CHAPTER 2

Russian Culture and Challenges of Socio-cultural Globalization

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Abstract

Socio-cultural globalization involves “reverse globalization” or the asymmetrical exchange of Western goods, capital and technologies, values, ideas and lifestyles, and simulation of unification (westernization) that mainly affect the material aspects of human existence, while the ethical and moral aspects of life remain quite stable. Socio-cultural globalization is a nonlinear dialectical process. National cultures are in a complex dialectical interaction with the global culture, but the global and the local ones exist as two parallel trends (based on the principle of the reverse movement toward each other). The most effective strategy to respond to the challenges of socio-cultural globalization is to develop adaptive abilities of traditional civilization to the new socio-cultural realities and to make a choice between them, giving preference to the latter but using all the best of the former. However, socio-cultural transformations and socio-cultural adaptation have limits. Russian civilization can offer the global world its main principles and experience for a peaceful existence of different cultures and confessions. Attempts to transfer Western culture to the global periphery could result in spiritual consolidation of Eastern Christian and Islamic civilizations. This alliance may become an eastern challenge to Western liberal culture and an exporter of ideas, values, and ideals.

Keywords


Socio-cultural globalization is a process of internationalization of culture on the basis of liberal values and principles of the European Enlightenment. This process should not be confused with Americanization. The latter is only one of the models of socio-cultural globalization. This very model, which
is more viable and which uses effective methods of promotion and public relations, has become prevalent in the initial phase of globalization.

We are witnessing the formation of globalist culture, that is, universal or unified American-type culture. Internationalization, unification, and universalization of the cultural sphere of the lifestyle of peoples ignore many civilizational imperatives and suppress cultural traditions, ceremonies, and rituals. Alexander Chumakov states, “Mutual penetration and mutual assimilation of various cultures, being an objective and necessary consequence of globalization, led in the 20th century to the formation of the universal, planetary culture. Its contours can be already seen quite well in every country and continent, where the established way of life, traditions and daily peculiarities coexist.”

As a matter of fact, socio-cultural globalization means active and dynamic importing of Western values into another socio-cultural environment. Its purpose is imposition of alien traditions, ideals, values, and, ultimately, control of human consciousness.

Chumakov also observes that, “difficulties and contradictions [are] engendered by an increasing influence and broad expansion of ‘mass culture’—periodically emerging crises of spirituality, increasing apathy, feelings of being lost, insecurity, etc, are the examples.”

The pace of cultural globalization has accelerated as a result of the information revolution, which promoted cross-border movement of not only material results of Western culture as it was before, but also spiritual ones.

On the one hand, the world is witnessing an intensive process of adapting to Western (mostly American) culture, which appears to be new for traditional societies, and attempts are being made to adapt it to local socio-cultural traditions, customs, and lifestyles.

On the other hand, in order to survive as a civilization, a country needs to respond to the challenges of socio-cultural globalization by forming its own directions in the multivariate information space and integrate Western and national principles, along with contemporary and traditional principles.

In order to minimize negative consequences of socio-cultural globalization, the nations of sovereign countries need knowledge of their own cultural and intellectual heritage, as well as an ability to use it creatively in a different cultural space and social time.

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2 Ibid., 291.