
- Coherent liberal IR theory has significant theoretical, methodological, empirical implications - to date, liberals have responded to criticisms in fragmented fashion

- **Core assumptions of a liberal theory**
  1. **Primacy of Social Actors: individuals and private groups**
     * generally rational and risk adverse
     * collective action constrained by material scarcity, conflicting values, variations in social influence
     * bottom-up politics
     * interests theoretically central
     * conflict derives from scarcity or inequality
  2. **States Represent Subset of Domestic Society:**
     * Preferences indirectly ordered by constituency
     * Biased political representation
     * Spectrum of tyranny to democracy
  3. **Interdependent Preferences Determine State Behavior:**
     * Causally privilege variation in configuration of state preferences
     * Compatibility of preferences of dominant social groups with foreign counterparts determines conflict
     * Variation in ends, not means, matters most - state preferences may reflect patterns of transnational societal interaction
     * Expected behavior of any state reflects interdependence of preferences of all states
     * Explains not only foreign policy, but systemic outcomes of interstate interactions

- **Liberal Variation:**
  1. **Idealational Liberalism: domestic social ID define state preferences**
     * Social ID shapes borders, decision-making, socioeconomic regulation
     * Incompatibilities in social ID leads to conflict
     * Fundamental social IDs: scope of nation, commitment to institutions, nature of regulation
  2. **Commercial Liberalism: focused on behavior based on patterns of market incentives**
     * Does not necessarily predict incentives of free trade
     * Greater economic incentives lead to greater pressure on government to facilitate desired transactions
     * Government sometimes has incentives to use force for economic gain
  3. **Republican Liberalism: emphasizes methods of transforming social ID and economic goals into state policy**
     * Key variable the mode of domestic political representation - policy depends on the groups represented
     * Aggressive behavior prevalent in polities where elites can pass costs to others
     * Fair representation tends to limit conflict

- **Advantages of liberal theory**
  1. Generates parsimonious empirical arguments (democratic peace, endogenous tariff setting, nationalist conflict)
  2. Plausible explanation for historic charge in system - causal link between social change and state behavior
  3. Plausible explanation for distinctiveness of modern international politics - current stability unexplained in realism

- Divergence from Neoliberalism - Most of neoliberalism's founding assumptions and basic causal variables more realist than liberal
- Liberal theory allows alternate viewpoint to prevent omitted variable bias - allows multicausal synthesis - liberalism has priority in two-stage constrained social choice