

Stanley Hoffmann (1986) 'Liberalism and International Affairs', in Hoffmann, Janus and Minerva. Westview Press, 394-417.

In his discussion of liberalism and international affairs - the tone of which reflects its Cold War context - Hoffmann asks whether the conflict between the liberal vision and the logic of international politics is so great that "one has to give up any hope for the promotion of liberal values on the world scene". In advancing his view that there is hope for injecting liberalism into international affairs, Hoffmann outlines the opportunities, principles and strategies for such a "liberalism without illusions".

First, he notes that existing liberal approaches to international affairs fall into three groups - those who see the world as a contest between the free and the totalitarians, those in pursuit of a utopia which would replace the international system, and those (incl. Hoffmann) who accept that the world politics game cannot be wished away, but want to instill some liberal values into it. Prima facie, the liberal vision and international affairs appear contradictory, as, for example, domestic liberal institutions, societal mores and common values do not exist as such on the world scene. Moreover, several dilemmas exist for liberalism: should a polity intervene in other states' affairs so as to promote self-determination? Should liberals approve of, or resign themselves to, the balance of power? Do domestic liberal institutions disadvantage nations at the world politics level through less decisive and coherent government actions abroad?

Hoffmann argues that, despite these dilemmas, the liberal vision has a place in world politics. After reflecting on the three approaches that have aimed to refute the realist orthodoxy and change the state of world affairs - rejection of the realists' view of human nature; historically-based emphasis on the prospects for progress; and acceptance of the realists' sombre picture accompanied by the argument that this makes the moral duty to effect change even more compelling - he argues the need for a minimalist "conscious liberal strategy" to instill liberal values into international relations. Hoffmann advocates the adoption of a transformist (i.e. 'finding a way between insufficient and impossible'), rather than incremental, strategy that would aim to strengthen liberal values and institutions in as many polities as possible through the promotion of human rights policies and support for democratic forces in repressive countries. The strategy would aim to turn the international system into a global regime containing norms, procedures, practices and institutions that set out the rules of the game in areas of state interaction (e.g. trade).

The liberal transformist strategy advanced by Hoffmann as an alternative to realist and utopian approaches would try to enforce several principles:

1. Transparency: broader opportunities for openness and better flow of information;
2. Accountability: rulers are only trustees of power and must be made accountable for their actions through a human rights strategy and support for international regimes (e.g. IAEA);
3. Responsibility: making leaders pay for errors and crimes;
4. Solidarity: solidarity brings obligations beyond state boundaries, such as strengthening the system of international distributive justice;
5. Non-violence: force should be avoided for purely national goals, with legitimate uses being reserved for agreed upon common goals.

Two specific policies for implementing these principles are noted: the need for "right" polities to develop "right" domestic policies; and the need for both diplomatic and military action in the nuclear and arms control realms.

Hoffmann concludes by emphasising the duty on liberals to act to achieve their goals, noting that both states and citizens have a role to play in injecting liberal ideals into the world arena. He concludes that liberals 'with authority, power, and awareness' are needed to implement.