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Abstract

The book comparatively analyzes the features of liberal hegemony, when the liberal international order strengthened after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the United States and Western European countries took the position of hegemony in world politics. While the economic dimensions of the liberal world order may be acceptable to all, its political component, as an instrument of the democratic world, is trying to serve the purpose of consolidating the world. It is important that the discourse about the liberal world order takes place during times of conflict, crisis and war, influencing the transformation of the modern world order.

The political elites of the liberal world order in the era of liberal hegemony must keep in mind that for the diverse authoritarian and democratic blocs of countries, it is necessary to protect the resilience of the international order and law. In accordance with the author's concept of political liberalism, it is interpreted broadly and as a unity of the spiritual, social and political forms of its being. Therefore, its essence unfolds through a consistent analysis of the ideological, social and political space, which makes it possible to form an adequate idea of the role of liberal ideology and liberal international politics in the social and political process.

Keywords: John J. Mearsheimer, international realities, great delusion, impossible dream, liberal edifice, political liberalism, liberal dreams, human nature, peace, restraint.

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The book examines the characteristic features of liberalism and provides a strategic forecast about the research task of liberalism. In this context, by defining scenarios for the relationship between liberalism and non-liberalism or anti-liberalism, as well as scenarios for the relationship of Western civilization with other civilizations, it is possible to construct three stages of liberalism corresponding to different periods: the present, the period up to 2030 and the period after 2030. In recent years, in this destructive environment of conflict and war, there has been a sharp increase in the amount of scientific work and research on liberalism regarding the future format of the international system. These works can be roughly divided into two groups: liberal pessimists and liberal optimists.

After the collapse of the USSR and the transition from bipolarity to a unipolar system of international relations, the world never came close to the expected liberal dream, and the unipolar system of global governance itself proved unable to effectively counter the global challenges of the 21st century. Against the background of the 44-day Second Karabakh War in 2020, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict since 2014 and the war since the beginning of 2022, the rapid growth of China, the rise of India and the emergence of new players, the need to review the international imbalance of power that has existed in recent years caused by liberal hegemony.

Against the backdrop of a crisis in international relations, a cycle of global disagreements in politics has begun. The reserve of agreement in relations between Russia and the United States has approached exhaustion. The United States and Western European countries are not ideal actors in world politics. But the diplomacy of the liberal hegemony was flexible in everything related to mutual understanding with China, India, Iran, and even Russia. In the conditions of modern wars, interest in the theme of the liberal international order has increased. The main driving force behind this general trend seems to be the inevitable rise of China and India and the military activity of Russia and Iran.

The rise of China's influence represents a long-term foreign policy towards the liberal international order. According to this argument, since the Chinese factor becomes one of the dominant on the world stage, then the liberal order must be resilient to competitive goals.

According to the author, liberal hegemony is an ambitious strategy in which a liberal hegemon seeks to turn as many countries as possible into liberal democracies like itself, as well as to promote an open international economy and build international institutions (Mearsheimer 2018, vii-xiv, 1-13). In this context, the liberal state seeks to spread its values everywhere, but there are many strong states that follow their illiberal strategy through the policy of balance of power (Mearsheimer 2018, 1-13). Western foreign policy elites consider liberal hegemony to be a smart policy that states should axiomatically pursue. This gives them the power to actively spread liberal democracy around the world.

The debate about liberal hegemony has become particularly heated amid the election of Joe Biden as President of the United States, Brexit, mass migration to Europe from the Middle East, and the rise of right-wing populism and nationalism in parts of Western Europe.

The book reveals the content of such a new understanding of the essence of the liberal international order and liberal hegemony, as well as their significance for the world community. After all, it is no coincidence that a new rise of interest in the topic of the liberal international order is again visible, but it has re-emerged in the context of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, launched on February 24, 2022. Once again, the geopolitical discourse on the liberal order has pitted democracies against autocracies, since the liberal order is associated with Western values and democratic transformations, and the threat to them comes from authoritarian countries. In this context, the book touches on the theme of human nature, which is key to liberalism. Therefore, the author of the book examines the key stages of liberalism through the characteristic features of human nature (Mearsheimer 2018, 14-44).

Modern competing doctrines of international relations stem mainly from the current unsettled ideological space of human rights and liberal individualism. The deep layers of consciousness that predetermine the stereotypes of social behavior turned out to be more inert than it could be expected. The world community is not faced with a shortage of social doctrines, but rather with their abundance in the absence of generally accepted criteria for the rational choice of an ideological position. At the same time, ideological systems function as mythological ones and are selected according to the political situation or emotional state. Finally, there is no culture of ideological communication in the global world. Various ideological complexes are immune to each other and, if they enter into a dialogue, then not in the language of arguments, but in the language of accusations according to all the rules of an ideological war. Today, perhaps, we need not so much a new ideology as a new understanding of the ideological process, which would establish a code of civilized ideological behavior. In this, and not in the reconciliation of mutually exclusive ideologies, an ideological consensus is achievable. The formation of a civilized ideological environment as a prerequisite for a global consensus is in the interests of all actors, regardless of their ideological expectations.

The book notes two variants of political liberalism: *modus vivendi* liberalism and progressive liberalism (Mearsheimer 2018, 45-81). As a research task, the author defined an attempt to evaluate political liberalism as well from the point of view of the content of individual rights and the role of the state. According to the author, they have a general view of human nature, emphasizing individualism and the limitations of our critical abilities. In this sense, inalienable rights, tolerance and the need for the state to maintain public order are important to them. However, political liberalism has two significant flaws regarding the prominence of individualism and inalienable rights (Mearsheimer 2018, 82-119). It is around the contemporary liberal tendencies of recent years that the ideological controversy is mainly concentrated, which is far from accidental. The condition from which the reforms started was such that any change, if it was not clearly reactionary, looked like a liberal one. At the same time, liberalization turned out to be an extremely contradictory process, which caused both positive and negative effects, which stimulated professional and public interest in the problem of Western liberalism and, accordingly, heated controversy. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate and clarify a number of questions that are essential for understanding the phenomenon under study: what is the essence of the liberal paradigm and to what extent the scientific understanding of this phenomenon is distorted by interpretations,

and also what is the relationship between Western and non-Western trends of liberal thought. This, in my opinion, minimally sufficient, although not exhaustive list of issues, ultimately comes down to the problem of systemic and, therefore, constructive understanding of the phenomenon of global and national liberalism in a broad social and historical context.

The author takes into account the fact that contemporary liberalism is largely synonymous with progressive liberalism, although *modus vivendi* liberalism still affects the contours of political life (Mearsheimer 2018, 82-119). Reflecting on the results of the past decade, we have to state that the fruits of the reforms did not justify progressive expectations and significantly devalued the values of democracy and the free market in public opinion. At the same time, the accumulated, albeit largely negative, experience actualizes the problem of scientific understanding of the ways and means of moving towards more humane, stable and effective forms of social organization. If we are talking about a spiritual crisis, then it is more likely not about the crisis of the liberal concept of development, but about the crisis of its simplified interpretations.

The history of Western civilization testifies that the values of liberalism, balanced by conservatism and democracy, have been largely realized. However, the civilizational and progressive paradigm of development does not find its convincing confirmation in the theory and practice of liberalism. The liberal choice of the West is the choice of the West, made in a socially and historically determined situation of place and time. The result of this choice confirms only the circumstance that liberal principles and values are universal, but not absolute. They are universal as a normative system and a moral imperative. They are relative because the forms and means of their implementation are given historically and situationally, and the search for the optimal balance between freedom and justice, individual and collective, political and social is a process whose results are not predetermined. Therefore, for transitional societies, the liberal experience of the West is valuable not as a utilitarian recipe guide, but rather as a guideline and methodology for resolving urgent contradictions.

Moving from the analysis of domestic political liberalism to foreign policy liberalism, the author asks the following question: what happens when a powerful state adopts a liberal foreign policy? (Mearsheimer 2018, 120). This question is given a controversial answer, as liberal hegemony and highly interventionist foreign policy, that is, even war and social engineering, appear in countries around the world. All this is due to the fact that liberal hegemony spreads liberal democracy in every possible way and overthrows authoritarian regimes, with the ultimate goal of creating a world of liberal democracy (Mearsheimer 2018, 120). But unfortunately, liberal hegemony begins with wars in which the liberal state fights to protect human rights and spread liberal democracy around the world (Mearsheimer 2018, 152-154). To cite Mearsheimer: *'This militarism arises from five factors. First, democratizing the globe is a vast mission that provides abundant opportunities to fight. Second, liberal policymakers believe they have the right, the responsibility, and the knowhow to use military force to achieve their goals. Third, they often approach their task with missionary zeal. Fourth, pursuing liberal hegemony undercuts diplomacy, making it harder to settle disputes with other countries peacefully. Fifth, that ambitious strategy*

also undermines the notion of sovereignty, a core norm of international politics that is intended to limit interstate war' (Mearsheimer 2018, 152).

One of the conditions and a prerequisite for such a turn is the transformation of liberalism in the environment of ideological interaction. The analysis shows that there are two forms of ideological coexistence: differentiation and convergence, each of which is due to a certain political trend. The former is characterized by the dominance of one of the ideologies, while the latter is characterized by the formation of ideological hybrids.

The book notes that liberal hegemony is built around the following three missions: 'increasing the number of liberal democracies in the world, facilitating an open economic order, and building international institutions' (Mearsheimer 2018, 188).

Real public policy is based solely on compromises and ideological hybrids. The most successful for the West was a hybrid of liberalism and renewed conservatism, supplemented by real socialist and democratic elements. In the public policy of Western countries, liberalism and conservatism have been rooted in ideology from time immemorial. Democratic and liberal views remained on the sidelines and could not become an obstacle to socialism. However, over time, socialism turned into an official ideological shell, under which a special ideological hybrid of socialism and conservatism arose.

The first wave of rejection of the conservative and socialist hybrid took place under the sign of democracy. Then liberal economists seized the initiative. But not for long. The conservative trend is already clearly marked, foreshadowing stabilization anti-reforms. Liberals and democrats will go into opposition, and the main ideological struggle will be waged between socialist, patriotic and other forms of conservatism itself. This forecast receives its social and political justification. From the perspective of historical analysis, the true nature and specificity of modern society and the state, the essence of power and property relations are revealed, the logic of the behavior of the ruling elite becomes more understandable (Mearsheimer 2018, 217-234). Upon closer examination, it turns out that the political history of the world is rather rigidly determined by the laws of cyclical development and the paradigm properties of the Eurasian civilization, which undoubtedly include authoritarianism, imperialism, unitarism, isolationism, state capitalism, and, undoubtedly, political clientelism and paternalism.

Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.46991/JOPS/2023.2.5.139>

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical standards

The authors affirm this research did not involve human subjects.

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