Socio-economic Problems and Perspectives of Globalization in the Context of Coronavirus Pandemic

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Abstract. The article analyzes phenomenon of globalization in the modern world, touches its aim and essence, positive and negative aspects. The authors pay special attention to the new model of «digital globalization». The main idea of the research is that the recent events in the modern world are changing much the process of globalization. And Coronavirus pandemic can be interpreted as a real instrument for the global world transforming. The authors try to find out whether the post-coronavirus world will become de-globalist or it’ll be totally globalized, on the contrast. The authors are sure the coronavirus pandemic will have two main social consequences: it’ll cause an increasing growth of globalization by total digitalizing and social distancing practices. But the growth of de-globalist tendencies in the modern world is also obvious. Coronavirus can be considered as a symbol of de-globalization. It turns out that confrontation between globalism and de-globalist tendencies in the modern world will be continued. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted and intensified the most essential contradictions between them.

Keywords: Coronavirus • De-globalization • Digital globalization • Digitalization • Globalization • Pandemic

1 Introduction

It’s absolutely clear today that the world and the society won’t be the same after the coronavirus pandemic. It’s quite possible that the life of people on our planet will be divided into «before» and «after» – before the pandemic and after it. What does it mean exactly? The most dramatic effects of the pandemic can be already seen today. These are the closing of state borders, the entering of quarantines and self-isolation of the whole countries. And all these life-changing decisions are made at the level of national governments. Their defensive reaction to the pandemic challenges has led to the fact of national selfishness and elementary absence of mutual aid. It’s really surprising, but several states – the well-known modern leaders of European integration – refuse to supply medical masks and medicines to their EU (European Union) partners. And the modern Italy wonders why the EC (European Commission) doesn’t hurry to save their stressed economy.

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When there is no stability and a comfortable way of life is collapsing before our eyes, the humans begin to behave in an absolutely new way. Dehumanization, distrusting and even aggression against all kinds of «outsiders» manifest themselves under the pressure of mass panic. When the surrounding world looks like a threat to life, every person instinctively wants to run away, to hide himself and to border from the others. If this situation continues for a little longer, everyone who travels a lot will be perceived as an enemy – a potentially dangerous subject, posing a real threat to the society and its members.

It’s clear that in the current situation discussions between supporters of globalism and de-globalism are escalating. Following the general spirit of our times, the authors try to find out whether the post-coronavirus world will become de-globalist? Or, on the contrast, it’ll be totally globalized after the epidemic? And all countries will combine their efforts in the fight against an invisible enemy?

2 Methodology

The main methods of the article are dialectical, comparative and prognostic. They are consistently used to form a full image of the problems and perspectives of globalization in the context of coronavirus pandemic. Dialectic method seems important to give a true version of meaningful events taking place in the modern world. They need to be considered in the dialectical way to fix their interrelations and mechanisms of development. This allows finding out connections between social events from a wide variety of areas – economic, political, healthcare and many others.

Comparative method allows revealing the contrast between the opposite strategies of globalization and de-globalization. It gives a chance to assess their reality and effectiveness in the modern conditions. Prognostic method helps to predict future correlations between globalization and de-globalization. It’s very important in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic taking place nowadays. But it’s also necessary to mention that the modern world is facing a challenge it hasn’t been faced before. So, it’s impossible to give unambiguous and absolutely reliable forecasts. We can only make assumptions. And we can illustrate them with a help of analysis of the most significant social and economic trends of our days.

3 Results

3.1 Globalization, Its Aim and Essence

The modern world is rightly called the «global». People of different countries increasingly use the same models of transport, wear the same clothes, consume the same food, watch the same films and TV shows, listen to the same news. The modern technologies, goods, services, information and so on created by the modern civilization enter deeply the lives of different people bringing them the feeling of closeness to each other. That’s what the concept «globalization» means in general. In particular, «the
ongoing process of globalization implies the continuing expansion and intensification of economic, political, social, cultural and judicial relations across borders» [2, p. 78].

The essence of globalization is an expansion and complication of relations and interdependencies between the people and states all over the world. Besides, globalization is an objective process that aims to generate the united world space functioning according to the general rules and the single solutions for everybody. In other words, globalization tries to strengthen planetary and universal social relations. This leads to the global integration of all spheres of social life and activities. We can see it in action through the phenomena of planetary information space, the world market of capital, labor and goods, etc.

3.2 Positive and Negative Aspects of Globalization

First of all, let’s note the positive aspects of globalization. They are the same: an availability of information all over the world, changing and improving the quality of education, development of cultural relations and tourism, etc. The digital economy is also rapidly developing. It’s a special type of economy based on «the unity of information technologies and global production institutions…, or more precisely, a system of information technologies and institutions adequate to them» [3, p. 142]. Globalization has resolved the contradictions of market systems of the XX century, united regional markets and created international production links. Thus, the global economic system was formed. It was an excellent innovation in the sphere of economy providing extensive consumer opportunities, the fixed structure of industries and the stable role for states in it.

But along with all the positive aspects, mentioned above, globalization entails a number of negative consequences. For example, a side effect of informatization is a wide spread of disinformation. And as for information itself, it is no longer a state, corporate or personal secret. It often becomes available against the wishes of its owners. Today an ability of distribution and using information is equivalent to economic power or impact on competitors. Thus, the process of global informatization has become a hostage of the economic and political development.

The actual problems of the global economy are the growing imbalance and the social polarization. The gaps between developed and developing countries, the rich and the poor ones are increasingly growing. The international contacts can be interpreted as a provoking factor for the global terrorism development. They also activate the inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts. In addition, there is a threat to the health and lives of people due to epidemics. We can actually observe it during the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the modern world.

3.3 Phenomenon of Digital Globalization

Today we can observe a change of traditional type of globalization to its new model. Today it’s obvious that starting from the XXI century digitalization has become the main instrument to realize the process of globalization. The idea of digitalization is closely connected with conception of technic development of the modern world and with the relating ideology of trans-humanism [5]. Besides people all over the world are
sure digitalization is one of the natural manifestations of the modern life – something similar to the alternative energy or resources. But the fact is that digitalization is significantly changing not only the human lives, but also their worldview. This aspect of the problem is just beginning to attract attention of the modern researchers [4].

Today we can see a process of replacing the traditional way of globalization with its new type. Universal digitalization entails formation of the special «digital globalization» [8]. «Digital globalization in the 21st century is characterized by accelerating and increasing flows of data and information» [11, p. 7]. It’s also determined by increasing of e-commerce, emergence and development of digital platforms. These platforms are the most successful competitors of the multinational corporations. They are no longer dominated by production systems, but by software products.

In the context of the global digital economy the leadership will belong to the country that’ll be the first in the field of digital platforms, their quality and quantity. Digital platforms forming on the basis of Big Data have a great impact on the growth of modern consumption. Consumption of material objects and immaterial products (such as information) is strongly activated with their help. Besides, digital platforms influence public opinion on various questions – social, economic, political, etc.

3.4 Coronavirus Pandemic as an Instrument for the Global World Changing

As we have already mentioned above, globalization is a process of worldwide integration and unification. However, if we analyze this problem deeply, the world governance and power belong to a small social group – the world’s richest people. Its members set the rules for integration and unification. It turns out that globalization is a controlling process. And it depends a lot on those who are governing. It’s organized on absolutely subjective qualities and principles. Having this circumstance in view, we can assume coronavirus can also be used in the personal interests of the ruling minority, for example, to start a global reform of the whole social structure.

The fight against coronavirus has already caused rejection of cash money and wide application of non-cash payments all over the world. Two leading political groups in the USA are trying to use the current events to discredit their opponents. A number of European countries are trying to solve their problems of migrants. As for the modern Russia, there’s a real increase of digital technologies’ implementation taking place in various spheres of life and work. With a help of various kinds of fake information, an attitude of population to the chipping project is carefully examined. It’s clear that most people don’t accept it or treat this project negatively.

During the world-wide coronavirus pandemic we can observe radical changes in the character, growth rate and prospects of globalization. In short, the coronavirus pandemic creates the most favorable conditions for initiating process of total digitalization. It covers all the spheres of social life including the state, the society and the humans. Maybe it’s a real interest of the transnational governing structure? If this project comes to life, it’ll be a turning step towards total digitalization and a global control over the world’s population. The aim of this project is to reach the maximum level of governance of the planet society. Something like this is already taking place in modern China with its social credit system. The main value of the modern Chinese society is honesty.
which should be manifested in everything – from the virtual behavior to the family life. The positive qualities are purposefully developed. So, everyone in China has a special personal rating. Its points are awarded if the person respects law, pays taxes regularly and practices active social activities. Points are deducted in the case of various bad or illegal actions. If you don’t get a right number of points, normal life becomes impossible.

4 Discussion

As it is known, American authors were the first who have begun to talk about «globalization». The term was used by Levitt in 1983. «Globalization» for him is a phenomenon of merging markets for individual products produced by large multinational corporations (MNCs). He noted that companies must learn to operate in such a way as if the world is a huge market, ignoring external regional and national differences [7]. In his turn Adda noted that distribution of the market mechanisms on the whole planet is the most significant phenomenon of globalization [1]. The essence of globalization was deeply studied by Hoffmann [6]. In «The clash of globalizations» he described its three types having place in the modern world. These are economic, political and cultural globalizations. But as it follows from the essence of the process, globalization is first of all a market-based phenomenon. It’s necessary to mention that the classic understanding of «globalization» is closely connected to the famous conceptions of westernization, financial and economic globalization, world-system globalization. But there are also alternative versions of globalization, giving us a «new knowledge about strategies of entrepreneurs, domestic and multinational firms, governments, and international organizations facing increasing globalization» [2, p. 46], taking «an international, multidisciplinary approach to understanding globalization and assessing its economic, social, and environmental effects» [10, p. 7]. The modern changes of the globalization process in the XXI century are successfully discussed by scientists of different countries, for example, Schilirò [11] and Novikova [9]. They both analyze the concept of «digital globalization», forming the basis of the research activity in this innovative area. The present article is an attempt to continue and develop this perspective way of analysis in the context of the recent events related to the coronavirus pandemic.

5 Conclusion

The authors are sure the coronavirus pandemic will have two main social consequences with a planet effect. First of all, it’ll cause the further growth of globalization by the widespread using of total digitalizing and social distancing practices. These tendencies are clearly visible nowadays in relation to the anti-epidemic measures taken by different countries. Among them there are entering of quarantines, transfer of education sphere into distance learning and cultural events – into distance format, priority of working at home, etc. So, after the end of the coronavirus pandemic, globalization will continue to
develop, but its model will be changed radically. Globalization in its traditional sense will give place to the digital globalization.

On the contrast, the growth of de-globalization tendencies in the modern world is also obvious. For example, the world leader, the United States refuses to sponsor WHO (World Health Organization). They didn’t save humanity as they have been claiming before. And they don’t even help other countries. «Dog-eat-dog» and «Every-man-for-himself» are the typical situations in the modern world. There was a great scandal when it was turned out that the United States were buying protective equipment from Italy and trying to take out doctors from the European Union. At the same time, humanitarian aid from Russia to Italy or the United States has caused a powerful negative response in the modern society. And there are the strongest anti-Chinese mind-states all over the world. Certainly, the crisis of globalization hasn’t arisen from nothing. This process has been increasing since 2014–2016 having a number of obvious prerequisites. Among them there are the Brexit, the Europe’s first hesitant protests against the US’s leading intervention in their politics, for example, in the Nord Stream case. And now, in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, all these processes have been increased many times. To some extent, coronavirus should be considered as a symbol of de-globalization. It turns out that confrontation between globalism and de-globalization tendencies in the modern world will be continued. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted and intensified the most essential contradictions between them.

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