

# *Communitarianism as a Semantic Context of Cooperation in Asian-Pacific Region*

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**Keywords:** communitarianism, community, social modernization, common good, cooperation, international relations.

**Abstract:** The article considers communitarianism and political practices in Asian countries as a semantic context of cooperation with Russia. This theory is worth attention, primarily, because East Asian critics of the western globalism and liberal universalism managed to organize experience of the own practices and institutes that fit the conditions of contemporary societies properly.

## 1. Introduction

The political events that led to the aggravation of relations between Russia and the Western countries are determined by a deep semantic difference in the understanding of the measure of combining the interests of the individual and society. And this is the problem posed by modern communitarianism, this philosophical movement arose in the English-speaking academic world in the 80s of the XX century as a critical reaction to the shortcomings and negative results of the Western liberal model of society. [1] Representatives of communitarianism advocate the need to balance between individual rights and social responsibilities. [2] Communitarianism, opposing itself to liberal democracy, aims to develop a model of society that allows us to remove the severity of antagonism between individual interests and the common good. This doctrine is based on the fact that in different communities and cultures possesses different norms and hierarchies of values that differ from the "universal" Western model. If in Western culture the value of individual freedom of choice is one of the most important, then to the Eastern values that are based on the Confucian tradition, the individual's involvement or community is more significant. Communitarianism and Confucianism are united in the view that the main task of politics is to harmonize individual and community. For this reason, the main ideas of communitarianism were accepted, reinterpreted and deeply grasped in East Asia. Specificity of mentality and culture of the people of the East Asian Region sets the character of their attitude to themselves and to representatives of other cultures. The orientation of individuals towards a common good and commitment to a group determines the set of meanings that form the basis of their life world. The key to the success of the policy of the East Asian countries is that they managed to find unique combinations of individual liberties and the common good on the basis of developing traditional collectivism for these countries with the capitalist orientation of individual activity. [3]

## 2. Communitarian Concepts in Asian-Pacific Regional Context

Communitarian ideas were creatively perceived and even partially realized in the countries of East Asia, which allowed the formation of a unique social and political climate. At the same time, if Western thinkers and politicians, in the main, stay in the field of theorizing, the Asian thinkers immediately went to the embodiment of these ideas in practice, because communitarian ideas fell on the fruitful ground of Confucianism. On the other hand, the Russian cultural and historical tradition is essentially close to the principles of communitarianism in terms of recognizing the priority of the common good over private interests. At the same time, it is extremely strange that attention to the problem of communitarianism among Russian researchers clearly does not correspond to the importance of this topic in the world social and humanitarian thought. It seems that we are falling out of the context of discussing the prospects for human development. Creation of such a social and political model that will be able to harmonize the relations of people and peoples. As such, it has the potential to form common values and provides an opportunity to enter into a direct dialogue with East Asian partners. [4] At the present stage of development for Russia it is critically important to seize the initiative from the West in interaction with the countries of East Asia, not only economically, but also socially, politically and culturally. Despite the fact that modern communism is of Western origin, the presence of a collectivist tradition in Russia and in the East will make it possible to use these ideas to restore the influence that Russia once had on the East Asian countries, primarily China. Thus, the use of the communitarian ideological platform is the only winning strategy for Russia. Misunderstanding of this circumstance leads to a serious loss of socio-political positions and opportunities for interaction with the countries of East Asia. Accordingly, this study has a dual goal. On the one hand, the coverage and popularization of the ideas of modern communitarianism in the Russian intellectual environment. On the other hand, on the basis of communitarian ideas, the development of principles for effective cooperation between Russia and the East Asian partners. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to establish what are the prospective points of contact between the Russian and the Eastern socio-political traditions.

## 3. Communitarian Concepts in Russian Context

It is also necessary to show how the use of this knowledge in practice, first, in the negotiations of various levels and formats will promote the achievement of mutually beneficial cooperation specially discussed in Russian philosophy. Perhaps, therefore, the fact that attention to the problematic of communitarianism among Russian researchers clearly does not correspond to the significance of this topic in the world's social and philosophical thought seems to be explicable. The proposed research sets the task of actualizing the conceptual foundations of communitarianism in Russian science, which will allow us to join the world discussions. The core of the problem was fixed by one of the leading representatives of the communitarian intellectual project and the world political movement A. Etzioni in the famous work "From Empire to Community: A New Approach to International Relations". [1] This problem is: how to build relations between countries and peoples not on the imperial principle of force pressure, but on the explication of the idea of the common good and common values. Communitarian criticism of liberalism indicates that liberal philosophy is rooted in an individualistic understanding of the good, and this directly affects the principles of the contemporary world order. The question is: whether it is possible to build relations between people and peoples, somewhat changing the priorities of private and common interest (while not opening up from political achievements of freedom and human rights). Because of it East Asia draws the attention of theoreticians and practitioners from all over the world, since the communitarian principle of the community turned out to be relevant to the traditional norms and values of the hostels of East Asian peoples. Discussion about the "Asian values", which set the

specifics of socio-political and economic activity in this region, has been active for several years. Leading Western and Eastern researchers are engaged in a constant and very intensive dialogue with a view to developing meaningful and valuable grounds for fruitful cooperation. [5]

#### **4. Conceptual Intersections of Two Contexts**

In the light of communitarian ideas we can see that Russian cultural and historical tradition is, in fact, much closer to the principles of the Asian worldview than the Western political culture. This is particularly evident in terms of recognizing the importance of collectivist principles and the value of the common good in public life. It should be noted, however, that the issue of harmonization of relations between individual and society (so important for Confucian thought and actualized in Communitarianism) has never been Studies that are directly devoted to the issue of Russia's cooperation with the countries of East Asia on the basis of communitarian ideas - does not yet exist. It is clear that this topic can be of interest only to representatives of these countries, while the significance of the problem is not understood either from the one or the other. But theoretically, the problem is analogous to that broad front of research that is currently being developed around the transfer of the principles of communitarianism developed from the West to the academic environment and social practices of East Asian countries.

##### **4.1. Different Responses for Westernisation**

Western theorists finds in non-western countries illustrations and experimental platforms for confirming and realizing their ideas, and the Eastern ones understands the need for some "Westernization" of their traditional culture, because they have to accept the scientific and technological innovations. Such experience of the convergence of the semantic and value-axiological attitudes characteristic of different communities and cultures that is of direct theoretical interest to us. The Singaporean researcher B.-H. Chua, in this work, calls into question the universality of liberalism and indicates that it is the communitarian program that is closest to the traditional social practices, attitudes and values of the peoples of Asian countries. Political practices, based on communitarian conceptual and value bases, are the most successful in these countries. T.-Wm, De Bary, in his book on the study of Asian values and human rights, in a profound conceptual and historical analysis, demonstrates that Confucian communitarianism contributes both to the development of individual freedoms and to the strengthening of solidarity and stability. Accordingly, values based on Confucian principles are compatible with modern democratic values. A study by the professor of the Hong Kong University Chan, J. is aimed at substantiating the thesis that democracy in the East Asian countries works best when it proceeds from the Confucian conception of the common good rather than from the liberal concept of rights. He argues that modern democratic institutions, in order to be effective, need not necessarily imply liberal values, but should be oriented toward the traditional values of culture and political philosophy. [6]

#### **5. Conclusion**

The problems of interaction between the West and the East on the basis of communitarian ideas are in the framework is the widely discussed topic of changing the principles of international relations. In of the most important of them is "soft power" that involves the use of cultural factors (education, mass media, cinematography, etc.) The main players in world The principles of soft power largely correlate with the communitarian notion of what the nature of contemporary international relations should be. That is why the theoretical developments in this field in this study are used as a framework with a sufficiently critical attitude to certain provisions. [7] [8] A close attention to the

doctrine of soft power is because that it has received official status in China's domestic and foreign policies. The main idea of this doctrine is that the strength of the state, first of all, consists in its ability to attract to itself the best minds of mankind, to create cultural products that are significant for the rest of the world, to organize centers of world information networks in virtual space, to support and broadcast their positive image on a global scale. It seems that Russia has a great unrealized potential for attracting interest from East Asian partners and developing its own doctrine of "soft power" in relations with them. Russia, as well as Asian countries, especially China, has the task of justifying a cultural "unity in diversity" that could be broadcast outside, within the framework of the "soft power" doctrine. We believe that the creatively perceived ideas of modern communitarianism can become a conceptual basis for this kind of theory.

## Acknowledgements

This work is supported by the grant of the FEFU № D-349-17.

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