The Liberal Perspective

I. Assumptions and Approach
II. Liberal Idealism
III. Neoliberal Institutionalism
IV. Problems with the Liberal Perspective
I. Assumptions & Approach

- Non-State actors are important in IR
- States are not unitary actors
- States are not fully rational actors
- Agenda of IR more than just security
- Security dilemma not as overwhelming or pervasive as Realists contend
II. Liberal Idealism

• Problem: Power politics leading to WW I
  – Alliances
  – Secret Treaties
  – Arms Races

• Human nature essentially good

• Problems (i.e., Wars) from poor governance, not evil people (or nations)

• Solution: Create effective multilateral institutions to achieve collective security
Liberal Idealist Reforms

- Wilson’s ‘Fourteen Points’
  - International Institutions (i.e., League of Nations)
  - International Law (e.g., Kellogg-Briand Pact 1928)
  - Disarmament
  - National Self-Determination
  - General Rejection of Balance of Power Politics

- Failed because it could not prevent Second World War!
III. Neoliberal Institutionalism

• Anomalies to Realist perspective (i.e., Peace in Europe)

• Factors mitigating the security dilemma...
  – International Organizations
  – Trade/Interaction
  – Common Values/Goals and International Regimes
    • International Regime = a set of principles, norms and rules governing behavior within a specified issue area
      (NOTE: slightly different from Nau)

• Leads to ‘positive sum’ IR not based solely on power!
Summary of Liberalism

• Anarchy and the security dilemma, but...
• International organizations, economic interdependence, common ideals ALTER the calculations of states within that anarchic framework
• All serves to increase trust and cooperation between states, creating a POSITIVE CYCLE of peace and stability
IV. Problems with the Liberal Perspective

- The persistence of conflict under interdependence
- The limitations of international institutions
- The stubborn health of nationalism and separateness

These guys can only do so much…