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A Succinct Analysis of the Nature and Variants of Liberalism in International Relations

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Abstract
In theories of international relations, liberalism is one of the oldest and most prominent theories that proposes to create a pacific world order through the means of cooperation among nations, enforcing international rules and norms, and establishing international institutions. As a progressive theory, liberalism seeks persuasive methods in international cooperation. Besides, the liberal theory expounds on a country's territorial sovereignty, independence, and self-determination. As per the liberal view, the state has to function with a minimum role, and other international institutions similarly function along with the state. Since the development of the liberal theory in international relations, there have been many interpretations and explanations given to it by various liberal theorists. This paper conducts a discussion on various aspects of the nature of liberal theory in international relations. Moreover, it discusses the multiple variants of liberalism in international relations, liberal philosophers' views, and liberal institutionalism. In addition, subsets of liberal theories in international relations, such as the functionalist theory of integration, the neo functionalist theory of integration, and the democratic peace theory, are also explained. Furthermore, it explains criticisms of liberalism from the perspectives of neoliberalism, realism, and neorealism. This paper has been framed as helping material for the understanding of international relations from the point of view of liberalism.

Key Words
Liberalism, International Relations, Functionalism, Neofunctionalism, Institutionalism, Democracy, Peace

I. Introduction

Liberalism is a progressive and idealist political theory.In international relations, liberalism is a distinctive body of thoughts concerning the peaceful settlement of disputes and strengthening cooperation among nations in the world(Lawson). Liberal ideas emerged in international relations as a response to theories that supported a state-dominated and power-centred international order. From a theoretical standpoint, a liberal state should always support the concepts of individual liberty, individual rights, private property, equality before the law, free speech, free and fair elections, democracy, and representative institutions(Doyle). Likewise, in the international realm, liberal theory upholds the principles of peace, security, national self-determination, the free-market system, and arrangements of international democratic institutions.

This paper has been structured primarily to provide a concise understanding of the concept of liberalism, its traits, and its variants in international relations.Besides, the theories of functionalism, neo-functionalism, and democratic peace have also been discussed. Liberal theory has also been viewed from the critical points of view of other international theories of neoliberalism, realism, and neorealism.

While discussing liberalism in international relations, there can be seen distinct traits of liberal

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ideas that interpret the roles, functions, and relationships of states and other institutions in international politics.As Andrew Moravcsik pointed out, "the fundamental actors in world politics are individuals and privately-constituted groups with autonomous preferences; governments represent some subset of domestic social actors; and interstate behaviour is shaped primarily by the pattern of state preferences, not state power" (Moravcsik,1). In a liberal tradition, the individual and society have a connection. And this conception has been further specified by John Gray by explaining key elements of liberalism, such as individualist, egalitarian, universalist, and meliorist(Gray). *Individualist;*it asserts that an individual has moral precedence over any claims made by a social collectivity. *Egalitarian;*as far as it accords all individuals the same moral position and dismisses the significance of individual distinctions in moral worth to the legal or political system.*Universalits;* recognising the moral equality of humankind and, as a result, placing certain historical linkages and cultural practises in a subordinate role.*Meliorist;* in its declaration that all social structures and political frameworks are corrigible and improvable.Liberalism is also a theoretical movement in order to strike down authoritative regimes. It aims to liberate people from tyranny by giving them the freedom to consent to their political institutions and the policies that are pursued within the framework of these institutions, as well as a set of liberties that are shielded from governmental interference and restriction(Hoffmann). Moreover, Stanley Hoffmann opined that "the essence of, liberalism is self-restraint, moderation, compromise, and peace" (Hoffmann,396).

As far as liberal theory in international relations, it has different traits. And such characteristics have been identified by different liberal theorists through their analytical and empirical understandings.Beate Jahn has explained various categories of liberalism in light of the observationsput forwardby different liberal theorists. Accordingly, Andrew Moravcsik identifies commercial, republican and ideational liberalism; Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye indicate commercial, sociological, regulatory and democratic liberalism; Jackson and Sorensen speaks of interdependence, republican, sociological and institutional liberalism; Tim Dunne says about idealism, internationalism and institutionalism; Michael Doyle speaks of pacifism, liberal imperialism and internationalism; Mark Zacher and Richard Matthew differentiated between commercial, republican, sociological, cognitive and institutional liberalism(Jahn).

Some important variants of liberal theories are explained below.

- Ideational Liberalism: -focuson how social preferences relate to basic collective goods like national unity, socioeconomic management, and legitimate political institutions (Moravcsik,). The main proponents of the ideational liberal theory are J.S. Mill, Giuseppe Mazzini, Woodrow Wilson, and John Maynard Keyes (Moravcsik,).
- Commercial Liberalism: - claim that economic interdependence fosters peace and cooperation. And also suggested that a state must provide favourable conditions in order to accommodate the unrestricted character of free commercial transactions at the international level.
- Republican Liberalism: -liberal democracies are more peaceful than other political systems.The main intention behind the theory was to form a "democratic peace" model, which is a better way to contain the belligerent international atmosphere. The key argument was the formulation of representative institutions with the free consent of the people.
- Pluralist Liberalism: - contend that incentives for war are produced by unequal social power distribution or by the presence of significant social cleavages (Moravcsik,). International relations encompass more than just state-to-state interactions; it also encompasses transnational interactions between individuals, groups, and organisations from other countries.
- Regulatory Liberalism: - claims that international law and institutions foster international cooperation(Moravcsik,). International laws and organisations facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes among states and promote global collaboration.
- Embedded Liberalism: - the government's commitment to maintaining full employment while also opening up the local economy to international trade and investment. John Ruggie is the one of the chief exponents of this theory.

Moreover, another variant of liberalism known as "contemporary liberalism" also interprets its various theoretical aspects. The contemporary liberals supported the establishment of a democratic system of governance. Tom W. Smith finds certain features of contemporary liberalism; (1) reformer; preferring change and rarely content with the status quo, (2) democratic; advocating the strengthening of voting right, (3) libertarian; in favour of fully

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extending civil liberties such as free speech and the right to assemble (4) interventionist and regulatory; the government manages business and the economy, (5)centralists; believe that the federal government should create and enforce national norms while also guiding state and local administrations, (6) humanitarian; building a social welfare system to care for and protect society in general and the poorer classes in particular, (7) egalitarian; advocates for equal treatment and equal conditions for all, (8) permissive; accommodating, and often supportive of unorthodox lives and practises (e.g., nudity, homosexuality, etc.)(Smith).

Historical Roots of Liberalism

In Western Europe in the seventeenth century, the enlightenment movement had resulted in a new way of thinking which questioned excessive state regulation over individual rights and liberty. And during the same era, European society witnessed the collapse of feudalism and the rise of capitalism (Lawson). Afterwards, a greater economic transformation occurred through the emergence of a laissez-faire economic system, which replaced mercantilism. It ensures individual freedom and a free market system. Furthermore, it was demanded that the state's role in economic function be reduced. Liberalism advanced further as a result of the contributions of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, French Physiocrats and economists, and American founding fathers(Haar). In the nineteenth century, new insights were also added to liberalism by several philosophers of the Utilitarian school of thought and Manchester school activists, and several variants of liberalism have also emerged. In 1812, the *Liberales,* a political party, formed in Spain with the adoption of liberalism as their political ideology. Since then, liberalism has emerged as a political movement across many European countries. The earlier form of liberalism was also known as classical liberalism. And classical liberalism is mainly characterised by six core factors, such as freedom, individualism, the rule of law, natural law, spontaneous order, and the limited state (Haar). In international politics, significant contributions to liberal ideas were made by scholars like Erasmus, Hugo Grotius, John Locke, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, et al(Daddow). After the end of the First World War, liberalism really became a pervasive political ideology in international relations, encouraging cooperation among nations. And it is indeed indebted to Woodrow Wilson for his fourteen-point program, in which he emphasised liberal ideology, particularly with regard to establishing a peaceful world order.

Philosophers' View

There are a number of philosophers who have put forward distinct liberal ideas, and these ideas have truly contributed to figuring out the different meanings of liberalism in international relations. The propagation of liberal principles has been pioneered by the works of various philosophers. Here, it mostly addresses the opinions of three significant liberal philosophers, including John Locke, Jeremey Bentham, and Immanuel Kant.

John Lock is considered the father of liberalism.John Lock says that "Men being, as has been said, by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent (Locke 146). The liberal theory of John Locke is based on the "social contract," which means man and state are entering into a contract. The man surrenders some of his basic rights, particularly to judge his own acts, on the basis that the state has to protect his natural rights of life, liberty, and private property (Gauba).The man has complete sovereignty over his rights, but the state has legitimate authority to protect them. John Locke also said that "The great and chief end, therefore, of men uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property; to which in the state of nature there are many things wanting" (Locke 159). John Lock's natural law theory was considered the primary theoretical argument that greatly supported the constitution of a liberal order.The liberalism proposed by him was used to protect human rights and the redistribution of wealth in order to protect the interests of the poor(Elias and Sutch). Locke's international theory looks upon the earth as a common resource which can be independently exploited for the benefit of each property-owning individual (Williams).

Jeremy Bentham was the first person to coin the term *"international"*, and it was used in a book titled 'An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation', published in 1789(Kenny). His theory of utilitarianism was the greatest of his works. Bentham argued that "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure"(Bentham 14). The nature of men is characterised by a seeker of pleasure and an avoider of pain. Hence, we should "organise our political lives to achieve 'the greatest happiness greatest number' or by maximizing utility'' (Elias and Sutch 67). In international

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relations, the works of Jeremy Bentham mainly related to international law, the emancipation of colonies, and the issues of war and peace.Bentham's endeavour to codify international law and treaties has been explicitly linked to the utility concept of "common utility" (Bourcier). He was also an advocate of setting up an international court to resolve conflicts between nations. Later, his idea helped pave the way for the creation of the Permanent International Court of Justice under the auspices of the League of Nations and the International Court of Justice of the United Nations (Elias and Sutch). His support for constitutional and representative forms of government was based on the idea that these systems' unique institutional arrangements may maximise the dependency of the rulers over the ruled and, as a result, reduce the likelihood of unwarranted international conflicts(Cello).

Immanuel Kant, an idealist political philosopher, advanced several distinct liberal ideas aimed at establishing a peaceful international order.Kant ‘s programme of *"perpetual peace"* was a philosophy to end anarchical order by establishing a confederation of republican states under the law of nations(Elias and Sutch). In an international chaotic order, Kantian thought was very optimistic about preserving values and morality. Kant's writings have served as a significant resource for studying both current issues with world order and the ethics of international conduct(Franke). The short pamphlet of Kant's "perpetual peace" discussed six preliminary articles about perpetual peace between states and those offering peace in international politics. Jeremy Waldron, et al., have explained these six preliminary articles in their book " Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History Immanuel Kant”, and those are following;

1. *“No peace settlement which secretly reserves issues for a future war shall be considered valid*
2. *No independently existing state (irrespective of whether it is large or small) shall be able to be acquired by another state through inheritance, exchange, purchase, or gift*
3. *Standing armies (miles perpetuus) shall gradually be abolished entirely*
4. *The state shall not contract debts in connection with its foreign affairs*
5. *No state shall forcibly interfere in the constitution and government of another state*
6. *No state shall allow itself such hostilities in wartime as would make mutual trust in a future period of peace impossible. Such acts would include the employment of assassins (percussores), poisoners (venefici), breach of surrender, incitement of treason (perduellio) within the enemy state, etc.”* (Waldron et al. 67–69).

In a more overt manner, Kant's theory achieves significant prominence as the intellectual foundation that justifies the spread of state democracy globally, particularly in the so-called developing countries(Franke). Moreover, he had anticipated the creation of international law, republican constitutions, and international organizations.

LiberalismAfter the First World War

The relevance and principles of liberal theory have been questioned during the First World War period.However, after the end of the war, nations reached out to form a peaceful democratic order to thwart future war and mutual aggression. Then the principles of liberal ideas came in a more practical manner. One of the main initiators of liberal ideas was then the president of the U.S.A., Woodrow Wilson.In January 1918, Woodrow Wilson made a speech in U.S. Congress and said, “fit and safe to live in; particularly that it be made safe for every peace -loving nations which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other people of the world as against force and selfish aggression’’ (Yale Law School, para.2). And also, he proposed a fourteen-point programme that included many liberal principles intended to create a peaceful and cooperative world order. According to Oliver Daddow’s view, points I,III, V-XII, and XIV of thefourteen-point programme specifically emphasise the key liberal principles.

- PointI, ‘Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at’- A plea for direct and truthful diplomacy. It would assist in avoiding the issue of covert alliances that cause states to engage in conflict against their better judgement
- PointIII, Removal of economic blockades- the creation of free trade between all nations who accept peace.
- PointV-XIII, National Self-determination- include a demand for the destruction of empires
- Point XIV, Association of nations- collaborating to ensure territorial integrity and political independence(Daddow 71).

Later, Woodrow Wilson’s principles influenced the establishment of institutional machinery in international politics. In 1919, as a result of the Paris Peace Conference, the League of Nations was formed with the objective of encouraging

international cooperation and achieving world peace and security.The League of Nations is a real example of the widespread appeal and political impact of liberal principles in the early aftermath of World War I(Daddow). During the post-League of Nations' formation, the international political atmosphere was also in turmoil. Germany's territorial expansionism, the prevalence of Fascist and Nazi ideologies, and the colonial nature of western countries had all contributed to the crisis of liberal principles.

Liberalism After the Second World War

The end of the Second World War was a resurgence of a new model of liberal ideology in world politics. And Liberal ideas became more institutionalised. The principles of peace, security, mutual coexistence, free trade, solving disputes by mutual negotiation methods and other liberal ideas after the Second World War became more pragmatically applied in world politics. Many new liberal institutions were established, for example, the United Nations, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. And the emergence of such international organisations and institutions has made nation-states more cooperative organs.

Following the Second World War, several Afro-Asian nations attained independence with sovereign powers.The liberal idea of national self-determination status has gained practical acceptance. The principles of rights, liberty, equality, democracy, peace, a representative legislature, and universal adult suffrage had bolstered the colonised countries' anti-imperialist struggle. Most Afro-Asian countries have followed suit in establishing a democratic government system in which citizens have legitimate rights to form representative institutions. In the post-Second World War period of international politics, liberal democratic principles could establish a new global governance order.

Liberal Institutionalism

Liberal institutionalism was developed as a result of the mutual cooperative nature of nations.The prime intention of liberal institutions was to create a cooperative world orderto prevent anarchical systems. The international institutions are aimed at establishing a stable, peaceful order and a mutually shared economic system by bringing all nations together. In the modern period, institutions and organisations have become more significant in order to unite various nations and address shared issues on a global scale. It is a mechanical system that unites nations under a similar set of principles and rules. Under an international institution, nation–states would become more adherent to the rules and regulations made by an international institution. The maintenance of peace and resolving disputes would be less complicated under the liberal institutional system. In the post-second world war era, the world order was most suitable for the emergence of international organisations and institutions. In 1945, the United Nations was formed with the aim of the preservation of world peace and security, the advancement of human welfare, and global cooperation in these pursuits. In 1993, under the Maastricht treaty, the European Union originated aimed at the attainment of European regional integration. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are functioning as controllers of the world economic system. The World Trade Organisation is a part of international institutional machinery to regulate the world trade system

Functionalist Integration Theory

After the end of World War II, the debate over the integration theory began in world politics. The integration of nations is a process of bringing divergent groups together to construct collective actions on a common issue.It supported a free universal market system, and nations should facilitate favourable domestic conditions for the free market system. All nations should join together in an international system under common rules, and each nation has to be willing to accept the common rules created by the common institutions.The role of the state has very much been limited in regulating the international order because the international order itself has a self-regulative mechanism.David Mitrany was a pioneer in the field of functionalist integration theory. Even though Mitrany does not use the term "functionalism" in his writings, the functional approach he created to promote societal harmony and prosperity is known by this label, and he suggests a new international system based on trans-border cooperation(Popoviciu).Mitrany observes that “if one were to visualize a map of the world showing economic and social activities, it would appear as an intricate web of interests and relations crossing and recrossing political divisions-not a fighting map of states and frontiers, but a map pulsating with the realities of the everyday life” (Mitrany, 358). According to functionalism, there are national government duties in the areas of welfare and technical administration that can be more effectively organised through intergovernmental collaboration(McLaren). The functionalist holds that governments are not always

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the ideal form of social organisation, economic growth fosters universally recognised values, and there is a need to create methods for delivering individual wellbeing across state boundaries(Groom and Taylor). Individuals have to perform their roles beyond the national borders. Individual rights and liberties are equally recognised at the international level. Mitrany views,achieving the needs of peace and social progress can be achieved through a different method of nation-state association: through a shared effort to organise the government in accordance with the needs of the moment(Popoviciu).

Neo-Functionalist Integration Theory

The neo-functionalist integration theory emphasises integration of nations at the regional level. The integration has to be initiated by the activities of non-state actors such as regional organisations, interest groups and social movements. In Europe, the vicissitudes of a concept known as "neofunctionalism" are inextricably related to Ernst B. Haas' academic reputation(Schmitter). Neo-functionalism highlights the dynamics of integration and identifies the function of supranational, transnational, and sub-national actors in this process (Gehring). Following this perspective, integration is a naturally sporadic and conflictual process, but one in which, under democratic and pluralistic representation, national governments will become increasingly entangled in regional pressures and ultimately resolve their conflicts by ceding a wider range and more power to the regional organisations they have established(Schmitter). In a neo-functionalist order, national rules have to adhere to the rules of regional organisations and follow the regional organisational principles under a collective system. Integration at the regional level is based on common aims and shared understanding. According to the neo-functional perspective, it can become a "spill over effect" from lower-level cooperation to higher cooperation. And that "spill over effect" means an incremental change from an economic and social relationship to a political relationship. The spill over happens at three levels: economic, social, and political.

- Economic: - at the lower level, as functional,free trade and a commercial relationship among countries would remove domestic territorial barriers.
- Social: - at the lower level, as functional,direct people-to-people engagementhappens mainly through cultural and communicative ways.
- Political: - at a higher level, as co-operational, the creation of institutions like the United Nations and the European Union.

According to neo-functionalist theory, the lower level of integration would lead to a higher level of political integration.

Democratic Peace Theory

The pioneering work of democratic peace theory was done by Immanuel Kant in his work of "perpetual peace". The democratic peace theory emerged as a main research programme in the post-cold war era(Daddow). The democratic theory claims that democratic nations are very rarely at war with each other because their domestic institutions are capable of regulating peaceful order. Conflicts of interest occur, but democracies rarely let them get out of hand to the point where they threaten or resort to using force against one another (Russett et al.).As Jeffrey Pugh mentioned in the article "Democratic Peace Theory: A Review and Evaluation" regarding the argument of R.J. Rummel, one of the chief exponents of democratic peace theory, "the democratic peace theory advanced four propositions: that interstate violence will occur only if at least one state is not 'libertarian'; the more libertarian two states are, the less likely they will engage in mutual violence; that libertarian states tend to engage less in interstate violence in general; and that the more libertarian a state is, the less internal violence it will have" (Pugh 11). The democratic system has developed under the specified principles of peace, moral values, liberty, human rights, equality, and fraternity. The legitimacy granted by the will of the people establishes democratic institutions.Since the end of the Cold War, liberal democracy has reigned in many countries as a result of the disintegration of the communist blocs. In an essay article titled "The End of History", Francis Fukuyama explains that the collapse of communism is a great sign of humanity's great desire for freedom and that it can only be realised through the triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism(Lawson).

A Critical Assessment

The liberal theory has been subjected to reasonable criticism by other international relations theories. Liberal ideology is strictly focused on the application of values and moral principles in international relations. In practical international politics, nations are always in a state of competition with each other for their own advancement. Many

liberal critics have expressed their apprehension about the practicality of liberal ideology in third-world countries because of their institutional incapability to carry out liberal orders.Some critics say that liberal ideology is best suited for developed countries, mainly due to their social and economic advancement. Liberal theory in international relations has primarily faced criticism from the theories of neoliberalism, realism, and neorealism.

Neoliberalists have criticised many of the theoretical viewpoints of liberal ideas, such as the role of the state, market freedom, and liberal institutions. Neo-liberalism is critical of the welfare state ideas supported by liberalism. The liberal state is promoting many social welfare policies, and such measures will curtail the self-progress of individuals. Market freedom does not fully permit liberal policies, which allow the state to act as a regulating institution in the economy. Neoliberal scholars argue that international institutions are not fully capable of maintaining pacific order in the world. For example, in 2003, the U.N. procedures and rules failed to support the other states that opposed the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq(Kay). Stephen Krasner argues that, in the real sense, the international system is controlled by trans-governmental and transnational actors (Lawson).

The realist theory is a prominent critique of liberalism due to its idealist nature. Liberal thought has been strongly criticised by realism in a more pragmatic manner. In international politics, the attainment of power is the ultimate goal of nations. Hence, in such a system, idealist principles are very rarely applicable. One nation's place in the world is determined by its level of national power. Liberal principles failed to maintain international order during the First World War and Second World War periods, and then the world order was controlled by realist principles. As per the realist view, the real natures of a nation are territorial aggrandizement, power expansion, and maintaining ideological hegemony. The classical realist Morgenthau explained in his famous "Six Principles of Political Realism" that power is the sole determining factor of a nation's interest in international relations and that politics is a distinctive factor from law, morality, and economy(Elias and Sutch).

As per the neorealist view, the international system is in an anarchical order because there are no legitimate institutions to regulate the world order. Neorealists believe that the international system is composed of units (sovereign states) and that they have different material capabilities to survive. Those who have more capability are called "great powers" or "major actors." On the basis of "capability distribution" across units, the international system has been demarcated as unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar(Folker). Peace is maintained in international order by balancing power among nations.

II. Conclusion

After analysing liberal theory in international relations, it has been realised that liberalism has its own multiple variants of theoretical explanation regarding international relations.It has also been discerned that variant forms of liberalism are most relevant in the contemporary era in maintaining the international order.At this time, liberalism is a widely recognised political theory in international relations, and at present most nations are formed based on liberal democratic principles. The nations are embracing liberal ideas principally due to the characteristics of cooperative, modernistic, and progressive elements. As Zacher and Matthweexplained, liberalists believe that the combined effect of the spread of these three factors "has introduced or enhanced the possibility of a dramatic improvement in the moral character and material welfare of humankind (Zacher and Matthew 110). The liberal economic principle of the free market has proliferated and been successful in bringing about unprecedented levels of material prosperity, both in industrialised nations and in nations that, at the end of World War II, were part of the Third World's depressed region (Fukuyama).As Francis Fukuyama argued that "liberal democracy may constitute the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the "final form of human government," and as such, constitute the 'end of history''' (Fukuyama 1).

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