

Contemporary Russian and Foreign Science on the 21st-Century Tendencies in Globalization: A Brief Introduction

Nikolay V. Kochurov and Olga G. Leonova

In the 21st century globalization has become an objective phenomenon that manifests itself as a complex integrated system with a set of nonlinear relations between its subjects and objects. Due to the nonlinear nature of this phenomenon, the cause-effect relations do not work in this system. Neither do technology forecasting and foresight methods produce any results.

The new wave of globalization possesses a number of specific features, namely: an expanding multipolar world; an increasing number and variety of global players, inter alia, at the expense of the non-state actors; a strengthening interrelation and interdependence between the local (regional) and global systems; and a growing disintegration and intensifying turbulence of global political processes.

The general analysis of the Western scientists' views and standpoints allows stating that globalization in the West is considered as an objective phenomenon that can be controlled through the creation of a system for effective global management, the latter is deemed impossible at the moment. The Western colleagues also put more emphasis on economic globalization as opposed to its political aspect. More attention is paid to negative effects of globalization.

Keywords: *globalization, tendencies, objective phenomenon, complex system, nonlinear relations, specific features, negative consequences, issues.*

Over the last decade some new tendencies and trends which require a further research have become obvious in the development of globalization. What is globalization in the twenty-first century? What is the content and essence of this phenomenon? What new features of this phenomenon have evolved, and what are its consequences and results? These are the main issues that concern researchers and politicians today.

The faculty and staff of the Department of Global Studies at Lomonosov Moscow State University (MSU) are actively involved in the elaboration of these issues.

The presentations at regular international Global Studies congresses under the auspices of the MSU, discussions and numerous publications by the Department of Global Studies show the whole range of standpoints on the essence of globalization, its content and features of globalization processes. All experts are unanimous that globalization is an objective phenomenon with a multidimensional nature encompassing economic, political, social and cultural, ecological, information, international legal and a number of other aspects.

Globalistics and Globalization Studies 2017 316–321

The researchers at the Department of Global Studies primarily focus on the *political* aspects of globalization and present their latest studies in a number of monographs, textbooks and articles where they describe new contours of the geopolitical space of our world as well as present the analysis of evolving global political system with its peculiar geopolitical configuration, structure, architecture and hierarchy (Ilyin and Leonova 2013, 2015, 2017, *etc.*). As a result, one can argue that the political sphere has already proved to be an independent trend within Global Studies in modern Russia.

The political aspect of globalization gains strength and starts to exert impact on the global economic development and dynamics. Many economic tendencies observed in current globalization have appeared to be the consequences both of the *political* interactions between the leaders of the global world and of their political decisions.

Today, the world community has entered a very challenging stage, namely, the transition of the *world* political system into the *global* one. In the modern globalized world a number of trends gain momentum which manifest the ongoing transformations and origin of a new global phenomenon of a *global political system* (Ilyin and Leonova 2015: 22).

Among the *new tendencies and trends* in the development of globalization one can trace the following:

- The formation of a new structure and architecture of the global world, the emergence of new actors of global political system (poles, centers of power, aspirants for the centers of power, global and regional powers) and their incorporation into a certain hierarchical pyramid. The new global structure is very mobile, and the relations between its elements are dynamic, which makes it unstable and unpredictable in terms of further development;

- Two modernization patterns for the global world countries have become more distinct: the Western (Atlantic) liberal model, with the USA and the European Union countries as paragons; and the continental model, with China being its relatively successful example and countries trying to reproduce the Chinese economic strategy. Both models have their strengths and weaknesses but still remain strong competitors each possessing peculiar civilizational features. Therefore, the future global world is unlikely to be an idyllic ‘global village’. Nor will it be a ‘clash of civilizations’. Obviously, it will be a global system with a peaceful competition between two models of modernization and development. But this will be a competition not only of economic developmental patterns but also, to some extent, of political systems of respective countries; in fact, it will be a competition between democratic and authoritarian regimes in their attempts to prove their surpassing efficiency and advantages, especially in the situation of global uncertainty and instability. The question about the ‘winner’ still remains open: the competition itself cannot guarantee stability; those who are more dynamic and appropriate to external and internal challenges, in particular, to globalization challenges, will be the winners. One can make a prediction that we may expect growing instability and uncertainty at the global level when there will be neither rules for economic or political ‘game’, nor firm principles and generally accepted standards of behavior settled once and for all. We may witness a constant reformatting of the existing coalitions and blocs and a fast change of priority vectors in states' foreign policy, *etc.* A human factor will be distinctly stand out behind all this unpredictability since the global world will become the expression of the world leaders' personalities and their ambitions, hidden psychological complexes and with what they consider to be their priority values;

– even today, many politicians and analysts have to admit that global management is far from being efficient and this fact becomes more obvious with the aggravation of international situation and growing global threats to mankind. Some global problems gradually transform into global risks threatening life on the planet. However, the ways to successfully cope with these problems and to handle difficult situations are still not found. Meanwhile, the institutes of global management turn incapable to response adequately and in time to the new challenges of globalization. The accelerated dynamics and scale of globalization demand other approaches and other tools which would fit the new quality of global political system;

– In addition, in the global world the conflict between globalization and countries' national interests remains urgent, thus hampering globalization processes. This conflict becomes especially acute in the countries that turned out to be in the periphery of global processes and failed to get the expected profits from their participation in global economy. Moreover, many of them start to consider themselves the victims of the process. In many respects this explains both the increasing protectionism and revival of 'responsible nationalism' concept which gain strength even in some Western countries which used to be the drivers of globalization. Brexit is the first example of this trend but it might be not the last one;

– The meaning of the 'global periphery' concept also undergoes certain changes. It is not limited to the countries which lag behind globalization or fail (or do not want) to 'be incorporated' in it. Today, the geographical periphery of the global world is presented mainly by rapidly developing Asian countries which have been leaders in GDP growth not for the first time and demonstrate both economic efficiency and political stability. Their contribution to global economy gradually increases and they also gain a political 'weight' as well as acquire a higher status in global hierarchy. It seems that in the 21st century they will be able to have a decisive voice and courage to articulate their interests and to make them matter in the whole world (*e.g.*, Grinin 2015).

These developmental trends in global political system hardly manifest the beginning of deglobalization process. They are only the *symptoms of a changing model of globalization as well as the 'diseases' of transition from a monocentric to a polycentric world* (Ilyin and Leonova 2013: 63–64; 2017: 53–55).

But in no way can polycentricity and multipolarity guarantee a political, economic or military stability in the future global world. In the 21st century, the objective of gaining stability or keeping balance between the existing centers of power and the global world poles will be much more difficult to achieve than now.

For quite a long time, the development of Global Studies in Russia and other countries proceeded in parallel and almost never crossing ways. Such separation and parallel courses in globalization research were caused by the lack of face-to-face communication between scientists from Russia and other countries (language barrier also played a negative role here), inaccessible sources (until recently it has been difficult for the Russian researchers to apply for foreign internships) and often by a dominating ideological approach to this phenomenon which is still perceived.

The comparison between the general strategy and focus of studies in globalization in Russia and in the West seem to be very interesting in this context. While summing up the achievements of the Russian Global Studies one should also keep in mind the development of Global Studies abroad.

In this respect, the conferences held in Italy within the framework of international forums on preparation for the G7 summits play an important role in bringing together the leading experts in Global Studies. The roundtable discussion titled 'Beyond GDP, or how to Achieve Sustainable Development in a Globalization Era' took place in Rome in May 2017 within the framework of international Forum 'Globalization, Inclusion and Sustainability in a Global Century'. At the conference, a wide range of experts, scientists and politicians from different, mainly Western, countries (among them there were two representatives from Russia) presented a really 'global' approach in their researches on globalization and summarized the results obtained. Unfortunately, the materials of this interesting discussion are not planned to be published. However, the analysis of participants' presentations helps clearly see the tendencies in Globalization Studies that dominate in the Western science and practice today.

Thus, globalization is considered as a nonlinear phenomenon. Globalization is a complex integrated system with a set of nonlinear relations. Due to its comprehensive nature and complexity, the system does not allow calculating in advance or making predictions about all its future manifestations and consequences of its development; moreover, the methodology and foresight principles turn useless in this case.

As many experts admit today, the law of indispensable cause-effect relations does not necessarily work in the context of globalization. It becomes more and more obvious that many factors of globalization cannot be taken into account while their outcome can hardly be predicted.

In their contributions many presenters used the words 'changing era' or 'changing epoch' and a paradoxical idea was often articulated 'The change of epoch is coming but it will not lead to an epochal change'.

It is obvious that *globalization of new wave* has a number of peculiar characteristics and trends. Even today, the following new features of 'the 21st-century globalization' or 'a new era' are distinctly manifested:

- the expansion of the multipolar world;
- the increasing number and variety of global players, inter alia, at the expense of non-state actors;
- the strengthening interrelation and interdependence between local (regional) and global systems; thus, the unsolved local problems can lead to catastrophic global consequences; and
- the collapse, destruction, disintegration, disruption and turbulence and instability that shake the world community.

By and large, all this leads to the formation of a new contents of the phenomenon under study which can be called a '*non-global globalization*'.

The experts focus on a number of aspects (designated as 'focal points') that form a certain *frame for the study of the phenomenon of globalization* accepted in the Western science. These are globalization, protection and protectionism, economic growth, trade, inequality and poverty; search for the ways for sustainable and inclusive development; and policy of sustainable development and global cooperation.

The breakout sessions at the above-mentioned Conference roundtable discussion were devoted to these particular problems. The analysis of urgent issues discussed at the Forum allows us to analyze how globalization is perceived today within the Western political dis-

course, how its consequences are assessed, and whether experts, analysts and politicians are ready to deal with the revealed problems and meet the emerging new challenges.

First, globalization is considered as an objective phenomenon independent of the human will and consciousness. Globalization cannot be forbidden or cancelled by an arbitrary decision of any government or reputable international institute of the highest level. However, when respective tools and international consent are available, this process can be controlled and managed on the basis of the elaborated common position and standpoint shared by all countries and people around the world.

Secondly, the creation of a global government as an instrument to manage globalization processes seems impossible today. Moreover, a consensus on the main problems of globalization and ways of their solution can hardly be achieved. The existing international organizations showed their inefficiency and functional inferiority at this stage of development of globalization; therefore, many agreements and rules established by the laws aimed at softening its negative consequences are not carried out or are generally ignored.

Thirdly, the perception of globalization in the West is in many cases uni-dimensional, namely, it is interpreted as a phenomenon integrating various countries' economies in order to form a global economic system. The political aspect of globalization is often ignored by politicians and experts although many economic problems result from political globalization or can be settled within global policy.

Fourthly, it is obvious that the period of euphoria and charm by globalization came to an end. Today, the idea about possible benefits that globalization can bring to countries and people loses its ground. On the contrary, they start to scrupulously assess the losses and expenses experienced by many states, especially the developing ones, which are actively involved in globalization. All this is an obvious evidence of the lack of an objective approach to globalization and its excessively emotional evaluations.

Fifthly, politicians and experts show obvious confusion when facing challenges and threats posed by new globalization trends. At present, there are no ready answers and no measures to counteract those challenges while the search for adequate solutions has obviously dragged on.

The general analysis of conferences' presentations gives the grounds to draw a conclusion that the development of Global Studies in Russia lags behind far from and in certain cases even advances the Western political science and practice in particular in the study of political aspects of globalization. Many Western ideas and concepts correlate with the position of the Russian scientists while the difference in our approaches to the study of globalization is far from crucial.

The analysis of new trends and consequences of globalization shows that the world is on the threshold of a new era when dramatic changes in all spheres of activity of global community are still to come (*e.g.*, Grinin 2015; Grinin L. and Grinin A. 2016). Therefore, we are united by the problems which the world community should solve in the near future before the situation becomes catastrophically irreversible.

To cope with these problems we need, first, to learn to hear and understand each other; secondly, to share results of our studies of globalization in the format of a constant dialogue; thirdly, to conduct joint researches; and fourthly, to gather for a collective reflection on new experience gained in political, economic, social and cultural, and information spheres of the global community's development.

References

- Grinin, L. E. 2015.** New World Order and Era of Globalization. *Vek globalizatsii* 2: 3–17. *In Russian* (Гринин Л. Е. 2015. Новый мировой порядок и эпоха глобализации. *Век глобализации* 2: 3–17).
- Grinin, L. E., and Grinin, A. L. 2016.** Forthcoming Technological Revolution and Global Risks. *Vek globalizatsii* 4: 40–58. *In Russian* (Гринин Л. Е., Гринин А. Л. 2016. Грядущая технологическая революция и глобальные риски. *Век глобализации* 4: 40–58).
- Ilyin, I. V., and Leonova, O. G. 2015.** Tendencies of Development of Globalization Political Processes. *Vek globalizatsii* 1: 21–35. *In Russian* (Ильин И. В., Леонова О. Г. 2015. Тенденции развития глобализационных политических процессов. *Век глобализации* 1: 21–35).
- Ilyin, I. V., and Leonova, O. G. 2017.** *Political Global Studies*. Moscow: Yurayt. *In Russian* (Ильин И. В., Леонова О. Г. *Политическая глобалистика*. М.: Изд-во Юрайт).