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EGALITARIAN LIBERALISM OF JOHN RAWLS AND BUILDING OF JUST AND HUMAN-CENTRIC SOCIETIES IN POST-SOVIET AREA

Abstract. American political philosopher John Rawls could propose and develop a viable alternative to utilitarianism and naturalism peculiar to both the Anglo-Saxon intellectual heritage and Western liberal philosophy. In liberal tradition Rawls could build a bridge between modern liberal thought and modern social democracy. Rawls aimed to reconcile liberal belief in freedoms and pluralism with the need to prevent excessive inequality in society and to develop a model of liberalism which supports some form of distributive justice. Rawls could show that the social welfare state as an economic model and political liberalism are not contradictory concepts and that social welfare state as a model of market economy and liberalism as a political ideal and pluralistic outlook are actually two sides of the same coin. Rawls is famous for arguing that meaningful exercise of civil and political liberties cannot be plausible without the provision of basic social and economic needs. We assert that to present liberalism in Rawlsian 'egalitarian' framework is very crucial to help nourish liberal values in post-Soviet context. We believe that Rawlsian political liberalism will shatter deeply-seated stereotypes about liberalism in post soviet countries, specifically among conservative citizens who tend to regard liberalism as inherently egoistic and anti-humanistic.

Keywords: liberalism, John Rawls, egalitarian liberalism, post-Soviet area.

Introduction. According to our opinion, just and human-centric society is based on (1) the ideological pluralism (acceptance of everyone for who he/she is), (2) the rule of law, and (3) social justice and the priority of human capital development. In this article, we would like to touch briefly on the principles that contribute to the creation of such society, and which are characteristic of the theoretical views of the American political philosopher John Rawls. In this article, we first touch on the topic of perception of liberalism in the post-Soviet space and describe the current understanding of liberalism in the Western political science. Next we will consider the main ideas of the political liberalism of John Rawls.

Perception of liberalism in the post-Soviet space and the modern understanding of liberalism in the Western political science. We often face misunderstanding and stereotypes about liberalism in the post-Soviet space. First, liberalism appears as the embodiment of anarchy, lawlessness, and secondly, as the ideology of hedonism, consumerism and immorality, thirdly, liberalism is an ideology of misanthropic capitalism, unregulated market, ideology of the main factor of social cataclysms and the gap between different social groups. The disappointment of liberalism in the post-Soviet countries and the parallel growth of stereotypes occurred due to a systemic crisis caused by the so-called "liberal" reforms that were actually "marketization" or "market" reforms implemented in a legal vacuum [1, 4-5].

If we consider the liberalism from the perspective of Western political science, it should be emphasized that it is a set of concepts and there are many different understandings about it. Besides, liberalism constantly evolved, developed in the course of history and this process continues. Therefore, it seems not an easy task to provide some kind of clear definition of the concept of liberalism. In addition, some of the differences (deviations) in the use of the term "liberalism" are common practice, and in theory there are still some differences in the views of the modern adherents of the liberal theory.

Therefore, secondly, liberalism is not uniform; there are many models of liberalism. We must distinguish between liberalism as a system of political ideas and neoliberalism – the trend in political economy. Therefore it is necessary to distinguish between liberalism, or rather, "neoliberalism" as a model

of unregulated market (which was followed by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and the IMF) and the "egalitarian and socially-oriented" liberalism, rooted in the Scandinavian countries. This explains the negative perception of liberalism in the post-Soviet countries due to the fact that liberalism is often wrongly associated with neoliberalism [14].

As it is known, after the collapse of the USSR, many post-Soviet states have carried out a rapid transition to a market economy, following the tenets of neo-liberal economic theory, which involved minimal state interference in private business, privatization, free trade and the reduction of public spending, which in turn led to the socio-economic disasters in nineties of the last century. But we have to admit that liberal critics have completely seized the opportunity to blame for all troubles not only neoliberal policies of individual governments, but also the very ideology of liberalism. Although the experience of many liberal European countries (notably Sweden and Finland), shows that the liberal-democratic values are not necessarily accompanied by a neo-liberal economic policy, and even conversely, socially oriented state can better ensure the rights and freedoms of its citizens.

Thirdly, it should be taken into account that the concept of "liberalism" is etymologically derived from the word "freedom" (human freedom). Therefore, to some extent, almost all liberal models focused on this aspect. Especially constitutional liberalism, which developed as the protection of human rights to life and property, freedom of religion and freedom of speech. In order to secure these rights, constitutional liberalism attaches particular importance to control of authority/political power of each branch of government, equality before the law and impartiality of the courts and tribunals, and separation of church and state.

In general, the institutional protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, pluralism of ideas, the rule of law, equality before the law and meritocracy are considered as fundamental liberal principles and values.

On the other hand, the centuries-old evolution of liberalism led to the fact that in the "mainstream" liberalism, "human freedom" is not understood in the absolute sense, but in connection with the "rule of law" (legal state) and is associated with humanistic ethics. Therefore, the "rule of law", along with "human rights and freedom" are an integral part of many developed liberal countries. It surprises the majority of the citizens of post-Soviet countries in because of the level of development in the same society.

In summary, we can say that in Western political science, the liberalism is presented as a political idea, which has the goal of building a society where people strive to "be someone", in other words, the idea of self-realization, self-development, but not anybody's selfish interests, not "ideal of creation of gatherings of people trying to get something (usually illegally)", unfortunately, this is the association of people in most post-Soviet countries on “liberalism”.

The basic ideas of Rawls political liberalism. The world-known American thinker and theorist John Rawls, whose main objects of research are the principles of justice in society have fundamentally changed the theoretical views in liberal theory and thus had a significant impact on the development of a philosophy of political thought and theoretical political science, and practice of political life in the West, especially in English-speaking countries. Rawls could overcome utilitarianism and naturalism inherent in the Anglo-Saxon intellectual heritage. The main theme of the works of Rawls was to find reasons to build a just society and the formulation of the problem of morality justification on the basis of the concept of rationality. The fundamental aspect of achieving justice for Rawls is honesty [2, 26-29]. It is believed that Rawls's works made a methodological "turn" in the philosophy of justice and in political philosophy in general.

Overall, Rawls attaches paramount importance on "ideological pluralism", "rights and freedom", "justice" (including the attainment of social justice and welfare) and "fairness" (which are seen as essential qualities of the state institutions, not just citizens). Rawls changed the trajectory of all the liberal ideas of utilitarianism to the direction of building a "pluralistic and fair" society. in his landmark book "Political Liberalism", John Rawls offers a form of liberalism that is not in conflict with other ideologies or religions through the creation of only political superstructure to ensure pluralism in society. In other words, any religion or ideology has a right to exist in a pluralistic society, where there is a consensus on the basic values and the existing disagreement between the followers of different ideologies and worldviews are resolved through dialogue within the legal field. John Rawls criticizes the "comprehensive liberalism" as an ideology, which not only creates a political superstructure for the ideological and pluralistic society, but