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*M.V. Chernyshev***LIBERALISM AND FUNCTIONING OF THE MODERN NATIONAL STATE  
FROM THE POSITION OF WORLD-SYSTEM ANALYSIS**

From the period of the French revolution, which linked the Rights of man with the demand for national sovereignty, liberal cosmopolitan theories paradoxically appealed to the ideology of nationalism. In his analysis of the paradigm of modernity Immanuel Wallerstein emphasised two opposite connotations in the framework of this concept – modernity of liberation and modernity of technology. The interrelationship between them became the issue of numerous intellectual discussions regarding the role of liberal theory in formation and functioning of the modern capitalist state. In this essay the author argues that practical implementation of liberal doctrine highly depends on specific socioeconomic context in certain world regions and development of the world-system. Considering different starting points in formation of the modern state in northwest Europe, the interests of local groups of elites articulated differently there comparing to semi-peripheral and peripheral world areas, one should admit that no single trend in applicability of liberal ideas to political reality could emerge. Therefore, the ideology of liberalism led to justification of the mechanisms for both conservation and undermining of the existing social order.

*Keywords:* Liberalism, Modernity, Western civilisation, World-system analysis, Immanuel Wallerstein.

*«Liberalism, above all, means emancipation - emancipation from one's fears, his inadequacies, from prejudice, from discrimination, from poverty».*

Hubert H. Humphrey, in a speech in New York City (March 29, 1967).

*«Unrestrained liberalism only makes the strong stronger and the weak weaker and excludes the most excluded».*

Pope Francis. Interviewed in «How the Church will change» by Eugenio Scalfari in La Repubblica (October 1, 2013).

**Introduction**

Modernity as an intellectual construct that was formed in the period of the French Enlightenment contains classical liberal ideas at its core. It celebrates freedom from localised, hierarchical bonds, progress in terms of scientific knowledge and economic welfare. But first of all, Modernity should be understood as a project implemented in the nation-state which emerged out of medieval traditionalist societies. Several levels of differences became apparent in the modern social system comparing to pre-modern political entities: public versus private, individual versus group, community society. National sovereignty supposedly gives people their most important entitlement: a state that expresses their traditions, history and unity – their «national soul» [2. P. 230-231]. The latter definition seems to be in opposition to pragmatic liberal political theory. German philosopher of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Johann Herder professed romantic understanding of this process arguing that «every nation has its own core of happiness just as every sphere has its centre of gravity» [9. P. 392]. The majority of scientists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not go far beyond this logic. Michael Walzer in his essay «*The Moral Standing of States*» (1980) pointed at five premises of state formation: nations are comparatively self-enclosed; the political and moral status of a nation is aptly characterized by the metaphor of the social contract; the only global community is a community of nations, not of humanity; the main moral principle of international politics is «pluralism»: respect for the integrity of nations and their states and, specifically, respect for their right to make a selection from political forms [18]. This analysis represents a highly idealist point of view that every traditional (pre-modern) society can provide political coherence to isolated groups of primary producers while the privileged social class effectively takes under control the potential leadership of coordinated revolt. But it cannot explain why exclusively Western countries contained all these features in the process of progressive national development. One can be puzzled with answering the question how liberal theory which succeeded in ideological branding of the Western nation-state in the 17-19<sup>th</sup> centuries could not deploy this process to other world regions at that time and later. Finally, the emergence of the extremes of Western nationalisms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is stayed aside from

the liberal perspective. The social contract metaphor is still a cornerstone of the modern myth of exclusively positive role of liberalism in functioning of the modern state.

### Contribution of the world-system theory to the debate

Immanuel Wallerstein, a distinguished senior research scholar at the Yale University, elaborated the concept of modern world-system. According to it, capitalism was «from the beginning an affair of the world-economy and not of nation-states» [16. P. 19]. Wallerstein notes that one cannot sufficiently provide reasoning for the durability of various state institutions at particular points in time of the history of the modern world-system mainly if we focus on a generic-cultural line of argumentation only. It is rather possible in terms of the structural role a country plays in the world-economy at that precise moment in time. This logic allows him to accept that both classes and ethnic groups, or status-groups, or ethno-nations are phenomena of world-economies. The interests of each historical entity are determined by its collective relationship to the world-economy as a system.

World-system analysis is based on the following assumptions:

- strong states in core areas (those militarily strong comparing to others and also not dependent on any group within the state) serve the interests of economically powerful classes, absorb economic losses, and help to maintain the dependence of peripheral areas [15. P. 355];
- semi-peripheral areas appeared as a «necessary structural element» in the system because «they partially deflect the political pressures which groups primarily located in peripheral areas might otherwise direct against core-states» [15. PP. 349-350], thus they keep any unified opposition from arising;
- shared ideology strengthens the commitment of ruling groups to the system; they must accept the system's «myths» and perceive their own well-being being «wrapped up in the survival of the system as such» [16. P. 404]. Lower social strata do not need to feel any particular loyalty; nevertheless, they tend to become integrated into the nationally merged cultures created by dominant groups which are more powerful in core states. An ideology for the whole world system came into existence later. But the ideology of liberalism has become the global geoculture since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century [17. P. 47];
- different forms of labour control fit different types of production, shared across the three main areas; throughout history, they incorporated wage labour, servitude, tenant farming, and slavery. The relative position within the system and rewards correspond to the hierarchy of tasks: «crudely, those who breed manpower sustain those who grow food who sustain those who grow other raw materials who sustain those involved in industrial production» [15. P. 86].

The meaning of ethnic awareness in a core area is significantly different from that one in a peripheral zone exactly because of the different *class position* such groups possess in the world-economy. Hudson Meadwell argues that nationalism was constituted around the principle of legitimacy that transformed a society of states into international society [10. P. 20]. The rationale of popular sovereignty substituted religious and dynastic principles that had a very strong influence in the pre-existing interstate society earlier.

The functioning of the world-market forces accentuate the differences and institutionalise them within the framework of liberal economics. Economic exchange may definitely take place without a common political organisation and even more evidently without belonging to the same culture. But it cannot be denied that world-economies have historically been unstable social structures leading either towards disintegration or conquest by one group and hence transformation into a world-empire [1. P. 808]. One of the key factors enabling to retain relative political stability on the world scale is the quality of spreading throughout the areas of semi-periphery and periphery of an ideological commitment to the system as a whole. The growth within the capitalist world-economy of the industrial sector of production in advanced Western countries, the so-called industrial revolution, was accompanied by «a *very strong current of thought* which defined this change as both a process of organic development and of progress» [16. P. 387]. Thus, liberalism firstly embodied in the ideals of the French Enlightenment and the French revolution little later became a socioeconomic construct created for justification of existing world trade order and maximization of entrepreneurial profits. But it is important to notice that, as mentioned above, the personnel of the world-system not only propagates the myths of liberal doctrine but also put efforts to promote them around the globe. However, an ideology, once created, got certain autonomy from those theoreticians who made it to existence.

### **Ideology of liberalism and its three principal political objectives**

According to Wallerstein, in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century core zones of the capitalist world-economy, liberal ideology dispersed itself into three important political middle-term goals – *suffrage, the welfare state, and national identity* – the combination of which political liberals used to achieve control over the functioning of the national state. Moreover, two radically new ideas became widely accepted among the wide public as almost self-evident. The first idea implied that political change was rather a normal occurrence than an exceptional one. Secondly, the view that sovereignty lies in an entity called the citizen became deep-rooted.

Liberalism as a central paradigm of the new epoch stayed focused on the idea of *human liberation*. But at the same time it gradually committed itself to the *modernity of technology* which implied removing the state, particularly the monarchical state, from political arenas of decision-making. Liberalism was equally insistent on putting the state into the centre of rational reformism. Wallerstein nicely remarks that liberalism as a doctrine, being far from anti-statist in essence, became the central ideological justification for the strengthening of the efficacy of the state machinery. This was because protagonists of liberal ideology saw the state as essential to achieving their central objective – *furthering the modernity of technology* by means of appeasing «dangerous classes» (proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, marginals and paupers). They hoped thereby to take under control and further elaborate the concept of public sovereignty which evolved from the construct modernity of liberation. The offerings given by the dominant political groups were carefully counted. Wallerstein nicely illustrates this process considering motivation of the supposedly reactionary political forces, the royal families in European countries after the end of the Napoleonic wars:

The British Tory government, the government of the new hegemonic power in the world-system, was far more equivocal, as was the Restoration monarchy of Louis XVIII in France. Conservative in instinct, but intelligent in the exercise of power, these two governments were equivocal because they were aware of the strength of the typhoon in public opinion, and they decided to bend with it rather than risk a break. Thus emerged the ideologies, which were quite simply the long-run political strategies designed to cope with the new beliefs in the normativity of political change and the moral sovereignty of the people [14. P. 475].

The great programme of liberalism was not to make states out of nations but to create nations out of states. That was the strategy to take those who were located within the boundaries of the state – formerly the subjects of the king-sovereign, now the sovereign people – and make them into citizens, all identified with their national state as a polity. In practice this process was accomplished by various institutional requirements. The first one consisted of establishing clear legal definitions of membership in the polity. Initially the rules varied in different countries, but always tended to exclude new arrivals to the state (migrants) while usually including all those who were considered «normal» residents. Ernest Gellner argues that a phase in the development of capitalist state called modern industrial society depended on economic and cognitive growth which, in turn, required a *homogenous culture* [3. PP. 140, 142]. The unity of this latter group was then usually reinforced by moving towards linguistic uniformity. In at least all core countries within the world-system, elementary education became compulsory, and in very many of them so did military training with its necessary attributes of national loyalty. As a result, the concept of early nationalism evolved. It held together an anonymous, impersonal society with mutually substitutable atomised individuals. Such a culture of nationalism is by definition secular, since economic and cognitive growth are possible only when the absolutist cognitive claims of the literate high cultures of the agrarian (pre-industrial age) are replaced by open scientific inquiry [3. PP. 77, 142]. It is plausible that, therefore, there is a significant relationship between rational abstractions of liberal political theory and gradual homogenisation of culture though formation of nationalist myths.

### **Nationalist extremes of liberal ideology**

The concept of the nation entered the political agenda in the so called «old regime» in 1716–1717 as a challenge by nobles to state absolutism but further events of the French Revolution marked off a critical watershed in the political history of nationalism and stimulated struggles for liberation of various kinds and nascent national movements throughout Europe and around its edges – from Ireland to Italy, from Spain to Germany. Nationalist movements being widespread around Europe in the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century seem to be the final crucial elements in the task of liberalism to create national identity. Those which best

represent this development are the «Youth» movements founded or inspired by Giuseppe Mazzini shortly after the 1830 revolution: Young Italy, Young Germany, Young Poland, Young Switzerland and Young France (1831–1836) and the similar Young Ireland of the 1840s, the antecedent of the only lasting and successful revolutionary organization on the model of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century conspiratory brotherhoods, the Fenians or Irish Republican Brotherhood, better known through its executive arm of the Irish Republican Army. The development of the ‘young nations’ was interpreted by both romantic intellectuals and professional politicians as a stage in human progress, marked by changes in the scale and quality of human organization. However, Eric Hobsbawm notes:

In themselves these movements were of no great importance; the mere presence of Mazzini would have been enough to ensure their total ineffectiveness [...] They mark the disintegration of the European revolutionary movement into nationalist segments. Doubtless each of these segments had much the same political programme, strategy and tactics as the others, and even much of the same flag – almost invariably a tricolor of some kind. Its members saw no contradiction between their own demands and those of other nations, and indeed envisaged a brotherhood of all, simultaneously *liberating themselves*. On the other hand each now tended to justify its primary concern with its own nation by adopting the role of a Messiah for all [5. PP. 132-133].

After its emergence liberal nationalism had two main versions in the core of the world-system. The first one, claimed by John Stuart Mill and related to prosperous nations and their rights to civilise peripheral nations was *expansionist*. The ideal of *popular democratic sovereignty* introduced by Woodrow Wilson’s model of international order in 1918 rather justified the right for nations to establish national states after the collapse of several European empires. It made indirect reference to the ideas of the French Revolution. However, the representation of the ideals of popular democratic sovereignty had more radical forms in the semi-periphery of the capitalist system.

The Mediterranean Europe emerged as a semi-peripheral area of the world-economy specialising since the late medieval time in high-priced industrial goods such as silks and credit transactions. The events which reflected the large transformation of the European continent toward the liberal and national ethos also affected small Italian states. Fantastically complex in its details, the chronicle of the historic circumstances and of the contradictions that constituted the national unification process (Risorgimento) in its year-by-year, and frequently day-by-day developments actually involved and ultimately changed the lives of 25 million Italians [12. P. 163]. At the height of the Risorgimento, particularly during its culminating Cavourian phase (1848–1860), the fate of the single Italian state was determined even more by diplomatic international negotiations than by military campaigns. The struggle for Italian independence and unity was seen as an essential counterpoint within the general European narrative of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: revolution or reaction, oppression or liberty, war or peace. But the specific economic and essentially political component of international debates concerning the «Italian puzzle» was a real opportunity to have an impact on the future of the state.

In the aftermath of the Risorgimento and even much longer beyond it, Italians themselves were caught between the interests of the political and social elites who claimed to have made the revolution and the disenchantment among the masses who had merely «suffered» it. As a result, the central problem of the new state remained relevant and speculative for many decades after 1870 – «Italy without Italians» which meant that the state was formed before the national consciousness took shape. The problem about nationhood, from the point of view of the revolutionary protagonist Giuseppe Mazzini, was that it empowered nationalism. His alternative to liberal nationalism formed in Italian circumstances by diplomatic maneuvers of international empires, was republican patriotism. But unfortunately for him, Italy had to follow the direction offered by the international partners and weak national bourgeoisie – it became a constitutional monarchy with not very much developed party system and inert constituency staying in the background of the European «concert of nations». The political regime was actually divided between a radical political culture of opposition and dissent that had republican roots, immature liberal government without strong support by the citizens of the new state and the monarchy. Italian fascism which had various ideological roots at least partly succeeded after reaching a consensus between different political and social groups (some of which were liberal) to substitute unstable political regime with the principle of dictatorship. The same tendency of political development was evident in Spain, Portugal, and Eastern Europe. In the period from 1900 to 1917, various forms of nationalist uprising and revolution occurred in Mexico and China, in Ireland and India, in the Balkans and Turkey and other countries of the world semi-periphery.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the states of the core of the world-system became nation-states and passed through changes toward becoming imperial states, which established colonies in the name of civilising mission. Using distinct racist attributes, political elites and intellectuals from western European nations expressed their political and cultural differences at expense of some minorities which were excluded from obtaining full or partial human rights. Self-assertiveness of the new imperialist states had undesirable consequences not only for their neighbours, but even more for the peripheral zones. John Stuart Mill, making distinction between civilised and barbaric nations, implied that the former (first of all, the British nation) «if trapped in a multinational society, should have legitimate resource to *independent state-formation*. But the option of revolt or of foreign support in the event of an attempt to make congruent nation and government was not legitimately open to backward nations» [11. P. 314]. Therefore, both economic assimilation of backward nations and the predominance of civilised nations were initially consistent with the logic of liberalism. Meadwell argues that liberals should accept the principle of nationality, because without it there was no justification for assimilation or secession when circumstances called for either of these practices [10. P. 21].

What the liberal programs of suffrage, welfare state, and national identity offered «dangerous classes» of the core states was a hope that the gradual steady reforms promised by liberal politicians and technocrats would eventually mean betterment for them. But by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century no social consensus was achieved, even a minimal one, about such fundamental issues of the liberal political agenda as whether the states should be secular, who was supposed to be the main institutional representative of public sovereignty, the legitimacy of partial corporate autonomy for intellectuals, and among others social permissibility of multiple religions. They seem to be stories concerning compatibility of human freedom with state technology on the way toward progress. Further development of capitalist industry required access to raw materials and in such a high quantity that economic needs could not be satisfied within the former boundaries of limited trade market of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The rise of manufacturing created a large-scale urban proletariat with its increasing social and political demands. Moreover, the first steps made by European governments toward adoption of the programmes of social liberalism in advanced Western countries inevitably meant a sharp increase in labour costs worldwide. The deployment of this process could not be endless and liberal politicians tried to search for legal mechanisms to constrain active demands of the labour class. By the time the First World War, the struggle for the modernity of liberation in Western Europe had been muted, as the workers of each European country rallied round the sacred flag and national honour [14. P. 480]. The old ideas of public freedom and individual entrepreneurship supplemented by new social benefits seemed realisable only in the core of the capitalist world-economy. But even there the anticipations of social unrest by the upper classes led to admittance of the possibility of establishing of temporal political dictatorship, the one suitable for the new epoch.

After the four wartime years the weakened European countries found themselves in acute moral and institutional crisis of the former liberal democratic state. In such circumstances some populist political movements expressed readiness to take upon themselves the role of new leaders of the masses disappointed by the political turmoil and impractical promises. Their intent was to convince people, even in the covert form, to mute the claims for the modernity of liberation, and to invest their energies instead in the modernity of technology in favour of national resurgence. This pattern was clearly observable in the countries of the Western semi-periphery where the lack of traditions of proclaimed political rights was indisputable.

The development of the fascist variant of modernity was certainly not the sole social alternative to classic liberal ideas for the nations from the periphery and the semi-periphery of the world system. The different embodiments of the Leninist socio-economic and political program (another modernist version of the political project of prevalence of social *technology* over substantive rights of «bourgeois individuals») became not a world revolution, but anti-imperialism with socialist basis. On close inspection they turned out to be mere rhetorical variants of the Wilsonian/Rooseveltian concepts of self-determination of nations, particularly in the periphery of the world system.

### Paradox of liberalism

After the crash of the fascist regimes in the WWII liberal intellectuals of the industrial *North* began to make headway in persuading the national liberation movements to break up with the appeals coming from delusive leftist and far-right radical ideologies. Liberalism as an ideology which glorifies individual freedom and critical thinking claimed to be seen as a lighthouse of political wisdom. But this appeal was soon criticised by social theorists, most notably from the Frankfurt school of philosophy. Being impressed by successful experiment of mass mobilisation in Nazi Germany Max Horkheimer outlined in his book «*Eclipse of Reason*» (1947) how seemingly anti-rational and anti-establishment political extremists managed to make

their political agenda appear «reasonable». He also issued a warning against exalting of «technological thinking» of the modern world which has more than enough propaganda and even the language itself «is assumed to suggest and intend nothing beyond propaganda» [7. P. 184]. in this regard, Hobsbawm points out that the counter-utopia to the Soviet and the Nazi regimes was «the theological faith in an economy in which resources were allocated entirely by the totally unrestricted market, under conditions of unlimited competition, a state of affairs believed to produce not only the maximum of goods and services, but also maximum of happiness and the only kind of society deserving the name of freedom» [6. PP. 563-564]. Thus, the ideology which originally positioned itself as a bearer of the spirit of revolt against stagnant social systems of the past has evolved toward exclusiveness and a new sort of orthodoxy.

In 1968 under the influence of the new postmodernist mentality the convenient conceptual unity of the two modernities was finally challenged by profound shifts in the structure of the world economy. As a result of Kondratieff-B downturn (stagnation) in the world-economy, state budgets almost everywhere were severely squeezed, and negative effects on the welfare state were particularly painful in the peripheral and the semi-peripheral zones of the world-economy. Even in the prosperous European welfare states student uprisings in 1968 marked the formation of new forms of political participation and new collective identities within the frameworks of *anti-systemic direction*: student, youth, women's, environmental movements. For Wallerstein, to be anti-systemic means «to argue that neither liberty nor equality is possible under the existing system and that both are possible only in a transformed world» [13. P. 45].

The spirit of post-modernity which has become a predominant cultural trend since the 1960s implied rejection of the modernity of technology associated with the welfare state on behalf of the new exalting of the modernity of liberation. Herbert Kitschelt coined the popular term «left-libertarian» to refer to some new emerging parties: «They are left because they share with traditional socialism a mistrust of the market place, of private investment, and of the achievement ethic. They are libertarian because they reject the authority of the private or public bureaucracy to regulate individual and collective conduct» [8. P. 180]. In such circumstances the liberals of all varieties – liberal liberals, conservative liberals, and above all socialist liberals (that is, «the Old Left») – were not to be trusted and indeed seemed to be the prime obstacle to genuine liberation. After the long dominance of the liberal ideology in the *geoculture* of the world-system both the word right and the word left moved away once again from the liberal centre [14. P. 482].

But the intellectual debates over the role of «liberal theology» in the «age of Globalization» are not over. According to the prominent protagonist of modern liberalism Jurgen Habermas, modernist culture, inherently connected with the Enlightenment project, continues to penetrate the values of everyday life – «the life-world is infected by modernism». Following his logic, even if different social discontents with existing reality are rooted in deep seated reactions against the process of modern societal modernization, these phenomena should not lead us into denouncing the intentions of the surviving Enlightenment tradition as intentions rooted in a «terroristic reason» [4. P. 11]. Habermas emphasises the idea that the project of Modernity – a creature of classical liberalism – has not yet been fulfilled and can be differentiated in the multicultural world by relinking of the modern culture with an everyday praxis that still depends on vital heritages.

The logic of the world-system analysis demonstrated in this essay shows how in the circumstances of multipolar world the absence of universal political regime on global scale still leads to concentration of economic and political roles vertically rather than horizontally throughout the system. The result of that seems to be in a conservation of existing social order based on unequal competing of the three groups of states. Internal reallocation of consumption in favour of the world 'core' logically undermines the ideological justifications of liberalism in other world areas demonstrating that the progress of private ownership in a single state is irrelevant to the rapid expansion of the world industrial productivity. But the stereotypes of social consciousness based on the paradigm of Modernity nonetheless continue to play its great role in conservation of the status-quo.

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**М.В. Чернышев**

#### **ЛИБЕРАЛИЗМ И ФУНКЦИОНИРОВАНИЕ СОВРЕМЕННОГО НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО ГОСУДАРСТВА С ПОЗИЦИИ МИР-СИСТЕМНОГО АНАЛИЗА**

Начиная с периода Великой французской революции, которая связала права человека с требованием национального суверенитета, либеральные космополитические теории парадоксальным образом были обращены к идеологии национализма. В своем анализе парадигмы современности Иммануил Валлерстайн придал особое значение двум противоположным коннотациям в рамках либерального дискурса – «технологическому модерну» и «модерну освобождения». Взаимосвязь между ними породила многочисленные интеллектуальные дискуссии, касающиеся роли либеральной теории в формировании и функционировании современного капиталистического государства. В данном эссе автор утверждает, что практическая реализация либеральной доктрины сильно зависит от конкретного социально-экономического контекста в определенных регионах и развития системы мира. Принимая во внимание разные стартовые условия в формировании современного государства в северо-западной Европе, интересы местных групп элит, по-разному действующих в областях мировой полупериферии и периферии, следует признать, что не могло возникнуть единой направленности в приспособлении либеральных идей к политической реальности. Следовательно, идеология либерализма привела к оправданию и механизма консервации, и механизма подрыва существующего общественного порядка.

*Ключевые слова:* либерализм, модерн, мир-системный анализ, западная цивилизация, Иммануил Валлерстайн.

Chernyshev, Maxim V.,  
PhD candidate at the University of Siena  
Department of Political and International sciences  
Via Pier Andrea Mattioli, 10 – Siena  
E-mail: maxim\_chernyshev@yahoo.com

Чернышев Максим Владимирович,  
PhD кандидат  
Университет Сиены  
Via Pier Andrea Mattioli, 10 – Siena  
E-mail: maxim\_chernyshev@yahoo.com