A Review on the Shift in Liberalism: From Classical Liberalism to Institutional Liberalism

A Case Study of the Gulf War I (1990-1991)

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ABSTRACT

Even though realism has been viewed as the mainstream theory of International Relations (IR), liberalism has been also an important theory for understanding international system after World War I. During the nineteenth century, the main idea of classical liberalism was that free trade would establish a more pacific global order. Nevertheless, the core assumptions of liberalism underwent a profound shift from classical liberalism to international institutionalism after the World War I. In this context, President Wilson argued that collective security could be promoted with institutions such as the League of Nations. Thus, the first Gulf War has been viewed as an evidence of the longevity and continued presence of Wilsonianism. However, although many IR scholars argue that the Gulf War I was an appropriate example to examine institutional liberalism, it in-fact resulted in establishing an American hegemony in the Middle East.

Key words: Classical Liberalism, Institutional Liberalism, Wilsonianism, the Gulf War I.

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1. Introduction

The term liberal has been used since the ancient world—particularly in Greece and Rome to define a variety of concepts such as the freedom of man, openness and open-mindedness (Heywood 2007, p. 23; Gray 1995, p. xi). According to some historians, the modern meaning of liberalism did not appear until the eighteenth century which is the era of the emerging Glorious Revolution and the publication of John Locke’s Two Treaties on Civil Government (Richardson 1997). In particular, the keystones of eighteenth century French philosophers’ work improved ideas such as intellectual and political freedom, education, reason, science, happiness and utility that reflected the principle of liberalism (Richardson 1997). Heywood (2007, p. 24) claims that liberalism developed as a theory after the collapse of the feudal system in Europe, however the modern meaning of liberalism did not appear until the nineteenth century.

Even though realism is held up as the mainstream theory of IR, liberalism also has been an alternative for understanding international politics. After the First World War, liberalism led the policy-making elite’s decisions and also trickled down to individual citizens’ thinking in the West (Dunne 2014, p. 114). Although liberalism receded during the Cold War, it has resurfaced as a new world order after the end of the era of the U.S. & the USSR as the only global superpowers. Fukuyama (1992) thus claims that liberalism has triumphed over all other systems. In his words, ‘…we are witnessing the end of history as such: that is, the endpoint of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government’ (Fukuyama 1989, p.1).

In fact, the First World War was responsible for a shift in the core assumptions of liberalism. This shift has been labelled as a move from classical liberalism to modern liberalism (Heywood 2007, p. 25) or old liberalism to new liberalism (Johnson 1948). Classical liberalism refers to challenges to the feudal system, the authority of monarchy and absolutism (Heywood, 2007, p.24). In the Scottish Enlightenment, for instance, its core assumptions were developed when Adam Smith posited his ‘liberal plan of equality, liberty and justice’ (Gray 1995, p. xi). Modern liberalism in IR has developed with the principles of President Wilson and his institutional liberalism. Wilson argued that collective security could be promoted with institutions such as the League of Nations and he also argued that a new world order could be established through such institutions (Dunne 2014, p. 117; Ikenberry 2009; Jackson and Sorensen 1999, p. 38; Smith 2003, p.8). However, institutional liberalism has been violated many times. The concept of sovereign nation-state and non-intervention which are the core principles of the twentieth century of liberalism have been undermined by US intervention in Iraq and by the annexation of Crimea. Consequently, the task of this paper is to argue that institutional liberalism and its core assumption of collective security were a decisive break with the understanding of classical liberalism.

This essay is divided into three sections. In the first section, the core assumptions of liberalism are examined, in particular, the works of Moravcsik (1997; 2013). Although many IR scholars claim that liberalism has no canonical description (Doyle 1997, p.207), Moravcsik (1997) asserts three core assumptions of liberalism as ‘concerning, respectively, the nature of fundamental social actors, the state, and the international system’.
Secondly, the shifts in liberal assumptions are examined using G. John Ikenbery’s (2009) famous article ‘Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order’. The shift from classical liberalism to modern liberalism has appeared, especially in the concept of security, from the idea that free trade establishes a peaceful world and thus collective peace. Understanding of sovereignty, interdependence and hegemony also changed among these liberal orders. Lastly, institutional liberalism, based on Wilsonian principles and the Gulf War I in 1990-1991, is examined to explain this shift in the understanding of liberalism. It is argued that international institutions have violated the principles of classical liberalism – sovereignty and non-intervention, so consequently, it can be argued that liberal assumptions have changed over time. The Gulf War I was an appropriate example to test United Nations’ collective security. Although the War is considered as providing international security by the UN, the War in fact resulted in establishing and supporting the ongoing American hegemony in the Middle East.

2. The Core Assumptions of Liberalism

The foundations of liberalism are based on the works’ of John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham (Dunne 2014, p. 114; Bell 2014; Gray 1995, p. 45; Jackson and Sorensen 1999, p. 100; Hoffmann 1995). Kant, for instance, claims that liberal Republicans are pacific in their global affairs with other liberal countries (Dunne 2014, p.116). Consequently, in order to achieve perpetual peace, he claims that we need ‘transformation of individual consciousness, republican constitutionalism, and a federal contract between states and to abolish war’ (Dunne 2014, p.116). Further, Kant (1957, pp. 11-20) explains the requirements of perpetual peace as ‘the civil constitution of every state should be republican, the law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free state, and the law of world citizenship shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality’.

The Kantian concept of security or perpetual peace turned into institutional liberalism with Woodrow Wilson and his concept of collective security. Wilson’s liberalism was on ‘transforming international relations from a ‘jungle’ of chaotic power politics to a ‘zoo’ of regulated and peaceful intercourse’ (Jackson and Sorensen 1999, p.108). This transformation has been the basis of international organisations such as the League of Nations (Jackson and Sorensen 1999, p.108). In fact, institutional liberalism provides a basis for political authority, designed as a legitimate social purpose and a fusion of power (Keohane 2012). Institutional liberalism, therefore, is encapsulated in international organisations such as the European Union or NATO; or it refers to a set of rules governing state action. These rules are also called ‘regimes’. The trade regime, for instance, is formed by the World Trade Organisation (Jackson and Sorensen 1999, p.108).

Many IR scholars have recognised some common core assumptions of liberalism. Dunn (1993, p. 33), for example, says ‘political rationalism, hostility to autocracy, cultural distaste for conservatism, for tradition in general, tolerance, and individualism’ are the main assumptions of liberalism. Jackson and Sorensen (1999, p. 97) also list three core assumptions of liberalism as ‘a positive view of human nature, a conviction that international relations can be cooperative rather than conflictual and finally a belief in progress’. Heywood (2007, p. 27) also lists the core assumptions as individualism, freedom, reason, justice and toleration. In contrast, according to Hoffmann, (1987, p.396) the core assumptions are compromise, peace, self-restraint, and
moderation whereas the basis of global politics is entirely different: the state of war or troubled peace, at best.

Doyle (1997, p. 206), for instance, recognises such liberal principles as ‘individual freedom, political participation, private property, and equality of opportunity’ that most liberal states enshrine, even if none possess all of these principles. He (1997) also describes four fundamental liberal institutions. Firstly, all citizens are equal under the law and they have other constitutional rights such as the press and religious freedom. Secondly, the consent of the voters of the state due to its effective sovereign authority and basic civil rights will be preserved free from all restrictions outside the legislative authority represented in its own terms. Thirdly, ownership of the means of production is based on the recognition of private property rights. Fourth, economic decisions are mainly shaped by the forces of demand and supply, either domestically or internationally, and they are not controlled by bureaucracies. Antony Arblaster (1984, pp. 55-91) also sums them up as individualism, constitutionalism, tolerance, privacy, freedom, property, reason, science, and the rule of law’. Similarly, Gray (1995, p. xii) points out the elements of liberal conception as individualism, egalitarianism, universalism, and meliorism.

However, others claim that liberalism does not have a specific social scientific definition, although it can be said to have certain foundational assumptions (Moravcsik 1997). Doyle (1997) supports this claim, saying that liberalism has no canonical definition. Similarly, Keohane (1990, p. 166, cited in Moravcsik 2007, p.515), for instance, says that in contrast to Marxist and Realist aspects, ‘Liberalism is not committed to ambitious and parsimonious structural theory’.

In contrast to the ideas of Keohane and Doyle, Moravcsik (1997, p. 515) has tried to improve a liberal theory of IR. In his words, ‘I seek to move beyond this unsatisfactory situation by proposing a set of core assumptions on which a general restatement of positive liberal IR theory can be grounded’. Thus, Moravcsik (1997; 2013) draws on three core assumptions of liberalism: (1) the primacy of societal actors, (2) representation and state preferences and (3) interdependence and the international system’.

First of all, Moravcsik (1997) claims that the interests of societal actors occupy primacy of place for liberals, in theory Jeremy Waldron (1987) says requirement that all perspectives of the social ought to either be capable of being made acceptable or be made acceptable to every last person. In fact, liberalism refuses the utopian concept that an automatic harmony of interest is in existence between groups and persons in society; for example, famine and discrimination present unavoidable challenges to this (Moravcsik 1997).

Secondly, the position of the state is examined as a core assumption of liberalism in Moravcsik’s work. According to him, the state is a purposive figure in external affairs, but it is not an actor in internal affairs. Domestically, the liberal state is ‘a representative institution constantly subject to capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction by coalitions of social actors’ (2011, p.163). Individuals turn to the state to achieve ends that private enterprise is not able to gain alone. State behaviour is thus influenced by the underlying interests, power individuals and groups, and identities who press the policy-makers to institute policies aligned with their interests (Moravcsik 1997).
Finally, Moravcsik (1997; 2013) claims that state behaviour represents the changing patterns of state preferences. So, state behaviour is shaped by the pattern of interdependence among state choices.

‘States require a "purpose," a perceived underlying stake in the matter at hand, in order to provoke conflict, propose cooperation, or take any other significant foreign policy action. The precise nature of these states drives policy. This is not to assert that each state imply pursues its ideal policy, oblivious of others; instead, each state seeks to realize its distinctive preferences under varying constraints imposed by the preferences of other states’. (Moravcsik, 1997, p.520).

The core assumptions of liberalism have changed over time – particularly over the last century. The major shifts have emerged with Wilson’s institutional liberalism; in this context, the concept of security and the understanding of Westphalian sovereignty; non-intervention and interdependence. Therefore, the following section will focus on the shifts in liberalism and its transformation into liberal internationalism.

3. The Shift from Classical Liberalism to Modern Liberalism

The doctrine of liberal ideology has clearly influenced nineteenth century world politics. However, the concept of liberalism has changed over time and has in fact become more conservative, ‘…standing less for change and reform, and more for the maintenance of existing –largely liberal-institutions’ (Heywood 2007, p. 25). Classical liberalism, for instance, considered the government as not justified to interfere in private life; however, modern liberalism seems to have changed its mind about the role of state (Heywood 2007, p. 25). Although the new liberalism of T. H. Green in the 1880s struggled with the issue of state intervention in the economy and socialism in European ideological thought (Richardson 1997), modern liberals think that government should regulate some welfare services such as housing, education, health, and managing/regulating the economy (Heywood 2007, p. 25). As Ikenberry (2009) argues, the principles of liberalism such as collective problem solving, progressive change, cooperative security, democratic community, international institutions, open markets, and the rule of law have appeared in different combinations and changed over the twentieth century.

G. John Ikenberry (2009) in a famous article ‘Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order’, identifies three versions of liberal world order –versions 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0. He argues that version 1.0 concerns the principles of President Woodrow Wilson; the second version - the Cold War liberal international world order, and the third - ‘post-hegemonic liberal internationalism’. In this article, he creates a series of dimensions for identifying various logics of liberal world order and specifies the shift from internationalism 2.0 to 3.0.

The twentieth century doctrine of liberalism refers to state independence, non-intervention and state sovereignty. In the twentieth-first century, however, the concept of a liberal world order has increasingly changed (Ikenberry 2009). The main idea of liberalism in the nineteenth century was that free trade would establish a more pacific global order and it was thought that regardless of the size or nature of the commercial economy, trade would bring mutual benefits for all states (Dunne 2014, p.117). So in the nineteenth century, the liberal world order constitutively presented an open market trade system in order to achieve mutual gains (Deudney and Ikenberry 1999). However, the

Notion of free trade creating a peaceful world collapsed in the twentieth century with the outbreak of World War I. Dunne (2014, p.117) claims that

‘...the fact that Germany and Britain had highly interdependent economies before the Great War (1914-8) seemed to confirm the fatal flaw in the association of economic interdependence with peace. The First World War shifted liberal thinking towards a recognition that peace is not a natural condition but is one that must be constructed’. After the war, the concept of liberal security has shifted from the idea that free trade creates a peaceful world order to collective security. Ikenberry (2009) claims that the first effort to establish a liberal order began with World War I, from the ideas of W. Wilson. The Wilsonian principles were shaped global collective security. He emphasised the international organisation –in this context, the international organisation was the League of Nations- to regulate international peace. He claimed that global security cannot govern by secret bilateral agreements and ‘a blind faith in the balance of power’ (Dunne 2014, p. 117). The major pillars of Wilson’s peace were democracy and self-determination (Hoffmann 1995). Wilson therefore, in light of his conception of peace, argued that democratic states do not and will not participate in war against each other (Jackson and Sorensen 1999, p. 38). However, Ikenberry (2009) says liberal internationalism 1.0 was a system of free trade and collective security; therefore it had only a limited view of the area of international cooperation. The shift from version 1.0 to 2.0 meant a shift in the concept of national security. In fact, version 2.0 was the shift from Wilson’s collective security to alliance based security around the Atlantic region (Ikenberry 2009). The Roosevelt administration altered the concept of sovereignty so that the system became more hierarchical and the concept of liberalism turned into a liberal hegemonic order (Ikenberry 2009; Hoffmann 1995). As Ikenberry (2009) points out, the new version of the liberal order was Eurocentric, multi-layered, and institutionalised and the United States became a major player in global affairs. Indeed, by the 1960s and 1970s, this new shift was not only gaining from free trade, but it was also challenging the concept of sovereign states and it was claimed that world politics was no longer an appropriate place for states (Dunne 2014, p. 119). According to Ikenberry (2009) there were two reasons for reducing the sovereignty of nations. Firstly, reducing states’ sovereignty targeted an intergovernmental vision rather than supranational. From this view, governments would coordinate, consult and bargain with other states. Secondly, the new international institution would, to a large extent, strengthen rather than reduce the ability of states to deliver their political and economic liabilities to their societies (Ikenberry 2009).

Additionally, the Great Depression brought the ideology of ‘new liberalism’ to Western countries, ‘albeit number diverse labels –the New Deal, the welfare state, and embedded liberalism’-(Richardson 1997, p.12). Ruggie (1982) also claims that embedded liberalism emerged as a consequence of the Great Slump. In fact, version 2.0 liberalism also carried the traces of Wilsonian liberal world order with its concept of sovereignty and interdependence, particularly from the Truman-era (Ikenberry 2009). However, version 2.0 established a new vision about security and economic interdependence. Developed countries were seen profoundly and mutually defenceless to global crises and the damaging policies followed by other states. So it was claimed that state would become deeply involved in the management of the global system (Ikenberry 2009). John Maynard Keynes, who was one of the most important economists of 1930s, for instance, was clearly a liberal
‘placing the highest value on individual cultural pursuits, rejecting Marxism and having little interest in class conflict, sharing the liberal confidence in science and –ultimately- in progress, and finding inspiration in certain of the classical political economists’ (Richardson 1997, p.12).

Lastly, the shift version from 2.0 to 3.0 has been divided into three categories. One of them concerns the concept of hierarchy and scope. After the crisis of version 2.0, the liberal world order needed to become more globalised and less hierarchical –it meant that the USA needed to step back its authority and control over global affairs (Ikenberry 2009). The second shift appeared in the area of understanding legitimate authority and post-Westphalian sovereignty (Ikenberry 2009). In fact, the concept of sovereignty was not separate from states, but ‘became a bargaining resource that states could negotiate away, to some extent, in order to obtain other benefits, such as influence over other states’ regulatory policies (Keohane 2012, p.127). Similarly, the understanding of non-intervention changed at this time. The previous definition of non-intervention was that ‘intervention even for liberal causes would multiply violent conflicts, whereas liberalism's aim was to dampen them’ (Hoffmann 1995, p.169). However, the new conception of non-intervention was that ‘in a world where chaos is now a major peril, intervention even for good liberal causes may only create more chaos’ (Hoffmann 1995, p.169). Thirdly, understanding of the international rule of law and democracy has changed with version 3.0. Liberals want to strengthen the authority and capacity of the global community without damaging democracy. Liberals expect a major role for the ‘international community’ in the international system (Ikenberry 2009).

In sum, the core assumptions of liberalism have changed over the last century. In the past, shifts were mostly around the fields of security and economy. In fact, the crisis of version 2.0 was based on authority. The crisis was about managing the international world order and also about restructuring the concept of sovereignty, hierarchy, rules, authority, and institutions (Ikenberry 2009). So shifts in liberalism are still ongoing. Ikenberry (2009) however claims that American hegemony in the world order cannot continue. There are many findings that other states no longer want a single-state-dominated world order (Dunne 2014, p.121). So Ikenberry (2009) claims that the hegemonic character of liberalism version 3.0 will change and the hierarchy will endure but it will not be American domination.

4. The Case of Establishing Institutional Liberalism and the Gulf War I

The major turning points of liberalism have, as mentioned above, emerged with institutional liberalism and the concept of security, the understanding of sovereignty and non-intervention. In fact, international organisations such as the League of Nations, NATO, the European Union and the United Nations represent the most appropriate examples to explain the shift from the classic liberal perspective to Wilsonian institutional liberalism. Furthermore, the Gulf War I (1990-1991) shows that the United Nations was used as an international institution for providing collective security based on the principles of Wilsonianism. Similarly, the Bush and Clinton administrations also followed a ‘neo-Wilsonian’ pathway for establishing a global order in the post-cold era. Thus, it can be claimed that now more than ever, sovereign nation states, democratically and economically, depend on international institutions (Smith 2003, p.9).

However, the existence of international organisations still poses a controversial question as to whether they violate state sovereignty and the concept of non-intervention or not. Many IR scholars
view these kinds of institutions as a new supreme authority similar to the Holy Roman Empire (Krasner 1993, p.260; Osiander 2001). Although the core assumption of Wilsonianism is that all states are equal and one state cannot intervene in one another’s domestic affairs, international organisations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, and the European Union do indeed restrict internal sovereignty. The European Union, for instance, enshrines principles which violate sovereignty such as ‘territory, recognition (the representatives of the union conduct some international negotiations), supranational authority, and the mixture of territorial and extraterritorial control’ (Krasner 1999, p.228). Moreover, the notion of the European Union is still not clear. There is no common agreement as to whether it is ‘a state, a commonwealth, a dominion, a confederation of states, or a federation of states’ (Krasner 1999, p.235).

The United Nations also shares a problematic identity. By the 1940s, there was recognition of replacing the League of Nations with another institution to provide global peace and security. There was a consciousness among the skeleton of the UN’s Charter of the requirement for a consensus between the Primary powers in order for enforcement action to be taken in the case of the UN. Thus, the veto privilege, which is given by Article of the UN Charter, let any of the five the Security Council’s permanent members reject any motion put forward (Dunne 2014, p.119).

However, the veto system of the UN does not satisfy the equality principle of sovereign states which based on the principles of Wilsonianism. Similarly, humanitarian intervention is also a problematic area for international institutions. It is widely accepted that international institutions have a right and/or responsibility to intervene in domestic affairs of sovereign states for security and human rights principles by the United Nations (Ikenberry 2009). As Kohen (2012) says, using military force for ‘humanitarian reasons’ without the Security Council is not acceptable under the rules of international law. The Bush administration, however, invaded Iraq in 2003 without the permission of the Security Council (MacAskill and Borger 2004) on account of alleged humanitarian and security grounds based on the construction of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by Saddam Hussain (Tunç 2005). Before invading Iraq, Bush suggested that ‘the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power, as are 25 million people who now have a chance to live in freedom’ (Moses et al. 2011, p.348). In fact, WMD were not and have not been found, and no link between Saddam’s Regime and international terrorism have ever been proved (Roth 2006, p.84). As a consequence, providing collective security via institutions such as the United Nations, one of the most important principles of the Wilsonianism, was undeniably violated by the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The United Nations’ agenda for collective security was still born because of the polarisation of global politics caused by the Cold War (Dunne 2014, p.119). Indeed, it did not continue at the end of the Cold War and the major powers could develop a collective security to be enacted, for instance, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 (Dunne 2014, p.119). The use of military force against Iraq was authorised by the UN Security Council hence it was the most important action in establishing collective security. It was also the first important issue in the aftermath of the Cold War which was to be solved by the UN. It was also disputed that whether the use of military force was a necessary action by the UN. Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, and then the Security Council gave
authorisation to the US and its allies and intervene until the end of Operation Desert Storm and the formulation of the ceasefire agreement (Freedman and Karsh 1994, p.424).

In fact, the main goal of the Operation Desert Storm was to establish a new international system by the United Nations. Even though the new international order under the hegemony of the US has witnessed exceptional collaboration from the permanent members of the Security Council, the politics through which the US intervenes in the Middle East demonstrates its strategy of using collective security as grounds to protect its hegemony in the Middle East (Ufomba 2010). US President George H.W. Bush in his speech of 16 January 1991 said that ‘This is a historic moment… We have before us the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a new world order, a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations. When we are successful, and we will be, we have a real chance at this new world order, an order in which a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfil the promise and vision of the UN's founders’ (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2014, p.6).

President Bush explained the War as the first examination of this new order as it did not involve a direct or indirect conflict between superpowers and that the UN security council served as a unified whole to defend the world from a clear threat. He pointed out that the globe was not turning towards ‘an era of perpetual peace'. Instead, ‘the quest for the New World Order is in part a challenge to keep the dangers of disorder at bay' (Freedman 1991, p. 196).

Liberals view American concern with protecting the United Nations and international co-operation as evidence of the importance of the institutions (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2014). However, as Ufomba (2010) points out that by striking first before gaining the approval of the Security Council, the US demonstrated that it was acting purely out of self-interest. Thus, the UNs’ involvement in the Iraq conflict, sanctioned by its member countries’ leaders, on the grounds that it was in fact securing Kuwait’s sovereign territory in order to safeguard the international community, actually aided the US in perpetuating its hegemony in the Middle East.

In sum, the core assumptions of classical liberalism changed after the First World War and the security concept became shaped by the principles of President Wilson. His new security concept – namely collective security- is based on institutions such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. However, these institutions have always been controversial, as to whether they are in-line with Wilsonian principles such as sovereign nation-state and non-intervention or not. Hence, it is claimed that the Gulf War I was the first example of the provision of collective security by the United Nations after the Cold War. Still, it is claimed that the main assumption of the military operation was to create a new world order based on the liberal ideas such as freedom and democracy. However, the War instead of establishing collective security by international institutions was simply an excuse for legitimising US military action in order to bolster American hegemony in the Middle East.

5. Conclusion

Two mainstream theories shape modern international relations: realism and liberalism. Many IR scholars claim that realism is the dominant theory in understanding international relations and world politics. Indeed, liberalism dominated twentieth and twenty-first century world politics and it is still the main theory for understanding world politics and modern international relations.
The doctrine of liberalism firstly appeared in the ancient world as the fore-runner of modern liberalism and developed into a modern theory after the collapse of feudalism. After this, liberals challenged absolutism and it has enshrined the concepts of equality, liberty and justice.

The First World War changed the course of history and altered liberalism too. After the war it is claimed that free trade created a more peaceful world because it raised the level of interdependence between states. However, the idea that free trade created a peaceful world order collapsed with the World War I. Two great powers, Britain and Germany, participated in the war against each other even though they had had highly interdependent economies. The major shift thus took place on the principles of classical liberalism, particularly in terms of the principle of security. The classical liberal concept of security has shifted to a Wilsonian conception of institutional collective security. In fact, President Wilson believed that the international order could have been established by international institutions. However, these institutions, such as the League of Nations, the United Nations and the European Union still present a challenge over whether they are appropriate to the modern definition of liberalism or not. Although twentieth century liberalism was based on state independence, state sovereignty and non-intervention, these institutions have often violated the concept of the sovereign nation-state and non-intervention, which are the founding principles of Wilsonianism. Even today, the United Nations demonstrates that it contravenes the principle of equal nation-states, for instance, by its use of the veto system.

The Gulf War I (1990-1991) was the first military action which demonstrated an appropriate example of the concept of collective security after the Cold War. In fact, it is claimed that the UN Security Council, which is the international organisation tasked with protecting international security, used military force to protect Kuwait from Iraq. However, the main aim of the War was not protecting global peace in regards to the UN’s conception of collective security, but for the US to exploit this in order to perpetuate American hegemony in the Middle East. Therefore, this essay, has argued that the main assumptions of classical liberalism have shifted after World War I and that doctrine of modern liberalism demonstrates a decisive break with the core principles of classical liberalism.
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