

## Europe and Russia in the Context of Global Changes: Socio-cultural Approach

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# Европа и Россия в контексте глобальных изменений: социокультурный подход

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**Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается культурный плюрализм как одна из существенных черт современной глобализации. Мы видим как различия, так и сходства европейской и российской культур на фоне глобального культурного плюрализма, а также требования, которые относятся к междисциплинарным исследованиям в данной сфере. Рассматриваются теоретические и методологические принципы при исследовании данной специфики; анализ парадигмы применяется для изучения глобального культурного плюрализма, специфики отдельных культур и их сравнения. В статье особое внимание уделяется культурным детерминантам взаимоотношений Европы и России, сравнению культур этих многонациональных акторов, их культурным формам, особенностям и ценностным ориентациям. В проведенном исследовании были использованы труды известных ученых. Социокультурный подход важен для изучения межкультурных связей, которые на фундаментальном уровне приводят к образованию связей в современном обществе. Проблемы в социокультурной сфере вызывают трудности в различных областях человеческой деятельности. Это особенно важно для российской и европейской культур. Тесные и порой непростые отношения, которые складывались на протяжении долгих лет, слишком ценны для обоих культурных миров, чтобы пренебрегать ими в современной ситуации, где глобализация занимает одно из ключевых мест. Полученная в ходе исследований информация используется для обоснования конкретных межкультурных проблем, помогает применить более глубокий подход для конкретизации ее проблематики. В современном мире культурная сфера тесно связана с глобализацией, она проникает во все аспекты человеческой деятельности. Те спорные моменты или проблемы, которые будут возникать между людьми в современном мире, нельзя игнорировать, и именно глубокое изучение основ этих проблем поможет в будущем нивелировать их пагубные последствия или вовсе их избежать.

**Ключевые слова:** глобализация, глобальное культурное многообразие, европейская культура, русская культура, анализ культурной парадигмы, социокультурный подход

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## EUROPE AND RUSSIA IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CHANGES: SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH

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**Abstract:** The article is focused on cultural plurality as one of the essential features of contemporary stage of globalization. It reflects both differences and similarities between European and Russian cultures in the context of global cultural plurality and defines the demands that relate to interdisciplinary research in this area. In the study, the theoretical and methodological principles of research on cultural specificity are considered; the paradigm analysis is applied to study global cultural plurality, the specifics of individual cultures, and their comparison. The article focuses on the cultural determinants of the relationship between Russia and Europe, comparing the cultures of these multinational actors, their cultural forms, characteristics, and value orientations. In the research, we used the works of famous scientists. The sociocultural approach is necessary to study the intercultural relations, which at a fundamental level lead to the organization and functioning of relationships in modern society. Problems in the sociocultural sphere cause difficulties in various spheres of human activity. The close and complicated relationships that have developed over the years are too valuable for both cultural worlds to neglect them in the modern situation, where globalization took one of the essential places. The information, which was obtained in the course of research, is used to justify specific intercultural problems, and helps to apply a deeper approach to concretize the problems. Nowadays, the cultural sphere is closely connected with globalization; it permeates all aspects of human activity. Those controversial issues or problems that will arise between the societies in the modern world cannot be ignored, because it is precisely the thorough study of the basis of these problems that will help us in the future to counteract their adverse consequences for further development of society.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Global cultural plurality, European culture, Russian culture, Cultural paradigm analysis, Socio-cultural approach

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## Introduction

Interrelations between Europe and Russia represent the important topic for discussions not only in the media or in international negotiations of politicians, but also in the academic field of political science, economics and international relations discipline especially. Simplifications, des-interpretations, discourse manipulations are used frequently in these discussions. They are based on mutual misunderstanding and traditional cultural stereotypes, and they are ideologically used – abused. It amplifies real international instability, threats and conflicts not only regionally but also globally. That is why understanding the cultural differences and similarities is very important precondition for overcoming the international controversies. However, these problems need serious multilevel and interdisciplinary research. Any simplification is misleading and ineffective, and it generates other serious problems.

This article is focused on cultural plurality as one of substantial features at the contemporary stage of globalization. It describes differences and similarities of European and Russian cultures in the context of global cultural plurality and defines the demands of interdisciplinary research on cultural plurality and specificity.

Socio-cultural approach represents effective theoretical and methodological platform for intercultural research. It results from more general systemic approach and concretizes its principles in reflection on human reality (anthropo-reality, anthropo-sphere) as one socio-cultural complex system. It enables to study contemporary globalized world in its complexity and identify substantial global changes. In addition, it allows us to understand globalization as a long-term global transformation, qualitative change for organizing both human socio-cultural reality as a whole and all dimensions of social life separately. Used as a methodological tool, it helps to understand human societies as socio-cultural systems, the inner and global complexities of their interrelations and interdependencies<sup>1</sup>. In this respect just socio-cultural approach enables to explain global cultural structure of the world, to study cultural plurality as a historical phenomenon, to identify cultural specificity of particular socio-cultural systems, to compare cultures and to identify mutual similarities and differences of cultures. Socio-cultural approach enables to define substantial questions and dimensions for research on similarities and controversies between particular socio-cultural systems. Compared to individual disciplines, this approach enables to elaborate complex, multilevel, interdisciplinary system of research.

Nowadays, all human societies (socio-cultural systems) are determined by specific global phenomenon. It is defined as a *global cultural gap*. This notion reflects

on strong dynamics and expansion of global civilization as a main source for global integration and networking in the world and inner integration of spiritual culture of each socio-cultural system. This implies that all human societies are now in cultural tension between external civilization integration and internal integration tendency of their specific spiritual culture. This tension may result in problems and conflicts in political, economic, security and other dimensions of international life. Socio-cultural approach enables to identify inner and external cultural tensions and conflicts that have potential manifest themselves in specific political or military threats, in international or ethnic conflicts, in tension between national cultures and culturally different minorities, etc.

## Global cultural structures

Cultural plurality is the phenomenon, which has been developing for the last five thousand years. Specificity and uniqueness of particular socio-cultural entities were shaped, and their inner complexity increased during long historical period. The cultural “map” of the world has been dramatically changing in the course of human history. Any culture represented and still represents a very dynamic picture from the historical perspective. It is continually changing and evolving, it has also passed through periods of depression and decline. At the same time, in the course of this dynamic historical process, each culture represents an integrated relatively stable socio-cultural whole that can be characterized by long-term stable cultural features.

Cultural plurality is a substantial feature not only for post-neolithic period of history, but also for contemporary globalized world. It is a source for humankind creativity; unique different cultures can enrich each other. In this respect, the global cultural unification seems to be a global threat. On the contrary, developing mutual understanding and complying with uniqueness and specificity of different cultures should be understood as an important aspect of complex global security<sup>2</sup>.

The problems of global cultural plurality (such as cultural diversity, similarities and differences of cultures, potential and limits of cultural tension and cultural “convergence”) are possible to study along horizontal and vertical axis. Horizontal axis of analysis allows to compare cultures on the same level, e.g. national cultures level or supranational cultural circles level. It implies the research on specificity, diversity, interrelations of socio-cultural systems and dynamics of changes on the same level. Vertical axis of analysis enables to study specificity, the dynamics of change and interrelations between socio-cultural systems of different levels, for example, national cultures and ethnic groups, national

1 See: *Lehmannová, Z. Systems Approach. Theoretical and Methodological Principles: Focus on Globalization. Working Papers, Vol. II.* University of Economics, Prague. Prague: Oeconomica, 2008.

2 The concept of complex security elaborated by Copenhagen school. See: *Buzan, B., Waever, O., De Wilde, J. Security: New Framework for Analysis.* Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998.

cultures within supranational cultural circles. Combination of comparisons on both horizontal and vertical axis allows to observe effects of globalization dynamics and global cultural gap on cultural plurality from global, regional and local points of view.

The research premise comes from the abovementioned methodological principles. It presumes identification of different cultures with some supranational circles to understand the effects of their interactions. Analysis and comparison of European and Russian cultures then presuppose the response to one substantial question: are there two different cultures (civilizations) – Orthodox and European, or there is one European culture (civilization) with two specific and different parts – East European (Orthodox cultural circle) and West European (originally Roman cultural circle, later Roman and Protestant)?<sup>3</sup>

Arnold Toynbee speaks about two autonomous cultures: Western and Orthodox<sup>4</sup>. For Orthodox culture, he reflects on its inner diversity, specificity of its regions and specifically defines Russian cultural peculiarity. S. Huntington<sup>5</sup> used Toynbee's concept and modified it to his geopolitical conception. Similarly to Toynbee's concept, Huntington also used religious identity as a main criterion to define Orthodox civilization (or culture) as specific, autonomous civilization. He identifies Orthodox culture geographically with former USSR including several countries of Eastern bloc (except central Asian part, which was influenced by Islam).

But in order to understand the specificity of cultures, it is necessary to analyze numerous other factors besides religion. Religion is a very important cultural factor, but it needs to be analyzed in the context with other factors. Another factor that is mentioned is the Euro-Asian character of culture. It requires identification of external cultural influences, comparison of cultures, historical analyses, the research of "depth" for external influence, etc.

The concept of European culture with two specific parts has a more composite structure. Presently, it paints a picture of large Western culture with 3-4 diverse parts, interconnected with some common denominators, but particularly expressed. Then European culture is divided into two parts. They are specific and different from each other, but they have common features, common historical roots, and common spiritual background. Their specificity has developed under the different historical experiences and inner and outer cultural influences. But they have common ancient reli-

gious roots; and in case of Russian culture, the last three centuries jointly shared historical experience – Russia has been an actor in Westphalian system, as one of European powers it has operated under the norms and principles of this system.

Eastern Europe itself is divided into two parts, separated by historical experience and external cultural influences, and interconnected by common spiritual background: Russia and Balkans have been under the strong influence of Islamic culture for a long period of time. Western Europe was in a different cultural situation. The national cultures are the dominant elements of it, even when regional differences can be identified, too. Western part of Europe is not as large as the Eastern part; therefore, national cultures are geographically close to each other and there are stronger mutual cultural influences and common values. Additionally, long shared history rising from the Ancient period determines common cultural features.

In this regard, it is important to notice the Western culture in European and Russian culture. It has historical roots: Western Europe for several centuries was the only core of future Western culture. At present, the notion of Western culture implicitly contains the importance of division in Europe, intensified by political discourse. This aspect of complex cultural analysis is very significant<sup>6</sup>.

The research of mutual cultural influences in in the context of time appears to be important as well. At the same time, when Northern American culture was rising as a "child of Europe"<sup>7</sup>, the Russian culture (several centuries old at that point) started growing towards Europe. The period between the 17th and the 19th centuries was the period of formation for contemporary Western supranational cultural circle. European and Russian culture converged and interacted in the fields of arts, philosophy, science, technology, etc. They operated politically in the same area, under the umbrella of Westphalian system of regulations. It was the important period in European history; the period of the first steps in development for the European international political system governance and formation of modern European states. From the cultural point of view, this was the period of mutual enrichment and cultural feedbacks. Mutual comparison and reflection on each other were inspirational sources for both sides.

Self-reflection is a very important factor we have to have in mind. There are several cognitive maps to be considered in this respect: self-reflection of European culture, self-reflection of Russian culture, reciprocal interpretations of each other. These questions require demanding multidisciplinary research on intersections of cultural sciences, psychology, social psychology, sociology and political science.

tinues Derrida's and Foulcaut's concepts and methods.

7 And a little later – Australian culture.

3 Traditional expressions are used to identify supranational cultural circles. But religion is only one of many factors (sometimes most important) that create specificity of the supranational cultures (cultural circles, civilizations).

4 Toynbee, A. J. *A Study of History*. 12 Volumes. London: Oxford University Press, 1934-1964.

5 Huntington, S. J. *The Clash of Civilizations*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

From the brief summary of the research dimensions, it becomes clear how demanding, multilevel and interdisciplinary the research has to be to find some effective answers to only one of the posed questions. But we need answers to many more questions to fully understand mutual differences and similarities of European and Russian culture.

### The Analysis of Cultural Specificity

To fully understand cultural similarities and differences, it is crucial to identify cultural specificity of different socio-cultural systems. There are effective methodological tools that can help us search for answers.

Firstly, there is multilevel research of cultural specifics. Usually, there are 4 groups of specific cultural features that differ in 2 aspects: dynamics of change and level of generalization:

1. Everyday habits and patterns;
2. Cultural standards and stereotypes;
3. General value structures;
4. Cultural paradigms<sup>8</sup>.

The paradigm analysis is applied to study cultural plurality and its changes. Paradigm analysis focuses on stable cultural principles and features, characterizing each culture as a unique and specific whole. Such approach allows us to reflect changes of cultural specificity from both long-term and the global point of views<sup>9</sup>.

The concept of cultural paradigm allows to compare different cultures and identify substantial changes in specificity of socio-cultural unit. The cultural paradigm concept is methodologically very important in this regard; it describes the problem of inner integration for a socio-cultural system and defines the function of spiritual culture in the system. Paradigm determines the uniqueness of socio-cultural entity; it is a core of cultural memory for each culture. Cultural paradigm is usually a unique system of basic principles, according to which human communities interpret reality.

These are spiritual or intellectual principles for orientation of the community in reality. They represent constant pillars for social interpretation of reality and represent stable interpretative structures. All interpretative principles belong among paradigmatic ones:

- interpretation of time,
- interpretation of substance and structure of cosmos, nature,
- defining the relation to transcendence,
- interpretation of human activity and its goals,
- interpretation of organization of human society,
- substance of human being and its mission in the totality of being, etc.

8 Many research methods were developed and applied to study cultural specificity. See: Hofstede, G., 2005; Hall, E.T., 1990.

9 See: Lehmannová, Z. Cultural Paradigm Analysis: Comparison of India and Europe. India in the Contemporary World. New Delhi, London: Routledge, 2014.

Paradigmatic principles are reflected and given concrete shape in the specific ways of perception, illustration, interpretation, and categorization of reality, in the specific value orientations, cultural standards and behavior patterns, symbols of community, etc. Cultural paradigm principles stay relatively stable for centuries and millennia, they are highly general and interconnected with the cultural identity of a specific society and its people. They have high integrative power and are concretized in the form of values, norms, cultural standards, and they function (operate) socially through these social regulations.

The main *paradigm question* for a specific society is always included in the paradigm structure. This question is important for understanding how the paradigm impacts and manifests itself in the social practice of a society (socio-cultural whole) and also for understanding the value and norm systems and main goals for society. Paradigm is expressed especially by spiritual culture of the respective society, by religion, mythology, philosophy and theoretical concepts of science. In other components of culture, it is manifested more indirectly, for example, in ethical and legal norms, in the structure of institutions, in emphasis on innovation or tradition, in definition of communal and individual goals, etc<sup>10</sup>.

Nowadays, specific cultural features of individual cultures undergo dynamic global changes. We can identify changes in the first and the second levels of cultural specificities; the general value orientations and paradigms of cultures are stable for the time being.

The fundamental questions are whether the historically stable paradigmatic cores of cultures are changing due to globalization and how strong is the dynamics of change and its direction. These changes also can hide the danger of global cultural unification and the threat to cultural plurality that is the source of mutual cultural enrichment, and thereby also of global cultural development. These problems represent big challenge for intercultural research and intercultural communication<sup>11</sup>.

### Comparing Cultures on Paradigm Level

The main criteria, used in paradigm comparison, are: historic factors, essentially influencing formation of paradigm and specific cultural features; historic impetuses for dynamics of paradigmatic principles and specific features; paradigmatic principles themselves.

Individual cultures of contemporary world are historically very different in time and space. To compare Russian and other cultures on paradigmatic level, it is necessary to keep in mind that they were developed in different historical time and conditions.

10 Ibid: P. 105-106.

11 See: Sadri, H. A., Flammia, M. Intercultural Communication: A New Approach to International Relations and Global Challenges. A&C Black, 2011.

There were three most important historic factors, which formed the profile and specific features of Russian culture. Orthodox Christianity has been a substantial factor and spiritual rudiment of Russian culture. It has influenced Russian culture through its history and developed specific spirituality. Geographic surroundings are another factor, which is important especially from political and security point of view (continuous threats from East and West and relative isolation from other cultural centers). Another three external cultural influences are important here. First, it is the Byzantine heritage, which brought not only the Orthodox Christianity, but also the tradition of Roman law<sup>12</sup> and strong impetuses for art development. Second, the Asian-Mongolian influence affected the statehood development. Compared to previous state organization during the Kiev period, it had given rise to a deeper gap between the ruling nobility and liege people and changed the model of social hierarchy. Interactions with Western Europe signified for Russian culture many new impulses for inner development. Simultaneously, it involved Russian culture to play active role in European space not only through its spiritual heritage (arts, philosophy, science), but also as an imperial power in the frame of Westphalian system.

In Western European part we can identify three main factors, which determined its specificity: the ancient heritage (Greek and Roman) oriented Western Europe towards the development of science and rationalism, it founded the development of law and of idea of cultural and political unification of Western Europe per sample Roman Empire. Greek philosophy laid the foundations for future European cultural paradigm. Ancient heritage represents the strongest influence for Western part of Europe, with two important cultural impulses at the end of Middle Ages: from China (development of technology) and from Islamic culture (transfer of natural sciences). Additionally, the contribution of Jewish culture to Europe needs to be mentioned.

Roman Christianity is a spiritual background of Western Europe. It was dominant in Middle Ages; in Modern period its role was influenced by Reformation and modern European science. European science has important role in Modern Period: it is a base for philosophical formulation of European paradigm and its interconnection with technology fundamentally changed and influenced not only Europe, but the whole world.

Historical changes are significant determinants of specificity development in Russian culture, which had to confront these changes and various threats during its history. Such historical experience is the source of cultural features, different from European: the reinforcement of collectivism, strengthening of phenomenon of authority, and the need for order as an opposite of chaos and uncertainty. To understand Russian culture means,

first of all, to understand its deep historical experience of threats and changes.

Western European historical experience is different. Cultural development was more continual, with one substantial historical change from Middle Ages into Modern Ages. But it was a long-term cultural transformation, unlike sudden historic and cultural "upheavals" in Russian history. It gave Europe an optimistic belief in human possibilities and development, belief in human *rationality*, science and technology development.

Self-reflection is very important in cultural specifics analyses, too. Self-reflection of Russian culture is concentrated in *Russian Idea*<sup>13</sup>. It is a red line that goes through the Russian history since the Moscow period. Substance and role of Russian culture and statehood represent its main aspects in connection with the concept of messiahship and the concept of pillars and statehood. Both concepts were originally formulated during the Moscow period as religious concepts. During imperial period they were concretely expressed in political and security ideas. The concept of pillars of statehood had other consequences, they were connected with the Asian-Mongolian cultural impetus. It was a despotic rule (*samoderzhavie*), which was transformed into modern form of autocracy during the imperial period. The same effect the Mongolian dominium had on Chinese culture in the period of Ming dynasty. In Russia, it was completely different from original concept of governance during the Kiev period.

Self-development of Russian culture and its relations to Europe were the concepts, dominating in the frame of Russian Idea during the imperial period, when Russia turned to Europe. Many important Russian thinkers discussed these questions (A. Khomyakov, P. Annenkov) and argued both standpoints: the enrichment of Russia through European cultural experience and self-development on its own roots and inherent experience. V. S. Soloviev<sup>14</sup> formulated principles of self-development and *sobornost* and reformulated the religious messiahship concept compared to protestant one.

Western European self-reflection has two dimensions. One of them is connected to the development of European science and technology, enlightenment and optimistic belief in human possibilities and human development. In the context of European colonization, Europe has interpreted itself as the "messiah" of civilization. It was a secular concept of messiahship, which also involved religion.

The second dimension of European self-reflection is closely connected to Russian cultural impetus. The theme of the individual in the context of society, elaborated by Russian arts and philosophy and especially by Dostoevsky's literary heritage<sup>15</sup>, was an important

13 *Russkaya Ideya*. Moscow: Respublika. 1992.

14 *Soloviev, V.S. Russkaya Ideya*. Moscow: Respublika. 1992.

(originally published: *L'Idée Russe*. Paris: Perrin et Cie 1888).

15 *Dostoevsky, F.M. Notes from Underground, 1864; Crime and Punishment, 1866; Idiot, 1869; Demons, 1872; The Karamazov Brothers, 1880.*

12 First written Code of law "*Ruskaya Pravda*" from the 11th century.

impulse for Europe. It enabled Europe to deeply understand its own individualism, to reformulate it and to develop it. European self-reflection and self-criticism from the second half of the 19th century was substantially influenced by Russian culture, its existential critique especially. European analysis of *alienation* in philosophy, arts, social sciences, and theology during the first half of the 20th century were determined by this impulse.

One difference between Russian and European culture is mentioned very often. It is the dichotomy of individualism versus collectivism. Russian culture is characterized as collectivistic one, European – as individualistic one.

Individualism and collectivism have many roots – economic, normative, spiritual, and they have many forms. European and American, or Indian, individualism are very specific and different. Also, Chinese, or African, or Latin American collectivism have different and specific forms. It is always necessary to interpret individualism and collectivism in interactions and to define them in both paradigm and value context and social and historical context. The common roots, represented by Christianity, have put into European and Russian cultures an individualistic feature – the responsibility of the individual before God.

Both cultures have individualistic orientation in their paradigm code. Christian tradition has been cultivating in both cultures up to now, but in different ways and in different social and historical context.

West European culture continued the ancient tradition from the 16th century and connected it with Christian tradition to stress the role of individuality in society. Development of capitalistic system and the industrial revolution emphasized the role of individuality in social practice, which Reformation did from the religious point of view. Russian culture continues religious and moral tradition of individualism. Social practice and historic experience resulted in strengthening of collectivism, but still, in this context the idea of the role of human individuality was continually developed.

In this respect, self-reflection is also important to understand individualistic or collectivistic orientation of cultures. In European culture it is formulated in modern philosophy as a general thesis in the context with other paradigm principles<sup>16</sup>. Western European

16 The European paradigmatic principles are: the role of human beings in the reality, rationalism and critical thinking, a man as an active factor in reality, the development of morality, the freedom of individuality, individualism and humanism. See: *Lehmannova, Z. et al. Paradigma Kultur*. Plzen: Vydavatelství A. Čenek, 2010.

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paradigm connected individualism with humanism; it means individual responsibility to humankind and its development and obligation to take a share in collective social struggle, an effort to secure rights and freedoms for each person. Interpretation changed in the 19th century in direction to existential interpretation, connected with the emphasis on individual personality and its “*enslavement*” by modern civilization. It puts emphasis on individual inner spiritual and moral effort for freedom. As it was mentioned earlier, this concept of self-reflection resulted from the Russian cultural impulse.

Russian culture developed individualism as a topic of spiritual culture from the 18th century. It has raised from the old tradition of martyrdom, moral and spiritual power of individual, and it was connected to the specific feature of Russian spiritual *zhalost* (sympathy and pity). Everyone, each individual is worthy of sympathy and pity. It is closely connected with the concept of *sobornost* as a spiritual collectivity (See: Soloviev)<sup>17</sup>. It continues in broader concept of individual in society, conflicts between personality and society (See: Dostoevsky). Later, it is conceptualized in critique of unification and degradation of individuals during the period of totality, in critique of modern civilization by Russian emigration philosophy and literature, and by internal opposition literature. It continued in the second half of the 20th century<sup>18</sup>. Russian culture expresses its individualism in the context of self-criticism.

## Conclusion

All these mentioned questions, along with many other, have to be fully examined to understand similarities and differences between cultures from the general cultural point of view and the concrete (political or security) point of view. Nowadays, cultural differences have strong potential to create and intensify international tensions and security threats. In this respect, the ability to mutual understanding of different cultures could be defined as a precondition for discussions and solutions for global problems. Intercultural understanding and communication are essential preconditions to decrease cultural tensions and conflicts; they have to be considered an important dimension of global governance.

Fedotov. See: *Russkaya Ideya*. Moscow: Respublika. 1992.

18 For example, Solzhenitsin and “*lagernaya*” literature or Zinovyev and the critique of “*homo sovieticus*” phenomenon.

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