Digital Civilization and Problems of Cultural Diversity

Political Actors or Infocommunication Technologies

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Abstract—The victorious march of civilization throughout the history of mankind is associated with a change in cultural diversity. The leveling of differences is due to both the natural erasure of cultural borders (trade, the progress of infocommunication technologies with subsequent globalization), and the direct interest of states in increasing internal stability by minimizing intercultural clashes. Observing the available historical examples from Antiquity to our time, it becomes possible to identify a close relationship with the actions taken by political actors, directly or indirectly.

Scientific and technical progress, especially in the field of infocommunications (so obviously used by political actors for their own purposes), bringing globalization, undoubtedly caused damage to cultural diversity. The new reality of the digital world, leading to the apogee of the process of mixing, at the same time, offers many tools and opportunities to preserve cultural diversity, allowing one, for example, to be involved in the world economic process, in its geographic region, preserving its culture, traditions and beliefs. The pace of development of the digital civilization suggests that in this process, very soon (in the life of one generation), fundamental changes will occur.

Keywords—scientific and technical progress; watersheds of culture; cultural diversity; social philosophy; globalization; infocommunication technologies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity is tightly connected with a dominant political regime throughout the history. All political actors are prone to reduce the diversity to stabilize the state, but more right-wing ones tend to create environments preserving it by condemning intermarriage and other association with oppressed cultures. (It is worth noting, though, that successful extremist regimes of both political flanks work very hard to merge the cultures in the end, the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union being the prime examples). At the same time, the left-wing ones work more like melting pots, creating new cultures by weakening the existing mechanisms preventing the cultures from naturally merging. That connection and the rapid acceleration of the technological development are the reasons of the extensive damage done to the diversity in the last three centuries. Consequently, this connection with respect to the previous political conjuncture and its changes can yield approximate prognosis for the cultural diversity change in states, regions and superregions.

Cultural consolidation is inevitable at the creation of even the least centralised multicultural states, as the populace isn’t keen to trust culturally and religiously alien administration, and, therefore, a course of standardizing a multiplicity of cultures to bring them close to the culture of a ruling elite, is natural and necessary for large centralized multicultural states to survive and thrive.

II. CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE OPTICS OF THE CULTURE’S WATERSHEDS

There is no clear definition of culture, so the term “cultural diversity” is also somewhat blurred. It is possible, having formulated the definition of culture, to identify the general patterns of changes in cultural diversity that accompany the development of society and the state throughout history. Taking into account their changes, these general laws can then be applied to form approximate forecasts of the development of cultural diversity in the future.

Depending on regional characteristics and historical period, each culture has a large set of “watersheds” (characteristics that separate members of one group, or culture, from alien people), the most important of which are usually, though not always, linguistic, religious, racial, civic and traditionalist.

The adjective “civic” here means the presence of citizenship of a state (it is worth noting that with the advent of nationalism, this “watershed” began to have a much smaller meaning, giving way to the combination of linguistic and traditionalist), and the traditionalist - following the traditions, customs and social norms. For example, the main “watersheds” of Rome were linguistic, civic and traditionalistic, and religious, meaning much later in medieval Europe, meant little, because the Romans initially had a very wide religious tolerance (see Edward Gibbon. The History of the Decline and the Roman Empire). It is worth noting that traditionalist and linguistic “watersheds” are still almost universally dominant in culture, because language is a guarantor and a method of communication, on which any power and a large social structure rests. And adherence to a
single set of customs and norms facilitates intra-social relations, since uniform norms entail uniform social agreements and restrictions, usually not contradicting each other and serving as the most basic method for regulating the work of a community. Different traditions very often contradict each other and therefore prepare the ground for disagreement and conflict. With the growth and centralization of states and the development of nationalism, the number of important for the state functioning of the watershed decreases, being replaced by a purely legalistic civic "watershed", which means, among other things, agreement to follow the same codified laws. Thus, culture is a set of “watersheds”, allowing dividing the set of all people into many satisfying parts of these conditions, people and many who do not satisfy them. Finding ways to apply this theory to the study of cultural diversity, however, is difficult.

III. FACTORS OF CHANGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Having defined a culture, let us consider the factors affecting the change in cultural diversity (the presence of multiple cultures at one time) throughout history. It should be noted that it would decrease throughout the reliably known history of man from antiquity to the newest time (note: history to antiquity is not considered in this work due to the insufficient number or apocryphism of available sources). The main reasons for this are the natural erasure of cultural boundaries as a result of human interaction and the direct interest of states as political actors in reducing the number of cultures for the sake of increasing internal stability by minimizing intercultural clashes. (Another way of increasing internal stability by minimizing intercultural clashes is increasing tolerance to other cultures - in general, it acquires considerable popularity in theory, practice and the mindset of society rather late).

A. Inclusion and Exclusivity

At this stage, one should consider such theoretical property of society as inclusiveness. We define it as the desire and the ability of society to accept approximately equal intercultural differences. The need to introduce such parameter is dictated primarily by its detrimental impact on the rate of reduction of cultural diversity by suppressing the communication that leads to the mutual cultural influence. We also define exclusivity as the inverse parameter of inclusiveness. Since a person generally experiences far less confidence in those who do not like him, and because the first successful states were first created in a small area, the cultural homogeneity of which is relatively easy to provide, they were culturally exclusive. Exclusive societies are fairly stable, but their ability to directly increase the occupied area and the ability to recover from conflicts and cataclysms is much lower, since the reserve of manpower is more easily depleted due to its relative scarcity. The best example of an exclusive state would be the Greek polis, for example, Athens, where before the law of Pericles granted citizenship to artisans who wanted to move to Athens with their family (it is worth noting that this greatly helped Athens to recover from the outbreak of the plague) or Sparta, where cultural exclusivity reached at its apogee, and within the state despite its small size, there were in fact two or three cultures. Nevertheless, even the Spartans, in obedience to the harsh necessity, introduced a new class of citizens - "new citizens", or neo-modelons who represented themselves as the personal helots. This illustrates the inevitable increase in inclusivity in the event of a catastrophe or war, entailing damage to the reserve of manpower.

For the sake of simplicity, let us define inclusiveness as the eagerness of a society to accept intercultural relations on a roughly equitable basis. Exclusive societies were the first ones to be created by humans, but they, while sensibly stable, are very limited in their ability to propagate as any increment in the amount of land directly administered by a perfectly exclusive society is an increment in the amount of land that has to be colonized by the dominant culture. Also the lack of inclusiveness makes societies vulnerable to disasters and wars as it makes it harder to replenish the manpower. The examples of exclusive nations are, of course, Greek poleis and early states, like Athens and especially Lacedaemon. This exclusiveness suited the Greeks finely since there was no real expansion and no real need to change the local culture, and the primary inclusiveness-increasing measures were taken by states to aid the war effort, such as the Periclean law granting the citizenship to those artisans willing to settle in the city and the Spartan creation of a new Neodamodei class of citizens. Both of those measures, as can be easily seen, were taken to replenish the manpower exhausted by either war or plague. Thus, we can suppose that inclusiveness, while potentially destabilizing the society, is necessary in order to expand and ease the recovery after disasters and wars. Considering the expansion of the Roman state, it becomes clear that this peculiar society, whilst somewhat unwilling to share the citizen privileges, was quite inclusive religious, offered everybody a possibility to become a citizen, bestowed everyone with vast arrays of public installations and institutions and readily welcomed the local elites into the ranks of the Romans. That allowed Rome to conquer and to reign supreme over a great amount of land almost without serious national uprisings against the Latin rule, save for the Jewish revolts. The same pattern of prevalence of exclusive cultures in small political actors and necessary steps to increase inclusiveness either due to the manpower shortages or in order to enhance the ability to integrate and pacify new regions is distinct throughout the history, and it can be easily seen that all contemporary societies are either small or inclusive to some degree.

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B. Influence of political conjuncture

Focusing on the second factor, in retrospect, we can give an example of the influence of the political situation on the cultural diversity of the actions of the Roman Populares party, which supported the spread of Roman law to the Italic allies. Although the political affiliation of the author of the reform, Marcus Livius Drusus, is somewhat uncertain, based on his previous projects - agrarian reform, which affected the vast
public lands in Campania, where there were most of them, and grain dole reform, which brought the urban poor to acquire grain at nominal prices or for free, which then became common practice, it is possible to judge that if he was not a popularis, he acted in this way, trying to fulfill the promises of that party and thereby deprive them of the opportunity to win over the plebs [10]. Marcus Drusus was killed, and the Italic rebels, demanding that they be granted the rights of Roman citizens, which were subsequently granted to them. Naturally, after the equation of rights, the natural interaction of people between themselves and their natural influence on each other completely erased the boundaries between the Romans and Italic. Of course, the Italic experienced Roman cultural influence before, but social inequality did not allow them to mix with the Romans completely. In general, the policy of Romanization, consciously pursued by the Romans, produced favorable results, spreading Roman culture almost throughout the whole known world, so that some frontier barbarians of the late Roman period differed much less from the imperial population by customs and habits than before, and the Ostrogoths that seized Italy and a number of other provinces and ruled with great preservation of the Roman system, nominally regarded as governors of the emperor in the controlled areas and almost without violating the laws and customs established by the Romans [2].

The Caracalla’s Constitutio Antoniniana, which granted citizenship to all residents of the empire, however, did not have such consequences and even caused some damage to the policy of Romanization, undermining the importance of Roman law as an incentive to accept Roman customs.

Prior to the reign of Kaiser Maximilian, there was no clear conception of a centralized state due to a number of factors, including the regrettable underdevelopment of the bureaucracy of most of Europe and the cultural realities associated with the dominant methods of warfare and government. And changes in cultural diversity were carried out either along the way, for example, during the crusades against the Languedoc Cathars, or spontaneously. Thus, the Normans, led by Rollo the Walker, who received the Normandy from Charles the Simple under the Saint-Clair-sur-Epte agreement, mixed culturally with the local population, eventually forming a nationality that was a cross between French and Norman cultures. Cultural consolidation in general was a process of conferring the fiefs to representatives of the desired culture. It happened in Britain after its conquest: Duke William distributed to his Norman followers the possession of Saxon nobles, and gradually Anglo-Saxon British culture experienced a significant influence of the Normans, forming English culture. In the early Modern history, national states appear (although the concepts of nation and nationalism are still absent). They thrive and expand due to their greater stability. It is impossible to speak of these nation states as nation states in the strict sense of the word, because cultural and political unification concerns to a large extent only the elite, however, during this period, it is the elite that plays a crucial role in managing society and determining the vector of its cultural development. This process of creating states as well-defined political entities, rather than domain domains of one or another ruler, viewed from the perspective of general feudal law, reached its apogee with the advent of Westphalian sovereignty. Vivid examples of the above-described protational states can be France, England, Portugal and Castile. However, this epoch marks not only the emergence of states that consolidate their culture, but also indirect cultural influence as a result of certain political actions, such as the Germanization of Silesia, where German colonists were warmly welcomed because of the economic benefits caused by their presence and where the German super-culture influence (it is considered possible to use this term, since the German culture in the strict sense of the word did not exist at that time, but there were significant similarities in the Germanic cultures of Holy Roman Empire of the German nation, allowing to group those cultures in some sense) was very much changing for the culture of the elite of the region, and also the culture of the region itself.

The Middle Ages and the early Modern history are generally more likely a period of the unification of many local cultures into larger groups through natural cultural interaction, even if it was influenced by some political actions, mainly violent. Then, however, the greatest obstacle to the erosion of cultural boundaries was conservatism, including religious, which actually suffered defeat after two world wars and insurrections of 68 year.

The marginalization of the institution of faith and the weakening of religious positions reached its greatest magnitude at the end of the 19th century with the secularization of US public life and the beginning of the so-called Kulturkampf - the struggle of the German administration with the Catholic Church for the control over the education and investiture [11]. This caused a backlash in the form of the emergence of fundamentalist movements [15]. At this time, the nations finally took shape in the modern understanding of this concept, and the nineteenth century saw a number of national uprisings, such as the Hungarian uprising [6]. The formation of nations has become a new stage in the increase in the scale of cultural groups, which function approximately as one culture and possess considerable tolerance towards each other. Political necessity, however, prevailed over attempts to resist church weakening, although the generally culturally and politically conservative atmosphere in Europe kept the cultural diversity relatively unviolated, although the political unification of most states that ended in the 19th century served as a catalyst for the formation of the above-described de facto united nations, greatly reducing the diversity of cultures in Europe compared with previous periods. The exception to the rule was, perhaps, the United States, where the concept of a melting pot was formed early due to the heterogeneity of the state, the principles laid in its foundation and its age.

The first truly brutal blow to social and religious conservatism received after the Great War. First, the main strongholds of conservative and heavily religiously influenced views fell - the Central Powers and the Russian Empire, secondly, the old system of the world discredited itself, thirdly, the mass transfer of the economy back to a peaceful course and large-scale release of workers after the war caused the widespread emergence of adverse economic consequences that required urgent social change. The main change, however, was the widespread pacifism, caused by the general fatigue from the war, and that is why peacekeeping was the main part
of the agenda of the world governments that survived the war. Conservative and even reactionary views on cultural issues, however, have found a second life in revanchist and irredentist autocracies, such as: Horthy’s Hungary, the Great German State, the Italian Kingdom, etc. [4, 5].

The defeat of these regimes in World War II and the inability of the old governments to fulfill the promise of maintaining peace delivered a second, much more sensitive blow to the old ideas, especially in the field of culture. Germanic cultural policy, ironically, ruined the idea that served, because earlier normal positions could now lead to disadvantageous political comparison with the fallen dictatorships, and previously normal ideas were heavily discredited due to the clear demonstration of their overly zealous application. Some continued to adhere to such views, such as, for example, the Imperial Socialist Party in the Federal Republic of Germany, but were in the minority. At the same time, excessive liberalism in matters of cultural frontiers was also undesirable due to the correlation with the ideas of the left, which then represented the main enemy of the free world. The next defeat inflicted on social and religious conservatism in cultural matters was the mass uprisings of the “new left” in the late 60s, which led to an intensification of counterculture and considerable general liberalization of political sympathies, which is still ongoing [3]. By the 1970s, however, a new concept was developed that supports cultural diversity, designed to save it - the concept of multiculturalism. It is, however, largely paradoxical and unreliable, and therefore it is now entering a period of crisis.

C. The role of technological development.

The ever-developing technology presents a very important factor to count when assessing the cultural diversity changes. Every state greatly relies on a combination of commerce, control and communication, both public and private, to operate, and the technology weighs in significantly. For example, it had not always been prudent to build large centralized states. The Roman Empire made it possible by developments in both legalistic theory and engineering. After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, however, the administrative theory suffered a lot, and the next great state to spring to prominence – the Carolingian Empire – was even less centralized than the Roman Empire, which at one point had six legitimate reigning emperors and eventually proved itself unstable. When the new kingdoms and empires emerged from the barbarian realms that appeared on the Roman territory and beyond, so great was the decentralization that the early German rulers lacked what could be called a capital, instead moving across the country while staying in various palaces, called Pfalzen and ruled in the royal absence by a count palatine. This concept was known as the Reisekönigtum, or itinerant kingship. During that period, the art of erecting easily defensible fortifications at some point progressed faster than the siege craft. And eventually the combination of ill-developed administrative and bureaucratic systems, the nomoi concerning land distribution and the very societal organization, the lack of proper consummate law codification, ease at which a town or a castle could potentially be defended, yielded a situation where a small principality or city could maintain its independence or immediate imperial jurisdiction. That was the main reason behind the great feudal fragmentation prominent in Italy, France and Central Europe. But even if we decide to disregard that and suppose that a large centralized state appears in the place of a XIII-century Holy Roman Empire, it is doomed to fail, because it lacks the means of fast communication and therefore has trouble exerting control. More than that, many a rebellion was fueled by the conviction of the masses that the central authority has forsaken them and cares not for their needs, like the plentiful provincial rebellions of Gallienus’s reign.

D. Globalization

Globalization has become one of the significant consequences of scientific and technological progress. Although the desire of mankind to globalization, to the process of world economic, political and cultural integration and unification has been observed throughout human history. The sources of the negative attitude towards globalization, we see in the XIX century. Konstantin Nikolaevich Leontiev was critical of the belief in endless progress leading us to a bright future. In his opinion, we are awaited by massive scientific and technical education, average literacy and, of course, freedom - a falsely understood freedom leading along the path of egalitarian progress. In globalization, he saw the arrival of the average person - a representative of mass culture, the opposite of the national culture that determined the spiritual world of the people. Konstantin Leontiev is rightfully referred to as conservatives and, at the same time, to critics of the idea of globalization, especially since many of his statements on this topic sound like aphorisms ("Life will probably send from progress" [7]) today you can paraphrase in "Life seems to send from globalization").

However, Leontiev did not oppose true progress, leading to complication, “blooming diversity”, but only against egalitarian progress, in which he saw some anti-cultural, technological force, which is a complex of tendencies that destroy the spiritual, cultural, and creative individuals and nations. Analysis of Leontiev's creativity allows us to conclude that he anticipated the ideas of the social philosophy of the twentieth century. Developed by thinkers of the twentieth century. The theme of the crisis of culture has matured in the depths of the previous century, since the problems that we faced in modern times have already been raised by Leontiev. He set them, marked them, although he did not use those concepts that became widespread in the twentieth century.

In the second half of the XIX century. Konstantin Leontiev defined disastrous trends in the development of European civilization. We are accustomed to consider progress as a positive phenomenon, because it implies development — expansion — the complication of our capabilities. However, the last, according to Leontiev, comes to naught when it comes to the egalitarian, i.e. the egalitarian nature of progress. The egalitarian progress here is understood as the technogenic force that destroys the spiritual, cultural, and creative aspects of the personality.
The growth of technical goods and amenities gives rise to the illusion that this will continue indefinitely. But technological innovations and their material components bring with them the so-called popular culture, which is devoid of a living, real connection with the true culture and which uses fragments of national cultures, only by imitating them.

The introduction of mass culture into the culture of societies that have preserved original traditions creates the threat of losing this identity [16]. In fact, the masses have neither social organization, nor customs and traditions, nor well-established rules and rituals, nor their own opinions. They are not only anonymous, but also conformal. They are steadily subjected to the processing of standardized information through the means of mass communication (radio, cinema, television, the Internet, etc.), under the influence of which stereotypical thinking, uniformity, adaptability, lack of independence of thinking are formed in the “mass person”. Conformity leads to “herd exaltation,” to irresponsibility, to the loss of individuality.

According to sociologists M. McLuhan and D. Bell, modern media radically change the life style, values, and perception of the world, thereby creating a “new tribal man” living in global space, whereby mass culture comes to the fore [9]. On the consequences of such phenomena, I.A. Ilyin wrote that if a work of art is not passed through the very depths of the soul, a “taste of the crowd” (equivalent to almost always tastelessness), “fashion” in art and eventually “vulgarity” will arise [3].

It was from this that Leontiev warned. Since childhood, having absorbed the charm of Russian life, Russian Orthodoxy, the beauty and poetry of Russian estates, which are unique, like all living things, Leontiev was one of the first to feel the lack of spirituality of Western European civilization, which leads, in his opinion, to world revolution or egalitarian progress. He brought up tremendous problems that were not all resolved by him. One of these problems is the dispute, started by Leontiev with the socialists and supporters of the theory of progress, a dispute that goes far beyond its field of globalization, the possibility of which is initially individualized, i.e. strives for higher unity in higher diversity (for originality), and then it spreads, simplifies for the second time and goes down, crushes and dies.

On globalization, which is a dead end stage of egalitarian progress, Leontiev, being a medical doctor, makes his disappointing diagnosis, giving it the last place in his triad of the historical evolution of humanity, according to which everything is initially individualized, i.e. strives for higher unity in higher diversity (for originality), and then it spreads, simplifies for the second time and goes down, crushes and dies.

E. Infocommunication Technologies

Discussing about the impact of scientific and technological progress on the emergence of globalization, we should note the impact of ICT. It is the impact of infocommunication technologies that historically traveled from writing to the modern digital world led to the modern upsurge of the globalization process. One of the key phenomena today is the development of information computer technology (ICT), leading to the formation of the information society [18]. The following problem is: if the acceleration of the development of infocommunication technologies comes to a saturation stage [14], will the saturation of the globalization process occur or is this process endless?

Globalization raises questions in all directions: in education, in relations with the employer in relation to groups of people who work on the same task, etc. Globalization is an ambiguous phenomenon of development: with respect to the economy, it has a greater positive influence, but in the human dimension, it is rather a phenomenon with a negative sign. People talking about globalization and the impact on this process of infocommunications, usually attributed to this process a negative impact.

However, the development of infocommunications in the process of globalization plays an opposite role: for example, the opportunity to work for a company located anywhere in the world, living in its native land, respectively, preserving its traditions, culture and its roots, its ethos.

Globalization with its mobility, with the "pumping" of genes, etc. gradually loses relevance in the problem field of influence of info-communications. After all, today's infocommunication technologies already allow people not to physically move to other countries, not to change their place of residence. There is an opportunity to solve all problems together with the whole world, in the on-line mode. In this process of informatization and globalization, the possibility of the disappearance of the most important factor in the mobility of people, with all its consequences, is traced. A modern representative, such as India, China or Russia, can work in an American company while staying in their own country. This is
especially convenient in one of the most common areas of the labor market - in the field of IT and programming. This means that a representative of a nation, a nation, has the opportunity to remain in its own country and continue its kin there, i.e. to develop their country genetically, thereby alleviating the problem of degeneration, changes in the gene pool and demography.

Similar positive prospects for solving the demographic problem are provided by many foreign companies. They, renting offices in Russia, actually participate in its positive change. Employees of these companies teach at universities, supervise graduate students, graduate students. On the one hand, this is a positive impact on the development of human capital in Russia; on the other hand, it is certainly globalization, since people in Russia work for specific foreign firms. Therefore, the development of infocommunicative technologies, of course, enhances globalization, but it also softens it, because this process is not associated with the transit / export of genes, or with “brain drainage”. At least that is the trend [13].

Thus, we see that globalization as the price for the development of information and communication technologies is ambiguous, because, on the one hand, ICTs spur the development of globalization, and on the other - they erode this process.

IV. NEW REALITY OF THE INFOCOMMUNICATION WORLD.

A radical breakthrough in the development of infocommunication technologies at the turn of the XX - XXI centuries questioned the preservation of multicultural identity. An important role in this process is played by the global involvement of mankind in education, especially in the unified process of obtaining higher education, - 26% of the world's population [12], which practically means being close to global engagement. Such perspective means that in the world of rapidly evolving infocommunications the immanently inherent humanity’s desire for economic and cultural integration and unification, thanks to an infinite number of new technological possibilities, gets the ultimate expression. From now on, the world is open to all, regardless of topos and chronos, which brings to the apotheosis of the process of losing identity.

Realizing the importance of this problem, the UNESCO international organization adopts the “Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity”, according to which the preservation and protection of cultural diversity is established as an ethical imperative [17]. In order to achieve this goal, the Declaration recommends using, including all the opportunities provided by cyberspace.

Indeed, the new reality of the digital world, leading to the apogee of the process of all-confusion, at the same time, offers many tools and opportunities to preserve cultural diversity, allowing, for example, to be involved in the world economic process, in its geographic region, preserving its culture, traditions and beliefs.

V. CONCLUSION

Thus, scientific and technical progress, especially in the field of info-communications (so obviously used by political actors for their own purposes), undoubtedly caused damage to cultural diversity. Modern technological development provides new opportunities for preserving the whole range of cultures and traditions. The pace of development of digital civilization suggests that in this process, very soon (in the life of one generation), fundamental changes will occur.

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