

THE ROLE OF THE NOTION “SECURITY” IN THE HISTORY OF LIBERAL THOUGHT

The article is devoted to the topical issue of the correlation between security and freedom which became even more acute after acts of terrorism in Paris in 2015. Such a correlation is studied in the theories of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill that are of a high importance for liberal thought. It is argued that although these thinkers devoted considerable attention to formulate a principle of liberty, a principle of security was of a higher importance to them.

Keywords: security, freedom, liberalism, liberal thought.

The scandal around US and UK surveillance programs Prism and Tempora that was initiated by the former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, as well as terrorist attacks in Paris in January and November 2015 have shown how acute and topical the problem of a correlation between security and freedom is.

Of course, the issue of a conflict between security and freedom must be addressed within a much broader study; however, a small part of it is researched in this article. It is devoted to the theme of a correlation between security and freedom in the history of liberal ideas. The theories of three influential thinkers, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill will be taken into consideration. It is argued that although they played a crucial role in the development of liberal thought, the notion “security” was always of a higher importance than “freedom” and “liberty” for these classical thinkers.

It is debatable, whether Hobbes was liberal or not. Pierre Manent, for example, calls Hobbes a founder of liberalism [4, p. 65]. Judith N. Shklar, on the other hand, claims that Hobbes was completely illiberal [8, p. 24]. According to her, Locke and Mill are two founders of liberal theory [8, p. 26–27]. Pierre Rosanvallon derives the establishment of liberalism from the 17th century, when it continued the processes of political secularization and recognition of individual priority that started in the 14th century [7, p. 12]. He adds that in this sense it is more a cultural paradigm than a specialized doctrine. Crawford Brough Macpherson argues that although individualism – a distinctive characteristic of the 17th century liberalism – is present in Hobbes’ doctrine, “his conclusion can scarcely be called liberal” [3, p. 1]; Locke is according to Macpherson “the fountain-head of English liberalism” [3, p. 262]. Therefore, it is better to say that liberal theory has its beginning in the 17th century. Hobbes was not a liberal, simply because liberalism as an ideology came into existence after him, post the French revolution. Many Hobbes’ ideas cannot be called liberal in any way. He did formulate a

theoretical basis for liberalism, however, which may be called a headspring of liberal theory with Locke as its founder. Consequently, it is important to investigate the ideas that created a foundation for liberal theory.

For Hobbes liberty was one of the basic natural characteristics of a human being – “the Right of Nature, that is, the naturall Liberty of man” [1, ch. XXVI].

“The RIGHT OF NATURE, which Writers commonly call Jus Naturale, is the Liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himselfe, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say, of his own Life...” [1, ch. XIV].

Liberty thus is the first and the most important mean of self-preservation. At the same time, absolute liberty is a great danger to safety of every person.

“For as amongst masterlesse men, there is perpetuall war, of every man against his neighbour; no inheritance, to transmit to the Son, nor to expect from the Father; no propriety of Goods, or Lands; no security; but a full and absolute Libertie in every Particular man...” [1, ch. XXI].

That is why Hobbes distinguishes absolute liberty, which is liberty without a commonwealth, liberty in the natural condition of war of every one against every one, and liberty in a commonwealth – “true Liberty of a Subject”, which is a great value for Hobbes. In order to preserve liberty, Hobbes insists that a person should “be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himselfe” [1, ch. XIV]. “For in whatsoever is not regulated by the Commonwealth, tis Equity (which is the Law of Nature, and therefore an eternall Law of God) that every man equally enjoy his liberty” [1, ch. XXVI].

At this point it is important to involve Locke into consideration. He also differentiates two types of liberty: in a state of nature and in a commonwealth.

“THE natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law

of nature for his rule. The liberty of man, in society, is to be under no other legislative power, but that established, by consent, in the commonwealth; nor under the dominion of any will, or restraint of any law, but what that legislative shall enact, according to the trust put in it” [2, p. IV–22].

For Locke the second type of liberty is the only true liberty: “...the end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom: for in all the states of created beings capable of laws, where there is no law, there is no freedom: for liberty is, to be free from restraint and violence from others; which cannot be, where there is no law...” [2, p. VI–57].

Therefore, for now it is possible to make a provisional conclusion that according to liberal theory absolute liberty constitutes a great danger, and true liberty is possible only in combination with security.

To continue this line of development, it should be stated that the main point in theories by Hobbes and Locke is very similar: to ensure security for people. The main sources of danger for a person are, however, different: the evil nature of other persons for Hobbes: “And Law was brought into the world for nothing else, but to limit the naturall liberty of particular men, in such manner, as they might not hurt, but assist one another...” [1, ch. XXVI], and the evil nature of persons who occupy authority positions for Locke: “...men found it necessary to examine more carefully the original and rights of government; and to find out ways to restrain the exorbitances, and prevent the abuses of that power, which they having intrusted in another’s hands only for their own good, they found was made use of to hurt them” [2, p. VIII–111].

In the first case, it is more urgent to prevent harm done to a subject of a commonwealth by other subjects, in the second case – to defend against state.

Despite this difference, both theories share one main idea: the end or the main goal of a commonwealth or a political body is to provide security and protection for a person from the evil nature of others. However, the central causes of this are different, since Locke sees the main danger in people who occupy authority positions, thus, in state, which, created to ensure security, endangers it. Locke writes: “...the enjoyment of the property he has in this state [of nature] is very unsafe, very unsecure. This makes him willing to quit a condition, which, however free, is full of fears and continual dangers: and it is not without reason, that he seeks out, and is willing to join in society with others... for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates, which I call by the general name, property” [2, p. IX–123].

The founder of liberalism thus tells: when people are completely free, they do not want to stay in that condition, they want security to preserve their lives,

liberties, and estates (the difference from Hobbes is the addition of the two latter categories).

It was one of the main attempts of Leviathan to reconcile liberty with another central notion of this treatise, security, in order to secure both of them: “...as long as this naturall Right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man...” [1, ch. XIV]. “The finall Cause, End, or Designe of men, (who naturally love Liberty, and Dominion over others,) ... is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby...” [1, ch. XVII]. According to Hobbes, the end of the commonwealth is “...to produce the peace and security of the people...” [1, ch. XIX] or “...the procuration of the safety of the people...” [1, ch. XXX]. Locke claims just the same: “The great and chief end, therefore, of men’s uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property” [2, p. IX–124]. “[T]he first and fundamental natural law, which is to govern even the legislative itself, is the preservation of the society, and (as far as will consist with the public good) of every person in it” [2, p. XI–134].

It was Locke who developed this idea into an intention to restrain state and power. “It is not, nor can possibly be absolutely arbitrary over the lives and fortunes of the people: for it being but the joint power of every member of the society given up to that person, or assembly, which is legislator... It is a power, that hath no other end but preservation, and therefore can never have a right to destroy, enslave, or designedly to impoverish the subjects” [2, p. XI–135].

This line leads then to the main intention of liberalism – to restrain and limit state and power. From the first glance, it is the liberal notion of liberty which provides the ground for this negative attitude toward power and state as a whole. According to Mill, “The power itself is illegitimate. The best government has no more title to it than the worst” [5, p. 30]. Nonetheless, the investigation of the history of liberal ideas shows that the real source of this intention is security. The theme of Mill’s treatise *On Liberty* is “Civil, or Social Liberty: the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual” [5, p. 1]. How does Mill understand liberty? “The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it” [5, p. 23]. There is, however, one significant exception to this crucial liberty to choose one’s own *modus vivendi*: “The principle of freedom cannot require that he should be free not to be free. It is not freedom, to be allowed to alienate his freedom” [5, p. 195].

One of consequences of such an anti-power and anti-state intention is expressed in this extract: “Unless opinions favourable to democracy and to aristocracy, to property and to equality, to co-operation and to competition, to luxury and to abstinence, to sociality and individuality, to liberty and discipline, and all the other standing antagonisms of practical life, are expressed with equal freedom, and enforced and defended with equal talent and energy, there is no chance of both elements obtaining their due; one scale is sure to go up and the other down” [5, p. 88].

This means that liberalism does not share any of these ideas and proclaims only the necessity of securing the possibility for these ideas to contest. The liberal principle is to defend all the ideas from banishment by an authority, but not to choose any. Such an attitude, being apolitical and neutral, is odd for an ideology. Consequently, liberal politicians have on hand only the void principle of no compelling of any concrete idea; hence they do not have practical principles to grasp, to lean on, and to follow in political actions. It is important not to confuse such neutrality with pluralism which is a political principle of a competition between different political ideas; it does not share the apolitical intention and abstinence from choice of a certain political point of view.

Chantal Mouffe also accentuates this problem: she is against “extreme pluralism that emphasizes heterogeneity and incommensurability and according to which pluralism – understood as valorization of all differences – should have no limits” [6, p. 20]. Pluralism is a wholesome political principle only when it is combined with choice and antagonism; pluralism without antagonism misses the aspect of the political and is named by Mouffe “the typical liberal illusion” [6, p. 20]. Using Carl Schmitt’s terminology, deprived of its political meaning and the necessity of a choice or a decision, pluralism transforms into neutrality and leads to securitization.

According to Mill, there is a great danger to the true liberty of a person not only from the government, but also from society itself: “...it practises a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since, though not usually upheld by such extreme penalties, it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself. Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough: there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling...” [5, p. 8].

Consequently, the main goal of *On Liberty* was to find out “where to place the limit – how to make the fitting adjustment between individual independence and social control” [5, p. 9].

Here we can observe an important twist in Mill’s logic: “The object of this Essay is to assert one very simple principle, as entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual in the way of compulsion and control, whether the means used be physical force in the form of legal penalties, or the moral coercion of public opinion. That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection” [5, p. 17].

He states further: “That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant” [5, p. 17]. Mill’s main idea is that there should be no interference in private life with one exception – in those cases that concern security. And here is a totally different situation: everyone is responsible, compulsion is justifiable, and almost every mean to ensure security is permitted.

It is interesting to find such an extract in the treatise by one of the founders of liberalism: “The liberty of the individual must be thus far limited; he must not make himself a nuisance to other people. But if he refrains from molesting others in what concerns them, and merely acts according to his own inclination and judgment in things which concern himself, the same reasons which show that opinion should be free, prove also that he should be allowed, without molestation, to carry his opinions into practice at his own cost” [5, p. 104].

Hence, the logic is very clear: the main way to ensure the freedom to choose one’s own *modus vivendi* is to guarantee security. While reading *On Liberty*, one can see the development of the line started by Hobbes: the principle of security is always present. For Mill, the main notion of liberalism is not only liberty, but also security.

The fundamentals of political liberalism have thus been discussed. In the second half of the 18th century, economic liberalism came to existence as a solution to those problems that were not solved by political philosophy of social contract [7, p. 49–50]. Later, in the middle of the 19th century, Adam Smith was acknowledged as a founder of economic liberalism [7, p. 140]. Such standardization contained a hidden agenda of development of economic liberalism into the dominating ideology of bourgeoisie. In such a case economic liberalism should have been detached from any connection with political liberalism [7, p. 140].

However, these two currents are connected not only historically, but also conceptually. They correspond with the type of society where social relations are based on utility and equity, but not on the idea of a given community; they share the idea of

depersonalization of forces that rule society and the principle of individual autonomy [7, p. 13]. Consequently, it is possible to speak about three utopias of liberalism: a utopia of market society; a utopia that legal order can substitute political order; a utopia that the social world consists of autonomous individuals who are the only masters of their lives [7, p. 14]. Although political liberalism carried some anti-state ideas, it was economic liberalism that brought the strong anti-political intention to liberal theory.

As it was shown, the principle of security is of a higher importance within the theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Mill than the principle of freedom or liberty. This line of priority extends to the contemporary Western society and is quite widespread within it. The political practice of reaction with security measures to security threats should not neglect the necessity of protecting personal freedom and privacy.

It is clear that some amount of security is a necessary prerequisite for liberty; however, too much security endangers freedom. Therefore, it is one of the most important tasks for contemporary society, to find a proper balance between two principles, especially as technical means provide extensive and powerful tools of surveillance. Besides, intelligence and law enforcement officers, as well as some politicians tend to

prefer tightening security measures as the simplest response to threats and risks. E.g., the director of the CIA John Brennan called on the 16th November 2015, three days after Paris terrorist attacks, to fill in the gaps in “the ability of intelligence and security services”, created, at least partially, due to Snowden’s disclosures. “In the past several years, because of a number of unauthorized disclosures and a lot of hand-wringing over the government’s role in the effort to try to uncover these terrorists, there have been some policy and legal and other actions that are taken that make our ability collectively, internationally, to find these terrorists much more challenging”, – said Brennan [9]. On the other hand, Snowden sufficiently contributed to the global awareness of a necessity of transparency and limits to the security measures. And to present another example, the ITI (Information Technology Industrial Council), the organization that presents the world leading high tech companies, rejected on the 19th November 2015 the call to weaken encryption and create backdoors to encrypted devices in order to give more possibilities to intelligence and security services [10]. To conclude, the practice of reacting with sole security measures won’t be successful, if politicians won’t at the same time address the fundamental causes of security and terrorist threats with political means.

References

1. Hobbes Th. Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civil / Thomas Hobbes. – London : Andrew Crooke, 1651.
2. Locke J. Second Treatise of Government / John Locke. – London, 1690.
3. Macpherson C. B. The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke / Crawford Brough Macpherson. – Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1970.
4. Manent P. An Intellectual History of Liberalism / Pierre Manent ; trans. Rebecca Balinski. – Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1994. – 128 p.
5. Mill J. On Liberty / John Stuart Mill. – London : J. W. Parker and Son, 1859. – 207 p.
6. Mouffe Ch. The Democratic Paradox / Chantal Mouffe. – London – New York : Verso, 2009. – 143 p.
7. Rosanvallon P. Utopichnyj kapitalizm. Istorija ideji rynku / P. Rosanvallon ; [trans. from French of Eugene Marichev]. – Kyiv : Vydavnychyj dim “Kyjevo-Mohyljanska akademija”, 2006. – 246 s. [in Ukrainian].
8. Shklar J. N. The Liberalism of Fear / Judith N. Shklar // Liberalism and the Moral Life / ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum. – Cambridge, London : Harvard University Press, 1989. – P. 21–38.
9. Smith D. CIA Chief Criticises Recent Surveillance Rollbacks in Wake of Paris Attacks [Electronic resource] / David Smith and Dan Roberts // The Guardian, 16th November 2015. – Mode of access: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/16/cia-director-john-brennan-criticises-surveillance-reform-paris-attacks>. – Title from the screen.
10. Tech Responds to Calls to Weaken Encryption [Electronic resource]. – The Information Technology Industrial Council press release from the November 19, 2015. – Mode of access: <https://www.itic.org/news-events/news-releases/tech-responds-to-calls-to-weaken-encryption>. – Title from the screen.

Шейко Ю. О.

РОЛЬ ПРИНЦИПУ БЕЗПЕКИ В ІСТОРІЇ ЛІБЕРАЛЬНОЇ ДУМКИ

Статтю присвячено проблемі кореляції між безпекою та свободою, яка стала дуже гострою після терористичних актів у Парижі 2015 р. Цю кореляцію розкрито в працях Т. Гоббса, Дж. Локка і Дж. Стюарта Міла як таку, що має велике значення для ліберальної думки. У статті доведено, що, хоча ліберальні мислителі акцентували увагу на формулюванні ліберального принципу свободи, принцип безпеки був для них не менш значущим.

Ключові слова: безпека, свобода, лібералізм, ліберальна думка.

Матеріал надійшов 21.10.2015