LIBERALISM (Idealism)

Idealism, or Liberalism as it is widely called now emphasizes different features of world politics from non-governmental ties between societies to organised cooperation between states, but the different branches of Liberalism unite in three basic assumptions. The three basic assumptions that Liberalism is based on are:

1. Human nature is positive;
2. International relations can be cooperative instead of conflictual; and,
3. We should believe in progress in human nature, in the state system and in the international system.

The Realists are pessimists. They don’t trust human beings thinking their nature is bad, they don’t trust other states because the main aim of a state should be to maximise their national interests and they believe in conflict. The Idealists (Liberals) are optimists. Liberalism first emerged in the second half of the seventeenth century, with John Locke. However, it gained speed with the Industrial Revolution, when progress was the magic keyword for the society. Industrialisation created new norms of living for all parts of the society, new social classes were born, and all of a sudden everything began to change.

The Classical Liberal philosophers, beginning with John Locke, saw great potential for human progress in the modern civil society and capitalist economy. Locke thought that both the civil society and the capitalist economy might succeed in states where individual liberties were guaranteed. For Locke, unlike the Realists, a state exists only to improve the liberty of its citizens so that they could live their lives and pursue their happiness without interference from other people. Locke claimed that Modernity meant a life without an authoritarian government, and with much higher material welfare. From Locke on, liberals began to think that state is a constitutional entity, not an instrument for power. A state must establish and protect the rule of law and must respect its citizens’ rights to life, liberty, and property.

The Industrial Revolution made Locke’s ideas reach other parts of Europe and North America and in time, the people who we call the Enlightenment Thinkers such as Adam Smith and David Hume became convinced that human rationality and reason were keys to everything. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Utilitarians led by Jeremy Bentham even developed a way of calculating the best life for the society based on the concept of “the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people in the society.” Bentham also claimed that constitutional states should respect each other and invented the term “international