

Globalization and the dialog of civilizations

V.I. Yakunin

Value heterogeneity of globalization: what is the challenge?

Communicational globalization

Expansional globalization

Dialog of civilization as a means of lifting some conflicts of globalization

It seems that everything has been said about globalization in the modern world. Armies of adherents on the one side and of antiglobalists swarming the cities of G8 meetings on the other side have emerged. The processes are historically objective. Why then do the world dynamics still cause anxiety? Why is there an uplift of resistance on the paradigmatic level as well as on the level of social activity?

In other words, what are the contradictions, lessons, warnings and the ways of eliminating these tensions in the processes and phenomena of globalization, if we look at these questions from the positions balanced according to the interests of the world, progress and humanism and to the interests of national states, that many want to sink into oblivion (we believe that it is too early to do that).

Value heterogeneity: what is the challenge?

Globalization has moved long ago from the category of theoretical challenges to the category of the actual reality conditions of social being.

We underpin that we see two key angles of this process. One of them originates from technological progress of mankind, which incorporates the growth of world economy transnationalization, inter-country exchanges, global telecommunications, global information, political and military presence and influence, systems of navigation, warning and security etc. This aspect of globalization is unstoppable, objective and to a large extent has a favorable impact.

It would be hardly justified for anyone to protest against this side of global world development.

But there is also another angle. It is connected with the emerging and intensifying ideas about the unipolar world, in which, in addition to technocratic spread and use of achievements made by leading industrial and post-industrial powers, also the value-civilizational, cultural, religious and finally political (in terms of state's internal organization) unification is possible. The idea of global supremacy of one superpower due to its economic strength is thrilling some people. Obviously, one cannot make any clear-cut conclusions with such a dual view on the process of globalization. The phenomenon needs to be closely studied. We try to present our point of view on this issue.

We see that the attitude to this complex phenomenon is still being formed on the level of ideomythological structures. On one hand, the mass consciousness is being mesmerized by the ideomyth about the "free world", and demonstrating loyalty to this world is regarded as an indispensable prerequisite for acquiring materialistic welfare (i.e. joining the group of respectable civilized countries). For instance, in the 1990s, Russia joining the G8 was widely celebrated, although if we analyze Russia's benefits from the membership, we wouldn't be so euphoric about it.

The imperativeness of this kind of globalization macro-value became the ideological pivot of "velvet" and "orange" revolutions. However the mythologeme of material prosperity on the back of joining the free world under the flag of globalization resulted for Russia in the economic collapse and demographic crisis in the 1990s.

On the other hand, there is an infernalization of the globalization process, as offering to the mankind nothing but the enslavement under the yoke of the Golden Billion. In fact, anti-globalism often turns into belligerent ignorance, migrantophobia, various forms of social deviations. Interestingly enough, anti-globalists in this context ascend to the archetype of Ned Ludd – the first conscious machine destroyer who inspired and gave name to the movement of British

workers that attributed deterioration of their social position to the introduction of machine equipment.

Modern Neo-Luddites, fighting globalization, mix up its two its heterogeneous components that we urge to divide – the communicational and the expansional ones. By rejecting the latter, they reject all the potential of international communicational exchange accumulated by humanity.

The research task in studying globalization phenomenon, as we see it, could consist in differentiating united and structurally mixed under this title phenomena.

Communicational globalization

Actually, there are two paradigms of globalization. The process of globalization as a formation of common communication (technocratic) space originated long before the emergence of the modern Western civilization. It wouldn't be an overstatement if we say that the first globalization wave in the history of mankind was the Neolithic revolution. Although it had begun in one local ethnic community, the manufacturing economy type (farming and cattle rearing) rapidly spread around the world. The transition from the Stone Age to the Copper and Iron ages also occurred in the format of globalization dynamics. The theory of "cultural diffusion", essentially the primeval globalization, is currently a widely accepted model of the universal logics of development of the Ancient World.

In modern history, the initially localized Western post-industrial community was also the main supplier of innovation technology. It was the West that accumulated the world scientific and technical ideal (we deliberately separate the issue of culture and social values into a different section below). But this was not always the case, and we believe that in the near future this will neither be the case.

In Classical times the Greek (i.e. European) thinkers were studying higher wisdom from Egyptian hierophants. The breakthrough of the advanced for that time Chinese achievements determined the course of the world development: the invention of paper, gun powder, compass, ship rudder, clock. The Great Silk Road

that starts in the Heavenly Kingdom was a crucial global communication thoroughfare. Introduction of sciences in poorly educated Europe was accomplished through the contacts with Arab Caliphates. It was the Arabs who taught Europeans algebra, chemistry, optics, astronomy. It is a common knowledge that the discovery of America transformed the agricultural outlook of the European continent.

Thus, there is no reason to believe that the role of intellectual leaders in the world will not change once again.

We already see some overwhelming difficulties in holding the leadership burden by the West. Japan's innovation breakthrough was the first sign of geopolitical modification of globalization configurations. The East, represented by developing national economies of various Asian regions is rapidly catching up, closing the gap with the West's Golden Billion major economic indicators. If the situation continues to develop this way, the direction of world communications may totally transform. With existing trends, in several decades the American globalization model will give way to the Chinese one.

Asian high-school and university students already excel their Western coevals in international scientific contests. There was a time when these academic competitions were dominated by Soviet youth. What is typical for rapidly developing semi-peripheral countries is that in their state budget the share of educational expenditures is higher than in the countries that are traditionally considered as belonging to the Western cultural range. However the latter, represented by the largest economic subjects, have a greater structural part earmarked for healthcare.

Thus, the West seems to be mostly present-oriented (health is the indicator) while the East is future-oriented (the indicator is education). As for Russia, given the current structure of its consolidated budget, it lacks either of the two value orientations.

The structure of state (consolidated) budget healthcare and education expenditures, in % to total expenditures¹

Country	Healthcare	Education
Russia	5.0	10.2
Developed Western countries		
Great Britain	16.6	12.9
Germany	13.3	8.5
Italy	13.2	10.6
Spain	13.5	10.9
The USA	20.5	16.8
Canada	18.6	14.8
Australia	17.2	14.7
On average	16.1	12.7
Developing semi-peripheral countries		
South Korea	0.4	17.7
Thailand	9.5	21.4
Egypt	4.9	19.2
Morocco	3.2	17.8
Argentina	7.7	13.4
Bolivia	9.4	19.7
Chili	14.0	18.1
On average	7	18.2

The attempts of self-isolation from globalization trends are also well-known in history. For instance, Japan became a “closed country” in the 1630s. In practice it led to a prolonged stagnation of its development. As a result, Japan’s opening for foreigners, accompanied by unequal treaties, was accomplished by force. The American military fleet headed by Perry that was going by the Japanese shores in

¹ Russia and world countries. 2006: Statistics data. Moscow., 2006. Pp. 290-291 (in Russian).

1853-54 forced the shogunate to sign an extremely unfavourable treaty. Thus, the isolationist policy, having constrained the globalization process only temporarily, resulted for Japan, due to the intensified during the isolation technological lag, in the severest forms of globalization. A similar scenario was executed when Western countries jointly “opened” the Chinese economy. China, once a very advanced country in terms of scientific and technological progress, didn’t even try to resist.

Thus, there is an absolutely progressive and obviously acceptable for world’s nations and societies side of modern globalization.

Expansional globalization

Expansional globalization has absolutely different functional role. In simple words, it is an aggression of one civilization against other civilizational organisms. The ways of expansion can differ. Its mechanisms are not confined to the straight-forward military invasion. There have been scenarios of demographic, propagandist, cultural-value expansions.

The “Merchant civilization” of the West historically chose the economy as one of the principal niches for its distribution. The declared principle of free trade was used to a large extent as a means for solving the issues of civilizational expansion. As a rule, when facing true competition in the economic sphere, Western civilizations used the mechanism of severe protectionist customs regulation. One could assume that with higher labor rhythm (unattainable for consumption societies) of new geo-economic entities of the Asian-Pacific region, the ideologeme of the free global commodity exchange will be devaluating.

However, the “free Western world” is not alien to imposing civilization by armed force. Democracy, imposed as a value political model in Iraq, is an example of direct military aggression on the part of Western civilization. Formation of the “White America” is connected with the ethnocide of the Native American population. Maybe the misunderstanding and rejection of civilization diversity of the modern world manifested on the level of psychomentality (the complex of American national identity) comes from there?

Another example of values double standards in modern globalization is the West's attitude to civilizational traditions. On one hand, traditional norms and institutions preserved in geopolitical periphery are treated as an obstacle for building the "open society". On the other hand, the USA never breaks its traditions. Traditionality of the British monarchy also contradicts with the policy of the English in the Commonwealth countries. Thus, for the USA and Great Britain themselves, the traditions not only were not an obstacle, but obviously have always been a basic factor for successful development.

So, why do they insist that other civilizational entities modernize their traditional ways of life, and those who dare to disagree are given a lesson, sometimes via bombers?

There exists an illusion about adaptational potential of expansional globalization. But is this militant Western globalism compatible with the civilizational variety of the world? Globalization adherents use the abstractly-universalist model of panhuman economic individual. From an academic point of view, such a universalist globalization is below criticism. At best, it correlates with the mechanist picture of the world that had been formulated in the educational environment in the XVIII century (during state institutionalization of the USA), but it doesn't correspond to the takeaways and theoretic provisions of the modern research. The big controversy is the West's self-assumption of the monopolist right to carry out the globalization mission. Even Samuel Huntington noted that in terms of its territory (the total area of the Western civilization countries is – 24.2%), population (10.1% of the global population), linguistics (the English language is native for 7.6%) or religion (Western Christianity has less than 30% of followers) the Western civilization didn't represent a majority of population.

Absolutization of civilizational advantages of only one part of the world is rather doubtful. Actually, the share of the West in the gross world product is less than one half (in the middle of the XX century this figure was at 64 %). If we base the comparison on other criteria, the Western civilization will move from the leader to an outsider. If we look at the birth rate, we would see very low figures

compared to other countries. For instance, in Germany, the birth rate is 1.32 children per woman, while in Asia it may exceed 7.² And it would be hardly plausible to argue that the phenomenon of the “ageing population” is a modern value-civilizational imperative. So the question is which civilization is at the top of the hierarchy: the one with the higher gross product or the higher birth rate? The answer is not obvious and, at the very least, could be a topic for discussion.

Apparently, the world, most nations in the world will hardly agree with the unifying, absolutizing the advantages of one of world civilizations model of globalization. This disagreement, in particular in one of its aspects, engenders the international terrorism. The values of one’s own civilization could never be implanted by bombers and transmitted in the language of ultimatums. These rather commonplace attempts have never been successful in the history of mankind, nor will they ever accomplish their goals in the modern times.

But is there an alternative to these unacceptable attempts? Is there a way to show to these over-enthusiastic globalizers some other types and models of global co-existence?

Dialog of civilizations as a way of lifting some globalization conflicts

Global communication among nations is not confined to mere trading and scientific and technological interaction. It also has cultural, civilizational-value dimension. One should carefully consider the phenomenon of missionaries. It is impossible to be truly pious and not to try to convert other people to one’s faith. The story of confessions separation as a result of religious dispute is wide-spread in the ideomythological legends of many peoples. The spread of Christianity was actually a historical version of globalization. Missions of other world religions such as Buddhism and Islam during their development were also similar to globalization.

However, the religious globalism of the past had manifold ways of implantation. There was, for instance, a violent way professed by Crusaders of

² The world in numbers – 2007. Moscow, 2007. P. 6 (in Russian).

Catholic Christianization, which resulted in the annihilation of a number of Slavic and Celtic ethnic groups from the European ethnic map. As the Russian philosopher V. Kozhinov aptly said, if Russia was called a prison of peoples, then Europe should be deemed a cemetery of peoples.³

Another way of Christian globalization, different from widening the political orbit of the new faith, was the spread of The Good News. Experiencing a revelation, a people not only preserved its ethnic identity, but also discovered new bounds of their originality. The experience of Orthodox empire building practiced by in Russia was based on preserving multiple identities rather than imposing unifying similarity.

Modern globalization lacks any missionary content. It doesn't promote or strengthen the new values, but rather destroys the existing ones, imposing the alien values. The value choice of the "free world" is essentially reduced to the question of material consumption facilities. Deficit of higher values is varnished by their substitution with such means as civil freedom and democracy. The answer to the question for what sake do people acquire freedom and are established democratic institutions is absent from the ideological inventory of globalists. Political attribute is being transformed from a means to a goal. But what is the true goal?

In modern Russia, in a number of other nations that discuss these questions in the framework of the World Public Forum "Dialog of Civilization" the ultimate goal is being defined as people, their lives, their dignity and the right for historical memory, traditions, values accumulated through the generations of their predecessors and passed centuries. A value becomes defined as a cultural-civilizational colour-richness and diversity.

In fact, figuratively speaking, is it possible to choose Miss Universe using the Barbie standards as the criteria? What about the other types of beauty – from the black continent or Asian countries? Are they denied the right to be recognized as beautiful? But based on what? There is no ground for that. Who of these women would want to squeeze into the Barbie standards? By the way, in fascist Germany

³ Kozhinov V. Achievements and woes of Russia. Moscow, 2000. P. 437-438. (in Russian)

chronicles there are some scenes where blond contestants were literally squeezed into these criteria. Those who didn't fit in went to gas furnaces of Oswiecim and Holocaust.

We are positive that this will not happen again, and that is why the unifying model of globalization has no future other than confrontation. This is why the world is beginning to understand that there is no alternative to civilizational diversity and inter-civilizational dialog. Technical progress is one thing, and the laws of radio technology, physics and nano-technology are the same for everybody, but major civilizational values differ for various peoples and states, they are constant and fundamental in determining behavioral motivation of people around the world. Acknowledging and respecting these values, promoting respective inter-civilizational, intercultural and inter-confessional communications is a very promising alternative. The modern globalism model doesn't envisage intercultural interactions as it is, to some extent, an antipode of cultural traditions. The idea of dialog of civilizations is alien to this model and becomes a global challenge for power centers in the world. It seems that in this case, some reconsideration of values is inevitable and will be naturally favorable.

The prophetic outlook on the future of the Russian philosopher V. Soloviev included the theme of overcoming the dissent among Christian churches before the coming of Antichrist. The important thing is that in this case the focus was not on lifting theological disputes and reaching theological consensus. The external challenge became a priority over internal arguments.⁴ Today the challenge is issued against the very right for civilizational diversity. The instinct of self-preservation forces civilizations to start a dialog.

However this scenario of dialog isn't anticipated by the theorists of the unified world. The most desirable for them and the most dangerous for the world is the model of civilizational wars with one superpower nominated as the arbitrator. We are approaching the vitally important alternative – a war or a dialog and

⁴ Soloviev V. S. Three Conversations about War, Progress and the End of Human History, Including a Short Story of the Anti-. Moscow, 2000. (in Russian).

polycultural world. This is a conceptual outlook on today's discussion. Whom does it affect in the first place? First and foremost, it affects societies and states. And in this in case, a national state is not defined as the pillar of nationalistic ideas and supremacy, but rather as a natural safeguard of axiomatic values: culture, faith, language, traditions, ancestors' memory, i. e. the total history of a nation in this particular state, customs and way of life. This is why in modern Russia the civilizational nature of demographic depopulation has been virtually proven. There are the threats of uncontrollable and non-inculturated immigration, the signs of degeneration instead of cultural enrichment during aggressive expansion of different civilizational traditions.

It seems that the question about modification of the aggressive-expansional type of globalization is identical to the question about the very existence of peoples and states.

In our opinion, this is the direction that should be taken by some modern world power centers or at least by the centers of economic power. In the history the power of force didn't always win. We are positive that the power of spirit has by far better chances of vanquishing. And the power of spirit presupposes the idea of civilizational uniqueness of peoples and states, which will never be sunk into oblivion.