

Liberalism

Introduction

Characteristics of liberal thought:

- Strong faith in human reason
- Belief in possibility of historical progress & reforming international relations
- Focus on state-society linkages & the claim of a close connection between domestic institutions & politics/ international politics
- Claim: Increasing economic interdependence among states reduces occurrence of conflict & war
- Arguments about the positive effect of processes of institutionalizing international relations
- Liberalism believes that individuals and states are capable of cooperating despite anarchy.

Classical Liberalism

- Two important thinkers; Hugo Grotius (17th century Dutch jurist) and Immanuel Kant (18th century German philosopher)
- Grotius was one of the first theorists of Int. Law; emphasising the potentially constraining effect of Int. Law on the behaviour of states.
- Also developed the Just war tradition; jus ad bellum and jus in bello
- According to him states like individuals are ultimately sociable and most have a deeply rooted sense of obligation to creating and respecting rules of international society. (Links this behaviour to man's nature)

Classical Liberalism

- Kant also believed that states despite the anarchic environment could bring about a state of perpetual peace.
- Key requirements according to Kant were:
 - a) Republican constitution= Democracy
 - b) Universal hospitality = Economic Interdependence
 - c) Federation of free states= International Organisations

Woodrow Wilson

- The only President with a Ph.D.
- President of Princeton University, 1902-10
- The 14 points – address to Congress, January 1918

14 points of Woodrow Wilson

- **Reliance on open diplomacy rather than secret agreements**
- **Freedom of the seas**
- **Free trade**
- **Reduce the military forces and/or weapons**
- Readjust the colonies fairly
- The allowance for Russia to self-determine its own government
- Respect for Belgium's Integrity
- Restoration of French Territory
- Italy receives territory based upon ethnicity
- Austria-Hungary receives fair development opportunities
- Independence for the Balkan states
- **Self-determination** for the peoples of the Ottoman Empire and free passage through the Dardanelles
- Independence for Poland
- **The formation of a League of Nations to guarantee independence for all countries, large and small**

Liberalism

Liberalism is one of the theories in international relations; it focuses on democracy and cooperation. Liberalists believe that individuals share many interests and can thus engage in cooperation.

Basic liberal assumptions:

- A positive view of human nature
- A conviction that international relations can be cooperative rather than conflictual
- A belief in progress.

Liberal theory after the Second World War was divided into four main standards of thinking:

- Sociological Liberalism
- Interdependence Liberalism
- Institutional Liberalism
- Republican Liberalism

Interdependence Liberalism

Interdependence Liberalism means mutual dependence:

- People and governments are affected by what happens elsewhere, by the actions of their counterparts in other countries.
- A high level of transnational relations between countries --> a high level of interdependence.
- Basically these liberals argued that a high division of labour in the international economy --> increases interdependence between states --> discourage and reduce violent conflict between states.

Complex interdependence is qualitatively different from earlier and simpler kinds of interdependence. Under complex interdependence:

- Transnational actors are increasingly important
- Military force is a less useful instrument
- Welfare (not security) is becoming the primary goal and concern of states.

Hence, the world is more cooperative interdependence relations.

Republican Liberalism

Republican Liberalism is built on claim that liberal democracies are more peaceful and law-abiding than are their political systems.

Michael Doyle claimed that there are three elements that democracy leads to peace with other democracies:

- The existence of domestic political cultures based on peaceful conflict resolution
- Democracies hold common moral value which lead to the formation of a "pacific union"
- Peace between democracies is strengthened through economic cooperation and interdependence.

Democracies do not go to war against each other owing to:

- their domestic culture of peaceful conflict resolution
- their common moral values
- their mutually beneficial ties of economic cooperation and interdependence

Institutional Liberalism

According to international liberals, international institution is an international organization, such as NATO, the European Union; or it is a set of rules which govern state action in particular areas, such as aviation or shipping.

International liberals adopt a behaviouralistic, scientific approach to claim that international institutions help promote cooperation between states. Institutions alleviate problems concerning lack of trust between states and they reduce states' fear of each other.

Neo-Liberalism and institutions

- Post-1945 International Relations:
 - Rise of international institutions as collective actors
 - Rise of European integration
 - Rise of Pluralism in the US
 - Pluralism focused on new actors (transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations) and new patterns of interaction (interdependence, integration).

Neo-Liberalism and institutions

- In the post-1945 period, liberals turned to international institutions to carry out a number of functions the state could not perform.
- This was the catalyst for integration theory in Europe and pluralism in the United States.
- By the early 1970s, pluralism had mounted a significant challenge to realism. It focused on new actors (transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations) and new patterns of interaction (interdependence, integration).

Neo-Liberalism (Institutionalism)

- Nature of the International System: **Anarchy**
 - For the liberalist, anarchy signifies that there is no supranational authority that is able to enforce agreements.
 - While liberalism and realism share the assumption of international anarchy, neoliberals criticize realists for underestimating opportunities for cooperation within that system.
 - Question becomes how to create an international system that **encourages cooperation**.

Neo-liberalism

- **Neo-liberal institutionalists** recognize that co-operation may be harder to achieve in areas where leaders perceive they have no mutual interests.
- **Neo-liberals** believe that states co-operate to achieve absolute gains and the greatest obstacle to co-operation is 'cheating' or non-compliance by other states.
 - This is where institutions come in.
 - **Neo-liberal institutionalists** see institutions as the mediator and the means to achieve co-operation in the international system.

Neo-Liberal Institutionalism

- Transnational cooperation needed to resolve common problems
- Cooperation in one sector would extend range of collaboration
- Growing integration increases the 'cost' of withdrawal from cooperative ventures
- Pluralism of actors

Criticisms

- Interdependence or Dependence? Marxist critique on capitalism.
- Prioritises the empirical evidence only from the developed countries of the world particularly Europe.
- Will the same institutional features of cooperation be generated if complex interdependence develops in South Asia, Central Asia, Africa or Latin America?
- Has war become totally irrelevant or obsolete? Prevalence of international anarchy means that possibility of war remains in IR.