4. Cooperative security. Democratic solidarity has led to building security pacts. Liberal democracy have a level of transparency that makes cooperation easier. Building “a security community”
- 5. Progressive social purposes, LI are expected to move the international order in a progressive direction. Welfare security and social justice
- LI initially focus on property rights and facilitating transactions and cooperation. But it has moved towards created more social rights. But this debate is still open
- Lockean idea of property right or the idea of modern welfare state?
- Anglo-American project versus Franco-German project base don French revolution ideals?

Elements of Liberal Institutionalism II

- Realists identified power seeking and despotic nature of human beings
- Realists saw cycles of power and order across history whereas liberals saw modernity i.e the advancement of science and technology offering opportunities for development and disaster
- Liberal internationalism examines how to build world order based on liberal democracies
- Realism studies how states cope with the problem of **anarchy** while LI focusses on how states cope with **modernity**
- It is not a utopian project to make the world a better place (Ikenberry)
- Woodrow Wilson: make the world safe for democracy. Making the world in America's image or just protecting the existing democracies?

Liberalism Political Philosophy

- State of nature for liberals: a state of equality
- Individualism and natural rights. All individuals are bestowed with a set of rights
- Tolerance and the role of state to maintain order
- The right to life, freedom of choosing preferred way of life, freedom of conscience . Live and let live!
- Tolerance has its practical limits, some ideologies promote intolerance, other who do not agree are maybe even evil as they're deliberately turn away from truth!
- State needs to tackle this and promote order . But the state does not set the standard to good life , does not set values
- Views on state are very strong and entrenched. Government is at best a “necessary evil”!
- Yet state needs to be limited such as by writing a bill of rights in the constitution
- A liberal state is soulless! How can it ask people to die for it?



Liberalism's values

- Liberal values: individualism, tolerance, freedom and constitutionalism
- There is a parallel between states and individuals
- Liberalism, unlike realism projects values of order, liberty, justice and toleration into international relations
- Positive outlook to human nature: Human beings can be improved
- Democracy is necessary to the improvements of human condition
- War is not a natural condition of human societies
- State is important but is not the sole actor. They are still very important players with significant power and influence on the global stage
- Individuals, multinational corporations, transnational actors and IOs
- “Democracy has contracting advantages” . The openness to outside scrutiny, the continuity of regimes, the electoral incentives for politicians to keep promises, the constitutional capacity to make enduring commitments (Charles Lipson)
- The end of history?



Modus Vivendi Versus Progressive Liberalism

- What are individual rights? For MV rights are non-interference
- Individual DO have universal rights (not that they SHOULD have them)
- Progressive liberalism emphasis on the power of reason
- Modus vivendi or Laissez fair liberalism and economic development
- MV: Small state, non-interference
- PL the role of state and social engineering , Call for more state role in promoting tolerance and consensus
- MV are sceptical about social engineering.
- The state should be minimal as it is dangerous



Modus Vivendi Liberalism

- John Locke, Adam Smith and Frederic Hayek and Steven Holmes and John Grey are contemporary examples
- The main claim is that our rational inquiry will not be able to determining the good life.
Limit of reason
- Good life can come in many varieties
- Individuals need to be given “Negative rights” to do what they prefer to do
- It is not government’s role to equal the playing field for all
- Right are closely related to ownership and property hence to capitalism



Progressive Liberalism

- PL is more positive and optimistic. Reason is capable to make the world a better place
- Principles of good life can be identified and set.
- Human reason has largely managed to identify democracy as an ideal form of government
- Yet the optimistic outlook stems from their government's role in doing social engineering
- Ronald Dworkin (Legal philosopher), Francis Fukuyama (IR Scholar) and John Rawls (Political Philosopher), Emanuel Kant and Nicolas de Condorcet are the best examples
- We are getting smarter and smarter people are liberal!
- Decent societies versus outlaw societies (Rawls), how does this square with being “naturally” reasonable?



What are natural rights?

- For MV negative rights : Freedom of expression, freedom of assembly most importantly private property (non-interference)
- MV dislike Positive rights, which make people subject of government's actions
- Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson were both progressive, believing in social equality and positive rights
- It appears that most liberals do subscribe to progressive liberalism
- Even Reagan did lots of progressive actors such as guaranteeing the right to treatment even for foreigners and the poor
- Yet certain contemporary scholars are calling a return to most MV principles(Ikenberry)

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points

- Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at
- Freedom of the seas
- The removal so far as possible of all economic barriers
- The reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety
- Impartial adjustment of all colonial claims
- The evacuation of all Russian territory
- The evacuation and restoration of Belgium
- The liberation of France and return to her of Alsace and Lorraine
- Readjustment of the frontiers of Italy to conform to clearly recognisable lines of nationality
- The peoples of Austria-Hungary should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development
- Evacuation of occupation forces from Romania, Serbia and Montenegro; Serbia should be accorded free and secure access to the sea
- Autonomous development for the non-Turkish peoples of the Ottoman empire; free passage of the Dardanelles to the ships and commerce of all nations
- An independent Poland to be established, with free and secure access to the sea
- A general association of nations to be formed to guarantee to its members political independence and territorial integrity (the genesis of the League of Nations)



Liberalism's IR theory

- Liberalism is a theory of both good government in states and among states
- In IR there is a strong potential for international cooperation
- No such thing as exclusive national interest
- National interests are not just military but most importantly economy, environment and technology
- World politics is comprised of a complex system of bargaining
- Fundamental concept of interdependence between states
- Numerous processes aimed at creating global common goods, free trade, clean air, security etc.



Waves Of Liberalism?

- First Wave: Following the French Revolution and the Enlightenment
Kant (1724)- 1804), Jeremy Bentham (1747-1832), J. S. Mill (1806- 1873)
- Second wave: “The Idealist Moment”; after the WWI, international and institutionalism,
Creation of the League of Nations
- Third Wave goes to the end of the second decade of 21st century.
The perception that liberalism is in Crisis, American leadership is in retreat



Economic Interdependence

- Fukuyama in End of the History also declared triumph of liberalism over other ideologies and that liberal states are more stable internally and more peaceful internationally
- Liberals believe that economic interdependence promotes peace, based on the assumptions of harmony of interests
- Britain in particular was promoter of this ideology in 19th cen.
- But Britain and Germany were highly interdependent economically before the WWI and this did not stop the war. Other examples?
- Also free trade among countries at different stages of development could lead to disproportionate gains and hegemonic power



Criticism to Perpetual Peace

- Liberal state have created a separate peace for themselves (Doyle)

- There is restraint among liberal states and international imprudence in relation with non-liberal states
- Liberal states tend to be wealthy so have less to gain by engaging in conflicts than poorer authoritarian states
- Liberal states are in friendly relation with other liberal states, not because of their liberal constitutions but just because they are friends
- Mexico and Cuba have close relations despite their divergent economic policies



Neoliberalism

- Criticized traditional liberalism for having become an instrument of imperialism and hegemony
- Actors enter cooperative agreements only if the gains are evenly shared
- Neorealists had previously argued that only relative gain is what matters
- Neoliberals advocate separation of facts from hypothesis and formulation of theories and values. They are more positivist
- Neoliberals do not believe the free commerce leads to peace. It prepares the ground for it but not guarantee it
- Fredrich von Hayek and Milton Freedman argued that social-liberalism has failed due to the excessive intervention of states that inevitably leads to totalitarianism.
- Sustained economic growth is the means to achieve human progress
- This led to the creation of libertarianism in global politics based on ideas of John Locke, Adam Smith and Thomas Jefferson

Ikenberry's stages of liberal institutionalism

- John Ikenberry (1999) considered three stages for the contemporary liberal internationalism: 1.0; 2.0 and 3.0

- LI 1.0 corresponds to the inter-war period and the failed attempt to replace the old balance of power
- LI 2.0 was the period after 1945 when the US set to build international order by developing European and Asian economies and actively promoting democracy and economic well-being. US was more powerful and accepted more share of the Burden. Truman Doctrine
- LI 3.0 US led LI is in crisis now, both due a decline in US power and also other state's unwillingness to accept American leading role. There are other powers as well now. The LI 3.0 is where truly global organizations and institution are created
- Is the liberal institutionalism order in crisis today?

Criticism of Liberalism 1

- Political realism and revisionist left have posed the biggest challenge to liberal internationalism
- E.H Carr: Wilsonian liberal project was a utopian project doomed to fail due to anarchic realities of world politics
- Another criticism is that liberalism is inherently expansionist and hence self-destructive (Mearsheimer)
- Liberalism is closely intertwined with assumptions of universalism. i.e. universal values of humanity
- The believe that all humans has inalienable rights creates a powerful incentive for liberal states to intervene
- Promotion of universal liberal values such as secularism, and democracy are being criticized for being detrimental to local cultures and values
- Revisionist criticism see a deeper problem of social justice. Deep and growing corruption inequality and injustice embedded to liberal society and global capitalist system render the liberal global order political untannable and morally suspect
- LI is indeed closely tied to empire. Underneath the talk of openness and global rules and institutions are global order and domination. It is a project to secure American hegemonic domination (Samuel Moyn)
- Liberalism and imperialism have shown to be operating very closely
- Critiques argue that LI advances claims of rights and universal values, but these are a façade for traditional real politics that privileges hierarchies
- Free trade has in practice generated hierarchies of wealth and power



Criticism of Liberalism 2

- The assumption that liberalism has triumphed after WWII and that the security, trade and development would generate peace and security has not been entirely correct and proved to be most favourable to the powerful nations
- Kenneth Waltz: the degree of interdependence internationally is far lower than the degree of interdependence among constituting part of one country
- The economic interdependence between states is weaker now compared to the first part of the 20th century
- Marxists have criticized liberals for forcing their universal values that the weak have no option to choose or leave
- Are democracy, gender equality, freedom of expression and respect of environment specific to the West?
- Are we having too much liberalism or too little liberalism?



Any Solutions?

- Both realists and revisionists claim that the first step should be the US retrenchment and pull back from its far flung security commitments
- Realists believe that American retreat will set the stage for a multipolar order that is regulated by a balance of power
- Revisionists believe that the US retreat will force the US to have a more domestic oriented focus on improving the US society or to build a new FP that is more just and promote equality
- Liberal Internationalism 3.0 based on multipolarity of power and interests might not prove to be functional, will this indeed “make the world safe for democracy”?



Future of Liberalism

- Absolute versus relative decline
- Alternative models of development based on authoritarian development
- China is claimed to be proposing an alternative pattern to the liberal model, is that so?
 - China is an active participant and beneficiary of the global liberal institutionalism.
 - China has yet to demonstrate the success of its model as it starts to grapple with the challenges that liberal states have faced decades ago
 - There appear to be indeed significant social and political limits to authoritarian development model. Ex. China could not continue to be a free rider in such a system and needs to contribute to production to global public goods (Kindleberger trap)
- Future of sciences: Biotechnology, nanotechnology and Artificial Intelligence and Big Data and the West is still at the forefront of these. The university ranking of research centres show that that this is likely to continue
- Russia is formidable in military terms but less so economically. China is still relatively small in military terms compared to the West
- The continues centrality of universal values even in the terminology adopted by authoritarian states
- The importance of soft power



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- What is the importance of state of nature in liberal internationalism?
 - Why liberals believe democratic states are more peaceful?
 - Has complex interdependence made world a more peaceful place?
 - Does liberal order depends on imperialism elsewhere?
 - Does liberalism has illiberal foundations?
 - Is human nature and natural rights discourses in liberalism capable of justifying equality and the need to state to protect and promote tolerance and rule of law?