



### **The Globalization of Liberalism**

Eivind Hovden and Edward Keene (eds.)

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This is a timely book: its contents could scarcely be more appropriate to debate over the major issues in contemporary international relations. It consists of a series of chapters each addressing a different aspect of liberalism in relation to international relations. This simple juxtaposition immediately sets up a number of interesting and important debates. As the editors argue in their introduction, liberalism can often be (or be seen to be) relatively insulated from the criticism attracted by any actually existing set of political circumstances: but this insulation only comes about through a sleight of hand in which liberalism is defined or understood merely normatively as a set of principles unsullied by the compromises and corruptions of practical existence. But, of course, liberalism has no right to this insulation, and as soon as the question is asked of liberalism's connection with capitalism, or with enlightenment rationality, it is revealed as engaged in and compromised by the world. However, some might still argue that liberalism can still escape this charge, either because it is too conceptually vague as a doctrine to be able to be pinned down to any particular commitments or because it can still wriggle off the hook of existence by defining or redefining itself in such a way as to escape all charges. However, the editors of this book are having none of this — they deny liberalism the space to manoeuvre in this protean manner. They want to root it in its real historical existence, to show that it is implicated in our practices of international relations, and to argue that we should therefore make sure we get round to thinking about what it is, what it has been, and what it should be. In seeking to pin it down they suggest that there are 'at least three distinct themes contained within liberalism which all inform the ways in which international liberalism can be understood' (p. 4). These three themes are, first, that it may be associated with a moral point of view in which rights and liberties are justified in terms of individuals' natural capacities or characteristics. The second is a methodological stance in which institutions should be understood through the assumption of individuals having free choices, the aggregate effect of which we speak of as society, community or social institutions. Finally, in their view, liberalism is often associated with a private–public distinction in which market relations operate in the private and democratic rights and liberties exist in the



latter. In this sense, liberalism is as much a project as a reality, but it does have an existential reality and is rooted in our practices both domestically and internationally.

This is where we start: but where do the chapters take us? Part 1, 'Understanding International Liberalism', commences with Robert Keohane and David Long engaged in debate concerning the nature of liberalism, Long criticizing Keohane for giving up too much of the moral dimension of liberalism in accommodating it to realism in international relations theory. This section is rounded off by John MacMillan with a 'Kantian Protest' against the way in which much liberal thinking in this sphere proceeds; he protests both against the neglect of Kant and against the dominant interpretation which has distorted Kant's message, a message which MacMillan restates with a greater emphasis on the importance that Kant attached to justice in his consideration of the necessary conditions of perpetual peace.

Part 2, 'Globalization and Liberalism in Contemporary International Relations', contains a series of fascinating discussions covering solidarity *vs* cooperation, the relation between international liberalization and domestic stability in the world economy, coverage of globalization, 'market civilization' and neoliberalism; the idea of a global civil society, and concludes with a consideration of global liberalism as 'a project to be realized'. In these pages, Richard Falk, John Ruggie, Stephen Gill, Mervyn Frost and Tom Young ply their interesting wares. Part 3 deals with the issues addressed in the preceding parts as they apply, respectively, to China (Christopher Hughes), Egypt and Tunisia (Katerina Dalacoura), and India (A.K. Ramakrishnan).

In a review one can always find space for a little critical comment, and I could find it if I chose; but I choose not to. This is because the virtues so clearly outweigh any vices that I prefer to conclude by stating that this book manages to be both informative and analytical, creative and critical, and that it will reward the attention of any interested reader, whether that reader is an expert or a novice, a liberal or an IR realist. Finally, it is a pleasure to read and to handle; it is well produced, well set and printed, and it seems to be gloriously free of some of the typos and minor spelling mistakes that so often (paradoxically) blemish the appearance of academic books.

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