

**Moravcsik, A. (1998). "Taking preferences seriously: A liberal theory of international politics (vol 51 ; pg 549 ; 1997)." International Organization 52(1): 229-229.**

\* Coherent liberal IR theory has significant theoretical, methodological, empirical implications - to date, liberals have responded to criticisms in fragmented fashion

\* *Core assumptions of a liberal theory*

**1. Primacy of Social Actors: individuals and private groups**

- \* generally rational and risk adverse
- \* collective action constrained by material scarcity, conflicting values, variations in social influence
- \* bottom-up politics
- \* interests theoretically central
- \* conflict derives from scarcity or inequality

**2. States Represent Subset of Domestic Society:**

- \* Preferences indirectly ordered by constituency
- \* Biased political representation
- \* Spectrum of tyranny to democracy

**3. Interdependent Preferences Determine State Behavior:**

- \* Causally privilege variation in configuration of state preferences
- \* Compatibility of preferences of dominant social groups with foreign counterparts determines conflict
- \* Variation in ends, not means, matters most - state preferences may reflect patterns of transnational societal interaction
- \* Expected behavior of any state reflects interdependence of preferences of all states
- \* Explains not only foreign policy, but systemic outcomes of interstate interactions

\* *Liberal Variation:*

**1. Ideational Liberalism: domestic social ID define state preferences**

- \* Social ID shapes borders, decision-making, socioeconomic regulation
- \* Incompatibilities in social ID leads to conflict
- \* Fundamental social IDs: scope of nation, commitment to institutions, nature of regulation

**2. Commercial Liberalism: focused on behavior based on patterns of market incentives**

- \* Does not necessarily predict incentives of free trade
- \* Greater economic incentives lead to greater pressure on government to facilitate desired transactions
- \* Government sometimes has incentives to use force for economic gain

**3. Republican Liberalism: emphasizes methods of transforming social ID and economic goals into state policy**

- \* Key variable the mode of domestic political representation - policy depends on the groups represented
- \* Aggressive behavior prevalent in polities where elites can pass costs to others
- \* Fair representation tends to limit conflict

\* *Advantages of liberal theory*

1. Generates parsimonious empirical arguments (democratic peace, endogenous tariff setting, nationalist conflict)
2. Plausible explanation for historic change in system - causal link between social change and state behavior
3. Plausible explanation for distinctiveness of modern international politics - current stability unexplained in realism

\* Divergence from Neoliberalism - Most of neoliberalism's founding assumptions and basic causal variables more realist than liberal

\* Liberal theory allows alternate viewpoint to prevent omitted variable bias - allows multicausal synthesis - liberalism has priority in two-stage constrained social choice