

Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 12, no. 3 (Summer, 1983), pp. 205-235.

According to Doyle, while liberalism has created international peace amongst liberal states, it has failed to successfully guide the foreign policy of liberal states towards non-liberal states in three respects.

1. Imprudent Vehemence

Doyle faults liberal regimes for “*imprudent vehemence*” (a term borrowed from Hume) in foreign policy, which is characterized by “confusion, costly crusades, spasmodic imperialism” resulting in “a failure to negotiate with the powerful and create stable clients among the weak” (324). This failure is caused by the fact that “the very constitutional restraint” and concern for individual rights that works so well within liberal societies “can exacerbate conflicts in relations between liberal and non-liberal regimes” (325). This is because according to liberal principles, non-liberal regimes—which do not respect the individual rights of their citizens—are illegitimate. This leads to “an extreme lack of public respect and trust” on the part of liberal regimes towards non-liberal states. In addition liberal regimes assume that non-liberal regimes (particularly communist regimes) “do not respect the political independence and territorial integrity of other states.” This lack of trust in turn leads to less than optimal rational, realist behavior. For instance, as a result of mistrust liberal regimes will refuse to cooperate with non-liberal (communist) regimes even when it would be in their best interest (e.g. arms reduction treaties).

We can tell that it is liberal principles, as opposed to normal realist behavior, which are driving much of liberal states’ actions because liberal states did not take advantage of divisions within the communist bloc in order to weaken Russia (by allying with China, say) even though realist ‘balance of power’ principles would demand such action—i.e., “liberalism creates [a] hostility to communism, not just to Soviet power.”

Liberalism is also “congenitally confused” about intervention in Third World (non-liberal) states. It both wants to intervene in order to protect individuals whose rights are being abused in non-liberal regimes, and not to intervene in order to respect the sovereignty of the nation.

In summary, liberalism exacerbates intervention into weak non-liberal states (Third World) and increases hostility to powerful non-liberal states (Soviet Union).

2. “Careless and supine complaisance”

Declining or less powerful liberal states (think, Britain, Japan, Netherlands) on the other hand, are reluctant to fund the military establishment necessary to play a role in global politics. And more worrying from a Realist perspective, liberal regimes fail to

sufficiently support their strategic allies who happen to be authoritarian or oppressive (South Africa, Somoza's Nicaragua) out of concern for human rights abuses; or to engage in détente with potential allies (Cuba, Angola) who are non-liberal.

3. Income distribution to the world's poor

According to liberal principles [or really utilitarian principles], rich countries have an obligation to ameliorate the suffering of those less well off. But liberal regimes have not acted in accordance with this principle, and have not instituted any serious mechanism for the transfer of wealth to poorer nations and peoples. Difficulty arises particularly over the issue of whether the money should be redistributed directly to the citizens of poor nations or to their governments.

Doyle recognizes that public acceptance of the obligation of rich countries to transfer wealth to poorer countries is unlikely, but argues that it remains an obligation of liberal states nonetheless.

Implications

As we can see, the above problems are a result of inconsistency, as liberal states alternate between Realist and liberal foreign policies. This inconsistency is inherent in liberal regimes and cannot be solved without endangering the liberal regimes and the peace they create (Installing a more authoritarian and permanent executive or foreign policy making branch that could consistently follow a Realist agenda would itself be illiberal). Instead, Doyle argues that liberal states should strive to more fully and consistently apply their liberal principles in foreign relations-- to liberal and non-liberal states alike. These principles Doyle gleans from Kant and Mill and consist in: non-intervention in internal affairs of other states, and scrupulous respect for the laws of war.

In addition, liberal states cannot treat hostile or non-hostile states differently. This is indeed "as radical in conception as it sounds. It requires abandoning the national interest and the balance of power as guidelines to policy." The U.S. should determine its enemies and friends based solely on whether they are liberal states or not. Liberal regimes should lead an economic crusade against communist and other non-liberal regimes. However, since liberal states do have a right to self-preservation, "Realist" concerns about survival are legitimate and may govern policy, but only to the point necessary to ensure survival of the state. Beyond that point, advancement of liberal aims must take over in determining foreign policy.

A consistent application of liberal principles in foreign relations "is not guaranteed to work" (349). But this is not the point. The point is that "liberalism cannot *politically* sustain non-liberal policies" (349). Liberal states must have policies that can be supported and accepted by their liberal electorate.

From this fully liberal foreign policy perspective, Doyle suggests a number of policy positions including: keeping the world economy open and free in order to encourage the formation of more liberal states; opening and maintaining diplomatic and economic relations with all states all states that are "no more repressive of liberal rights" than the

USSR, and severing relations with less liberal regimes (such as South Africa); and above all striving to “preserve the pacific union of similarly liberal societies.”

Kant

Kant argued in 1795 that “the natural evolution of world politics and economics would drive mankind inexorably toward peace by means of a widening of the pacific union of liberal republican states.” This would occur through two mechanisms. One, societies would be driven into forming liberal republics from the pressures of external and internal war. And two, republics would create commercial ties of mutual advantage that would cause them to be pacific towards each other. Eventually, once the entire world consisted of such pacific, liberal regimes, mankind would attain perpetual peace.

Forecasting the arrival of Perpetual Peace

Doyle takes the two different scenarios for the growth of liberal regimes (transnational—ties of commercialism; international: pressures of war creating more liberal regimes) and extrapolates from historical data to predict when we will attain perpetual peace. For the transnational model he predicts the year 2101. For the international model, 2113.