

The Great Delusion:

Liberal Ideals & International Realities

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My Basic Story

U.S. pursued “liberal hegemony” after Cold War.

Main aim: remake the world in America’s image.

The policy failed miserably.

Why? Nationalism & Realism > Liberalism

Outline

- What is Liberalism?
- What is Nationalism?
- What is Liberal Hegemony?
- Why Did the U.S. Pursue Liberal Hegemony?
- What is Liberal Hegemony's Track Record?
- Why Did Liberal Hegemony Fail?
- Liberal Hegemony's Future

What is Liberalism?

Liberalism's Bedrock Assumptions

- It is individualistic at its core. It assumes that the individual takes precedence over the social group.
- It assumes that individuals cannot reach universal agreement over first principles. Those differences are sometimes profound and can lead to violence.

Central Question

How should politics be arranged to deal with this potential for violence?

The Liberal Solution

- Individual rights – that are inalienable
- The norm of tolerance
- The state

The Taproot of Liberal Hegemony

Individualism + Inalienable Rights = Universalism

What is Nationalism?

Nationalism's Core Assumption

Humans are naturally social animals. They are born into and heavily socialized into particular groups.

Individualism takes a back seat to group loyalty.

Aside from the family, the most important group in today's world is the nation.

What is Nationalism?

A set of political beliefs which hold that a **nation** — a body of individuals with characteristics that purportedly distinguish them from other groups — should have their own **state**.

Sovereignty

Nations place enormous importance on sovereignty or self-determination, which is why they want their own state.

Nations-states place enormous importance on sovereignty or self-determination, which inclines them in powerful ways to resist foreign interference.

Nationalism > Liberalism

1. Human beings are primarily social animals.
2. Look at the planet: it is covered by nation-states.
Liberal democracies have never even comprised 50% of the states in the system, and the number has been declining since 2006.
3. All liberal democracies are liberal nation-states.

What is Liberal Hegemony?

Liberal Hegemony's Goals

It is basically an attempt remake the world in America's image.
It has three components:

1. Spread liberal democracy across the planet. ***
2. Integrate more and more countries into the open international economy. *
3. Integrate more and more countries into international institutions.*

Benefits of Liberal Hegemony

- Eliminates significant human rights violations
- Makes for a peaceful world, thus eliminating the twin problems of nuclear proliferation and terrorism.
- Makes the world safe for liberal democracy.

Why the U.S. Pursued Liberal Hegemony

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- Unipolarity made it possible to largely ignore balance-of-power politics and pursue a liberal foreign policy.
- The U.S. is a profoundly liberal country.
- American nationalism supplied an unhealthy dose of hubris to the equation. Think Madeleine Albright! Think “American Exceptionalism!”

Liberal Hegemony's Track Record

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1. The Bush Doctrine & the Greater Middle East.
2. The Ukraine Crisis & U.S.-Russia Relations.
3. The Failure of “Engagement” with China.

Why Liberal Hegemony Failed

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- The power of nationalism
- The power of realism
- Overselling of individual rights

Liberal Hegemony's Future

The End of Liberal Hegemony

Reason #1:

The Coming of Donald Trump

The End of Liberal Hegemony

Reason #2:

The Rise of China
&

The Resurrection of Russian Power

The End!

I look forward to your questions and comments!