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Metamorphoses of Political Neoliberalism

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Abstract—The phenomenon of political liberalism and its genesis and evolution are explored. This phenomenon is studied using interrelated methodological principles at the crossroad of political philosophy, political theory, and international relations theory. The author analyzes the discourse of the “decline of Europe” and, more broadly, of the Western-centric world through the prism of changes in the forms of classical liberalism that have become part of political ideology. Special attention is paid to political neoliberalism, which from a once dynamic system of principles and values has turned into a dogma and is associated with the least popular aspects of the hyperphase of globalization. The elements of the weakening of Westcentrism are described, including the strategic decoupling of the United States and its European allies. The topic of the militarization of thinking and foreign policy of some countries is discussed. The author holds that the degradation of political neoliberalism clears the way to the search for a new balance between the ideological traditions of liberalism, conservatism, and collectivism.

Keywords: political neoliberalism, liberalism, conservatism, collectivism, international relations theory, ideology, “decline of Europe,” Westcentrism.

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Changes in political processes and European party-political systems, the discourse of specialists in international relations, and the accompanying narratives are well underway. Recently, we proposed an assessment of the phenomenon of the liberal political establishment (LPE), its differentiation into the orthodox and moderate parts, and the emergence of a “new political alternative” [1]. The LPE is a phenomenon that has its roots in the first decades after World War II, but it has taken its present form over the last 40 years, politically shaping the neoliberal wave that swept the world in the 1980s and 1990s. Among the pillars are both the classical LPE principles of the postwar structure of the Western world (Atlanticism, self-identification based on the concept of the West led by the United States, and mandatory membership in NATO and the EU or the closest association with them) and those that have taken root in the neoliberal era (globalization based on the simplistic political economy of the Washington Consensus, abandonment of “soft power” in favor of “liberal interventionism,” a course to exacerbate geopolitical competition,

substitution of postwar universal international law with categories of “multilateralism” and “rule-based order,” and aggressive promotion of ultraliberal values and social norms). For adherents of this trend of political thought, the ongoing changes in the balance of power in the world arena are the most painful. Since 2016, their fears about the prospects of Westcentrism have multiplied owing to the Brexit phenomenon and as a result of the acceleration of the US strategic drift from Europe to Asia under D. Trump.

The LPE is eroding in line with the strategic decoupling of the United States and its European allies. The relative weakening of the world positions of Western countries, including the United States, the change in the balance of power in the world, and the redistribution of roles and responsibilities for various elements of world politics among them have become subjects of regular research in Russia and abroad since the beginning of the new century. The terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 with its dramatic consequences, the rise of neoconservatism in American foreign policy, and the reaction to it of other countries and representatives of other schools of foreign policy thought served as a trigger for rethinking the Euro-Atlantic prospects.

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As the discourse on the situation in international relations developed, both existing and new categories were used, and revised or truly innovative concepts and interpretations of events and their prerequisites and consequences were proposed. Modern or old concepts that have found new life in the current context have come into wide circulation: a concert of powers; a new Cold War; a new normal; Pan-Europeanism; “European *pochvennichestvo*”; Euro-Westernism; a new bipolarity; Helsinki 2; a niche power; a dual-core West; multilateralism; rule-based order; stress tolerance; and others, including the newly coined Westlessness [2]. Many terms and concepts were included in the domestic scientific use without any critical reflection, which is quite understandable, during the period of complete dominance of the Western theory of international relations, which followed the disintegration of the Soviet Union [3]. One of the few areas in the study of international relations that proposed original concepts and approaches at that time was perhaps civilizational geopolitics [4–6].

Basically, the question of creating a separate international relations theory (IRT) was not raised in post-Soviet Russia, as opposed to, for example, China. At the same time, applied foreign policy analysis in our country is one of the strongest in the world. Of course, creating some isolated theory of one’s own is a dead-end path because the science of international relations is international in nature, as is, basically, any other modern field of knowledge. However, a country that claims a leading role in modernization and, even more so, in shaping a new international agenda and an overhauled global governance system, is bound to be a key actor in the development of IRT. International relations theory not only explains the past and the present and studies the world “as it is” but also works proactively, is engaged in forecasting, and formulates new concepts and notions, substantiating and adjusting the foreign policy of a particular state and partly setting the very course of events for the future [7]. Today, Russian scientists have made the most significant contribution to IRT, in addition to geopolitical and civilizational subjects, by developing the concept of multipolarity/polycentrism, including through the prism of regional studies [8–10]. Important achievements in understanding the evolution of the system of international relations can be traced in official documents, primarily in the concepts of Russian foreign policy [11].

Taking a strong position in the development of international relations theory is important not only for the sake of science as an end in itself but also for the implementation of applied tasks, including the fundamental nature of national education and the shaping of expert and public opinion in the country and abroad and narratives and terms generated in the domestic “pot” of scientific thought. Otherwise, it is difficult to get away from imitation and “playing by someone else’s rules.” Even the most unbiased Amer-

ican, French, or any other specialist in international relations always tends to see the world through the prism of the cultural and historical matrix of his or her country. Science is international in nature, but its diversity, competitiveness, and polyphony, which are created by various schools of thought, relying, in turn, on one national experience or another, are equally valuable.

Although international research as a branch of knowledge emerged in Western science, this does not mean that Russian scientists have no competitive advantages. First, the very structure of world politics no longer predetermines the monopoly of Western thought. For example, such a key element of world politics as the United Nations, created in 1945, and the Yalta–Potsdam system of international relations in general, were joint projects of the West and the East. It is not surprising that the modern narrative of the “liberal world order” is aimed at retrospectively nullifying the role of Russia in creating a number of universal mechanisms of global governance that are not under anyone’s control. Second, Russia still preserves academic science and large research centers in a number of universities. They provide a fundamental, integrated, interdisciplinary, and long-term approach to the study of international relations and world politics that only a few foreign centers have. Third, the transitional character of international relations and their departure from Westcentrism make it possible to abandon Westcentrism in international studies as well, to start from scratch. Most likely, it is advisable to do this at the crossroad of political philosophy, political theory, and international relations theory, which has already been proposed by a number of Russian scientists and is used in major works [7, 12, 13].

THE BALANCE OF FORCES IN THE WORLD AND THE LIBERAL IDEA

The topic of changing the configurations of global and regional players and the rules governing their relationships has a long history, which is much older than the 20th century. It found its embodiment in different historical epochs in the works of Thucydides and N. Machiavelli, R. Kjellén and H. Mackinder, K.N. Leontiev and N.S. Trubetskoi, and P. Gallois and H. Kissinger. For most of modern and contemporary history, the change in the balance of power meant, first of all, the distribution and redistribution of forces on the European continent (between European empires) and, as the United States became stronger and after the bipolar world was ultimately filed as history, within the collective West. In the 19th century, there were still large non-European centers of power, primarily China and the Ottoman Empire. However, as a result of the Opium Wars, China was relegated in the world “table of ranks” not to second but even to third tier. Turkey actually became an element of the system of international relations headed by Europe-

ans. The first breach in this routine order was made by the First World War, under the impression of which O. Spengler's famous work *The Decline of the West* was written. The Second World War and its consequences, on the one hand, further lowered the status of Eurocentrism in world politics, and on the other, partially rehabilitated it, paving the way for the creation of European communities and the largest regional integration project to date.

The forerunner of the modern stage of the discourse about the "decline of Europe" or, more broadly, the West was S. Huntington's equally famous concept of the "clash of civilizations," which rather quickly, thanks to the course of events, gained the upper hand over F. Fukuyama's forecasts [14, 15]. Discussions in the spirit of European decadence renewed. Long before the migration crisis of 2015 in the Old World and Trump's coming to power in the United States a year later, P. Buchanan posed the theme of the "death of the West" in relation to demographic and migration processes [16]. Interpretations of the very concept of the West were becoming increasingly differentiated [17]. Its "decay" is under discussion in most Western specialized journals [18].

Nevertheless, it took many years to enable not only theorists of international relations but also the Euro-Atlantic expert community that accompanies the foreign policy of Western countries and organizations to recognize the relative weakening of the United States and the West as a whole and the rise of other states and regions as important participants in global and regional governance. The Western political establishment, especially the European one, was even slower in understanding this fact.

It was the liberal idea in the first place, or rather its neoliberal version, that was in crisis. "Today most liberals are either furious or frightened," I. Krastev holds. "They feel deceived by history, or, more precisely, by the idea of the 'end of history'" [19]. The fate of liberal democracy as such is being questioned. Fukuyama himself, describing it as a regime that balances on the pillars of the state, rule of law, and accountability [20, p. 541], comes to a depressing conclusion from the point of view of LPE supporters: the institutional forms adopted by some countries, for example, the United States, are not universal models. No one who lives in a rooted liberal democracy should think that its survival is guaranteed. History has no automated mechanism that would make progress inevitable [20, pp. 542, 548].

What kind of liberalism is meant? Large-scale modifications of classical liberalism began after WWII. This required the overturning of the free market doctrine by the Great Depression in the 1930s and prevalence of social liberalism after 1945 on the wave of postwar mass expectations. The history of liberal thought demonstrated at that time that liberalism can be the repository of the humanistic tradition in alli-

ance with the leftist idea. This union led to the introduction of the practice of the "social state" and the social market and created the phenomenon of the welfare state, on which social peace in Europe still largely relies. W. Beveridge, one of the ideological founding fathers of the welfare state, was neither a conservative nor a social democrat, but a prominent figure in the Liberal Party of Britain.

The next period of major changes fell on the 1970s–1980s, when economic neoliberalism spread based on the ideas (in terms of social and economic theory) of F. von Hayek, L. von Mises, K. Popper, I. Berlin, M. Friedman, and others. Quite quickly, economic neoliberalism grew into political neoliberalism, embodied in the phenomena of Thatcherism and Reaganomics.

In the 1990s–2000s, against the background of the unfolding ultraphase of globalization, political neoliberalism turned from a dynamic and once effective concept into a dogmatic one and, in some issues, into a political ideology intolerant of other views. The advancement of neoliberal ideas from the late 1990s began to merge with forcible methods of changing reality, be it the concepts of "humanitarian intervention," "regime change," or "democratic revolution." In this, liberalism merged with right-wing conservatism (neoconservatism), creating a grim cocktail that gave rise to the idea of "liberal military intervention." French President E. Macron put it in the following way [21]:

Sometimes we committed mistakes by trying to impose our values and change regimes without getting popular support. It is what we saw in Iraq and Libya... and maybe what was planned for Syria, but that failed. It is an element of the Western approach, I would say in generic terms, that has been an error since the beginning of this century, perhaps a fateful one, due to the convergence of two tendencies: the right of foreign intervention and neoconservatism. The two meshed, with dramatic results. Because the sovereignty of the people is in my opinion an unsurpassable factor.

It turned out impossible to prevent a new remilitarization of Western policy proceeding either from J. Nye's ideas of soft and smart power or the philosophy of the EU's normative power. By now, the way of solving problems by force has become the main one for the United States, and the European Commission, formed in the fall of 2019, officially proclaimed the EU a geopolitical force, although in the recent past this term was used in the EU mainly abusively [22]. Political neoliberalism, conceptually developed in the 1970s, including the ideas of classical liberalism, for a long time had a wide electoral base, consisting primarily of the middle class. Over time, it degenerated, becoming an ideology serving the global financial oligarchy. The middle class, which emerged during the era of the welfare state, is eroding and differentiating as its lower strata become poorer. These processes were

among the main causes of the 2008 Great Recession and the emergence of the phenomenon of the new populism.

The crisis of political neoliberalism, which emerged from the bosom of liberalism as a political philosophy and made its way from political theory to political ideology, is inextricably linked with the growing problems in relations between states on both sides of the Atlantic. Already 20 years ago, there was no shortage of warnings about the strategic divergence between the United States and its European allies [23–25]. By now, the attitude to the phenomenon of the decline in the role of the West in international affairs has changed so much that instead of an irrational denial of the ongoing redistribution of forces in the world to the disadvantage of the West, one can often find the opposite extreme—supra-alarmist sentiments about the loss of any leading positions. Dambisa Moyo, who was named one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2009 by the *Time* magazine, wrote that the United States was on the road to creating the worst and most corrupt form of state, which arose from despair as a result of years of bad economic policies and in a society that was insatiably devouring itself [26].

Previously, the West constantly accused Russia of the psychology of a “besieged fortress,” but now the West itself is tirelessly looking for external and internal enemies. Brexit and Trump’s foreign policy played a special role in aggravating these sentiments, although the revision of foreign policy and military strategy began not with him but with George W. Bush and B. Obama. R. Kagan wrote about the latter in 2015 that Obama was probably the first US president since World War II who did not care what was happening in Europe [27]. It was under Obama that a fairly unbiased analysis of the real resources and capabilities of the United States began to migrate from think tanks into official documents [28].

Note that, at the scientific and expert level, the vulnerability of US foreign policy and the methods and principles on the basis of which it is conducted, including the obsession with domination and ignoring the opinions of others, had become the object of constant criticism long before the presidents listed above came to the White House. A textbook in this regard was J. Fulbright’s *The Arrogance of Power*, published back in 1966 [29]. Several years before him, Ronald Steel wrote about how Euro-Atlantic ties suffered because of the US attitude to its European allies as satellites [30]. There has always been a strong opinion that the liberal world order (or its synonym, “the rule-based international order”), which nowadays is mentioned in almost every Western foreign policy document or research devoted to international affairs, has practically never been liberal at its core. “The US has few, if any, allies. It actually has a set of nations with which it maintains a subordinate relationship”

[31, p. 3]. This was said not in our days but in 1978 by the famous American politician Eugene McCarthy, who in 1967 published a book on the limits of the US power [32]. However, in the 1960s–1990s, such criticism was rather of a warning nature; for the most part, it was ignored by the American political establishment and, in general, did not change the US foreign policy behavior.

NEOLIBERALISM: FROM POLITICAL THEORY TO POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND PROPAGANDA

The growing uncertainty of the West about its future has exacerbated debates about the role of the nation-state, which began in the 1990s, and the nature of democracy as such. The principles of liberal democracy as a kind of political (plural) democracy that takes into account the interests of minorities began to be increasingly questioned by the supporters of majoritarian democracy and the direct expression of the will of the people, which Brexit has brightly highlighted. Discussions about the prospects for liberal thought and practice and, as an offshoot, of the liberal world order acquired a special political and ideological sensitivity. The category *liberal world order* has become one of the most used in studies of international relations, becoming in fact a cliché in the LPE lexicon. Here is one of many quotes using roughly the same set of words: “Moscow uses a variety of instruments to disrupt and undermine American hegemony and liberal order” [33, p. 396]. Another example: “The two world wars in the first half of the 20th century served to transform the 19th-century Concert of Europe into the liberal international order we are familiar with today” [34, p. 7]. The main leitmotif of most Western studies on this topic is concerns about the decline of the “liberal order” and recipes for how to prevent or at least minimize the losses of the “liberal West” caused by the ongoing redistribution of forces in the world [35].

By massively using the term *liberalism*, including for ideological purposes, the LPE supporters monopolize it in the same way as the term *Europe* is monopolized by the European Union, using it as a synonym for the EU. The expression *liberal democracy* is used instead of *political democracy*; *liberal ideas*, instead of *ideas of freedom*; *liberal international order*, instead of *just international order*; etc. In fact, we are speaking about political neoliberalism as one of the political theories that borrowed a lot from liberalism as a political philosophy. Having arisen in the development of economic neoliberalism, later political neoliberalism gave birth to political ideology. Note that each of the three world political philosophies has its own embodiment as political theories and political ideologies. The former are based on worldviews and the principle of “Cartesian doubt”; the latter use a certain set of ideas for their application in the political process; and

still others are the most reduced forms of political philosophies and are aimed at achieving specific goals in the party-political struggle. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp, as well as the retreat of the leftist idea around the world, the temptation arose to universalize liberal principles, portraying them as the foundations of Western culture, starting with the Enlightenment. The French philosopher Chantal Delsol describes this interpretation of the history of ideas as follows: “During the two centuries following the French Revolution, Western culture has claimed its status as upholder of universal values to justify its spread around the world” [36, p. 21].

Against the background of the actively promoted discourse about the fate of liberalism (more precisely, neoliberalism), the legacy of and classical ideas about the three great traditions of political thought—liberalism, conservatism, and collectivism—are increasingly falling in oblivion [37]. Not so long ago by historical standards, their significance and relevance and the need to find an effective balance between them in the interests of social development were considered obvious. In the postwar era of “mass parties” and class politics, the party-political systems of democratic countries balanced between these three political philosophies, on which specific political ideologies (leftist, rightist, and centrist) were based. In fact, it was about the relationship between the values of freedom, tradition, and justice—in other words, about how relations should be built between the individual and society and between them and the state.

However, the switch of globalization in the 1980s to the neoliberal path of development led to a clear displacement of the body of ideas of conservatism and collectivism from political discourse and the process in the sphere of party-political systems to the emergence of “universal parties” without a clear class orientation and the dominance of neoliberalism not only in the economy but also in politics. This is exactly what J. Chiesa spoke about in relation to the rollback of the left idea, recalling the theses of A. Gramsci in *Prison Notebooks*: “I am talking about a common European trend ... the left capitulated and began to obediently follow in the mainstream of a single totalitarian Western discourse imposed on the world” [38, p. 3]. Yet the dominance of neoliberalism is often referred to as liberalism. Thus, W. Merkel, a professor at Humboldt University of Berlin, writes, “[In] Germany, as in most Western countries (not in Eastern Europe), there is a clear predominance of liberalism in public discourse” [39]. According to the Dutch political scientist C. Mudde from the University of Georgia, the crisis of liberal democracy today is that “there is an ideological vacuum in its heart” [40, p. 11]. Of course, the party-political systems of many countries still have liberal parties that are genetically related to classical liberalism and its subsequent varieties. Moreover, for example, they strengthened their positions in the

new composition of the European Parliament after the May 2019 elections.

However, political neoliberalism aspires to something more—a paradigmatic role in the spirit of the “end of history.” Unlike the 1980s and 1990s, when the “end of history” presupposed the final triumph of liberal democracy, later it was not so much about the ideology of market emancipation and “throwing state influence back” but about the justification of a new phase of globalization and the enormous power of transnational capital, especially in the field of information and communication technologies, the Internet, social networks, big data, and software.

After the United States proclaimed the resumption of geopolitical competition in its 2017 national security strategy and most of its allies quickly agreed with this, political discourse in the context of information was forced the idea of liberalism as the dominant value system. The rights of the individual and human rights issues, which now include a set of postmodern values, have again become absolutized, emphasizing political and civil rights to the detriment of economic and social ones. This narrative began to “spill over” into the foreign policy sphere with the division of states into adherents of “multilateralism” and “rule-based order” and all others, into “liberal” and “illiberal” states, fetishizing some freedoms and neglecting others. To overcome the crisis in their own development, writes N. Gnesotto, “the West again resorted to an uncompromising ideological struggle, but this time not between East and West ... but between liberal democrats and sovereign autocrats” [41, p. 139]. In the discourse on international relations, neoliberalism rushed to crush other schools of thought, primarily the theory and practice of realism.

The use of various facets of liberalism as a political ideology was widespread in the past. During the Cold War, this value-based approach appeared quite convincing in the face of confrontation between the two worldview systems—socialism and capitalism. Now there is no such confrontation on a large scale. The monopoly on “liberal truth” was also based on other arguments of a rational nature, for example, on the higher welfare of the population in the countries of “liberal democracies” and the greater efficiency of their development model. However, even today they do not work well in the conditions of rapid and long-term economic growth of many countries, which the LPE supporters classify as illiberal, primarily China, Vietnam, etc.

The ongoing confusion and substitution of concepts can be explained quite simply: certain concept symbols are constructed, allegedly not requiring proof; they introduce a priori “correct” meanings, both positive and negative, into the mass consciousness. In a situation where the discourse on systems of political ideas and values becomes massified (deprofessionalized and primitivized), reflections on the

relationship between liberalism and democracy, not to mention the majoritarian and plural forms of the latter, are factored out. Such a fateful decision like Brexit was made by a small majority of votes of the British subjects and by way of a referendum, that is, over the head of the mechanisms of representative democracy. At the same time, the same country, just like its continental neighbors, absolutizes the rights of, for example, sexual minorities. Considering this, the very idea of liberalism as a political philosophy that has little in common with political neoliberalism is discredited.

As a result of primitiveness and extreme simplification of political neoliberalism by propaganda, its adherents do a disservice to liberal philosophy itself. The situation here is similar to how the values of democracy, which were used to veil the “reforms” that created oligarchic capitalism in the country, were largely discredited in the Russian mass consciousness in the 1990s. The need to recall the true meaning of liberalism, which is so deformed by both its rabid critics and overly zealous supporters, is understood by many not only in the West but also in Russia. S.F. Chernyakhovskii points out that liberalism was born by the age of the Enlightenment and that liberalism is “a phenomenon of such a scale that cannot be destroyed due to the unsuccessful adventure of this or that political party” [42, p. 38].

About 20–30 years ago, an active discussion of alternative models of market and social development happened in Western Europe and the United States (for example, the “third way” in Britain, “middle way” in Germany, communitarianism in the United States, stakeholder economics, etc.). That period coincided with a time of great expectations caused by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the world’s bipolar system. However, the neoconservative wave in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century and the beginning of the crisis period in the development of the European Union drew a line under them. The Great Recession dealt a severe but not fatal blow to economic and political neoliberalism. Since then, the parties and the media of the old mainstream took hostility to the desire to revive the discourse about the variability of social development by the forces of various movements of the “political alternative,” indiscriminately portraying their opponents as irresponsible populists, demagogues, and pariahs.

This tactic has produced mixed results. A left-wing project in Greece—the Syriza phenomenon—ended in collapse. In December 2019, the British general election dashed hopes for the coming to power of supporters of Corbynism (named after the leader of the Labor Party J. Corbyn) as an updated version of progressive social democracy [43]. Paradoxically enough, but the ideas of collectivism, social solidarity, and redistributive policy have loudly declared themselves on the other side of the ocean—in the person of B. Sanders—since the presidential election campaign in the United

States in 2016. It was he who in 2020 again became one of the two main contenders for the US presidency from the Democratic Party.

Against the background of the dominance of political neoliberalism in Europe, the dismantling of the welfare state and the mechanisms of the social market continued both before and after the Great Recession. Of course, this process is far from over, and the social safety cushion has not yet disappeared from most EU member states. Moreover, under the impression of the global economic crisis, a certain restart of the idea of “social Europe” took place thanks to the previous composition of the European Commission, headed by J.-C. Juncker [44]. However, this has not reversed the decline in social inequality and poverty and an increase in the precariat, although the EU unemployment rates have improved in recent years. The ideas of a growth economy and a social contract have been rehabilitated in some way, but only cosmetic repairs have taken place. Since 2020, the world economy has once again been entering a period of slower development, a trend that manifested itself long before the start of the coronavirus epidemic and was only accelerated by it.

The substantive discussion of the problems of social justice and the consideration of the interests of vulnerable groups of the population in European countries is increasingly being replaced by the discussion of problems of the “other dimension,” for example, the “green” and climate agendas, around which, both from above and from below, mass social movements are built, focusing primarily on youth. They are ousting the usual set of ideas about the main challenges and threats; for example, the antiwar movement has dwindled to an insignificant size, although the world needs it more than ever in the last 50 years. Only a few voices in Russia and in the West are calling to think again and to stop transferring the stencil of the “new normal” to the arms control sphere [45–47].

By the early 2020s, the bankruptcy of neoliberal ideas in politics and economics has become evident. Brexit dealt another blow to the concept of a liberal world order. The decision to leave the European Union for a country like Britain has shaken the foundation of Western European integration and, moreover, the Western picture of the world. The EU development has always been viewed as an irreversible and endless process that has turned into a kind of secular religion and an indisputable axiom. The whole philosophy of the “European dream” was based on the idea that the European Union was the embodiment of the best achievements of humankind and that membership in it is happiness for any country. It was believed that, relying on it, the European Union would become in the 21st century a new global leader, eclipsing the American Dream.

The British Eurosceptics’ “wall-battering machine” for breaking a breach to escape from the European

Union was not so much considerations of material benefits from Brexit as the ideology of British specialness, grandeur, and a historical complex of superiority over continental neighbors. This increased the painfulness of the events for the supporters of European integration by an order of magnitude, since it struck, first of all, not at its “body”—the economy but at the very heart—at the system of values, which in the mass consciousness turned out to be firmly attached to the term *liberal*.

Even the leading figures of the Western establishment have ceased to adhere to political correctness in relation to both economic and political neoliberalism. In an interview with *The Economist*, French President E. Macron said [21],

We have an internal European crisis: an economic, social, moral, and political crisis that began ten years ago.... There is a deep vector of thought that was structured in the period between 1990 and 2000 around the idea of the “end of history” and of a limitless expansion of democracy, of the triumph of the West as a universal value system. That was the accepted truth at the time, until the 2000s, when a series of shocks demonstrated that it was not actually so true.

Let us add that in the LPE terminology the mentioned “universal system of values” is also “liberal.”

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What we see today is not the weakening of liberalism as a political philosophy but the retreat of the Western-centric world order and the political neoliberalism serving it, which is degenerating into propaganda, including pseudoscientific promotion. This kind of liberalism, as a result of several decades of ideological hegemony, has evolved from a political theory into a dynamic and then dogmatic political ideology. The latter serves the interests of the financial oligarchy, hyperglobalization, and the ruling elites brought up on the simplified principles of the Washington Consensus, a unipolar world, military interventions, and interference in the affairs of other states. A side effect of this process was the whipping up of the impression about the crisis of liberalism as such. However, political neoliberalism is losing ground just as inevitably as a redistribution of forces in the world occurs, clearing the way for a search for a new balance between the political traditions of liberalism, conservatism, and collectivism. This search is extremely important not only for political theory but also for international relations theory, the development and practical application of which will have the most direct impact on the behavior of the actors of world politics in the coming years.

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