THE DIGITAL WORLD: THE CONTOURS OF THE FUTURE

There is hardly the need to argue that evolution of the human society will be determined by development of information technologies, even in the foreseeable future. Public institutions follow the rapid progress of communication means: the newspaper that originated in the early 17th century, became the key institution of politics and the real "fourth power" only in 250-300 years; the potential of radio and television was revealed in 30-40 years after their invention; but the key social networks, now forming the political discourse in many countries of the world, were launched just a decade ago. Digital platforms have become the main means for informing the people, and more and more information is presented in the multimedia form (they are infographics, the flourishing of the video blog genre and meme pictures). The increase of the Internet connection speed and introduction of new standards (5G is already tested in Russia) help that. Multimedia use makes the content more available: owners of cheap smartphones in the countries with the high illiteracy level are already using all the opportunities provided by the Internet with the help of the voice recognition function.

The technological transformation changes human behavioral models as well: visual images are perceived better than text, the correct written language stopped being the "sacred cow", "clip thinking" simplifies the thinking process (and at the same time it's hardly right to say that people are "growing stupid": the amounts of mastered by each generation knowledge and skills increase all the time, because of that we are sooner speaking about the change of cognitive process forms and not about its degradation).

The role of symbols that will play the part of political programs to a certain extent, offered by politicians via media platforms, will grow in this new environment. We, those who grew up in the Soviet period, remember the set of visual images associated with the USSR and the Communist ideology. It's possible that in future not the globally recognized symbols of ideologies and religions like sickle and hammer, or crescent will be applied (and not as much as them), but also

bright and striking, visualized slogans in meme covering (according to the author of this term R. Dawkins, they are self-sufficient units of information having the potential to virus-like spreading; this can be an easily remembered picture, a wisecrack and a short video). Memes are often based on the mass culture images adapted to the issues of the day (our experience on Twitter shows that use of popular British cultural images – quotations, proverbs and sayings, pictures, film shots – is a very successful way to deliver the thoughts to the reader).

These trends together with the boost in practical application of the Big Data to analysis of politics and economy and their more efficient management (we're speaking not only about political technologies in the spirit of the notorious "Cambridge Analytica") make the phrase ascribed to several modern economists absolutely justified: "Data is the new gold". The one who collects the biggest "golden reserve" has the best chances in the geopolitical race for leadership.

When social networks just appeared, they were praised as "the voice of the people" giving a chance to self-expression for those, who previously had to keep silent. Basing on the users' content (i.e. information from common people and not professional journalists and politicians) was announced the means of political liberalization and improving the world as a whole. Today, even Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, prefers to speak carefully only about "the new meaningful interactions between people", but the traditional press, losing advertising money, sets the dogs on "the new media" as transmitters of "fake news" and surely "the Russian influence" (however, the United States and the UK engaged in indoctrination of foreign public opinion and brainwashing via social networks long before the first accusations of Russia in that "sin"). The users' content stays the basis of the Internet media, however, the role of platforms filtering the information getting to users both for strictly commercial purposes (use of a Website or an app should not bring about negative emotions) and in the interests of fighting extremism (it's known that terrorists use a number of Internet platforms for coordination, and prohibition or total censorship of any of them just leads to a quick change of the communications channel) grows. Collection of the

users' personal information also inevitably leads to loss of anonymousness on the Internet even if the law does not make it obligatory to give the provider or the state your real name. Thus, the hero of the 2000s, the fearless Internet "anonymous" under the mask of Guy Fawkes, who according to the popular then expression, "does not forgive and delivers" goes into the past, and this is a world-wide trend.

So, it seems that a common individual ("a low-ranker") is again becoming a person of no importance. But still new technologies are gradually equalizing opportunities for people of various origin and culture. Over many centuries, language borders strictly determined career prospects for a certain individual as well as cultural and economic prospects for countries (the number of translations is the universal criterion for any author's acknowledgment), and today the quickly developing machine-aided translation blurs these borders (by the way, visualization of the content also makes it universally understandable). Free computer translation (including synchronous voice interpretation) that is already available in our times, provides transmission of the meaning, because of that development of artificial intelligence technologies in this sphere is of a really breakthrough importance. Though Russia is still among the leaders in the Internet presence (6.4 % of all texts on the World Web are written in Russian – this is the second result after 52.1 % in English; cf. 1.9 % in Chinese, and just 0.1 % in Hindi), destruction of the language barrier will bring giant profits to business, science and culture: this will be the true globalization, and the countries introducing respective technologies earlier will be the first to reap the fruits of it, and Russia has good chances in that.

There is no doubt that this globalization will undermine the Western hegemony (first of all, American and British) in information and cultural space. The success of Chinese IT companies, a number of advanced technologies of which in e-trade and Big Data processing already exceeded Western results, allow to put this question on the agenda already now. In essence, only voluntary self-isolation of many big Chinese players still preserves the status quo on a global scale.

What will the global society of the future be? Unprecedentedly open for people and companies of any origin – but not leaving place for anonymousness. The one that has accumulated and uses an unimaginable amount of knowledge – but ready to follow the leader offering the best remembered wisecrack on the issue of the day. We may not like this new reality but the progress can't be stopped, because of that our task is not to try to stop the coming of the future but make it in such a way as to Russia and the Russians to occupy a worthy place in it.