Dialectic of Liberal Peace

• Hegel tells us that communities think, and learn, through the dialectic.

• Opposing forces combine to forge eventual consensus

• synthesis may mature slowly and be harried by controversy.

• Liberal thought is perhaps the most characteristic and influential component of the Western tradition.
Dialectic, continued

• Liberal thought is the most characteristic and influential component of the Western tradition.
• Liberalism contains strong strains of optimism and faith in progress
  • Details of what constitutes progress vary widely.
• Liberalism includes many contrasts, even incompatible assumptions/conclusions.
The River of Liberal Thought

- Liberal tradition it is like a great river
- Breadth makes it seem to contain contrasts
- Much of liberalism is in agreement about the basic thrust of historical forces.
  - Human beings, or their institutions, can improve, or at least constrained.
  - Knowledge is basically good.
  - Beliefs are less important than insights.
- Wealth and freedom are liberating
What Liberalism is Not

- Liberals do not believe that human nature is all that malleable
  - Though attributes of human beings such as knowledge and culture are readily changeable.
- Societies are rational constructs, not arbitrary entities of tradition or social imagination.
What Liberalism is Not, cont.

• Civilization is more than the sum of its parts
  • But civilization is not a separate “actor”
  • It is knowable as a tool of collective will
  • Imperfectly controlled by popular preferences.
• Liberals accept the pessimism of realists as a beginning point, but reject this as inevitable.
What Liberalism is Not, cont.

- Liberals do not see organizations as driven primarily by collective forces, a social subconscious, or historical forces.
- Instead, a group is a group of individuals.
  - The group is an imperfect representation of the collective will
  - But we can know groups by working up from their elements better than we can know them by working down from the top of hierarchy.
Two Traditions of Liberal Thought

• Two basic traditions of liberal thought
  • One dominated by politics
  • The other focuses more on economics
• Many authors in both traditions
• We can begin to think about each in terms of typical arguments and basic differences.
The Political Tradition

• In “Perpetual Peace,” Immanuel Kant (1795) lays out principles for the abolition of inter-state war.
• Kant is not the first to fashion a manifesto.
• Abbe St. Pierre, Rousseau, and Thomas Paine also link political enlightenment with peace.
• Ceadel (2000, 16):
  “The argument that republican regimes were necessary for peace, … was already a near-commonplace of Anglo-American radicalism.”
Political Tradition, cont.

• Not clear whether Kant was being optimistic or satirical in calling for perpetual peace:

  “Whether this satirical inscription on a Dutch innkeeper's sign upon which a burial ground was painted had for its object mankind in general, or the rulers of states in particular, who are insatiable of war, or merely the philosophers who dream this sweet dream, it is not for us to decide.”
Kant the Humorist

- The introduction is an allusion to the wars between Holland with England
  - Lasted in excess of 130 years
    - Ended only a decade previously.
    - Two most liberal countries in the world
    - Fighting over trade.
  - Was Kant was poking fun at liberal peace?
Kant the Pessimist

• Kant was pessimistic about human nature
  ... he was German

• He describes human beings under anarchy:
  “the natural state is one of war.”

• Bettering the lot of humanity involves working against human tendencies.
  “A state of peace ... must be established.”
Kant the Theorist

- Kant divides his argument into several sections:
  - Preliminary articles (things that help alleviate some of the tensions making war worse):
    - No secret treaties
    - Territorial Integrity (Norm)
    - No standing armies
    - Censor national debt (for financing war)
    - Sovereignty (Norm)
    - Law of War (fight so that peace is possible)
Kant the Theorist, cont.

• Definitive articles (things that must occur in order for stable peace to evolve):
  • Constitutional government (republics, not democracies)
  • League of nations (international law/deliberative body)
  • Universal hospitality (be nice to tourists)
Kant the Theorist, cont. 2

• First Supplement:
  • Human nature and self-interest create stable ordering of humanity, not human artifice:
“A problem like this must be capable of solution; it does not require that we know how to attain the moral improvement of men but only that we should know the mechanism of nature in order to use it on men, organizing the conflict of the hostile intentions present in a people in such a way that they must compel themselves to submit to coercive laws. Thus a state of peace is established in which laws have force”
“The spirit of commerce, which is incompatible with war, sooner or later gains the upper hand in every state. As the power of money is perhaps the most dependable of all the powers (means) included under the state power, states see themselves forced, without any moral urge, to promote honorable peace and by mediation to prevent war wherever it threatens to break out.”
Kant, the contradictions

- King is constrained by citizens (constitution)
- War “does not require of the ruler … the least sacrifice”
- While for citizens war is “a poor game”
- Kant also views King as civilizing force
- Restrains individuals from state of nature.
  - King restrains people, people restrain king.
Liberal Economic Tradition

• Liberal economic theories of peace develop along side liberal economic theories of peace

  “Peace is a natural effect of trade” (Montesquieu 1748)

  “commerce diminishes the spirit, both of patriotism and military defense” (Thomas Paine, 1776)

• Adam Smith does not write about war, but carries on a correspondence w/ Franklin
Peace and Commerce

• How does commerce affect politics?

“The richest trader had only invisible wealth which could be sent everywhere without leaving any trace ... [so that] rulers have been compelled to govern with greater wisdom than they themselves would have thought.” (Montesquieu 1748)
Peace and Commerce, cont.

Commerce is:

“Rapidly rendering war obsolete” (Mill, 1848)

“The great panacea” (Richard Cobden, 1867)

“It is impossible for one nation to seize by force the wealth or trade of another … war, even when victorious, can no longer achieve those aims for which peoples strive” (Norman Angell, 1910)
Angell (1910, 1933) offers two arguments:

• Markets tie states together
  • Mutual dependence deters aggression
    • German general in the Bank of England
  • Plunder is no longer profitable
    • It costs more to steal than to purchase
      • Anlaf the Viking raiding the English coast
“I used to think if there was reincarnation, I wanted to come back as the President or the Pope or a .400 baseball hitter, but now I want to come back as the bond market. You can intimidate everybody.” (James Carville, 1992)
Constrain, Inform, or Transform?

• Three basic ways that interdependence could affect whether states resort to military violence:
  • Constrain: trade could be a benefit that leads states to prefer peace (opportunity costs)
  • Inform: countries could learn about each other through their economic interdependence
  • Transform: economic ties could lead to new interests in societies that prefer peace to war
Opportunity Costs

• Basic argument (opportunity cost theory):
  • Trade substitutes for war in acquiring goods
  • Fear of lost profits leads leaders to prefer peace
    • “Make money, not war”
Information

• Uncertainty about willingness to fight is what makes war necessary (asymmetric information)
• Trade substitutes for war by informing
  • Countries that care a great deal about some issue and don’t trade may need to fight
  • Countries that care a great deal about some issue and do trade may use sanctions, etc.
• Logic of escalation ladder
Identity/interests

• Trade transforms domestic economies
  • More people are dependent on good relations with other countries to make a living, prosper
  • Export oriented firms/workers lobby the state to pursue peaceful foreign policies
  • Mutual preferences for peace can lead two trading states to be less prone to conflict.
Problems with Perspectives

- Opportunity costs:
  - Dependence can be used to coerce
    - Schelling’s mountain climber analogy
  - May get different bargains
    - But not clear why benefits would stop war
  - Example of World War I
    - Counter-example: World War I
Problems, cont.

• Identity (transform):
  • Similar problems to opportunity cost arguments
  • Can change interests (prefer trade to war)
  • Cannot take away security dilemma (chicken)

• Signaling (inform):
  • Cannot really see signaling (like the wind)
  • Substantial enough to generate robust peace?
Can Trade Cause War?

• Skepticism about liberal (economic) peace
• Threatening to traditional interests:
  “Without war, the world would slide dissolutely into materialism.” (Helmuth von molke)
• Academic criticism (Hirshmann, Barbieri)
  • States can fight over trade
  • Cannot take away security dilemma (chicken)
• Kant’s Dutch Innkeeper
Can Trade Cause War?, cont.

• Dependency Theory
  • Asymmetric dependence is bad
  • Dependent state “under thumb” of others
  • Non-dependent state can use trade to force the dependent state to comply (power)
• Problem (opportunity costs -- Wagner)
Can Trade Cause War?, cont.

- Asymmetry can still be bad (different reason)
  - "Trade war" mirrors/substitutes for conflict
    - States must simultaneously
      - Absorb costs (own state’s lost trade)
      - Impose costs (other state’s lost trade)
- Symmetry: both states harm and inform
- Asymmetry: one state informs, the other harms
  - Dependent state prefers using force to harm
Kant’s Dutch Innkeeper

• Why were the Dutch and English fighting over trade in 17th/18th centuries?
  • The answer is informative for today
  • Very different kind of trade
  • Not exchanging goods/services
  • Most of the value was in moving from A to B
    • Value could be maintained by preventing others from participating in the shipping
Trade and Empire

• Most empires are economic enterprises
  • Make money for sovereign by:
    • Capturing wealth
    • Limiting free exchange of goods
  • Modern (European) empire collapsed when:
    • Captured wealth declines in value
    • Trade system eclipses empire (Europeans could no longer control flow of trade)
Conclusions

• Interdependence is generally good for peace
  • May have negative effects if asymmetric
• Not clear why (constrain, inform, transform)
• Globalization:
  • Often viewed in a negative light
  • Encourages international cooperation