

Example of essay on american liberalism

[Philosophy](#), [Freedom](#)



Liberalism refers to both political and moral philosophy anchored on the principles of individualism and liberty. The philosophy of liberalism recognizes an individual as the first order value in the society. The notion that liberalism is all about basic principles of constitutional governance and individual rights is well acknowledged by both conservative and modern liberals. The society therefore provides the necessities or the humble environment from which an individual can fully achieve their aspirations through liberty. In essence, these are the two basic pillars that support liberalism. In a broader sense, liberalism is a constitution of four essential elements that include individualism, universalism, egalitarianism and meliorism. From its most basic context, the founding philosophers looked at individualism as a composition of pre-politically existing rights which are also above the discretion of any state, nation or territory (McGowan, 2007). Going by this discussion, human rights are so fundamental that no government should infringe on them.

Classical American Liberalism

This is the ancient or conservative liberalism that was founded by philosophers such as John Locke, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant and Thomas Jefferson. However, John Locke is regarded as the father of classical liberalism that defines the American political landscape prior to the 20th century. His philosophical understanding of liberty was based on individualism. That one should be allowed to follow his/her will in all activities without any form of external interferences. This assertion relates human freedom to that of nature that is presumably under no other rule other than the rule of nature. This perspective of the political liberalism has been

referred to by the modern liberals as negative liberty. However, Locke stood his ground that there is no other liberty apart from the negative liberty that gives freedom the first priority.

The classical political liberalism is a tradition that emerged as early as 17th century and it climaxed into the French and American Revolution. This form of American liberalism was mainly based on the United States constitution and is majorly referred to as constitutional liberalism. This is what the conservatives of the philosophy of political liberalism hold. These conservative liberals based their analysis on religious liberty, freedom of speech and expression and inclusive governance that ensures an independent society where individuals are free to own property and the production rights in the economy. According to this conservative notion, the modern liberalism is a little bit deviating from the classical liberalism. Modern liberalism is equally vested on democracy and the principle of contemporary political liberty. However, it still draws its strength from constitutional liberalism making the classical and modern liberalism principles overlap. (Starr 34-35)

According to Vincent Philip in his article "Sustaining American Liberalism in Principle and Practice", the founding philosophers of the political liberalism are among the founders of the American liberalism who strongly believed that good constitutionalism must be a process that observes human equality by respecting the natural rights of all human beings. According to Jefferson, these rights must treat equally both the minority and the majority members of the society. Actually, the origin of liberalism is the responses accorded various problems experienced by different social organizations and authority

that followed the fall of one unifying religion and the emergence of a strong monarch government. Generally, the political philosophy of liberalism is the pursuit to amplify individual freedom within a legal framework that diffusing power. This is what American constitution is all about. Going by for instance the United States legal systems, the constitution fully respect and uphold the concept of individualism, democracy and human rights.

The framers of the United States constitution knew very well that the change in this country was majorly anchored in democracy. This is why they came up with a well define due process for instance to uphold the individual rights and democracy even in the corridors of justice. According the constitution, the due process is a system of legal proceedings that ensure the protection and enforcement of the rights of the citizens. It was established by the US constitution under the fifth and the 14th Amendments. The section 5 is applicable to the federal courts while the 14th Amendment is for the states. The two amendments and it clarify, that no government actions can deprive the accused person his/her right to life, liberty or property without the due process. They demand that government actions follow the same rules for all individuals accused of any crimes in US. This ensures fair trials and judgments for all the accused persons.

Classical political liberalism can however become hazardous if not properly monitored. This natural freedom can be liable to abuse by few individuals who may alienate themselves to political plutocracy. A clear incidence of this nature is the Hamilton's activities in the 1880s. As much as he put emphasis in commerce through tariffs and heavy investments in infrastructure such as roads and canals, he could not still win the trust of philosophers Jefferson

and Madison. These two philosophers feared that his integration of political and economic power would end up amassing more wealth and resources on the hands of those who are already well-off. This clearly denotes the threat that negative liberty can culminate into.

Modern American Liberalism

The American past and present political development is not purely based on revolution. Right from the declaration of independence, liberalism is live and evident. This declaration that all men and women are created equal is one of the key onsets of liberalism in the United States. American political culture traces its strength from the political philosophy of liberalism. Owing to the fact that liberalism and democracy are very close, very clear relations can be drawn from various literatures to support this claim. McGowan states that as opposed to democracy is an old phenomenon, liberalism is a new invention that emerges from increased knowledge dissemination and scientific revolution.

It is worth noting that the American level and state of democracy and liberty has been something that many countries have admired. As opposed to many critics of democracy and freedom, America is not doomed to fail in embracing freedom and virtue that also goes hand in hand with wisdom and consent of humanity. In fact, success can be a failure tried once more.

Liberalism has really shaped the American political and social development. Being a multiracial country, United States was and is still bound to uphold the founding principles of and the American liberal traditional milestone. This is a fact that many have to bear up with even if they hold different views on liberalism and democracy. Political liberalism fosters economic and social

development in a country. This one of the reasons the American economy has been flourishing all along.

A further analysis of this constitutional provision reveals that the accused also have the right to a compulsory process of obtaining witnesses in his/her favor, and to the assistance of the Counsel for his/her defense. However, defending the accused at times becomes a matter of public controversy. For instance, the case in which John Adams represented the British officer and soldiers who were whom the America accused of firing at and killing 5 innocent protestors in the “ Boston Massacre”. As the first American lawyer-president, his defense became one of the outstanding cases of loyalty to the rule of law and defense of the rights of the accused. This may also apply in cases where advocates may defend unpopular clients hence generating public controversy. (Government, 2013)

However, the philosophy of liberalism has of recent received several setbacks. The concept of the American democracy has become a very critical issue. The philosophy of liberalism embraces the application of diplomacy in solving disputes and conflicts. However, the last two centuries have witnessed a lot of military confrontation between the United States and other countries especially the Middle East.

A critical examination of some of the key United States presidential doctrines, democracy seem not to be auguring well with the spirit of the united states liberals. For instance, a thorough review of President Truman’s speech reveals his personal concerns for the dire needs of Greece and Turkey for financial and economic aid. He clearly expresses concern that Greece and Turkey governments are democratic and peaceful but are being

coerced into conflict by their neighbors. He also adds that the United Nations and Britain had already expressed concern for the two nations. For instance, President Truman reiterates that it is not the first time that the United States is offering assistance to the two troubled nations. His remarks are even more authoritative than appealing when he stressed that United States must offer the requested aid. It sounds like no one like it is the sole responsibility to offer the help. (Unknown)

He further explains that the Greek state is under the threat of terrorism being propagated by several armed men commanded by the communists who does not respect the Government's rule in the northern parts of Greece. He points out that a UN led investigation is underway to assess the situation in Greece. This explanation gives the matter an international outlook making the US intervention inevitable. His speech also brings into attention of this session the handicap nature of Greece that makes it necessary for the United States government to offer the assistance that she seeks for.

Not only President Truman had such a presidential doctrine but this trend has since infiltrated down to the president Barack Obama's administration. Bush for instance ambushed and bombed Iraq and Iran in the bid to protect the American soil its citizens. What president Truman, Bush and Obama set as their foreign policies are not bad but literature shows that they really worked for such policies to be passed by the congress. The moves by these United States presidents may not seem that bad but the only odd thing here is the way in which president Truman and his colleagues presented coercion on the joint session of the US congress. They personally want to implement their doctrines but since they cannot do it on own, they have to devise a

very successful plan to arm-twist the Congress. This contradicts the slogans of democracy and its principles.

In conclusion, the United States and America in general was founded on the ground of liberalism and democracy. For many centuries after its discovery, the United States was guided by the principles of democracy and the philosophy of liberalism. Most, if not all, of the liberals strongly believed in diplomacy as the best means of finding solutions to their problems. They therefore embraced dialogue and mediation in solving most of their problems and approaching their challenges. However, this state never stood the test of time as the predecessors of the founding fathers of democracy and liberalism soon presented and acted upon a different version of these principles. This is very coherent with the past few United States presidential doctrines as well as their foreign policies.

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