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Globalisation as a Cultural Trend

Abstract: Globalization as a term took shape in the 20th century, but its roots should be searched for in the Late Middle Ages, when the growth of cities, the emergence of the class of merchants and the development of commercial relations between countries led to the creation of the "European world economy". The process of globalization had an impact on all spheres of public life - politics, economy, and culture (including literature). Cultural globalization can be followed by two results: On the one hand, the popularization of national cultures throughout the world and on the other, their "oppression" and transformation into international culture.

Key words: Globalization, Americanisation, cultural expansion, unification.

Globalisation as a Cultural Trend

Disputes about globalization have become increasingly topical among politicians, political experts, and commentators over the past several decades. This notion implies the process of the creation of a unified cultural, informational, economic and other areas. It should be noted at the very beginning that the process of globalisation is a new stage of the development of humankind and a completely new form of the existence of society. Correspondingly, the term denoting these processes, which was introduced in the scientific field in the 1960s, acquired new semantic overtones precisely in the 1990s, because it was this period that large-scale changes in modern societies are linked to (Grevtseva 2008:cyberleninka.ru/article/n/kulturnaya-globalizatsiya-problemy-i-paradigmy). "The growth of economic potential, the size of production, and the sales markets of transnational corporations, which resulted in the standardisation of goods and services, should first and foremost be named as the reasons that has led to this situation. For its part, all this has led to the unification of the material elements of the civilisation and the lifestyle of a significant part of the global population. On the other hand, the creation of the global information space on the basis of most recent means of communication is leading to the expansion of indigenous humanistic cultures of "non-Western" nations by suppliers of information, which, for its part, is leading to the unification of the picture of the world and has a natural impact on the traditional cultures of these nations" (Flier: ifapcom.ru/ files/Monitoring/flier_glob_kult _tendency.pdf).

Some sceptics think that the aforementioned is going to cause the same crisis in the sphere of culture as, say, in the environment, because it is natural that the reduction of the level of cultural uniformity is going to result in the reduction of the adaptation potential of humankind in non-uniform conditions of existence that are changing frequently. Some historians, culturologists, and anthropologists believe that cultural and political expansion is coming from one centre, particularly the United States. In other words, the whole of the remaining world is under the threat of Americanisation. However, there is another group, which is not at all small. Its members believe that cultural globalisation is a unique innovation of our time, which promotes closer ties between world nations and deeper cultural contacts between them.

In spite of the opinion of sceptics, who emphasise only the negative side of the problem, it should be said that despite its leading positions in many fields of economy, there are no grounds to ascribe total cultural expansion throughout the world specifically to the United States. Although some culturologists insist that the cultural forms of

goods and services produced in the countries of Europe and the Asia-Pacific region are oriented specifically on American standards, the opinion seems quite dubious. Specialists now agree that despite its hegemonic positions in the global economy, the cultural forms enshrined in everyday products are of European origin rather than American (for example, the centre of world fashion is in France, Italy, and the United Kingdom; most prestigious cars are produced in Germany; appliance electronics is mostly Japanese; London, Amsterdam, and Hamburg are believed to be centres of the so-called youth image, never mind the intellectual and cultural spheres dominated by Europe with its semiotics, Postmodernism, mass culture, and so forth (Flier: ifapcom.ru/ files/Monitoring/flier_glob_kult _tendency.pdf). As regards the trend of cultural unification and standardisation on a huge territory expressed in levelling the cultural diversity of the nations residing on these territories and their nearly full assimilation with a culture completely alien to them, our remote ancestors coped with the problem in an excellent manner several hundred years before satellite communications and the Internet were invented.

It can be said that Persia's aggressive wars in the 1st millennium BC can be regarded as the first historically confirmed example of globalisation. The thing is that on the territories they conquered, Persians deliberately deleted boundaries historically existing between ethnic groups, creating new administrative units with the population as heterogeneous ethnically as possible, which was of course followed by mass assimilation of small nations with larger ones. In this regard, campaigns of Alexander of Macedon that were followed by the formation and expansion of the Hellenistic cultural system from the territory of present-day Italy to India should be regarded as a more impressive example. To be more specific, the cultures of more than a hundred nations and tribes interfused in the Greek culture,

which implied complete renouncement of the autochthonous cultural features. (An impressive example in support of the aforementioned is a majority of the nations in Asia Minor that were swept away by the wave of Hellenisation).

Roman conquests and the formation of Pax Romana also bore traces of some elements of globalisation, particularly in the spheres of governance (Roman law continues to be regarded as the foundation of the political and legal system of Europe), trade of war, and civil engineering. At the same time, it should be noted that Romans did not have the habit of interfering in the traditions, religions and other cultural aspects of conquered nations. On the contrary, they used to integrate various alien elements in their own culture (which was particularly true of religion).

Numerous waves of the Migration Period that continued with various intensity during the whole of the 1st millennium and supposedly ended in Mongol conquests in the 12th and 14th centuries did not effectively bear any signs of cultural globalisation. On the contrary, Huns, Turks, Hungarians, and Mongols, who came from the east, as well as Vikings, who came from the north, were completely or partially assimilated in the cultures of conquered peoples through creating their own syncretic ethno-cultural formations (Flier: ifapcom.ru/ files/Monitoring/flier_glob_kult _tendency.pdf).

At the same time, the Middle Ages were marked by three supposedly most large-scale actions of cultural globalisation in human history. By saying this, we imply the spread of three world religions - Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. The expansion of each of the aforementioned religions took place in different forms and at different times. However, the unification of the cultural peculiarities of the nations that found themselves in the spheres of influence of these religions surpassed similar events known in history in the level of evening out ethnic and cultural peculiarities.

Of course, these processes unfolded in a different manner in each specific case. It can be said that the most total "deletion" of cultural peculiarities of nations was carried out during the Arab conquests in the 7th and 8th centuries. An effectively homogeneous culture that differed in the typology of economic activities, that is, in the lifestyle of land tillers and herdsmen, dominated a vast territory from Morocco to the north of India in that period. It

should be said that this was the most grandiose cultural globalisation in human history by the number of conquered nations and the level of their cultural unification. Later, after the Caliphate went all to pieces and independent states were shaped, conquered nations gradually started restoring the specific features of their ethnicities and cultures. This was true first and foremost of the nations of India, Iran, Central Asia, and Maghreb in Africa. The second group comprised ethnic groups - Turks, North Caucasians, and the population of North Africa, who converted to Islam after the collapse of the Caliphate. In this case, the ethnic groups that were converted to Islam in full observance of Islamic religious norms were able to mainly retain their ethnic and cultural individuality. Trends of ethnic localisation gained momentum in the 15th century, when the leadership of the Islamic world moved from Arabs to Central Asian Turks (Tamerlane and his descendants). At the same time, dozens of nations of the Middle East finally disappeared from the world ethnic map during the past thousand years, having joined the super ethnic groups of Arab, Iranian, and, later, Turkish nations (Flier: ifapcom.ru/ files/Monitoring/flier_glob_kult _tendency.pdf).

The cultural expansion of Christianity unfolded on an equally large scale, but was more prolonged. We imply first and foremost the expansion of the Catholic Church, because spiritual leaders of eastern Christianity, who existed mostly under the patronage of the state, were trying to dexterously "blend" the religion in local traditions, without making significant efforts to even out ethnic peculiarities of converted nations.

The conquest of the South and Central America by the Spanish and Portuguese became the peak of the cultural expansion of the Catholic Church. The eradication of the cultures of local Indians and the violent introduction of Catholicism as a religion, culture, and lifestyle were carried out with such cruelty that they ended in the physical destruction of several dozens of Indian tribes. At the same time, the Inquisition was raging in Europe. It had the same aim in fighting against all kinds of dissidents - complete unification of the intellectual image of European nations. The 30-year war in the 17th century with almost all European states involved put an end forever to the cultural globalisation in Europe on religious grounds.

The expansion of Buddhism, the first world religion chronologically, had specific peculiarities. Buddhism also had a potential of cultural globalisation, but given the peaceful and voluntary nature of its expansion, it had a major impact on the cultures of those nations that were on a comparatively low level of development. These were nomadic tribes of Tibet and East Asia and nations of Southeast Asia. As regards more developed nations - Indians, the Chinese, Koreans, and the Japanese, Buddhism was naturally "intertwined" with various religious teachings already widespread in these countries without introducing major changes in the local ethnic and cultural situation.

Later, when the so-called "new times" came, globalisation moved to a new imperial stage. Similar to the experience of old Rome, the unification of cultures in empires like Russia (later the USSR and now the Russian Federation), and Austria (Austria-Hungary), as well as the Ottoman Empire, the empires of Bonaparte and, partially, France and Great Britain was carried out mainly in the spheres of governance, education, trade of war, and institutional judiciary agencies. The governments of these countries did not interfere in the religious beliefs or cultures of numerous ethnic minorities and colonised nations, but were decisive in imposing on them a common language of paperwork and military and administrative orders. Thus, representatives of other nations, who could not speak the official language and were unaware of the main norms of the official culture, found it impossible to live in such empires. Of course, this is a specific type of cultural globalisation that can be described as intrastate globalisation, but this cannot change its nature. It should be said that the United States travelled this road, creating a unified American nation from multi-ethnic migratory streams.

And finally, we were able to observe two examples of Medieval globalisation in the 20th century. What we mean is, on the one hand, the idea of world revolution and the creation of the "world Socialist camp" and, on the other hand, European Fascism and Nazism that aspired to establish world dominance not only in terms of politics, but also in terms of culture. It is definitely unnecessary to remind that none of them managed to carry out a cultural expansion and we finally received armed violence as the last argument in favour of cultural unification. The fact that not only the leaderships, but also a majority of the populations of China, North Korea, and North Vietnam accepted the Soviet ideology can be regarded as surprising exceptions from this rule. At the same time, it is also clear that the aforementioned nations belong to the regions that have firm collectivist traditions (Flier: ifapcom.ru/ files/Monitoring/flier_glob_kult _tendency.pdf).

Given the aforementioned, a question arises: Is it possible to create a unified and standardised culture on the whole planet? It should be said that there has not been a single nation in history that would not be divided in dozens of ethnic and other subcultures. How can this be carried out throughout the plane then? Through the Internet? Opponents of globalisation forget that humankind that is one biological species has always been divided in dozens, hundreds, and thousands of ethnic, social, religious and other loci. The nature has not provided any other conditions for the existence of humans. Given this, how can globalisation cope with the situation? We can conclude that the processes of both ethno-cultural localisation and transcultural globalisation are quite natural and they should be regarded as trends of the cultural life of humankind that are constantly valid. In addition, they complement and balance each other.

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