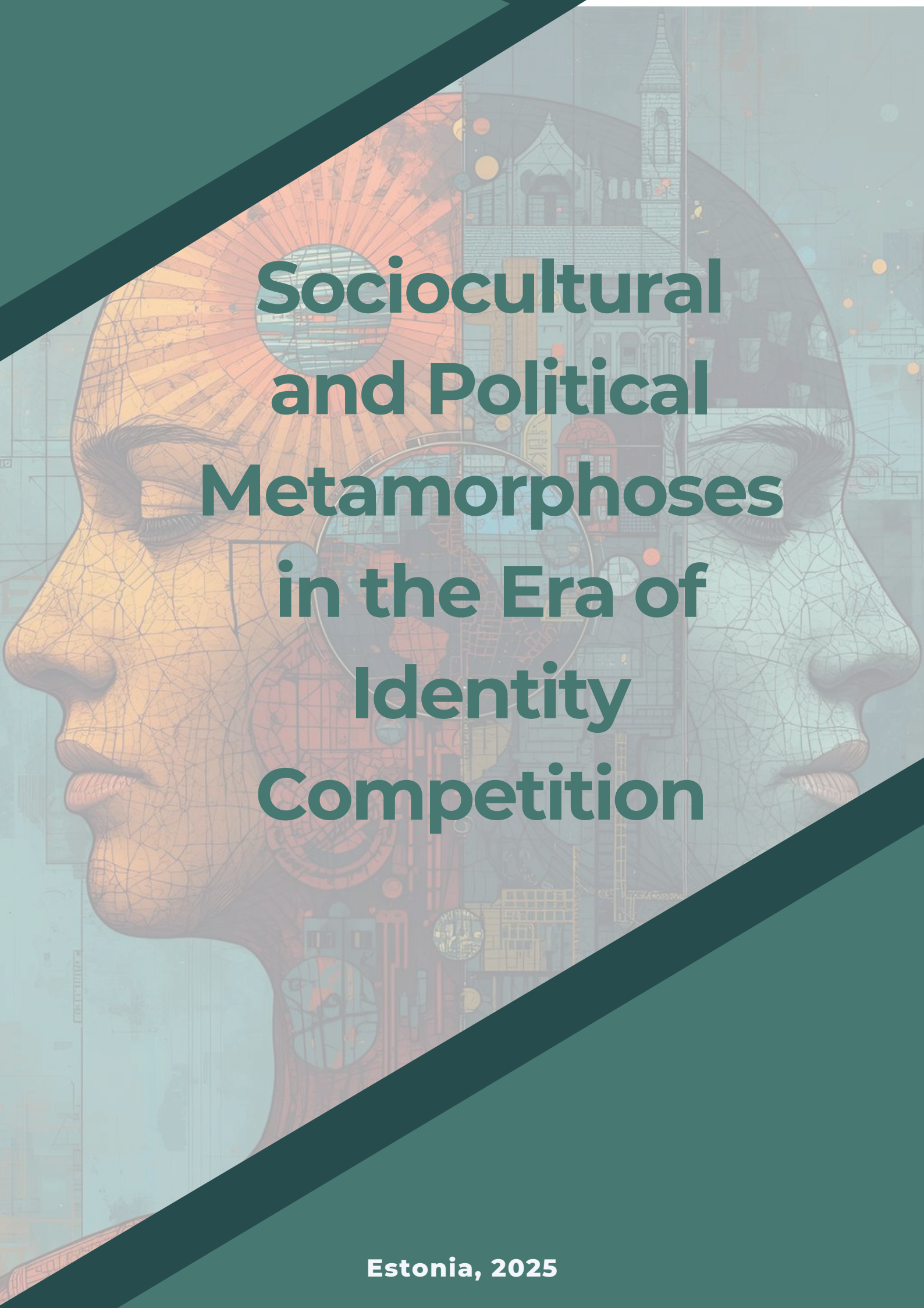

Sociocultural and Political Metamorphoses in the Era of Identity Competition

Estonia, 2025

SOCIOCULTURAL AND POLITICAL METAMORPHOSES IN THE ERA OF IDENTITY COMPETITION

Collective monograph edited by
Alla Kravchenko

Estonia, 2025

International databases and directories indexing publications:

- CrossRef (DOI: 10.36690);
- Google Scholar;
- National Library of Estonia;
- The ESTER e-catalog;

Recommended for publishing by the Academic Council of the Scientific Center of Innovative Research (№4 of 26.09.2025)

ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Sociocultural and Political Metamorphoses in the Era of Identity Competition *(2025)*. Monograph. In A. Kravchenko (Ed.), Scientific Center of Innovative Research. Estonia. 221 p. https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC

The monograph examines the key sociocultural and political transformations of contemporary society driven by digitalization, globalization, information warfare, and the crisis of stable identities. Particular attention is devoted to the changing condition of the individual, who in the era of civilizational upheaval experiences the fragmentation of subjectivity, the loss of existential grounding, and the need to rethink freedom, responsibility, and value orientations. The authors analyze the phenomena of liminality and transgression, the evolution of identity in the global mediasocium, and the social genesis of knowledge in the digital age. Significant focus is placed on the digital city as a space of intercultural interaction, on the civilizational strategies of the digital world, and on the dynamics of European integration in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. An interdisciplinary approach integrating philosophical, sociological, cultural, and political analysis makes it possible to outline the challenges and risks of the age of identity competition. The study substantiates the need for a new humanistic paradigm capable of supporting the integrity of the individual and balancing technological progress with the preservation of dignity, autonomy, and moral responsibility.

The monograph will be valuable for a wide audience: scholars and researchers in philosophy, sociology, political science, cultural studies, and communication studies; lecturers and students of the humanities and social sciences; analysts, political scientists, and experts in public policy and digital technologies; as well as all those interested in contemporary processes of identity formation, the transformation of personality, the challenges of digital civilization, and humanistic strategies for societal development.

Table of Contents

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary era is marked by large-scale civilizational transformations that encompass all spheres of social existence – from economics and politics to culture, communication, and spiritual practice. Globalization, digitalization, information wars, growing ecological and security threats, a crisis of trust, and moral disorientation are shaping a new type of social reality in which traditional structures of identity undergo essential change. A human being of the twenty-first century finds themselves in conditions of instability and uncertainty, where their lifeworld loses coherence and turns into a space of multiple, often conflicting answers to the question "Who am I?".

A fundamental shift in the anthropological situation is taking place: human existence is increasingly unfolding in a state of liminality – between past and future, between the bodily and the digital, between personal experience and global data flows. This liminality manifests itself in the fragmentation of subjectivity, the erosion of moral orientations, and the growing influence of technological systems that offer ready-made models of behavior, thought, and self-presentation. Under such conditions, there arises an urgent need for a profound philosophical analysis of processes that not only alter the social landscape but also shape new modes of human existence.

The relevance of this study is rooted in the need for philosophical reflection on these processes, which manifest themselves not only in the spheres of technology or economics but above all within the domains of anthropology and culture. What is at stake is a transformation of the very mode of human existence – a transition from stable worldviews to dynamic, hybrid identities that coexist and compete within a globalized world. At the center of this problematics stands the human being, who must not merely adapt to changes but rethink their nature, the boundaries of freedom, moral responsibility, and their place within the civilizational horizon.

In this context, it is crucial to recognize that modernity generates new humanitarian risks – phenomena that either did not

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

exist in earlier historical epochs or did not possess such magnitude of influence. These include algorithmic segregation, information manipulation, the substitution of reality by simulacra, digital vulnerability, the epistemic opacity of artificial intelligence systems, the erosion of privacy, psychological dependency on technologies, and the chronic fatigue produced by ongoing instability. These processes generate the need not only to respond to challenges but also to form a new humanitarian cartography capable of describing contemporary civilization in its complexity – as an interaction of the biological, social, technological, and digital dimensions of human existence.

The degree of scholarly development of the topic indicates that the phenomena of transgression, limit-experiences, and identity occupy a central place in the philosophy of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. M. Heidegger, K. Jaspers, J.-P. Sartre, E. Fromm, H. Marcuse, and later Z. Bauman, J. Habermas, J. Baudrillard, B. Stiegler, Y. N. Harari, and other thinkers have described the destruction of stable structures of meaning and the emergence of multiple, unstable forms of self-awareness. Their approaches show that technological civilization, despite expanding human capacities, simultaneously produces the threat of losing the spiritual dimension of being, transforming the subject into a function of the system and communication into an exchange of simulacra. At the same time, Ukrainian humanitarian discourse foregrounds questions of cultural memory, spiritual continuity, and ethical choice, which gain special significance in conditions of wartime challenges and the struggle for national identity.

The aim of this monograph is to provide a philosophical interpretation of the sociocultural and political metamorphoses of modernity as a space of interaction, confrontation, and reinterpretation of identities, and to determine their anthropological, axiological, and moral dimensions. Achieving this aim involves solving a set of interrelated tasks: examining limit-experiences and transgressive processes as fundamental characteristics of contemporary being; analyzing the individual under conditions of civilizational rupture and crisis; identifying mechanisms of identity construction in the digital society; exploring the sociogenesis of knowledge, transformations of communication, and the operation of

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

algorithmic systems; studying new political and civilizational strategies of the digital world; and searching for humanistic orientations capable of resisting the dehumanizing tendencies of technocratic culture.

The study also aims to reveal the patterns of identity formation in the digital society, where knowledge, power, and information generate new forms of social interaction. The analysis of the sociogenesis of knowledge, mechanisms of communication, and cultural representation makes it possible to understand how media and technologies not only inform but also shape the human being, constructing their image and behavioral models. An important aspect is the study of political and civilizational strategies of the digital world – from the concept of "Society 5.0" to the processes of European integration, which today unfold within the dramatic context of the Russian–Ukrainian war and the global rethinking of values.

Special attention is given to the search for humanistic guidelines capable of counteracting the dehumanizing tendencies of technocratism. The task of the study is to show that, despite the threat of losing authenticity, the contemporary human retains the potential for moral self-creation. The revival of subjectivity becomes possible through a return to moral and ethical virtues – prudence, justice, courage, love, faith, and hope – as universal foundations of spiritual balance and social cohesion. In this context, education and philosophy gain the role of not only institutions of knowledge but also environments for cultivating critical thinking, moral autonomy, and responsibility.

The methodological foundation of this study is based on a combination of philosophical–anthropological, hermeneutic, phenomenological, axiological, and cultural approaches. The use of principles of systematicity, comparativity, interdisciplinarity, and the synergistic interaction of humanitarian and social knowledge makes it possible to consider the human being not as an object of technological progress but as its moral center and axis of meaning. Hermeneutic analysis allows for the interpretation of the cultural texts of modernity, phenomenology makes it possible to reconstruct the experience of being under conditions of existential uncertainty, and axiology – to trace the evolution of value orientations in the process of digital transformation.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

The scientific novelty of the monograph lies in its integrative humanitarian–philosophical approach to understanding the relationship between the individual, identity, and digital civilization. For the first time, the monograph offers a systematic vision of the phenomenon of identity competition as a driving force of sociocultural processes and simultaneously as a challenge to human moral subjectivity. The concept of a new humanism based on the values of freedom, dignity, spiritual autonomy, and responsible coexistence is substantiated.

The practical significance of the results lies in their applicability to research, educational, and cultural activities. The materials of the monograph may serve as a basis for teaching courses in the philosophy of culture, social philosophy, ethics, philosophy of education, media communication, and for developing concepts of humanitarian education in the digital age.

The study was carried out within the framework of the departmental research project of the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, and Political Science of the State University of Trade and Economics, «*Socio-Philosophical Discourse of the Globalized World: Economy, Society, Culture*».

Given the above, the monograph emerges as an attempt to outline intellectual orientations for understanding the complexity of contemporary processes and to promote the formation of a reflective and responsible approach to the challenges of our era.

Chief editor of the monograph
Dr.Sc. (Philosophy), Alla Kravchenko

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Chapter 1
Philosophy of Liminal States and Transgressions of Modernity

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC
ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Section 1.1. Transgression of the Life-World in the Socio-Cultural Borderland

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Citation:
Kolinko, M. (2025). Transgression of the Life-World in the Socio-Cultural Borderland. In A. Kravchenko (Ed.), *Sociocultural and Political Metamorphoses in the Era of Identity Competition.* 221 p. (pp. 9–22). Scientific Center of Innovative Research. https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC-9-22

Abstract. *The section conceptualizes sociocultural borderlands as dynamic spaces where identity competition is enacted in everyday experience. Drawing on Husserl's lifeworld, social reality is treated as an intersubjective horizon of meanings rather than a fixed inventory of objects. War, migration, and networked sociality make questions of boundaries and belonging methodologically urgent. The objective is to refine tools for analyzing lifeworld transgression in borderland conditions and to explain how multiple and hybrid identities arise among migrants, using the Ukrainian refugee experience as an indicative case. The study combines phenomenological interpretation with comparative conceptual analysis of border studies, boundary studies, and frontier studies. It differentiates territorial regimes, symbolic demarcations, and liminal zones, and synthesizes philosophical accounts of otherness, deterritorialization, and transgression into a unified framework. First, border is defined as an authoritative regime that regulates mobility, permission, and exclusion, while boundary designates symbolic markers of difference that organize cultural status and access to resources. Second, frontier is interpreted as a soft, shifting zone of uncertainty and mobility where social roles are rewritten and new forms of contact become possible. Third, encounters with the Other destabilize everyday norms and prompt acculturation pathways, including public inclusion, diaspora community participation, integration into the host community, differentiated inclusion, exclusion, and return oriented reintegration. These patterns illuminate how symbolic boundaries mediate security, rights, and everyday mutual recognition. Transgression is conceptualized as threshold movement that erodes prior certainties and generates new limits through repeated crossings. The borderland appears as a living "in between" space that can function as a laboratory for ethical responsibility, solidarity, and identity innovation. Future work should operationalize these categories in empirical studies of communicative competence, institutional support, and conflict intensity, and should examine how war driven mobility reshapes European symbolic boundaries, governance capacities, and resilience.*

Keywords: *life-world; borderland; boundary; frontier; transgression; liminal being; identity; acculturation strategies.*

ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

1. The Lifeworld Concept in Phenomenology: Husserlian Foundations. The processes of identity competition in today's turbulent world are shaping scientific demand for research into social boundaries and borders, cultural transit, and transgression. It is becoming increasingly important to develop a way of thinking in which social reality is defined not as a static set of separate social objects, but as an open, dynamic space of social interactions. The analysis of the repertoire of forms of identification (cultural, national, political, gender, etc.) requires a methodology that will be productive in researching the mechanisms of identification and differentiation, separation and combination, compatibility and selection. One of the important scientific tasks of this section is the development of theoretical and methodological tools capable of adequately reflecting the changing modalities of borderline sociality and the mosaic of various forms of human inclusion in the modern sociocultural world. The understanding of cultural diversity, the desire to understand the Other, migration challenges, and the spread of networked and streamlined forms of social life determine the attention of contemporary philosophy to the processes of social inclusion and marginalization, the importance of everyday experience, and the formation of the lifeworld.

Phenomenology is the main way to study the lifeworld. E. Husserl introduced the concept of the lifeworld in his works “Cartesian Meditations” and “The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology”. Just like a hundred years ago, today's sociocultural crises and political and technological challenges call for philosophical reflection and practical answers. E. Husserl suggests understanding the lifeworld (Lebenswelt) as the reality of everyday experience, a living reality. It exists in the form of thoughts, experiences, and values. As Ukrainian researcher Olga Nakonechna explains the German philosopher's concept, “the lifeworld is where a person reveals and realizes themselves, unfolds their own multifaceted content (hidden under the conditions of the dominance of science, which aims to master the world and man), and as a world in which a person is forced to rely on themselves (rather than on the anonymous forces of science or social organization). The lifeworld is the horizon for understanding the meaning of human actions, goals, and interests, as it is connected both with the manifestation of human existence and with the possibility of extreme situations in which a person is forced to make a choice” [7]. The world is intersubjective; we share it with others. The lifeworld becomes an environment where the structure of meanings, worldviews, values, and practices in which we live and construct social reality is formed.

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2. Research studies of the theory of the socio-cultural borderland. The working tools for solving the problem of the living world of frontier people are the concepts of border and socio-cultural borderland. The logic of the research leads to the analysis of promising spatial discourse, to border studies, boundary studies, and frontier studies. Various theories of social and cultural borderlands in English-language scientific discourse are grouped into three research groups. Interpretations of borders in border studies, boundary studies, and frontier studies seem similar, as they all describe distinctions between spaces, demarcations, and differences. However, in ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological aspects, there are significant semantic and analytical differences between them. They influence the formation of border studies, boundary studies, and frontier studies as separate paradigms. Let us analyze the methodological resources of each group to create a unified, systematically organized analytical space for our research.

A border is seen as a demarcation line, a political and social construct, and an administrative border zone. It embodies the power to determine who is included or excluded from certain social or political relations. Border Studies examine the border not only as a line of contact and transition, but also as a regime that organizes inclusion/exclusion, permission/prohibition, mobility/stability.

The concept of boundary refers to considerations of identity, difference, and inclusion in a semantic and symbolic rather than a territorial context. The main concept of boundary studies is the boundary that defines anthropological, cultural, and value limitations and delineates forms of social and ethnic diversity. It is worth noting that "symbolic 'crossing' of boundaries occurs constantly, and therefore everyday life consists of the continuous 'reproduction' of transitional states of anxiety, events, and existences" [11, p. 306]. In describing the life world of a person who finds themselves at the intersection of cultures, boundary functions as a constitutive parameter. The identity of such a person is considered in the thematic field of social and cultural differences, multicultural and postcolonial projects. Within this scientific discourse, British researchers John Dixon, Shelley McKeown et al. [3] draw attention to a new conceptualization of spatial order in terms of boundary studies. Polish researcher Zofia Rosińska agrees that "The category of 'boundary' has become central in philosophy of culture" [9, p. 7].

The concept of boundary studies is used in the analysis of gender identities. Wong Ying Wuen writes: "Boundaries" were of interest because it meant that certain 'traits' of a group of people can be "closed off" from

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others and some traits transcend boundaries and are communicated from one group to another. Also, the study of relations across cultural boundaries meant that social relations between different groups of people can be explained using 'differences'. Such differences are highlighted and drawn upon to explain different behavioral norms between groups of people, their self-identification, and to distinguish between groups of people with seemingly 'marked boundaries' " [13].

Thus, border indicates an authoritative order, while boundary indicates the existence of sociocultural differences. Understanding cultural boundaries helps to explore the dynamics of changes in a person's life world in intercultural relations and borderline circumstances. Currently, there is active competition between cultural groups in the production, distribution, and institutionalization of alternative systems and principles of life. Symbolic boundaries separate representatives of one cultural world from another and emphasize a sense of identity. They act as important mediators, thanks to which people understand their belonging to a particular community, the status of their cultural group, and the opportunities to use and even monopolize material and immaterial symbolic resources. Cultural boundaries are objectified forms of cultural differences.

The borderland not only marks the geographical boundaries of states or regional communities, but also forms a special sociocultural and mental frontier. The word "frontier" has its roots in the word 'front' – a line of combat operations, which forms the etymology of the French "la frontière" – the border between two states. The concept of frontier is mainly associated with the modern world. Its characteristics are determined by the rules of forming modern borders, political and cultural spaces. But today, the processes of glocalization, Russia's archaic tasks in the war against Ukraine, and the intensification of Ukrainian migration to the European world are renewing scholars' attention to the concept of frontier, and in certain contexts are bringing it out of secondary spatial forms into current patterns and key elements of modern research. The elasticity of the term was emphasized by American historian F. Turner, and B. Parker added the idea of the frontier as a changing, soft, zonal border area. The liminal space of the frontier can be chaotic, unregulated, and alien. At the same time, the potential of the concept of "frontier" includes dynamism and opportunities for intercultural communication, corresponding to the characteristics of situationality, transience, and differentiation aimed at finding mechanisms for further connection.

Americans associated the frontier with the colonization of North America. In the second half of the 19th century, the American frontier played

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an active role in the construction of a new society, the American nation. The main characteristics of the frontier are uncertainty and instability, which is why it offered settlers the prospect of improving their well-being, gaining freedom, and a better life. The American frontier demonstrates the fundamental ideological task of Western society – the ability to shape the space of democracy and the values of the "self-made man". The frontier is defined as a territory with vague, blurred boundaries. It represents a way of life full of dangers and anxieties. At the same time, it offers hope, provides sociocultural perspectives, and the opportunity to build meaningful long-term relationships. Thus, the idea of the frontier arises where existence approaches its limits – not as an end, but as an invitation to transition. It is precisely this understanding that is productive for comprehending the borderline existence of Ukrainian migrants in order to construct strategies for their adaptation in another world.

3. The human lifeworld in the conditions of the frontier. The borderlands are characterized by greater mobility compared to the cultural hinterland, "rewriting" the social roles and statuses of residents and creating new forms of cultural contact. Practices of introducing the values of European democracy, individualism, respect for the individual, and entrepreneurial activity are unfolding. The frontier is becoming a relevant form of interaction between sociocultural spaces, absorbing the features of several cultural territories and giving rise to a new reality. How the living world, the "meaningful core" of the community in this new reality, is formed depends on the level of self-awareness and knowledge of its inhabitants, as well as on the effectiveness of state programs of influence and the consistent implementation of legal actions aimed at protecting the interests of the community.

The life world of an individual as a world of human immediacy, desires and experiences, doubts and awareness of meaningful actions functions in interaction with the life worlds of others. In borderland conditions, it is important to investigate how conflictual the subject's life world becomes, whether it is open to other life worlds. There is a clash between "one's own" and "the similar" and "the foreign." The competition of identities can reveal the contradictions of borderline existence, expose gaps in the politics of the frontier community, and encourage the search for a shared life. The goal of this process may be to build a social community (Mitwelt in Klaus Michael Meyer-Abich's concept), where worldview guidelines and algorithms of action are harmonized, joint productive decisions and common structures of sustainable development are created. But a scenario of deterritorialization (according to J. Deleuze) is also

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

possible, where familiar collective structures are dispersed and identity takes on hybrid features.

The phenomenological distinction between “one's own” and ‘foreign’ space has existed since the days of archaic cultures. In the worldview of traditional society, this configuration is presented in the topoi of “center/periphery” and “proximity/distance”: at the center is the individual, their family, and their immediate environment. Connections with the world imply connections with a place that is filled with meaning. Here it is appropriate to mention J. Mead's concept of “significant others” who accompany a person at the initial stage of mastering the world; without them, it is impossible to generalize the acceptance of roles. Significant places impose their mark of phenomenological experience of space on a person or group. When subjects feel their belonging to a familiar, native space, this forms an idea of an understandable “own” world, where habitual social positions, actions, and worldview narratives are harmonized. As one moves away from the location of “one's own”, a hierarchy of space is built up at different levels: geographical, cultural, political – according to the degree of alienation. The act of crossing the boundaries of one's own, familiar social space marks the beginning of the formation of a borderline personality. “It is not only about violating boundaries, but also about standing on the border, being ready to cross it, and being aware of one's threshold social status. G. W. F. Hegel in The Science of Logic asserts that all existing being is defined by a certain quality, which is also its limit. Determinacy implies the finiteness of a thing” [5, p. 178].

Encountering otherness triggers processes of rejection and acceptance. Reflecting on one's experience outside one's native world pushes a person to search for an acceptable life strategy. The Other defines the problem of social order. If the subjects and objects of the domestic world are perceived with their individual characteristics, then the perception of the Other is based on generalised, typified, abstract characteristics. Encountering representatives of another culture involves deciphering specific signals, codes of a foreign culture. “At the moment of these actions, the subject discovers elements of these codes in himself. It is the topological method of comparing ‘like with like’, the use of general cultural topoi, that allows him to see in a foreign or unfamiliar personality properties or qualities similar to his own, which unite and bring individuals closer together. The other ... can act as a neighbor, as a marginal, as a stranger. The extreme form of the stranger is the enemy” [5, p. 183]. He reacts to the rules of the lifeworld of the community he enters. “No phenomenology of the ‘other’ can be presented as a simple reduction of one consciousness to another; the space between oneself and the Other is

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paved through knowledge of oneself, which is given to the Other" [5, p. 186]. The other intervenes in the phenomenological structure of the host community's lifeworld, evaluates and actively influences the principles of its organization. In this exchange, new rules and a new reality are built. The transience of this reality acquires ontological status; it ceases to be temporary.

A characteristic trend in modern society is its permanent changeability, fluidity (according to Z. Bauman), and uncertainty. Globalization, geopolitical challenges associated with the claims of authoritarian states, and the redrawing of borders as a result of Russia's direct aggression in Ukraine bring the issue of identity to a new, ontological level. As Ukrainian researcher of borderline identity Yaroslava Vermenych notes, "the war for identity has all the hallmarks of a deep ontological conflict between two worlds that differ in their structure, organization, and principles of existence of models of reality" [11, p. 306]. Therefore, strategies of cultural borderlands not only offer receptions of human existence that change one's life circumstances, but also participate in generalizations of an ontological nature about the contemporary social world.

The formation of new cross-border social relations is accompanied by markers of "encounter with the Other": cultural distance, freedom of movement, transparency and inclusive plasticity of the community, attention to adaptation techniques, communicative competence, and tolerance. The borderland can become a channel for multidirectional intercultural transmission, but at the same time create a field of mutual misunderstanding and conflict. Y. Vermenych draws attention to the complexities and dangers of a transitional existence: "The dichotomy of the borderland and the constant choice of social development strategies cause the formation of a specific local consciousness in borderland people, which combines self-sufficiency and introversion. Any external influences may be perceived as unacceptable and create traps of value divisions" [11, p. 36].

Processes of social diffusion shape multiple identities. It is precisely this format of identity that most adequately characterizes the transformational processes of the borderland. This concept reflects the complexity of contemporary human experience in the context of globalization, cultural interactions, and political transformations. It rejects the modern simplified view of identity as a single, fixed set of traits that define a person. Identity is described as a multifaceted, dynamic, and ambiguous construct.

The concept of multiple identities was developed by French social philosopher Étienne Balibar [1]. Balibar used the concept of multiple

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

identities in his examination of transitional social conditions, postcolonial and global issues, and the political problems of dual citizenship in the EU. He noted that identity is not only a matter of self-determination, but also a complex interplay of political, social, and cultural relations. He viewed identity as the result of an individual's interaction with other people and social structures. For Balibar, identity is not a given that we possess permanently. We build it through interaction with others, so it is the result of dialogue and contextual changes. "Multiplicity" means not only a plurality of options, but also the tension between them, the internal conflict in the formation of the living world. The complexities of intercultural relations in border areas are also related to the awareness of belonging to certain communities: who has the right to be part of this community and who does not. "The complication of the social identity profile can lead to certain social tensions and even social conflicts" [10, p. 131].

Interactions with the community are based on institutional partnerships, but encounters with the Other are always dramatic conflicts, as noted by J.-P. Sartre, E. Levinas, and S. de Beauvoir. The Other challenges the local way of seeing the world and acting, requires effort, and places responsibility for its decisions on the community. The presence of the culturally Other forces us to rethink our understanding of how social space is organized.

Thus, the concept of frontier participates in the construction of new ontologies. It acts as a social laboratory in the formation of identities. A new type is created – hybrid identity. Within the broader concept of transitional identity (hyphenated self), it offers an understanding that modern people, under the influence of multidirectional sociocultural processes (in technological, educational, private, and public spaces), are forced to constantly change and adapt to new requirements, model their current "I," and review established positions.

The term "transgression" (trans – through, across; gress – movement) is actively used in the thesaurus of borderland philosophy, which fixes the boundary, the transition between two worlds. The concept of transgression is developed in the philosophy of M. Foucault, J. Derrida, J. Baudrillard, J. Bataille, M. Blanchot, P. Klossowski, and others. First of all, transgression was considered from the perspective of religiosity or sexuality. Michel Foucault's statement about transgression as a gesture directed at the boundary expands the methodological possibilities of this concept, which has been developed in contemporary scientific discourse. "M. Foucault attached such importance to the concept of transgression that he compared its role in the formation of contemporary culture and thinking to contradiction in dialectical thinking" [5, p. 175]. We agree with Peter

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Bebergal, who states: “To define transgression, we must think of a threshold, or rather, a movement towards the threshold, towards the limit, where there is no longer interpretation. We must think of the self being pushed to its own limits, where it uncovers new limits, in an infinite procedure, that instead of liberating the self from its confines, imposes new limits that must be again transgressed” [2].

The transitional, uncertain conditions of life of a person or group moving or already entering a different sociocultural space are characterized by a transgressive crossing into the territory of other rules, traditions, and algorithms of social action. This process deprives life of clarity, the “sacred” foundations of the home order and native environment, and erodes identity. Migrants are characterized by a “dual identity, when they are not yet separated from their former cultural group, but already consider the host community as desirable and their own” [4, p. 201]. The presence of individuals with an “undesirable” identity disrupts the clarity and harmony of the host cultural system. Their differences and former priorities threaten the established order of the world that welcomes them, and migrants challenge the everyday rules of a socio-cultural space that is new to them. It should be acknowledged that migration processes are a serious challenge for Europe, but most often migrants seek to go to Western countries not to destabilize their social order, but to obtain security, shelter, and work. The presence of new residents should not be seen solely as a threat or a source of social complications. Their integration opens up the potential for a radical rethinking of cultural coordinates. Xenophobia as a reaction to otherness is evidence not so much of justified concern as of the limits of imagination regarding the possibilities of social renewal. Migration, of course, is not a guarantee of cultural creativity, but it is a stimulus capable of triggering processes of reflection, rethinking, and the formation of new forms of coexistence. Going beyond the boundaries of one's own cultural tradition can be both a loss and a discovery. It can transform the horizon of the life world both for the traveler entering a new space and for members of the host society. Awareness of the historical and conditional nature of sociocultural constructs opens the way to practices of cultural recognition, to a philosophical strategy of coexistence in conditions of multiplicity.

“Transgression is a kind of exchange and transcultural diffusion between two or more different cultural groups. The processes of common cross-cultural, two-directional influences lead to the creation of new types of universalized identity and create the transcultural forms of social as well as political organization” [8, p. 231].

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

1. The space of possibility is a field of responsibility. This is the ethical dimension of the frontier: we are responsible not only for what we do, but also for what we can do. The identity of frontier people can become a resource of solidarity that unites and produces responsibility for a shared space.

The text of this section is a continuation of our study of liminal, borderline existence. Using the example of analyzing the formation of the life world of Ukrainian refugees, we have summarized their adaptation strategies during the period of transgression, in the cultural borderland. "The experience of Ukrainian refugees has contributed to the accumulation of knowledge regarding ways to generalize and categorize the processes of adaptation and acculturation of migrants in their new life circumstances. In most cases, integration is the most desirable strategy for Ukrainian refugees. This process may involve distancing sojourners from their home culture and a desire to strengthen their relationships with members of the society of settlement. However, communication with the cultural community left behind or the diaspora can be maintained, and relationships with the new social environment can be established. This option is the most socially productive and psychologically comfortable for migrants" [6, p. 30].

In our study of migration practices, we identified and summarized options for acculturation in borderline conditions. 1. "Public inclusion: social support from institutions and the public of the host culture promotes "soft" adaptation and reduces communication and other social risks. The effectiveness of adaptation depends on the willingness of newcomers to engage in public communication. Participation in public events and discussions with representatives of civil society organizations, the media, and authorities provides an opportunity to discuss the problems of migrants, clarify their rights and obligations, create new connections and relationships with local residents, and improve the psychological and social environment surrounding people in a borderline sociocultural state" [5, p. 267].

2. Joining the diaspora community: communicating "with compatriots and sharing positive life experiences can serve as protection against tension, reducing the symptoms of acculturation stress. However, such a policy, if not combined with integration practices, can turn into isolationism and lead to the formation of closed cultural communities" [5, p. 269]. European countries face similar problems with cultural diasporas. Turkish, Caucasian, and Arab diasporas (with a high level of traditional intragroup relations and behavior patterns) tend to adapt to their environment rather than change themselves. In Poland, a certain problem with Ukrainian migrants has been noted. Some of them do not seek to reorient themselves in their new

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environment, but try to adapt the local space to their own ideas and traditions. Trying to stick with your old way of life can mean ignoring your experiences and growth. German researcher H. Wehling compared this kind of life to "a candle lit at both ends" [12]. He shared the theory of cultural identity "between two chairs", according to which the borderline cultural affiliation of newly arrived migrants is characterized by uncertainty; they find themselves in a borderline sociocultural state, having already broken away from their home culture but not yet integrated into the new one. In the process of resocialization of a person in a new place, life habits, value orientations, knowledge, and skills do not remain constant. They are subject to transformation under the influence of new circumstances of life. An individual, immersing themselves in a new sociocultural reality, does not sever their ties with either their native environment or the host community, but expands the field of their belonging, weaving themselves into a network of relationships that goes beyond traditional cultural horizons, into a transnational space where identity becomes multidimensional and dynamic.

3. Integration into the host community. This process is often accompanied by alienation from the familiar, "home" environment. People who have had negative experiences in communicating with representatives of their own cultural community may reject it and strengthen ties with the new culture. At the same time, a more balanced approach is possible, where ties with the native cultural community or diaspora are maintained, and positive relationships are established with representatives of the new culture. This path is considered the most favorable from both a social and psychological point of view.

4. Differentiated inclusion is becoming a relevant innovative strategy for intercultural relations in the context of openness, dispersion, and non-linearity of the modern cultural space. The choice of positions in the public space and at the workplace determines the options and parameters of interaction. They can be both positive and negative. Differentiated inclusion will be considered positive if there is a gradual inclusive movement of migrants into a new environment according to certain multiple parameters (knowledge of the language, housing, sought-after profession, religious community, etc.). "Unproductive, conflictual contacts with compatriots and the host community, the exchange of negative experiences can complicate the process of entering a different cultural environment, break the morale of the newcomer, which will lead to problems with regulating his or her sociocultural life. Such differentiated inclusion is characterized as negative. The conflictual nature of differentiated inclusion can also be complicated by the rules of social selection in the host society" [5, p. 270-271],

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discriminatory conditions of work, housing, education, and medical treatment.

5. Exclusion from the host community. Main options: "marginalization of migrants and reintegration (return to their home environment). Without integrating into the new environment, migrants may develop a "homelessness" syndrome, regardless of whether they return to their former world or not" [5, p. 271]. The feeling that a person is "nowhere and never at home" becomes a dangerous psychological condition. Programs promoting voluntary repatriation (return), developed by the UN and other international organizations, help to alleviate the "homelessness" syndrome.

Conclusions. The semantics of dividing sociocultural space into "one's own" and "foreign" is based on E. Husserl's concept of the lifeworld. The concept of transgression demonstrates heuristic potential and is used in our study as a relevant methodological tool for analyzing social issues. It is appropriate to use it in relation to social groups of migrants and displaced persons, to involve it in the analysis of tourism practices or technological breakthroughs, when the lifeworld is transformed and a new identity of the personality of the sociocultural borderland is born.

In the study of the transgression of the living world in the sociocultural borderland, three important methodological approaches have been identified: border studies, boundary studies, and frontier studies. Border is the practice of shaping space that produces identities (national, cultural, political). Border studies examine borders, borderlands, and the processes of formation, transformation, and overcoming of borders in both the physical and social, cultural, or political sense. The meaning of frontier is explained in the combination of processes of differentiation and convergence as the permanent formation of modern sociocultural space. Frontier does not rely on established practices of rooting and is therefore frightening. It is a horizon that we move, a space for social and cultural experiments where new ethics, new politics, and new identities are formed. In this context, the frontier is not an escape from the present, but an attempt to radically rethink it. This section aims to prove that the frontier is not only the boundary of a developed territory, a space of the unknown, complex, and risky existence for the person who finds themselves in it. It is a metaphysical field of possibilities, a project for the future, where humanity questions the limitations imposed by history, everyday experience, and the technological and natural landscape.

Therefore, when it comes to the *borderland* as a methodological tool, a vision of a living, moving space "in between" is proposed. The borderland is presented as a dynamic process of interactions within and between

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boundary complexes. The search for harmony in the interactions of cultural differences increases the heuristic value of the borderland, in contrast to a closed, developed space.

Contemporary changes in a globalized world force us to rethink traditional notions of identity. In the context of global mobility, the challenges of war, migration flows, and cultural exchanges, the issue of identity becomes particularly acute. People who cross borders may feel that they are part of different cultures and communities at the same time. They may define themselves as "intercultural," "multilingual," or "global" subjects. Thus, identity takes on multiple or hybrid characteristics. Intercultural interaction can unfold in several directions: public inclusion; inclusion in the home world of the diaspora; integration into the host cultural community; differentiated inclusion; exclusion from the new cultural space. Despite the pain and complexity of this period, it is a necessary means of adapting to a new culture, shaping the ability to live in an ever-changing world where geographical and cultural boundaries are blurring and borderless communication is becoming increasingly important.

Our research supports the view that our identity is no longer fixed in rigid forms, but is subject to the influence of deterritorialization, rhizomatic, and transgressive processes, and therefore must be capable of change, transformation, free redistribution, and expansion. Multiple identity becomes a symbol of rejection of fixed forms and categories that define a person. It articulates our ability to adapt, as well as the need for mutual understanding and coexistence in conditions of cultural diversity. Such a mosaic construct of identity can be both a source of inner enrichment and a potential source of conflict. Its problematic nature is an open and promising topic for further philosophical research.

Funding. The author declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest. The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement. The author declare that no Generative AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

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https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Section 1.2. Personality in the Era of Civilizational Upheaval: Existential Challenges, Consumption, and the Transformation of Values

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Citation:
Kravchenko, A. (2025). Transgression of the Life-World in the Socio-Cultural Borderland. In A. Kravchenko (Ed.), *Sociocultural and Political Metamorphoses in the Era of Identity Competition.* 221 p. (pp. 23-44). Scientific Center of Innovative Research. https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC-23-44

Abstract. *The rapid development of technogenic civilization, consumer culture, and transhumanist ideologies has reshaped the boundaries of subjectivity, freedom, and moral responsibility. These processes challenge the traditional philosophical understanding of the human being and demand a renewed humanitarian framework capable of preserving existential integrity amid the pressures of technological and social change. The purpose of the paper is to explore the philosophical and anthropological dimensions of personality transformation in the conditions of modern consumer and digital society, to reveal the mechanisms through which technological progress and economic rationality influence human subjectivity, and to justify the need for a new ethics and educational paradigm that safeguard human dignity and freedom. The methodological framework combines existential and phenomenological approaches (Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre), the critical tradition of the Frankfurt School (Marcuse, Fromm), and contemporary theories of digital culture and transhumanism (Bauman, Stiegler, Harari, Deleuze). Comparative analysis, hermeneutics, and axiological interpretation are employed to trace the evolution of philosophical conceptions of subjectivity and to reveal shifts in value orientations caused by informational and economic transformations. The study demonstrates that the digital and consumer revolutions lead to a reduction of the human being to a functional role within algorithmic systems, causing the erosion of autonomy, authenticity, and reflective capacity. However, it also argues that through the cultivation of moral and ethical virtues – prudence, justice, courage, love, faith, and hope – it is possible to restore human subjectivity and reaffirm existential freedom. The prospects for further research involve developing an integrative model of digital humanism that unites philosophy, education, and ethics. Such a model should provide a conceptual foundation for rehumanizing the digital environment, forming critical and moral competencies, and strengthening the existential resilience of the individual in the globalized world.*
Keywords: *digital society; subjectivity; transhumanism; ethics; existence; consumption; philosophy; education.*

ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

1. Existential challenges of civilizational upheaval. In the 21st century, humanity faces unprecedented challenges affecting the economic, cultural, existential, and informational spheres of being. Radical societal, economic, ecological, and techno-scientific transformations demand a rethinking of the values and meanings underpinning human existence. The contemporary socio-cultural space is undergoing profound changes that not only reshape modes of interaction but also fundamentally transform the foundational principles of personal existence. Shifts driven by the information revolution, the development of smart society, globalization, epidemiological, ecological, and military threats are influencing the formation of new models of needs, identity, and values.

The current epoch presents itself as a period of global challenges and paradoxes. On the one hand innovation, progress, integration; on the other identity crises, erosion of values, and the fragmentation of cultural heritage. Humanity seems to be in a state of «anthropological rupture», where traditional behavioral models and conceptions of good and evil, morality, and responsibility are no longer perceived as universal. In such conditions, the individual emerges as the primary bearer of meaning, entrusted with the mission of preserving the human dimension amid postmodern chaos.

As an active participant in socio-cultural processes, the individual finds themselves in a space of existential uncertainty, necessitating the search for new moral orientations, ethical responsibility, and a holistic vision of self in the world. In particular, the phenomenon of consumer society has significantly shifted the anthropological focus from existential pursuit to utilitarian functionalism.

Despite the growing pressure of information flows, the human being remains the central figure of civilizational progress. However, the meaningful content of one's life increasingly depends not on spiritual and cultural narratives, but on the ability to adapt to technological transformations, navigate social shifts, and manage one's informational behavior. Against this backdrop, the rethinking of the role of education, virtues, meaning, and national identity becomes especially relevant as the foundation of spiritual integrity.

A comprehensive reflection on the impact of contemporary phenomena from consumer society to the information economy reveals a shift in the structure of values, meanings, and personal identity. The new configuration of the modern world, with its orientation toward social equilibrium and values, correlates with the growth of individual self-sufficiency, social mobility, and corresponding changes in consciousness. What is at stake is the formation of a new system of worldview orientations and priorities that

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transforms not only human lifestyles but also the social structure of society and the relationships between the individual and the collective amid the increasing disintegration of social bonds that are losing their subjectivity.

Today, in an era dominated by informational internet structures, new modes of communication, and the transformation of needs and consumption patterns, the emergence of a new socio-cultural reality appears both logical and inevitable. In accordance with its demands, the familiar environment of existence is receding into the past a development that should not be resisted, but rather understood and acknowledged, for this situation necessitates the formation of a multifaceted, developed personality.

However, such development does not entail abstract humanistic proclamations, such as «everything in a person must be beautiful», or that «man sounds noble». Humanity has always been differentiated, and thus, the notion of «the beautiful» has been understood differently in each era, within each system of upbringing, education, and culture. Likewise, not all individuals meet the standards of dignity. Every historical epoch leaves its imprint on the human being on their thoughts, aspirations, needs, and beyond. Today, amid the increasing dynamism of all processes, one can no longer afford stability in a world overwhelmed by an immense volume of information, which defies perception and analysis a world in which uncertainty is not a deviation, but an inherent feature, and where the continual reinvention and improvement of one's profession is a necessity. In such a world, «high mental flexibility and vast reserves of emotional equilibrium» are required [25, p. 326].

2. Transformation of subjectivity in the digital and consumer society. The philosophy of personality is called upon not only to comprehend the nature of the human being, but also to indicate the paths of their evolution under conditions of technological and social destabilization. It demands a synthesis of anthropological depth, moral responsibility, and critical evaluation of contemporary social processes. The question arises concerning the essence of this world its principles and values within which the individual must live. As Jean-Paul Sartre stated: «Man is condemned to be free; condemned because he did not create himself, yet once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does» [12, p. 34]. In this sense, the problem of life’s meaning, the pursuit of authenticity, and the capacity for freedom becomes a cornerstone of the humanities. Therefore, the relevance of the inquiry proposed in this section lies not merely in describing changes, but in attempting a philosophical interpretation of the new paradigm of the personality.

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In the context of global civilizational transformations, there arises an urgent need for a philosophical rethinking of the very nature of the subject. The traditional notion of the individual as an autonomous bearer of freedom, dignity, and moral responsibility is undergoing critical reassessment under the influence of digital culture, informational algorithms, and new forms of communicative interaction. The subject of the 21st century increasingly functions not as an internally integrated existential unit, but as a variable construct shaped by external informational flows, platforms, networks, and cultural templates.

To gain a deeper understanding of this transformation, it is appropriate to conduct a comparative analysis of classical philosophical conceptions of subjectivity (Heidegger, Sartre, Jaspers, Fromm) and contemporary perspectives (Bauman, Harari, Stiegler, Deleuze), which reflect a paradigmatic shift in the vision of the human being within technocratic society.

Table 1.1. Comparative Characteristics of Classical and Contemporary Approaches to Subjectivity

Criterion	Classical Philosophy (Heidegger, Sartre, Jaspers, Fromm)	Contemporary Philosophy (Bauman, Harari, Stiegler, Deleuze)
Essence of the Subject	A center of autonomous choice, bearer of existential meaning and moral responsibility.	A variable, flexible construct shaped by digital structures and environments.
Source of Identity	Inner moral choice, self-reflection, authentic experience.	External self-presentation, algorithmic categorization, networked positioning.
Freedom	Ontological possibility of self-determination even in extreme situations (Sartre: *«Man is condemned to be free»*).	Pseudo-freedom: choice within programmed options; behavioral control via digital systems.
Interaction with Technology	Technology as a means that may alienate but does not negate freedom (Fromm).	The human is no longer a subject but a function of the system, a node in networked productivity.
Attitude toward Consumption	Critique of imposed needs and the loss of authenticity (Fromm, Marcuse).	Consumption as the foundation of a new ontology: the replacement of the real by simulacra (Baudrillard).
Meaning of Life	Conscious search for meaning, transcendence, and self-becoming through freedom (Heidegger, Jaspers).	Displacement of meaning by efficiency, productivity, hedonism, and informational pressure.

Source: systematized by the author

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

In light of this comparison, it becomes evident that the shift in emphasis from ontology to algorithmics, from being to functioning undermines the foundations of the classical conception of the human being as a moral agent. While in the existential tradition subjectivity was understood as an inner capacity for freedom, doubt, and choice, in the digitized environment it is gradually reduced to a set of reactions, behavioral patterns, and «profiles». In this context, the task of the humanities gains special urgency: to preserve the human capacity for self-reflection, moral choice, and creative self-transcendence despite the profound transformation of the conditions of existence.

The human being in the context of modern civilization emerges as a subject immersed in a dynamic environment of constant change, which determines the horizons of their continued existence. While shaping a world oriented toward technological progress and the commodification of life, the individual simultaneously realizes the aspiration for safety and the fulfillment of personal needs. In this context, philosophical reflection on the economic, ethical, and socio-cultural foundations of human development becomes essential particularly within the dimensions of consumer society and informational-digital reality. Such an approach opens the way for analyzing the internal tension between the rational-pragmatic and the emotional-biological in the human being a tension that enables a new configuration of personality.

The civilizational landscape of the present is largely shaped by the phenomenon of the «consumer society», which functions as one of the key structural principles not only of the economic system but also of social organization. As defined by N. Ferguson, a consumer society is «a way of life in which the production, sale, and purchase of consumer goods (such as clothing, etc.) play a central role in economic processes. Without a consumer society, the Industrial Revolution would have been impossible. But the Industrial Revolution could not have begun in the West without the simultaneous development of a dynamic consumer society with an almost insatiable demand for cheap goods. Everyone became a consumer, including workers which was the great advantage of industrialization» [24, p. 45].

The consumer society functions as a rationally organized system that structures economic and cultural practices based on standardized mechanisms of need satisfaction. At the same time, demand within this system is of a subjective nature and is often unrelated to actual necessity or ontological meaning. It is not the system itself that lends coherence to economic behavior, but rather individual goal-setting an outcome of irrational choice. As numerous scholars have noted, the goals of economic

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activity, much like other historical manifestations of human enterprise (e.g., the construction of the pyramids, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, or the Terracotta Army), cannot be fully rationally justified. They emerge as culturally determined, symbolic, or even mythologized constructs. Rationality reveals itself solely in the means of achieving these goals. In this sense, consumption that goes beyond basic subsistence always bears the mark of irrationality, while production often merely simulates rationality, in fact serving the same irrational impulses of consumer culture.

Modern market economy, despite its apparent structure, tends toward the fetishization of the commodity, resulting in a peculiar form of cultic veneration of the endless stream of products that constantly stimulate new forms of demand. This operational logic transforms the market into a space of continuous consumption, where producer and consumer exist in a state of perpetual seduction. The convenience, comfort, and aesthetic appeal of this system have led to the global dominance of the Western model of consumption. Its defining feature is its capacity to transcend ideological boundaries: even countries that attempted to implement socialist or anti-capitalist models have been unable to escape the inertia of consumerist logic. As Niall Ferguson emphasizes, this has resulted in «one of the great paradoxes of modern history: an economic system designed to offer people an infinite variety of choices has made mankind almost homogeneous» [24, p. 273].

Within the logic of consumer society, the multidimensionality of the individual is reduced to standardized behavioral models, leading to the formation of a «homogenized» or «one-dimensional» subject. Herbert Marcuse, a representative of the Frankfurt School, conceptualized this phenomenon in his work One-Dimensional Man as the outcome of the dominance of technological rationality, which narrows the horizon of existential experience to utilitarian social functions and displaces the depth of existential meaning [20]. People in such a society acquire the characteristics of interchangeability, as they conform to identical desires and standardized needs many of which are artificial and imposed.

Similar motifs can be traced in the work of Erich Fromm. In his book *To Have or to Be?*, he analyzes the trend toward the loss of existential autonomy, where the subject replaces genuine needs with symbolic commodities that serve not for fulfillment but for the demonstration of social status [5]. Jean Baudrillard, in his concept of simulacra, emphasizes that postmodern consumption unfolds within the sphere of signs copies without originals and loses connection with authentic experience. In this space of

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simulation, the act of consumption becomes self-referential and reproduces itself independently of actual needs [18, pp. 59–61].

Within this cultural context, the individual is increasingly subjected to the influence of the market and advertising, which impose homogenized notions of happiness, success, and socially acceptable lifestyles. This undermines subjective autonomy and leads to a simplified anthropological model. Fromm aptly observes: «We have become consumption machines that accept slogans instead of questions, habits instead of will, and clichés instead of authenticity» [5, p. 83]. As a result, the personality becomes embedded in a rationalized economic system which, however, does not generate authentic meanings. The meanings of existence emerge in the realm of the ethical, spiritual, and cultural domains that cannot be commercialized.

In this context, existential reflection as a practice of self-awareness, responsibility, and freedom of choice acquires particular significance. It, in turn, demands a renewal of the educational paradigm. Education must focus not only on the transmission of knowledge but also on the formation of subjectivity, autonomous thinking, and ethical consciousness [20].

In contemporary socio-cultural conditions, the individual increasingly loses access to authentic experience, as existence is shaped by the inertia of established norms and expectations formed by the external environment, media space, and economic rationality. In the terms of Martin Heidegger, this is the state of inauthenticity (Uneigentlichkeit), in which the subject operates under the influence of the impersonal «they» (das Man), which dictates patterns of behavior and restricts the possibility of independently interpreting one's being [7]. As a result, the person ceases to be the subject of their own life, increasingly becoming the object of manipulations informational, political, or marketing in nature. This, in turn, inhibits processes of spiritual development and reduces the level of existential self-awareness.

In response to this situation, contemporary philosophical thought emphasizes a return to fundamental existential categories authenticity, intentionality, and freedom as the foundations of personal responsibility and moral choice [22, pp. 9–12].

The formation of subjectivity presupposes the capacity for autonomous thinking, reflection, and critical engagement with norms, directives, and values institutionalized in consumer culture. Existential philosophy, as represented by the works of M. Heidegger, K. Jaspers, and J.-P. Sartre, highlights the necessity of returning to existenz a mode of being that involves choice, doubt, responsibility, and openness to a tragic and paradoxical, yet deeply meaningful, existence.

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The model of consumer society, which increasingly defines the modern ontology of the subject, determines new boundaries of human existence, within which traditional values truth, justice, love, and the meaning of life are displaced from both the public and ethical spheres. Value orientations are transformed, becoming focused primarily on biosocial parameters: physical satisfaction, comfort, safety, and stability. As a result, the spiritual intensity of human existence declines, manifested in the diminishing pursuit of the transcendent. As Nikolai Berdyaev emphasized, true freedom begins where functionality ends in the creative self-realization of the personality, which resists standardization [16, p. 78].

This raises a fundamental question: is it possible for the modern market economy, which currently functions as a mechanism of consumer subjugation, to be transformed into an instrument that supports personal spiritual or at least existential freedom? Can the individual, while situated within the system of commodity and advertising seduction, regain the capacity for free and authentic choice?

Undoubtedly, any form of economic activity is aimed at the production of material or informational goods, including services and commodities. However, it cannot generate meanings or values of a spiritual order, as these are by nature extra-economic. Freedom of thought, speech, and action as core characteristics of human subjectivity can neither be created nor guaranteed by economic institutions, even within a liberal market system. At best, the economy can reduce the degree of material dependency or transform it into a «softer» more humane form. Yet good and evil, as categories of human reflection, cannot be reduced to utilitarian relationships with things.

The modern world is undergoing a profound transformation not only in consumer behavior but also in the very nature of the objects of consumption a shift largely driven by the transition to an informational-digital reality increasingly dominated by artificial intelligence. In this context, Yuval Noah Harari notes: «Humans will never be economically useless because even if they cannot compete with AI for jobs they will still be needed as consumers» [25, p. 60]. However, he cautions that in the future economy, even this function may become redundant, as robots and algorithms may replace not only productive labor but also the logic of consumption. In a hypothetical but potentially realistic scenario described by Harari, production and consumption are carried out entirely by automated corporations without human involvement: «A mining company produces iron for a robotics company, which builds robots that, in turn, help the mining company extract more iron» [25, p. 60].

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Such a system, powered exclusively by artificial intelligence and technological resources, could potentially function independently of human presence, expanding «to the size of a whole galaxy». In this logic of transformation, computer algorithms are already beginning to play the role of «consumers». On stock markets, for instance, algorithms are the primary buyers of financial assets, and in advertising, search engines dominate the structuring of demand. «When designing web pages, people often settle for what Google selects, rather than what a particular human might prefer [25, p. 60]. This marks a shift in economic logic toward an automated environment insensitive to human need, where the role of the subject is increasingly diminished and the space for existential freedom progressively narrowed.

In the contemporary technological environment, we are witnessing a gradual displacement of the human being from leading roles in productive and communicative processes a shift driven by the rapid development of advanced technologies, artificial intelligence, and automated systems. This not only transforms patterns of activity but also alters modes of perceiving reality. Nevertheless, despite these transformations, the fundamental psychophysiological and social nature of the human being persists, grounded in the existence of universal needs. The satisfaction of these needs depends on access to resources generated within the economy understood in the broadest sense as a system for reproducing the conditions of human existence.

According to Martha Nussbaum, such resources are best interpreted as a set of basic human capabilities that is, the opportunities necessary for realizing one's human potential. These capabilities, she argues, constitute a legitimate foundation for personal self-actualization, as they reflect the conditions that nature makes available to us [11].

Beyond basic needs, contemporary discourse on value development emphasizes the expansion of the spectrum of human capabilities. These include life expectancy, health, safety, access to knowledge, freedom of speech, and participation in public life. Added to these are aesthetic experience, emotional richness, social and cultural ties, leisure, creativity, reflection, and the ability to form an individual conception of a dignified life [21, p. 256]. It is precisely the totality of these capabilities that shapes the status, quality, and meaningful content of human existence within the socio-cultural space.

Progress in achieving these capabilities cannot be reduced solely to economic indicators. The organization of economic policy depends largely on worldview orientations, the spiritual sensitivity of society, and the

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prevailing cultural environment. In many cases, it is the socio-cultural infrastructure that serves as the decisive factor in realizing an individual's potential. As a being of meaning, the human person seeks to understand the essence of events surrounding them particularly in times of profound transformation, which demand new ethical coordinates.

In this context, existential philosophy particularly the concept of «boundary situations» (Grenzsituationen) proposed by Karl Jaspers becomes increasingly relevant. In moments of crisis, Jaspers argues, the individual encounters insurmountable circumstances that cannot be altered but may awaken a consciousness of one's own transcendence. Only by accepting the boundary situation can one attain authentic existence, grounded in inner choice, responsibility, and the search for higher meaning [8]. In this sense, contemporary social reality particularly the culture of consumption can serve not only as a form of alienation, but also as a space for spiritual awakening and moral self-realization.

3. The hierarchy of needs and the spiritual dimension of human existence. It must be recognized that even symbolic consumption, which is characteristic of modern culture, is not entirely detached from the system of basic human needs. Its foundation remains anchored in the fundamental structures of biological and social existence. One of the most illustrative representations of such a structure is the model of the hierarchy of needs most famously represented by Maslow's pyramid. This model describes the goals of human activity in a vertical hierarchy, beginning with survival-related needs: physiological (food, sleep, rest, protection from the environment) and safety. Higher in the hierarchy are social needs such as belonging (reproduction, parenting), and those related to esteem and recognition from individual authority to the pursuit of power.

Compared to other needs, the desire for power proves to be the most energetically charged in terms of its capacity to mobilize substantial resources for its realization. However, this need is not universally active; it is characteristic of a relatively small, active segment of society willing to engage in competition for power. In such cases, the drive for dominance activates a specific behavioral energy that can be understood as a sublimated resource.

Thus, the hierarchy of needs functions not only as a psychological model but also as a sociological structure: it correlates with the hierarchy of social status. A person's social position is often associated with the dominant level of need they prioritize, as well as the volume of behavioral energy they are capable of mobilizing to satisfy it.

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Above the biosocial level lie the ideal, spiritual, and cultural orientations justice, truth, beauty, and goodness. However, in real social practice, these ideals often appear not as self-sufficient existential imperatives, but as rationalized expressions of underlying biosocial motivations. Lacking their own energetic base, such values are frequently transformed into tools of cultural programming, particularly by socially dominant groups. In this sense, ideals can function as instruments of legitimizing subordination: they direct the «passive» segments of society toward serving the interests of elites, even when these ideals conflict with individuals' actual needs and aspirations.

The hierarchy of needs model proves methodologically useful for analyzing the integrative behavior of large social groups within complex societal systems. Its strength lies in its universality, which allows for the description of fundamental biosocial impulses that determine the dynamics of collective behavior. However, the model also has a significant limitation: such approaches primarily focus on generalized characteristics of «human nature», abstracting from the personal and existential dimensions of being. As a result, individual uniqueness, inner freedom, and spiritual choice remain outside its conceptual framework.

A human being reduced to a bearer of basic needs risks being perceived as a depersonalized entity functioning solely within biologically determined behaviors. Such a reductionist perspective neglects the cultural, moral, and spiritual dimensions that form the essence of the «second nature» culture. Hryhorii Skovoroda already noted that nature within a person may manifest in both elevated cultural actions and in «animalistic» acts, including those of aggression or instinct. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of human existence requires the integration of both natural and spiritual-cultural factors, moving beyond reductionist models.

In this light, the position of economic determinism which reduces personal development to material conditions alone loses explanatory power in the contemporary social context. The human being is not merely a product of the economic environment. «Human life and development are not reducible to economic stratification to the differentiation of income levels and standards of living», emphasizes A. S. Halchynskyi. «Growing importance belongs to non-economic determinants that relate to the political, social, and legal status of citizens, their rights and privileges, responsibilities and obligations, power and influence, and so on. It is also crucial to account for natural social fluctuations, which in turn correspond to economic cycles that constitute the basis of the self-development of the socio-economic system, as one of its essential attributes» [19, p. 456].

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Moreover, it is essential to account for the dynamic nature of social processes: fluctuations and oscillations in the political and cultural environment interact with economic cycles and contribute to the self-development of the socio-economic system. These fluctuations are not accidental deviations but structural elements of societal dynamics. This calls for an understanding of the multifactorial nature of human subjectivity, which integrates biological, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions.

In the context of recent advancements in modern economics encompassing areas such as hyper-agriculture, neurostimulation in healthcare, nanotechnology in medicine, alternative energy, electronic payment systems, digital education, programmable finance, risk management, and behavioral monitoring through sensor systems we are witnessing an unprecedented intensification of consumption. These transformations are altering the character of human existence, where consumption becomes the dominant motive of life activity, and personal autonomy is subject to erosion. Within a political-economic model that reinforces the instrumentalization of the human being, there emerges a real threat of losing subjectivity, diminishing self-determination, and weakening individual sovereignty.

4. Revival of subjectivity through moral and ethical virtues. This raises a central question: is it possible to restore human subjectivity under conditions of excessive economization of the life-world? Deirdre McCloskey offers a compelling answer, pointing to the necessity of returning to classical virtues that once constituted the moral foundation of bourgeois culture. Chief among them is prudence not merely as economic caution («buy low, sell high»), but as the capacity to prefer cooperation over violence, to anticipate consequences, and to act for the common good with deep knowledge [9, pp. 506–507].

Prudence emerges not only as the ability to save and accumulate but as a cultural virtue of self-discipline that includes intellectual development, honesty in business practices, a readiness for dialogue, and the ability to compromise. This conception of prudence emphasizes an internal ethical orientation that resists the chaotic hedonism of consumption.

Justice, according to McCloskey, is not merely a legal mechanism for protecting property but a moral principle requiring respect for labor, recognition of professional dignity, rejection of privilege and envy, and the affirmation of equal opportunity [9, p. 507].

Particular attention should also be paid to the virtue of courage not in the classical sense of heroism, but as the ability to overcome fear of failure, adapt to change, embrace innovation, remain resilient after bankruptcy, and

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stand against pessimistic intellectual fatalism [9, p. 508]. In this light, courage becomes an inner resilience that enables the individual to retain subjectivity within a rapidly evolving technocratic world.

Thus, the restoration of human subjectivity in a technologized consumer order is possible through ethical self-reflection, the reassertion of dignity, and the cultivation of existential virtues that foster autonomy of thought and action in a world of continuous transformation.

Alongside the virtues discussed above, McCloskey also highlights three cardinal moral qualities with not only ethical but also existential significance: Love, Faith, and Hope. Love manifests in empathy, concern for others colleagues, partners, fellow citizens in openness to the Other and in the striving for spiritual fullness of being, including the search for God. Faith, in McCloskey's view, is not only a sign of moral commitment to business and society, but the ability to discover sources of meaning in the traditions of science, religion, and ethics traditions that open up horizons for personal self-determination. Hope, finally, lies in rejecting the pessimistic repetition of the past and in the ability to consciously live out the everyday, to discover vocation and meaning within it [9, p. 508].

The cultivation of such virtues does not guarantee a solution to all existential challenges facing modern individuals, but it creates the necessary conditions for strengthening their subjectivity, enhancing their ability to control their life-space, and to determine the direction and quality of their existence. When economic activity goes beyond basic subsistence, its goals become existentially motivated, subjective, and contingent in nature. In this sense, it is the system of virtues that grants human activity a deeper meaning and relates it to the question of the purpose of life. As Sartre warned, without this meaning, the fundamental question arises: «Is this life worth living?» [12].

The contemporary era, marked by sweeping socio-economic transformations particularly the rise of the consumer society radically alters lifestyle patterns, dominant values, cultural structures, and the purpose and meaning of human activity. The reorientation toward biosocial needs leads to a reduction of the personal dimension, reducing the individual to biological or functional existence, and the loss of the deeper «self».

The true challenge lies in integrating material-economic activity with existential concerns questions of meaning, dignity, and self-realization. Preserving the human being as a spiritual entity is only possible through the restoration and nurturing of a moral-ethical system of virtues. The affirmation of such virtues is a precondition for maintaining human integrity intellectual, social, cultural, and professional. Within the educational

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paradigm, this calls for an approach that emphasizes not only the transmission of knowledge but also the cultivation of moral sensitivity, reflective capacity, and the ability to be oneself in a complex, ever-changing world. As David M. Berry notes, «if the active citizen must increasingly be aware of computational processes, replacing the autonomy of the mind with the heteronomy of algorithms, then we must begin to teach the principles of critically reflecting on the computable through new understandings of what we might call digital Bildung» [2]. Such education should become the response to the challenges of the digital age, which demands a new ethics, a renewed philosophy, and a reimagined ontology of subjectivity.

5. Digital civilization, transhumanism, and the new humanism. The transition to a post-industrial era, accompanied by deep civilizational transformations, radically changes the mechanisms by which social norms and values are formed. Hence emerges the phenomenon of a technogenic civilization, in which social structures and modes of interaction are increasingly shaped by scientific and technological progress, information flows, and digital instruments. In its search for new sometimes alternative paths of development, humanity is constructing innovative models of social interaction that require a rethinking of ethical and normative foundations.

In these conditions, modern individuals encounter new patterns of behavior, responsibilities, communication forms, and social roles. The infrastructure of everyday life is permeated by the logic of machine-based production, while technocratic thinking increasingly dominates criteria of efficiency, utility, and rationality. These changes are global in nature, encompassing all cultures and nations regardless of ethnic, religious, or social divisions. This has become possible due to the rapid development of technologies capable of instant information exchange, fast dissemination of innovations, and the integration of unified forms of communication. As Alvin Toffler observed, «Today, the network of social connections is so tightly woven that the consequences of contemporary events spread instantly across the world» [14, p. 3].

Replacing the industrial society characterized by standardization, centralization, specialization, synchronization, concentration, and maximization, all typical of the «second wave» of civilizational development is the «third wave» society. According to Toffler, this new society is based on fundamentally different forms of life organization: rigid structures give way to flexible networks, decentralized governance, multifunctionality, and fragmented experience [23].

The formation of the information society, followed by the development of the so-called «Fourth Industrial Revolution,» has brought about radical

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changes in social structures. However, it was the global challenges of recent years such as the COVID-19 pandemic, full-scale military conflicts, mass social protests, and waves of forced migration that imparted a new dynamic to these processes. These factors acted as catalysts for the digital transition, intensifying transformations that had already begun in times of relative peace.

One particularly telling development has been the forced shift to digital modes of interaction. Tools that until recently were considered auxiliary messaging apps, video conferencing, digital platforms have acquired the status of essential life infrastructure. Quarantine restrictions, social distancing measures, mobile contact-tracing applications, and digital services in education, healthcare, and public administration have all contributed to the emergence of a new communicative ethic and a transformation of everyday practices.

In the contemporary context of global transformation and civilizational turbulence, the problem of cultivating social cohesion has become especially urgent. Such cohesion must be grounded in communicative alignment, which serves as a fundamental prerequisite for the harmonious functioning of social institutions. The level of mutual understanding within a social system determines not only the effectiveness of its institutions but also the very possibility of constructive interaction in a complex world.

The global crisis brought on by the pandemic, military conflicts, and technological overload has clearly revealed the limitations of traditional models of social communication that relied on physical presence. On the one hand, digital tools have provided the technical means to sustain communication. On the other, they have led to the dehumanization of interaction, the loss of emotional richness, and the erosion of trust. Communication is increasingly acquiring a simulacral character, wherein the individual represents themselves through constructed images (avatars), which replace authentic subjectivity. This process shapes new conditions of identity formation and weakens both empathetic and moral sensitivity.

As T. V. Andrushchenko aptly points out, for a person to enter the new informational reality in a correct and humane way, a humanitarian foundation should have been established at the very stage of its formation one that would provide an ethical basis for the digital domain [15, p. 85]. In other words, ethical norms of real life should have been adapted to the virtual space, rather than displaced by it. The absence of such moral guidelines gives rise to virtual irresponsibility, where communication participants, hidden behind screens, tend to ignore the consequences of their statements. This, in

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turn, leads to the erosion of trust, proliferation of conflicts, misunderstandings, and social alienation.

In the digital age, the formation of a culture of responsible communication is a critically important condition for preserving the social fabric. Without this, society risks losing the capacity for consensus and thus for coordinated and sustainable development. The ethical interpretation of virtual communication, including its norms, boundaries, and principles, must become the subject not only of philosophical inquiry, but also of educational and political strategies.

In today's world, the digital transformation of communication entails not only technical, but also ontological shifts. There is a growing need to reconsider the very foundations of freedom of speech, which in the online sphere takes on an ambivalent character. As J. Chitadze argues, the legal standards of freedom of expression, developed in modern conditions, cannot be directly applied to the digital realm without losing their effectiveness. New challenges demand the development of an adequate regulatory framework that not only proclaims but also governs the moral and legal aspects of online interaction [3].

However, technological mediation of human communication, as shown by contemporary experience, is increasingly accompanied by the process of subject desubstantialization. Communication through screens increasingly acquires features of simulation: nonverbal elements, tonal depth, and bodily presence which are essential for an authentic encounter with the Other, as understood by Emmanuel Levinas disappear. A person loses not only the emotional richness of contact but also the capacity for co-presence, which gives rise to virtual forms of identity.

In this context, the concept of the «simulacrum,» first introduced by Plato, takes on a new meaning. Whereas in classical philosophy a simulacrum was a pale copy of reality, in Jean Baudrillard's postmodern interpretation, it is no longer a copy but a self-sufficient substitute for reality, operating outside the hierarchy of true and false [18]. We cease to be who we truly are and instead acquire a media-constructed image that lives autonomously in the virtual environment. This image an avatar, a profile, a public «self» is not authentic being [7] but a mode of existing within the realm of «they», where individual self-identity and responsibility are lost.

According to Martin Heidegger's perspective, this condition represents a form of estrangement from authentic existence, a shift toward the mode of «inauthentic» being, wherein impersonal technological narratives dominate and absorb the voice of the subject. Digital communication, once merely a tool, has now become a new mode of being-in-the-world not through bodily

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co-being, but through codes, algorithms, truncated emotions, «emojis» and automated responses.

Thus, contemporary virtual culture, rather than expanding the space of freedom, often generates new forms of control, simulation, and loss of meaning. Paradoxically, one of the main problems of our time is not a lack of communication, but its excess coupled with a loss of depth, trust, and dialogical presence. This raises a renewed demand for the humanities: how can authentic humanity be preserved in the age of digital simulacra? How not to lose oneself in the mirror of social media? How to return to the experience of genuine communication not merely as message exchange, but as a dialogical event of encounter?

This state of affairs should not be unambiguously interpreted as either positive or negative. Rather, it constitutes an ontological condition of contemporary civilization, in which technological shifts, digital transformation, and global communication networks have ceased to be mere tools and have become the environment of being. What is happening does not seek our consent: it exists beyond the limits of individual will, preferences, or judgments. As researchers V. P. Bekh and V. I. Zinkevych observe, «the philosophy of the current stage testifies that the global community is in a state of searching for a mainstream of social development not only in the field of knowledge about the world, but also in global communications, new market relations, fundamental science, global education, planetary human upbringing, and the directions for shaping a new philosophical and planetary culture» [17, p. 557]. This search is accompanied both by hope and anxiety as we move into an uncertainty where the old normative models no longer function, and the new ones have yet to be established.

Within this transformation, the problem of social interaction acquires a new dimension: on the one hand, technology promises convenience, immediacy, and global connectivity; on the other, the pace of its updates proves too rapid for the biosocial structures of human nature to keep up. Social adaptation particularly at the levels of ethics, institutions, and customs consistently «lags behind» the innovations being implemented.

This imbalance between the technical and the human has contributed to the rise of transhumanist ideology, which proposes the radical enhancement of humans through technology – to the point of becoming «post-human». But is such a project truly progressive? A philosophical question arises: if we transform ourselves to the extent that we lose our moral, emotional, ethical, and identity-based core, will we still remain human in the full sense of the word? Max More, one of the leading theorists of transhumanism,

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proclaims a new anthropology of the future [10]. However, the critical perspective provided by Jürgen Habermas casts doubt on the unconditional value of such a prospect. If biological life becomes fully dependent on arbitrary preferences, the philosopher notes, it will inevitably alter the normative understanding of what it means to be human [6].

This issue is not only moral but ontological in nature. We risk reducing the human being to a functional bearer of abilities, controlled by technical means, thus losing the uniqueness of being-through-itself that has shaped human dignity for millennia. In this way, the virtuosity of technical advancement may conflict with the philosophical category of «humanity» as the capacity for responsibility, empathy, love, and spiritual self-formation.

At this point, the question of a planetary philosophical culture becomes particularly urgent. This is not about a universal ideology, but about the necessity of developing a humanitarian foundation that would allow us to navigate the age of bio-digital experiments. In a situation where intellectual systems increasingly take over human functions, it is crucial not to lose the boundary between enhancement and dehumanization, between innovation and betrayal of the anthropological core of culture.

In the new conditions of digital society, the concepts of freedom, responsibility, and privacy undergo substantial rethinking. Information flows, which have taken on the character of hyperreality, are shaping a new ecosystem of social existence, where classical ethical norms require not only adaptation but also conceptual renewal. This is not merely about technically transferring morality into the digital sphere, but about the need to form new foundations for moral life in the age of algorithms.

A fundamental question arises: under conditions of informational oversaturation, constant surveillance, and fragmented experience, is a person still able to maintain inner unity, critical thinking, empathy, and compassion? This ability is the foundation of human subjectivity – the very deep quality that allows an individual not merely to function within a system, but to be a moral agent, a creator of meaning, responsible for themselves and others. In the age of technological breakthroughs, the fragility of social bonds becomes evident, along with their dependence on infrastructures of control and the inadequacy of global institutions, which often fail to comprehend their own transformations.

In his «Postscript on the Societies of Control», Gilles Deleuze states that the paradigm of subjectivity is undergoing a profound transformation: it is no longer constituted within the space of intersubjective ethics but rather within a system of technical regulation, where behavior is programmed by codes, algorithms, and digital profiles. The subject increasingly appears as a

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«function» within a control environment deprived of inner reflection and existential depth [4]. The pandemic, functioning as a sort of «laboratory of social experimentation», accelerated the implementation of mechanisms of biopower: digital monitoring, QR codes, and mobility regulation became new forms of life governance.

Simultaneously, we are witnessing a profound reconfiguration of identity itself. As Zygmunt Bauman observes, we have transitioned from the «solid» to the «liquid» phase of modernity, where traditional structures family, profession, culture dissolve in the flows of change. Identity no longer serves as a stabilizing force; it becomes a tactic a temporary response to shifting circumstances dictated by the media environment. In this liquid age, the individual is compelled to reconstruct themselves anew each day, constantly struggling with their own dissolution [1].

This condition engenders existential instability. A person deprived of stable reference points becomes vulnerable to manipulation and dissolution within networked flows of desire. Philosopher Bernard Stiegler refers to this as the «loss of psychic individuation» the inner capacity that enables a person to experience themselves as a unique individual, rather than merely a node in the digital grid [13]. The automation of desires, the algorithmization of emotions, and the standardization of behavioral models undermine the very foundation of ethical subjectivity, reducing moral life to a mere communicative function.

Thus, the digital age poses a challenge not only to the organization of society but also to the philosophical understanding of the human. The response to this challenge requires not merely technological innovation, but an ontological awakening a return to the sources of the human as a being rooted in responsibility, reflection, and ethical existence.

The digital era has not simply altered the formats of social interaction it has posed a fundamental existential challenge to the individual: how to preserve one's existential core amid fluid identities, technological surveillance, and informational overload. The transformations of the modern world have taken on the character of permanent acceleration, where the boundary between innovation and destruction is increasingly blurred. We no longer merely live in a time of change we are condemned to exist in a mode of perpetual search: for meaning, for answers, for new ways of being. This condition is not an anomaly but the new norm.

Therefore, there is a growing need to reconsider the foundations of social interaction, to develop new models of coexistence that are not only functional but also morally meaningful. This entails a search for balance between technological efficiency and human dignity, between algorithmic

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governance and personal freedom. Society needs new humanistic tools to create a space for responsible participation, where the subject does not dissolve into network structures, but retains the capacity for authentic dialogue, empathy, and ethical action.

In this context, the philosophical and educational reflection on human existence acquires particular significance. The task of philosophy is not only to provide a critical analysis of the epoch but also to shape an ontological horizon within which the possibility of being human-thinking, sensitive, and responsibleis preserved. Education, in turn, must cultivate not merely a competent individual but one who is morally grounded and capable of navigating the conditions of an ambivalent reality, of being with others despite screens, digital avatars, and social filters.

A response to these challenges is impossible without a return to humanitarian reflection as the foundation of human resilience in the world of the future. It is precisely within the dialogue between philosophy, ethics, and education that the potential for a new humanism unfolds one capable not only of comprehending the world but of preserving humanity within it.

Conclusions. The contemporary socio-cultural situation is marked by profound transformations that affect not only the technological and economic dimensions but also the anthropological and existential dimensions of human existence. Amidst the rapid development of digital technologies, globalization, the inflation of meanings, and changes in social structures, a radical reassessment of traditional notions of human nature, its role in society, and the meaning of life is taking place. The individual finds themselves in a state of ambivalence: on the one hand, the significance of personal self-realization increases; on the other, the risk of losing identity, autonomy, and the capacity for moral choice also rises.

The phenomenon of the consumer society determines a shift in the hierarchy of needs and values, promoting the dominance of utilitarian bio-social orientations over existential aspirations. In this context, we witness the devaluation of the spiritual dimension of life, which prevents the formation of authentic identity, deepens the symptomatology of simulacra, and complicates reflective self-relations.

Digital reality, while offering new opportunities for communication, self-presentation, and access to knowledge, also intensifies the threat of depersonalization, superficiality of social bonds, and the substitution of genuine interaction with technological interfaces. The virtualization of being, the mechanization of speech, and the loss of emotional depth in communication highlight the urgent need for a critical reflection on the moral dimension of the digital age.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Philosophical reflection on the present demonstrates the necessity of returning to the concepts of subjectivity, moral autonomy, authenticity, and meaning. In this context, the humanitarian perspective-particularly philosophy, education, and ethics-gains special importance. These domains are tasked not only with developing tools for adapting to change but also with supporting dignity, reflexivity, and the capacity for empathy.

In the context of the rapid development of transhumanist ideas and technological enhancement, the issue of preserving the moral integrity of the human being, their capacity for responsibility and freedom, becomes particularly pressing. A key condition for safeguarding human essence in response to these challenges is the appeal to a system of moral and ethical virtues that underpin the formation of the individual as an integral socio-cultural subject.

The urgency of a humanitarian rethinking of human nature and its place in the new social reality becomes of decisive importance. This rethinking requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines philosophical knowledge, the social sciences, and ethical reflection in order to preserve and cultivate the human in a hypermobile, digital, and fragmented world.

Funding. The author declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest. The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement. The author declare that no Generative AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Chapter 2
Identity, Knowledge and Communication in the Digital Society

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC
ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Section 2.1. Identity Crisis as a Mirror of Modernity

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Citation:
Lipin, M. (2025). Identity Crisis as a Mirror of Modernity. In A. Kravchenko (Ed.), *Sociocultural and Political Metamorphoses in the Era of Identity Competition.* 221 p. (pp. 46-72). Scientific Center of Innovative Research. https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC-46-72

Abstract. *Contemporary socio-cultural dynamics are increasingly shaped by accelerated change that destabilizes inherited forms of order and continuously reconstructs the conditions of social coexistence. Within this context, globalization functions not only as an economic and political process but also as a mechanism that produces identities by flattening cultural differences while preserving global asymmetries. The discourse of identity, often presented as resistance to globalization, emerges as a compensatory response to the erosion of universal horizons that previously grounded meaning and political agency. As a result, identity practices acquire heightened symbolic intensity precisely when universality recedes from public contestation and is replaced by post-political forms of localization, mythologization, and group mobilization. The objective of the study is to conceptualize the relationship between globalization and identity as a single dialectical configuration, and to interpret the contemporary "identity crisis" as a symptom of dehumanization and a displacement of the question of human essence by the managerial logic of identity choice. The study employs philosophical and socio-political analysis of key conceptual oppositions, including universal and particular, rational and irrational, politics and police order, essence and identity. It integrates critical readings of theorists of globalization, ideology, power, and subjectivation, using interpretive reconstruction to trace how identity discourse becomes both a product and an instrument of symbolic domination. First, globalization and localization are shown to be mutually reinforcing processes that converge in suppressing the universal as the condition of genuine politics. Second, the identity crisis is interpreted as an effect of fragmented, dehumanized social relations in which individuals seek meaning through mythologized identities rather than critical self-determination. Third, identity politics is demonstrated to operate as a struggle over symbolic power, where private interests mimic universality and reify groups as primary social units. Fourth, the modern imperative of individualization produces compulsory identity choice that devalues meaning and constrains freedom to adaptive selection rather than creative transformation.*

Keywords: *identity crisis; modernity; globalization; anti-globalization; cultural homogenization; capitalist expansion; identity practices; ideological compensation.*

ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

1. Globalisation as a mechanism for producing identities. At the beginning of the last century, humanity faced the problem of a significant acceleration of socio-cultural, economic, and political transformations. At first, it seemed that the destruction of the «old order» was a temporary phenomenon and that the «era of change» would give way to a new, stable organisation of human coexistence. However, it gradually became clear that the end of the «era of change» would be postponed indefinitely. As early as the beginning of the 19th century, there were claims that the «era of change» represented a new way of life for modern society.

Despite the recognition of the fluidity and uncertainty that permeate all aspects of human existence today, attempts to construct new islands of order within the turbulent «cosmic chaos» persist. If the spread of accelerated changes that erode the uniqueness of individual cultures and regions is attributed to globalisation, then attempts to establish these islands of order are primarily rooted in anti-globalisation tendencies. One of the most common means of countering this global «chaosmos» is the practice of identity.

On the surface of contemporary social processes, a situation emerges in which the discourse of identity is fuelled by resistance to the various consequences of globalisation. Consequently, forces of localisation counteract the influence of globalisation, employing the discourse of identity to establish restrictive boundaries.

However, this apparent contradiction rests on a single foundation. The process of globalisation expresses the underlying logic of the modern economic system; beneath the veneer of globalisation, capitalism continues its expansion. While there are superficial notions concerning the imposition of mass culture (where «culture» is subtly diminished), the promotion of the global market economy is actively underway. The more intense the debates surrounding cultural, ethnic, or national uniqueness and identity become, the more «flat» – or homogenised – the world becomes. The capitalist order penetrates national spaces despite, and often even because of, the obstacles presented by identity practices. In this context, identity becomes a kind of ideological embellishment, serving as compensation for what we prefer not to acknowledge: our integration into the global economic order with its inherent instrumental rationality.

Globalisation is often perceived as the unfolding of a new socio-economic and political order, mirroring how the actualisation of the question of identity is seen as a hallmark of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Globalisation is credited with the dominance of instrumental rationality, while discussions on identity frequently employ the terminology of

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

irrationalism. However, as philosophical history demonstrates, framing the question as an opposition between rationalism and irrationalism already falls prey to the limitations of reason itself. Within the realm of reason (as distinct from mere intellect), the rational does not necessarily negate the sensual; similarly, the sensual can manifest rationality. By contrasting the discourse of identity with rationality, we do not liberate ourselves from reason, but rather reinforce its dominion.

In light of the above considerations, it becomes evident that globalisation, even while employing rationality, does not eliminate the inherent asymmetry of the world produced by the current stage of capitalist development. The world is becoming «flat», yet this does not abolish the division of labor, which is now established on a global scale. Consequently, the «flat» world does not achieve true unity. The asymmetry of the modern financial market vividly illustrates globalisation's failure to create a genuinely universal unity. Globalisation coexists with the preservation of global differentiation, wherein each participant occupies a specifically defined position. While this does not imply that individuals are incapable of altering their positions, the positions themselves remain hierarchical, and someone else must occupy them. Thus, globalisation does not alter the fundamental principles of the world order; instead, it significantly amplifies the potential for its totalisation.

According to S. Žižek, globalisation processes do not so much negate searches for «ethnic roots» as express, through them, their inherent logic: the ultimate loss of «organic-substantial unity» [1]. The interest in "natural" and «authentic» forms of identification with the ethnic or national «body» is mediated by the dynamics of the global market. As Žižek observes, this return to "natural" roots is not a true «regression», but a distorted manifestation of its complete antithesis. In this act of «denial of denial», the absence of a singular foundation for human development is, paradoxically, affirmed [1]. In other words, our pursuit of identity and rediscovery of «lost» foundations arises precisely because we have (consciously or unconsciously) experienced the erosion of the roots that once provided a sense of unity. Thus, notes S. Žižek, the opposition of globalization to a particular cultural identity embodied in a certain way of life is misleading: in fact, globalization threatens not cosa nostra (our private, secret way of life that others want to steal from us), but its complete opposite – universality itself in its exclusively political dimension [1]. Therefore, globalisation engenders a «new world order» that, despite its seemingly universal scope, remains fundamentally non-universal.

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The relationship between globalisation and the discourse of identity must be understood within the context of the long-established interplay between the rational and the irrational. Attempts to amplify one component of this dialectic inevitably lead to the corresponding absolutisation of its opposing principle. The greater the ambition to rationalise the totality of human existence, the more irrational, compensatory attempts emerge to transcend the perceived sterility of pure reason. Yet, as is widely recognised, despite the apparent opposition between detached reason and unbridled sensuality, they draw their energy from a common source and contribute to the fragmentation of human life.

Similarly, the relationship between the processes of globalisation and the seemingly opposite processes of localisation only appear on the surface to be rooted in different foundations. Localisation (and its accompanying discourse of identity) emerges as both a reaction to and a continuation of the totalising impulse described earlier, wherein the individual is inscribed within a broader, general order. It is crucial to recognise that, within this dynamic, the individual (as a singular entity) does not merely relate to this general order (society); instead, they actively oppose it. However, we observe a parallel phenomenon within globalisation processes, which demonstrate a similar indifference towards true universal unity. The secondary desire to define the local boundaries of group existence not only rejects the truly universal but, by generating this very desire, globalisation actively opposes the universal, which serves as a fundamental prerequisite for the political. In this context, both globalisation and localisation, each fuelled by the discourse of identity, present themselves as «post-political» phenomena.

It should be emphasised that genuine politics cannot exist outside the framework of the universal (the general). Moreover, the universal does not exist as a pre-determined dogma or a rigidly canonised schema. Politics derives its very possibility from a continuous contestation over the meaning of the universal. It is precisely this ongoing conflict regarding the nature of the universal, this openness to participation in its constitution, that is suppressed both within the horizon of globalisation and within the enclosed sphere of localisation. Consequently, in both contexts, public deliberation on the foundations upon which social unity is constructed is effectively precluded.

This elucidates why research on the discourse of «national identity» gravitates towards the obscure and, inherently, the patently irrational realm of mythology. Today, the search for identity unfolds against the backdrop of a perceived collapse of the universal context of human existence, which

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stems from the inability to resolve fundamental social problems through political means. In this situation, the opposition between globalization and unique cultural identity does not bring us closer to solving these problems; on the contrary, it only exacerbates them.

2. The identity crisis as a symptom of dehumanization. Attending to the specificities of social relations allows us to consider the escalating identity crisis as a symptomatic expression of the dehumanisation of human relations. Within this framework, the «identity crisis» can be interpreted as a reverberation of the broader crisis pervading social interactions. The inability to address social challenges through political avenues can be understood as giving rise to a social order in which the humanisation of the individual becomes increasingly problematic. Conversely, within this system, a process of active dehumanisation is set in motion. As a result, we lose sight of the individual amidst a proliferation of disparate identities. Drawing upon J.-P. Sartre, we recognise that «the Other» has the potential to become «hell». However, adopting the perspective that the formation of the human «I» is contingent upon an appeal to «You», we can infer that if «the Other» is transmuted into hell, our own «I» will inevitably undergo a similar transformation. Individuals become «hell» for themselves, confronting the intolerable nature of their own existence, which they attempt to conceal through the relentless pursuit of identity. If the human «I» has become «hell», then an escape from this dehumanised «hell» can be found in the refuge of identity.

The world becomes hostile to an individual only when that individual has become hostile to themselves. A dehumanised world is a fragmented world characterised by dynamic transformations that lack both inherent meaning and purpose. The persistent calls for a renewed search for national, ethnic, or cultural identity are driven by the fundamental need to imbue the surrounding environment with at least a semblance of significance. However, such meanings are often embraced only insofar as they reinforce an ideologised myth of identity. Therefore, it would seem that absurdity is not overcome through the imposition of meaning but is instead subjected to «rebranding» through the deployment of irrational modes of mythologisation. This mode of constructing mythologised representations of identity serves as an example of a neoconservative approach to meaning-making, whereby the essence lies in replacing the inherent absurdity with «identity», in order to acquire a sense of «I» at the expense of relinquishing the «experience of criticism» [2].

The achievement of the maturity envisioned by the Enlightenment necessitates, first and foremost, independent thought and a critical re-

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evaluation of that which has ossified within the environment and one's own empirical «ego». In contrast, according to P. Sloterdijk, the obsessive focus on the «golden calf of identity» represents the latest manifestation of anti-Enlightenment sentiment. This explains why identity emerges as a «spell» of conservatism, concealing manifestations of the «most external» and «most general» [2] behind promises of a return to the «most intimate» and authentic existence. Within today's climate of risk and uncertainty, the discourse of identity holds the promise of a return to a sheltered and secure «natural» state, thus leading identity to be characterised as «a prosthesis that is self-evident in dangerous territory» [3].

The mechanism by which the «most external» makes its presence felt within these promises of a return to the «most intimate» is revealed in the logic of localisation and regionalisation, which function as elements of the struggle to establish a regime of existence – what P. Bourdieu defines as «symbolic power» [4]. The specificity of the latter lies in its manifestation as a form of «invisible power», exercised only with the consent of those who either do not recognise their subjection to it or actively participate in its exercise. «Symbolic power» constitutes social reality itself, forging a consensus surrounding the names, meanings, and classifications of the various elements that comprise the existing social order.

Within this context, the relationship between «symbolic power» and ideology becomes apparent. The mobilisation of social groups and their subsequent unification create the very conditions that foster both division and differentiation – both within the group itself and between those who do not belong to the newly formed collective. Within such power dynamics, culture is strategically employed as an instrument to legitimise domination, as it encompasses the very means of «symbolic production». In essence, culture assumes an ideological function.

According to this framework, the «symbolic struggle» is waged to impose a specific worldview that serves the vested interests of particular social groups. Thus, concealed beneath the seemingly innocent appeals to identity – whether consciously or unconsciously – lies a struggle for «symbolic power»: a struggle for the right to impose a specific vision of the world, for the right of an individual or a particular group to represent society as a whole.

The struggle between, and the opposition of, national, ethnic, or cultural characteristics to globalisation processes also appears to be an element of this competition for «symbolic power». Moreover, as is characteristic of post-totalitarian relations, the capture of the symbolic world is invariably accompanied by the attribution of universal significance to a partial, private

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social position and to particular interests. Thus, seemingly objective phenomena such as region, territory, memory, language, culture, and ethnicity become imbued with the parochial interests and preconceived notions of specific groups, thereby participating in ideological manipulation. The aspiration towards universality is achieved through the suppression of «foreign» perspectives on the world order. In these conditions, the mechanisms of national or cultural identity assume a central role in legitimising «symbolic domination», thereby functioning as active «forces» [5].

The concept of the world as a correlation of blind forces emerged during the Modern Age and has since gained widespread acceptance. Central to this worldview is the conviction that the discourse of power stands in opposition to truth. More precisely, within this framework, truth is reduced to that which serves the interests of private gain. It becomes apparent that, in light of the above, truth loses its inherent objective universality. Instead, within power relations, truth is strategically employed to imbue a subjective position with the appearance of universality. This form of private «truth» derives its potency not from the depths of the objective world but from the very struggle that culminates in victory. From this perspective, truth invariably aligns itself with the victors.

Such ideas are deeply rooted in social reality, serving as an expression of the state of social coexistence that Thomas Hobbes famously characterised as a «bellum omnium contra omnes». The ideologised discourse of identity aligns seamlessly with this conception of social space as a battlefield [11]. Within this arena, the struggle revolves around the right to «self-determination», the right to «be oneself» – that is, the right to constitute and impose one's own vision of authentic existence, both for the individual and for the community. Simultaneously, this struggle is waged from a standpoint that denies the existence of a universal truth, instead attributing «authenticity» solely to the victors. According to M. Foucault, the relationship between force, power, and truth is intrinsic to historical and political discourse, which, unlike its philosophical and legal counterparts, remains indifferent to objective, unengaged truth. Consequently, the discourse of group identity invariably unfolds within the historical and political spheres, lacking orientation towards objective truth and instead seeking to establish itself in accordance with the interests of particular individuals or groups.

It should be noted that, despite the prevailing tendency to deny objective truth and foreground subjective arbitrariness, the rhetoric of truth retains its appeal, even within the framework of ideological manipulation.

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As the logic of «symbolic production» makes clear, any private interest seeks to grasp and assert itself as truth, thereby presenting itself as a universal interest. Without mimicking fidelity to truth, it proves exceedingly difficult to impose one's particular interests as universal. The power of truth lends strength to that which is partial and distorted, enabling it to exist as if it were whole and, thereby, to present itself as universally valid.

The same principle applies to the struggles for identity unfolding today, which have moved beyond the realm of individual psychological concerns to the level of large social groups. From this perspective, the «identity crisis» manifests as a crisis of social existence. In contemporary society, the challenges of social coexistence are increasingly addressed through the secondary mobilisation of communities. Societies are undergoing a process of «reimagining», requiring the creation of new characteristics for the groups expected to emerge from this mobilisation. Consequently, the late 20th and early 21st centuries have witnessed a resurgence in the politicisation of issues related to identity.

3. Politics and identity. For the most part, contemporary researchers underscore the inextricable relationship between politics and identity. Recognising society as an arena of perpetual conflict that generates a multitude of differences, socio-anthropological knowledge itself becomes a political force, insofar as all social differences are linked to power relations. According to this perspective, socio-anthropological knowledge at the structural level focuses on the broader dynamics of global differences, while at the experiential level it examines the politics of self-determination as they unfold in the everyday lives of individuals navigating questions of selfhood, affiliation, and differentiation. The emphasis on identifying and delineating these differences transforms socio-anthropological knowledge into a form of politics fundamentally concerned with elucidating the role of relations of domination in constituting identity.

The inherent interest in difference within the discourse of identity is indicative, inevitably leading to a horizon defined by opposition to the universal. The consequence of this opposition is a displacement of the need to define the universal (generic) essence of the person, relegating it to the periphery of the identity discourse. The concepts of «essence» and «identity» become increasingly indistinguishable, ultimately functioning as synonyms. As a result, the tradition of self-determination focused on the generic essence of humankind – a tradition dating back to ancient philosophy – is relegated to being merely one variant of the broader discourse of identity, a variant that has assumed dominance given prevailing historical circumstances. This interpretation of the philosophical tradition assumes, for example, that

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Immanuel Kant (and Western thought more broadly) treated the question of «own» identity as synonymous with the question of the essence of the human being. However, it is worthwhile to reconsider the relationship between essence and identity from an alternative perspective: Immanuel Kant was concerned not with the problem of identity per se, but with the philosophical quest to understand the essential nature of human existence. This focus on the universal has indeed been a hallmark of philosophy since its origins in antiquity. This focus is not merely reflective of logocentrism or Eurocentrism but expresses Europe's specific universality. Kant's reasoning considers any identity within the horizon of human essence, beyond which there is no distinction. Outside of identity, it makes no sense to talk about any difference. Both identity and difference only acquire meaning in their dialectical unity. The ideological discourse of identity is characterised precisely by the separation of identity and difference. Globalisation is then imagined as processes representing abstract identity, and identity as concrete difference. But in this fragmented form, both identity and difference are abstract, one-sided moments of the aforementioned unity. In the parliamentary ideologisation of identity discourse, such unity is deliberately excluded from the field of socio-political discussion. Thus, the politicisation of identity discourse entails the actualisation of differences, which occurs through the exclusion from attention of that which gives unity to human existence.

Of course, European universality has repeatedly fallen into the trap of Eurocentrism when, instead of the universal (which is always embodied in the particular), the abstract universal has come to the fore, which, on the contrary, is achieved by levelling the particular. However, it is Europe, particularly in its philosophical tradition, that initiates the principle of reflexivity as a way of turning to the foundations of its own activity and thinking. Thanks to this, universality does not freeze in fixed forms of self-confidence, but always remains a problem for itself, a possibility that requires a separate personality for its realisation. Here, man appears as the personification of a universal existence. «One becomes European», notes S. Proliev on this subject, «not by joining a separate cultural tradition limited to a specific historical region, but by practising a way of being that has universal human significance» [8, c. 76]. But the same can be said about man in general: man becomes man by realising a universal (universal) way of being. That is why the question of the essence of a person (of the human way of being) inherently contains answers to questions about identity, while outside this philosophical problematisation of human existence, the

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discourse of identity is forced to feed on material from individual psychology or sociological considerations about supra-individual social structures.

The American researcher R. Brubaker has rightly emphasised the political connotations of the term «identity». In his estimation, «identity» functions as a key term within the prevailing ideology of contemporary politics; failing to account for this political dimension renders the use of the term «identity» both ambiguous and fractured, oscillating between essentialist connotations and constructivist modifications, and thus ultimately cannot satisfy the requirements of social analysis [8]. A key consequence of neglecting this bias within the term «identity» is the encroachment of the rhetoric employed by «political dealers» upon the domain of scientific knowledge, resulting in the reification of language that is inherent in this type of rhetoric. This necessitates a critical re-evaluation of phenomena such as «groupism» – he tendency to view delimited groups as both the fundamental units of the social world and the primary elements of social analysis [8, p. 8].

It is worth noting that this tendency is inherent in the ideologised discourse of identity, in which the primary focus is placed upon the extent to which individuals conform to the prescribed image of a group, collective, or nation. Ironically, the very topic of identity-which was initially introduced into the sphere of public discussion through the groundbreaking work of psychologist E. Erikson on the individual identity criticism is now predominantly concerned with the extent to which individuals conform to the dictates of particular groups. This is especially true with rhetoric related to group or collective identities, which always unfold through the insertion of a person into pre-existing structures, roles, and positions. As a result, a situation arises in which identity seems to detach itself from the person and begin to exist outside and above them.

The uncritical embrace of «groupism» in the study of identity is a common characteristic of many domestic studies of this phenomenon. The chief shortcoming of these studies, in our estimation, is the privileging of organizational, collective, or national dimensions of identity. Within this framework, the individual is reduced to a mere «brick» within a collective edifice, with identity functioning as the «cement» that binds them together. Even culture, in this context, is re-purposed as an instrument for mobilising society, thereby explaining why «sociocultural identity» becomes of interest to researchers as a means of achieving consolidation. According to some researchers, for instance, sociocultural identity plays a «special role as a factor in the construction of consolidating value systems, unifying types of orientations, and socialisation based on interaction» [9, c. 5]. Within this

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framework, the term «identity» is employed synonymously with «socialization», interpreted as an individual's capacity to adapt seamlessly to the existing social order. «The concept of "identity" conveys the ability of a person or group to consciously and adequately determine their place in society and the set of core values that dictate their behaviour» [9, c.13]. Despite various attempts to situate human identity within a purportedly universal context, it remains, in effect, determined by the empirical confines of an individual's existence within a specific social environment. This localisation of human existence is manifest, for example, in interpretations of the process of human socialisation, which is said to «take place in the links of social organisation closest to the individual through the assimilation of norms and roles accepted in these segments of society» [9, c. 14]. In this case, one might expect that a person is «doomed» to assimilate images of identity that are drawn exclusively from the immediate environment surrounding them.

In O. Lisovyi's study, identity is likewise understood in close connection with the processes of socialisation. Self-identification is conceptualised as «a structural component of personality socialization» [10, c. 7] and is considered «an important component of the socialisation process, as a result of which the formation of a person's own "self-image" takes place» [10, c. 8]. Thus, personal identification takes on the character of passive adaptation to the existing norms and standards of empirical society. One of the goals of this process is to organise a person's life in the context of the social environment in which they exist. Loyalty and predictability are the virtues of such a clearly understood identity. «This allows us to define cultural self-identification as a process of conscious acceptance by an individual of cultural norms and standards of behaviour, awareness of the system of values and language, one's "I" from the perspective of the cultural characteristics that exist in a particular community, demonstration of loyalty to them, and self-identification with these cultural models» [10, c. 8], –writes O. Lisovyi.

However, if an individual, acquiring their own identity, their own «image of the self», only adapts to their empirical circle of existence, reproduces it, then it remains unclear how it is possible to talk, for example, about human responsibility, since within the framework of the aforementioned «adaptive» approach, a person is always only a product of the existing social order, its victim and result. In addition, such an «adaptive identity», which is the result of adaptation to existing conditions of existence, makes both social and personal development impossible. After all, it is unclear how individual and social innovations that emerge from and

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sometimes destroy the existing social environment are possible. By identifying with existing socio-cultural models, the individual condemns himself to always move in accordance with a predetermined scale. The dominant principle of the surrounding environment becomes the limit of his development, and the goal is to reproduce the existing order.

It is evident that if we interpret human development solely as the «assimilation of norms and values» dictated by the immediate social context, we will inevitably find ourselves trapped within a perpetually recurring identity crisis, particularly in a world characterised by constant, accelerating transformations. This is because existing structures will be incessantly dismantled, giving rise to new social environments to which individuals will be compelled to adapt anew. The aspiration to circumscribe the scope of human existence – to rigidly define the boundaries and prescribed role of individuals and communities in accordance with the dominant principles of empirical reality – compels the discourse of identity to situate individuals within specific (national, civilisational, ethnic) frameworks. Thanks to this imposed identity, individuals are taught to accept and internalise their designated place within the prevailing social hierarchy.

4. The pitfalls of identity politics. The struggle for the «right» identity acquires paramount significance through its confrontation with the universal, drawing its very lifeblood from the concept of the universal itself. In his study, «The Crisis of Individual and Collective Identity», V. Gösle, in analysing the identity crisis, posits that it stems from the rejection of the «I-subject» – one's own «I» – which the scholar defines as the «I-object» – the Self. According to Gösle, a sound, normative image of one's «self» should not be in conflict with «universal norms» [11]. Gösle elsewhere asserts that an indispensable element of the rational pursuit of identity is «an orientation towards universal ideas; any identity that contravenes this orientation is destined to become pathological and parasitic» [12, c. 178]. This prompts the conclusion that a secure, self-confident «I» emerges only through its identification with values that transcend self-serving, particular interests.

Thus, the struggle for identity unfolds within the broader struggle to imbue specific values or interests with a universal character. This position remains valid even in contexts where the universal, as such, is explicitly denied, insofar as this very denial paradoxically lays claim to universality. Within this perspective, therefore, the discourse of identity is ultimately transmuted into the imposition of a certain worldview, complete with its associated classification and distribution of the social order.

Unsurprisingly, the reverse side of this struggle is, invariably, a struggle for power. While appeals to culture and history are most often presented as

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the primary arguments in the pursuit of an authentic identity, conflicts concerning the attributes of particular groups and their individual members are invariably enmeshed within a covert or overt struggle for power. Competitions over ethnic or regional identity – as noted by P. Bourdieu – are merely specific instances of broader conflicts over classification and the struggle for a monopoly on the authority to impose legitimate definitions of the social world, thus creating and eliminating distinct groups: «What is at stake...is the power to impose a certain vision of the social world through principles of distribution which, imposed on an entire group, establish meaning and consensus on meanings, in particular on the identity and unity of the group, creating the reality of this unity and this identity» [4, p. 68-69].

Drawing upon the etymology of the word «region» (*regio*), P. Bourdieu contends that it originates from an act of authoritative, almost magical, distribution. The act of drawing lines and defining boundaries is typically accompanied by claims justifying their necessity with reference to supposedly natural, pre-existing principles, which, in reality, merely serve to conceal the exercise of power. This act of separation – the severing of a part from the whole – is rendered possible only as an act of power and emerges as a foundational element in the construction of identity. It is worth reiterating that the logic underpinning this process is, inherently, rational – a rationality that is manifested within the discourse of identity through the dominance of instrumental reason.

It should be stressed that the relationship between politics, ideology, and identity is infinitely more complex than it may initially appear. While efforts to connect the issue of national identity with the domain of politics are commonplace, these attempts often serve to displace genuine political engagement with a contest for domination, transforming conflicts over national or ethnic identity into ideological tools for legitimising domination.

One approach to elucidating the intricate relationship between national identity and politics can be found in the scholarship of J. Habermas. A crucial element of Habermas's argument is the definition of a nation as a political entity. Within Habermas's framework, the nation, since the French Revolution, has been constituted as the very source of state sovereignty [13]. The nation, as an entity asserting its right to political self-determination, emerges as the «people of the state», prompting the replacement of traditional ethnic bonds with a community grounded in a shared democratic will. As an ethnic group defined by shared geographical boundaries, the nation exists as a pre-political entity. At the close of the 19th century, the historical primacy between national identity and democratic citizenship shifted; instead of national identity as a prerequisite for citizenship, it became

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the other way around. The principles of the republic do not reject cultural differences; they bring to the fore a democratic political culture, active membership of which forms «civic identity». Thus, it turns out that a citizen is not defined by belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural tradition. Citizenship, unlike the particular meaning of an individual's national and ethnic identity, has a universal meaning. Such universality is necessary when referring to the legal principles of modern society. The foundations of civil society presuppose the universality of political and legal culture. Conversely, the absolutisation of the significance of ethnic and national identity conceals a contradiction with the universal application of law.

Similar points regarding the relationship between politics and identity discourse are presented in the reflections of J. Rancière and J.-L. Nancy. From the latter's point of view, it is necessary to distinguish between the idea of «common being» and politics. Politics does not absorb the entire space of common being; it is a sphere of distribution of functions and roles. As J.-L. Nancy notes, it can be assumed that there is no political community, but rather politics, which opens up and enables the unique realisation of different orders of the «common». Of course, the researcher wrote, this requires that politics be defined by «openness» as the principle of its existence, rather than attempting to fill it with a set of specific abstractions. In his opinion, the essence of democracy lies in such openness. Based on these considerations, the following conclusion follows: democracy must remain devoid of identity [14, p. 22].

In the works of another contemporary scholar, J. Rancière, the significance of the political subject as one that exists between different identities is revealed. The attributive quality of political subjectivation is the realisation of equality, which becomes possible only when located in the space between names, identities, places and roles.

For a more meaningful understanding of the process of political subjectivation, it is necessary to distinguish between the regimes of police and politics. It is in the former that a person is tied to a specific name, place or identity. The police regime does not tolerate emptiness, uncertainty and intervals. It absolutises the desire to put everything in order, to give everything a definite place, and therefore the police regime does not allow utopia or the transcendent. The political regime, on the other hand, is a state of liminality that allows one's own existence to remain distinct from the social roles that a person is forced to perform. The place of the political subject, according to J. Rancière, is an interval or a gap: being-together as being-between: between names, identities or cultures [15].

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Another important consequence of the distinction between the regimes of politics and police is revealed in their belonging to the struggle for domination (power). From J. Rancière's point of view, power is an important element in a situation of domination by the police regime, but not by politics. According to this point of view, what revolves around power is not politics. It follows from this that politics is not the exercise of power. We immediately skip politics, «step over» it, if we identify it with the practice of power and the struggle for its possession [15]. Thus, power becomes the centre of gravity of the police, that is, an order in which it is impossible to «distribute the sensible» among all participants in coexistence. Therefore, in this situation, someone finds themselves outside the boundaries of this order, that is, deprived of their own destiny in this social whole, unable to participate in it, and as a result remains unheard and unseen. The police impose the order of coexistence («social integrity») as a given, as something that already exists. Such a pre-existing «social integrity» can legitimise itself through tradition, culture, mythology or values.

Politics, on the other hand, assumes that this «social integrity» needs to be justified and argued for each time. Without discussion based on differences, there is no politics. It follows that identities that offer a person a specific socio-cultural place make the political regime impossible, but open up broad opportunities for establishing rigid configurations of coexistence between individuals.

From the point of view of the subject of our research, the transformation of Diogenes' search for man into the modern search for identity is interesting. The question arises as to why the modern world no longer seeks universal foundations of humanity, but instead makes enormous efforts to find the foundations of multiple identities. To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the essence of the phenomenon of identity in its interconnection with the process of forming the «man without personality» (R. Guardini) in our time. In this case, we are interested in the problem of identity precisely in the context of its substitution for the question of the essence of human subjectivity.

The social and humanitarian discourse within which the terms «personality» and «subjectivity» are being replaced by the term «identity» is a symptom of the transformations taking place within socio-political practices. However, it is not only an expression of these changes; to no lesser extent, this discourse, through the development of a system of signs, causes new socio-political transformations. Because of this, the process of identification is one example of what P. Bourdieu called «social magic» [4]. The essence of this phenomenon is the ability of a sign, word, or emblem to

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bring to life the thing they represent. The case of «social magic» is directly related to the acute constitution of a group in which a sign produces the thing it signifies, that which it signifies is identified with the thing it signifies, which would not exist without it and which is reduced to it.

From this, it becomes clear why one of the most common causes of the so-called «identity crisis» is the disharmony between the «I» and the «social I» [11]. This issue becomes relevant in a situation where traditional ways of human existence are being destroyed, when supra-individual structures cease to determine the meaning of human existence. Or, rather, when these meanings cease to be obvious, because modernity, despite its democratic pathos, is by no means devoid of the coerciveness of supra-individual structures in relation to the individual. To confirm this idea, it is enough to recall the scientific research of M. Foucault, according to which the modern subject is derived from the configuration of discourses. In this regard, it can be assumed that the spread of the «identity crisis» in our time is not least due to the spread of the discourse of identity. The ways of life of modern humans create a situation in which they are literally forced to search for identity.

5. The power of identity and the embodiment of the universal. The destruction of universal orders that connected people to the whole provokes the formation of other local orders in place of the former wholeness, which in turn claim the title of a new whole. Such a restructuring of the social body recreates new instances of power in each of the newly formed orders. It is clear that in the process of their own legitimisation, they seek to use and rely on the constitution of new identities. The process of fluidity and transformation simultaneously creates new opportunities for the self-affirmation of power, but at the same time it is a threat to it. Power tries to stop the transformation of the individual by identifying them, by tying them to certain roles. Therefore, the rhetoric of identity is used both to emancipate subjectivity and to strengthen the objectified unity of the group. However, beyond the personal form of human existence, strategies of power penetrate the individual and produce the desired subject through a process of «personalization». «And it is this absent person, this lost instance which is going to "personalize" itself. It is this lost being which is going to reconstitute itself *in abstracto*, by force of signs, in the expanded range of differences, in the Mercedes, in the little light tint, in a thousand other signs, incorporated and arrayed to re-create a *synthetic individuality* and, at bottom, to shine forth in the most total anonymity, since difference is by definition that which has no name» [16, p. 88].

The fact is that at the point of identification, two lines of force intersect, which are represented at the level of everyday perception as opposites. We

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are talking about the dichotomy of the social and the individual, or, in other terminology, the general and the singular. Usually, the former is seen as universalising, objective, and authoritative, while the latter is seen as a project of liberation, a source of individualisation. But, as we know, when taken to their logical conclusion, opposites coincide. Accordingly, the rhetoric of identity has proved to be a convenient tool both for supporters of the emancipation project, i.e., for various minorities fighting for recognition, and for supporters of supra-individual entities such as the nation, the state, and the ethnic group, which seek to integrate the individual into a certain whole. At the heart of identity lies the intersection of practices of subjectivity formation and practices of constituting supra-individual structures, as a result of which the search for identity becomes a «the stake in a power struggle» [17, p. 103]. This gives rise to the need to examine identity in more detail in the context of the deployment of power strategies.

Referring to the works of M. Foucault, researchers of the phenomenon of power note its role in the process of forming subjectivity. Two trends can be identified in M. Foucault's work: first, the study of political techniques by which supra-individual authorities appropriate control over the natural life of individuals; and second, the study of «*technologies of the self*» which «processes of subjectivization bring the individual to bind himself to his own identity and consciousness and, at the same time, to an external power» [18, p. 5]. Thus, the individualisation and totalisation of modern power structures occur simultaneously. According to this approach, the «attitude towards oneself» unfolds within the horizon of power relations and is their continuation. According to J. Deleuze, the «inner individual» is encoded and recoded in relations of power and knowledge: on the one hand it involves being «subject to someone else by control and dependence», with all the processes of individuation and modulation which power installs, acting on the daily life and the interiority of those it calls its subjects; on the other it makes the subject «tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge», through all the techniques of moral and human sciences that go to make up a knowledge of the subject [17, p. 103].

Thus, the search for identity is closely intertwined with the mechanisms of power through projects of emancipation of the individual. Moreover, individualisation itself, along with identification, is becoming a mandatory and compulsory procedure in modern society. According to the author of the well-known work «The Individualised Society» [19], today, we are doomed to individualisation; it is no longer a matter of choice. Many of us are individualised without actually being personalities, and even more suffer from the feeling that we have not yet grown into the status of a personality

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

that allows us to be responsible for the consequences of individualisation. «Let me repeat: there is a wide and growing gap between the condition of individuals *de jure* and their chances to become individuals *de facto* – that is, to gain control over their fate and make the choices they truly desire. It is from that abysmal gap that the most poisonous effluvia contaminating the lives of contemporary individuals emanate» [19, p. 39]. Already in this statement, a strange tendency can be noticed: the project of individualisation, which expresses the desire to free oneself from the domination of impersonal social forces, conceals in its foundation the possibility of what it was supposed to free us from - because if an individual cannot be responsible for the consequences of their actions but is forced to exist in a mode of imaginary individualisation, then someone or something else takes on this responsibility for them.

Another important point in this statement is the assertion of the coercive nature of the process of individualisation, which testifies to its impersonal character. If individualisation occurs despite the «absence» of personality, then it is quite natural that the person here acts not so much as a subject as an object of individualisation. It is not the person who is individualised, but rather the person is individualised by attaching an external meaning (identity) to them, which gradually replaces its bearer, i.e., the human personality. The ideologised discourse of identity provides an algorithm for human behaviour in conditions of the dominance of the person without personality.

According to P. Berger and T. Luckmann, the perspective of «individualism» in the context of the problem of identity means the possibility of individual choice between different realities and identities. «The "individualist" emerges as a specific social type who has at least the potential to migrate between a number of available worlds and who has deliberately and awarely constructed a self out of the "material" provided by a number of available identities» [20, p. 191]. Thus, the principle of individualisation, which is widespread in our time, is directly interrelated with the situation of «identity choice», which undoubtedly leads to the devaluation of the latter. Meanings that become the subject of arbitrary and irresponsible manipulation by humans are devalued. As a result, identity today appears to be something frivolous, something that can be changed or transformed at any moment, something that can even be rejected (in order to immediately find another). This «lightness», inherent in contemporary practices of self-determination, deprives identity of its ontological roots, making it entirely subjective and irresponsible, since there is no transcendent

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authority that could serve as an objective criterion for such frivolous identification.

On the other hand, however, identity appears to be determined by objective socio-cultural factors. Even the seemingly exclusively subjective choice of identity is limited by the «socio-structural context of the individual». Therefore, the possibility of choosing one's identity in the modern world should not be absolutised. Such absolutisation is based on the idea that freedom and choice are identical, with the latter being interpreted in the context of arbitrariness. In reality, however, there are many factors, both external and internal, that significantly limit choice. Moreover, the act of choice may well take place outside the sphere of freedom.

The reduction of freedom to the mere possibility of choice reveals the condition of our time, in which the creative essence of man – his capacity to express the totality of his being – is gradually eroded. Starting from the creative nature of the human person, it becomes evident that the absolutization of the problem of identity choice replaces the deeper question of the development of human essence. Whereas the former places the individual before the necessity of selecting from ready-made images of «oneself», the latter addresses the logic underlying the unfolding of the universal determinations of human existence. If identity, understood as self-sameness, confines the individual within the empirical circle of his existence – self-sufficient and self-enclosed – the latter, by contrast, calls the human being to transcend his present state. The acquisition of identity presupposes a moment of rest and staticity (even if only temporary and conditional upon the attainment of the desired state), whereas in creativity the surrounding world (the cosmos) as well as the inner world (the microcosm) are perceived not as givens but as tasks.

6. In search of the subject of self-determination. The search for identity presupposes the existence of the subject of such a search, i.e., the existence of the human «I». It is the «I» that chooses, searches, and finds itself dissatisfied, and it is the «I» that becomes the mode of presence of human essence. From this perspective, it becomes clear that it is possible to choose identity, but not essence. The creative nature of man means that in human existence it is not just my individuality, not my empirical «ego» that is realised, but something that transcends my particularity, whereas, in the process of searching for identity, the individual realises exclusively his individual or group «ego». Thus, the following becomes clear: the questions «what is a human being» and «what is their identity» are not identical. After all, the question to which, according to I. Kant, all philosophical problems can be reduced, sounds precisely like «What is a human being?», that is, it

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problematises the very essence of a human being. However, in the context of replacing «essence» with «identity», we lose the depth of philosophical inquiry and find ourselves, at best, within the boundaries of psychology and sociology, and at worst, within the ideological prejudices of everyday consciousness.

It is precisely when individualisation and totalisation coincide that choice comes to the fore in human existence. The fact is that choice already implies accepting the existing state as the only possible one. It is precisely a way of reproducing the dominant principles of existing being, but with the consent of the person themselves. The individual is completely unconsciously subordinate to the law of reality and, as a result of this unconsciousness, considers its (the empirical reality) principle to be natural, an absolute point of view. In this case, all of his freedom is confined within the limits of the principle of existing being, so it becomes natural to interpret it as a choice. In view of the above, we come to the following conclusion: choice is the principle of adaptive activity. Freedom, unlike choice, does not imply adaptation to existing conditions, but their creative transformation. This means that the essence of freedom includes the desire to overcome one's empirical «ego», while in choice, the individual remains true to «himself», that is, he identifies with his existing existence and the strategies of power that ensure it. However, such «self-identity», which is conditioned by the prevailing principle of the existing environment, carries with it its partiality, abstractness, and one-sidedness. In this case, the limits of an individual's development will be determined by the dominant principles of the existing society, impersonal and anonymous «others». Therefore, the identity acquired on this basis turns out to be partial and one-sided, i.e., it is not self-sufficient and needs to be updated in accordance with the transformation of the social environment surrounding the individual. Its shelf life will directly depend on the dynamics of changes in the surrounding world. Hence, the constant «identity crisis» of a person who, in the conditions of accelerated changes in the modern world, is faced with the need to adapt again and again to the updated conditions of existence.

The rhetoric of the «identity crisis», which is becoming popular today, is a belated echo of previous crises and testifies to the distortion of the relationship between the individual and the social forms of their existence. As a result, we can still hear complaints about globalisation causing an «identity crisis», as if the processes of globalisation were taking place separately and independently of the life of the individual, as if globalisation were possible without human participation. Instead, we think it's worth paying attention to the fact that any social and economic changes are only

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possible when the way people interact changes too. Societies and cultures change because relationships between people change, and when that happens, people change too.

The fact is that outside of a genuine relationship with oneself as a representative of the human race, i.e., what G. Hegel called «*Erinnerung*», identity becomes a purely ideological construct. As the latter, it turns out to be detached from the real self-affirmation of the personality, which means that the reduction of the space for human activity in the development of one's own destiny leads to an increase in the need for identity as a way of imagining the acquisition of meaning. According to M. Castells, in the modern world, the search for identity, whether collective or individual, assigned or constructed, becomes a fundamental source of social meaning, and the loss of legitimacy by social institutions and culture in general causes the process of searching for one's own identity to become the only source of meaning. In other words, a confused individuality is confined to the private sphere, which is now recognised as the only reliable space for its freedom. But this «territory» outside the real activity of the individual appears as something virtual: people increasingly organise their meanings not around what they do, but on the basis of who they are, or their ideas about who they are [21, p. 27].

The problem is that in the surrounding world, what M. Castells defines as global networks of instrumental exchange continues to use individuals in accordance with its own interests. As a result, the scientist argues, our societies are increasingly structured around the bipolar opposition between the Network and the «I». However, the absolutisation of this opposition hides the fact that people's perceptions of themselves are already conditioned by the logic of the functioning of the «Network». After all, the process of identification has long since become «the stake in a power struggle» [21, p. 27].

Accordingly, the idea of a difference between «personal identity» and «collective identity» only conceals their interconnection. They both constitute the «ego» as something that appears before us as existing, and in this form it not only claims to be the subject of domination over the world, but also the willingness to be the object of domination. The danger of a person losing their own essence grows in proportion to their transformation into the ruler of all that exists, in the latter capacity, it is represented precisely in global networks of instrumental exchange, within which not only the surrounding world but also the individual itself is utilised. In the context of our problem, it is important that a person utilises themselves in the process of constant consumption of various images of identity, which are supposedly

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available to them in a ready-made form. The consumption of such ready-made images creates a short-lived illusion of self-identity, although in reality, as M. Heidegger wrote, with oneself, that is, with one's essence, "man today is nowhere to be found ... and therefore can never find himself among the objects of his imagination [233]. Our time offers us to seek our own identity and corresponding meanings in the realm of the imaginary, but the question arises: what are the meanings that are constituted around the void that is formed in place of the disappearing essence of the world and man?

Thus, identity can arise as an individualised reproduction of the totalising tendencies of our time. The mechanism of such reproduction is masked by the opposition between the individual and the social, where the former is considered the source of freedom and the latter a repressive authority that imposes an objectified necessity. According to this view, freedom is identified with the spontaneous release of an individual's inner energies, but it is precisely this seemingly unlimited «freedom» that becomes the perfect conduit for impersonal forces. As M. Heidegger wrote: «Naked unrestraint and arbitrariness are always only the night side of freedom; its day side is the claim to the necessary as binding and supportive» [22, c. 119]. If freedom-arbitrariness is concentrated on the side of the individual, then the «claim to the necessary»complements it by adapting to the existing conditions of existence. Necessity is grasped by a person not in the horizon of awareness, but of coercion. Then the stated claim implies ensuring individual self-affirmation beyond objective necessity; the individual is forced to self-affirm in a situation where there are insufficient grounds for doing so. It is not surprising that the main vector of his activity is directed into the realm of the imaginary, rather than real practice. Based on this, it can be assumed that despite the presence of the prefix «self-», something contrary to human nature is asserted here. The forces of totalisation, even despite (or thanks to) the fact that people are not aware of them, are at work, directing the process of identity formation towards this illusory «self-sufficiency» and «self-assertion». It is important to understand that the latter expresses the logic of the functioning of the impersonal process of «self-empowerment of authority».

The identification of the search for identity with the search for human essence is a natural consequence of the mechanism of forming such a project of the modern era as an «individualised society». At one time, J. Habermas, referring to Hegel's works, emphasised that the desire for liberation characteristic of the Modern Age can turn into its opposite – lack of freedom. The reason for this substitution is the transformation of the relative into the absolute. The modern world suffers from false identities because the relative,

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conditioned both in everyday life and in philosophy, is taken as absolute [23, p. 33]. Nowadays, the statement about the multiplicity and relativity of any identity has become banal, but despite the seemingly vivid empirical evidence of this fact, which is provided in large quantities by modern history, both individuals and entire groups continue to actively participate in the process of absolutising these relative principles. On this basis, they construct their own images, for which they have to pay with their humanity. After all, the unity achieved in this way is only a negative unity; in a world where everything is relative, even under the mask of absoluteness, human relationships lose their immediacy. Hence, the only authority that gives them a socially acceptable form is power. Therefore, T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer were right when they wrote that «the awakening of the subject» turns out to be acquired «at the cost of recognising power» as the principle of all relations [24]. If we turn to the studies of T. Hobbes or G. Hegel on the historical foundations of the formation of civil society, which, in our opinion, contain the foundations of an «individualised society», we will not be able to find there the presence of any positive unity. However, it is precisely from the destruction of the latter that a new European individualism is born, which in our time faces identity as a problem.

Strategies for forming post-tarian relations inherently contain a tendency to absolutise the relative, which is achieved by «spoiling» the absolute and constituting a unity in which some of its elements exist at the expense of others. In this context, it is important to distinguish between «positive» and «negative, or false» unity, as done by V. Solovyov. «I call», wrote the philosopher, «true, or positive, unity that in which the one exists not at the expense of all or to their detriment, but for the benefit of all. False, negative unity suppresses or absorbs the elements that comprise it and thus reveals itself to be emptiness; true unity preserves and strengthens its elements, realising itself in them as the fullness of being» [25, c. 552.]. Thus, an important feature of the absolute is its openness to everything and its interpenetration with everything. On the other hand, the relative, which insists on its own separateness, thereby falls outside the limits of the aforementioned unity and, on the contrary, opposes itself to everything. The absolutisation of the relative occurs by interrupting the aforementioned unity and limiting it with clearly defined boundaries. This is the path to the corruption of the absolute.

It should be noted that the absolute does not oppose the relative, does not reject or deny it. It complements the relative, literally bringing it to completeness, which is only possible through its inclusion in the interconnection with everything, that is, through the inclusion of the relative

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in the horizon of the absolute. If the relative is limited and therefore identical to itself, then the absolute is always incomplete in the sense that it is a «movement of self-affirmation» (G. Hegel), which contains within itself the possibility of being different. The absolute, or rather the presence on the horizon of the absolute, is openness to encountering the other. In this horizon, a person is always incomplete, and therefore not identical to themselves, i.e. their identity never exhausts the depths of human selfhood. Nor does the totality of different identities exhaust it. However, the absolutisation of a person's relative identities interrupts the dialectic of identity and difference in human essence. As a result, identity remains on the side of the individual, and difference is brought to the outside. The human «I» merges with its own image, which is given to it by one identity or another, and thus finds itself enslaved, as if locked within itself. In this case, we are dealing with dogmatic identity, which, like any dogmatism, is based on the absolutisation of the relative.

7. Inverted forms of identity: the appropriation of the function of the «Other». The search for identity in all its forms is distorted when it gives absolute value to the acquired result. From P. Ricoeur's point of view, such distortion can be characterised as the «temptation of identification», which consists in «reducing identity ipse to the level of identity idem, or, if you will, in slipping, deviating from the flexibility inherent in the preservation of the "I" in obligation, to unyielding firmness of character in the quasi-pathological sense of the word» [88]. The reason that triggers the mechanism of «identity temptation» is ideology, which, as P. Ricœur notes, revolves around power [26]. Ultimately, it must be recognised that the slide of identity to the level of idem is a danger inherent in relations of domination. Infection by power gives the problem of identity an impulse that causes the absolutisation of the relative and partial, its claim to universality and universality. From the very beginning of the Modern era, processes of absolutisation («the affirmation of unshakeable firmness») have been accompanied by the self-expansion of domination, as a result of which essence is first deprived of the thing, then the whole world, and ultimately, the human being.

The process of stripping away essence turns everything into an object of exploitation and manipulation. The world, things, and people appear in the light of such a relationship as having no important meaning outside of it. In order to exploit human essence, it is necessary to carry out the operation of «reification of the soul». Within the horizon of power relations, an essential encounter, which requires openness to accept the other, becomes impossible. In turn, within the ideology, which is designed to legitimise this

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reification, the reality of the other is distorted in order to dominate them, which leads not only to the alienation of the person from the world they have mastered, but also, along with the «reification of the spirit», the relationships between people themselves become enchanted, and even the relationship of the individual to themselves [24]. Thus, as a result of the intrusion of ideology into the process of identification, a person becomes alienated from themselves, becoming a «blind spot» to themselves. From this perspective, the contemporary actualisation of the discourse of identity is an attempt to make oneself «visible» and «existent».

According to this approach, it becomes clear that, within ideology, the objective and subjective coincide in the process of identity formation. Ultimately, in the vast majority of studies examining various aspects of the problem of identity, the latter is correlated with a certain whole. Of course, the question of identity must be resolved in relation to a certain integrity. However, in modern society, such a whole is reduced to certain collective formations that appropriate the function of the other. As a result of the conditionality of identity on the recognition of the other, the appropriation of this function by the collective means that self-identification occurs through the correlation of the «I» with the depersonalised others of the collective body. There is a deprivation of the space of self-autonomy of the «inner dimension», which is formed by the dialogue between the «I» and the «not-I», where the «not-I» personifies not anonymous publicity, or what F.M. Dostoevsky called «universality», but the voice of the «human race». In another tradition, the «not-I» as «the other in me» is defined as conscience – that is, as my relationship with the whole, which exceeds my empirical existence and is its prerequisite. And only in this case, when the acquired identity ceases to be the self-affirmation of a one-sided empirical «ego», can it be a source of meaning in life. Otherwise, it becomes a way of binding a person to artificially constructed images.

Conclusion. The problem of identity must be considered in the context of the transformation of contemporary culture. According to this approach, individual life can only acquire meaning if it has the opportunity to relate itself to the universal horizon formed by culture and history. Outside this universal background, individual decisions scatter into a set of discrete facts that are in no way related to each other. A person's actions are synthesised into a more meaningful whole in their personal biography, which, in turn, must be integrated into the history of culture. Thus, the integrity and continuity of history are a necessary prerequisite for the integrity of human life. The loss of cultural context and the loss of individual identity are interrelated and accompany each other, because the fullness of being

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represented by an individual can only be realised in connection with the universal foundations of culture [27].

Thus, the problematic nature of defining human identity in the modern world has been a common theme in social and humanitarian discourse over the last century. The spread of the search for identity is a symptom of a situation where the absence of meaningful guidelines for human life in the existing model of socio-economic and political development becomes obvious, but no acceptable alternatives appear. After all, if identity can really only be built against the backdrop of a universal horizon of a holistic culture, then the modern, hybrid, and fragmented world denies the very possibility of such a universal context. The continuation of the search for identity today represents the absence of this universal horizon.

Funding. The author declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest. The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement. The author declare that no Generative AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Section 2.2. Sociogenesis of Knowledge in the Digital Age

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Citation:
Kreze, O. (2025). Sociogenesis of Knowledge in the Digital Age. In A. Kravchenko (Ed.), *Sociocultural and Political Metamorphoses in the Era of Identity Competition.* 221 p. (pp. 73–98). Scientific Center of Innovative Research. https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC-73-98

Abstract. *At the present stage, the development of digital technologies has reached a new qualitative level. The paradigm of human–machine interaction is also changing. Artificial intelligence systems are moving from passive tools that assist in solving narrow practical tasks to autonomous agents, capable of identifying correlations and patterns within large volumes of data. In the past, such activities belonged exclusively to human researchers, as they required deep knowledge and creative thinking. These changes pose new challenges for scientists and philosophers, who must rethink traditional approaches to knowledge and information as fundamental elements of human culture and civilization. The goal of this study is to demonstrate the multidimensional and paradoxical nature of the category of "knowledge," its relation to "data" and "information," as well as its role and significance in the dynamics of social processes. Drawing on critical historical and philosophical analysis, this study shows that the understanding of "knowledge" can be achieved only within a social context. It also explores the concept of "information" in its fundamental aspects, clarifying the role of artificial intelligence as an information-processing system in modern society and outlining possible models of future human-AI interaction in the process of knowledge creation. The methodological framework of the research includes methods of analysis and synthesis, as well as historical-genetic and systemic methods, which make it possible to study knowledge as a complex, dynamic, and socially conditioned phenomenon. Further research in this field can be focused on several directions, such as the study of the cognitive limits of artificial intelligence, the development of integrated methodological approaches to verifying AI-generated knowledge, the impact of AI systems on the transformation of forms of cognition and social communication, and the formation of new hybrid cognitive systems that include both humans and artificial epistemic agents.*

Keywords: *knowledge; information; sociogenesis; epistemic agent; human-AI interaction; artificial intelligence; digital age.*

ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

1. The importance of researching knowledge in the digital era. Questions about how human civilization is reflected in different historical periods are always difficult. This is because they require an outside perspective that helps to notice contradictions and tendencies which already exist but do not yet have a clear solution. Many processes develop over a long time, so they cannot be fully understood only from the point of view of the present. However, we can describe the main problem field and, with the help of systematic analysis, identify the most important transformation processes that should be considered today.

According to V. Hrytsenko, the director of the International Scientific and Educational Center of Information Technologies and Systems of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, the key feature of the information age is the growth and use of new resources – intellectual ones. These resources are based on knowledge about all areas of society. The main tools for their creation are computer and information technologies [32, p. 28].

At present, artificial intelligence systems are developing rapidly, and their integration into almost every sphere of human activity, including science, is increasing exponentially. This creates the need for deep philosophical reflection on their role in producing new knowledge.

For example, the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2024 was awarded to DeepMind specialists D. Hassabis and J. Jumper. Their contribution was connected with the discovery of protein structures through the AI system AlphaFold. Hassabis created AlphaFold using statistical and physical approaches to study protein interactions in amino acids. Later, Jumper developed an improved version – AlphaFold 2. It included two interacting information modules: one analyzed the connections inside the protein, and the other studied external relations between different protein sequences [59].

In turn, the Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded to J. Hopfield and J. Hinton, who studied artificial neural networks using artificial intelligence tools. As M. Zgurovsky and O. Khimich note, “In 2024, the Nobel Committee recognized a new phenomenon in science – the synthesis of classical sciences and artificial intelligence. The fundamental laws of nature remain the basis of scientific research, but AI becomes the key tool for their practical application in complex systems. Such integration not only speeds up the research process itself but also opens new horizons for science, making it more interdisciplinary and technologically advanced” [61, p. 18].

Thus, modern neural networks radically change today’s scientific space. The very approaches to producing new knowledge are being transformed. This is not only an improvement of existing tools but a

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

fundamentally new way of forming scientific knowledge through the interaction of information flows and the discovery of connections that are not obvious to scientists when they use traditional methods. Therefore, we can say that traditional cognitive practices are being transformed at a fundamental level. At the same time, the challenges of the digital age, connected with the transformation of cognitive practices, require scientists to develop new epistemological approaches to understanding knowledge itself.

It should be noted that knowledge, as one of the fundamental philosophical categories, is multidimensional. This multidimensionality is mainly explained by its social and ontological properties. Knowledge exists in society, in the space of human life. Moreover, knowledge cannot exist outside a human being and human activity. In addition, the category of knowledge is connected with the ontological properties of reality itself, because it can exist only in a world where such a property as knowability is possible.

2. Challenges in defining the category of knowledge: a philosophical and historical perspective. The outstanding Ukrainian philosopher S. Krymsky once gave, in our opinion, one of the most complete definitions of the category of knowledge. He said that knowledge is "a special form of spiritual understanding of the results of cognition (the process of reproducing reality), which is characterized by the awareness of their truth" [17, p. 228].

In this definition, we can see several important structural elements that help us to describe the features of knowledge. First, knowledge has a certain form. This form is spiritual, which means it relates to the "spirit". S. Krymsky defines "spirit" as the potential of creative activity, as the transition from the state of things to the state of ideas (and back), which constantly happens within human activity. Spirit characterizes the self-realization of the subject, his ability to reproduce himself in the material world (especially in culture) and to transform this world through a creative personality [17, p. 177].

In turn, T. Soldatska rightly focuses on the transcendent nature of spirituality, because unlike the soul, which is directed to the inner world, spirituality is turned toward the world of culture and society. In other words, "in a broad sense, spirituality is the openness of a person to the world, the ability to transform it, and the possibility to make everything in the world, even one's own self, being an object of knowledge" [56].

Thus, the very existence of knowledge is based on human nature, on the ability of a person to understand reality and to express himself or herself creatively in the world. Another important condition for the existence of

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knowledge is cognition itself, as the process of becoming aware of reality. However, a human being never has complete access to the world. But this lack of full access actually reveals the world to us and makes knowledge possible. As M. Popovych noted, "the field of human vision is limited, and each time cognition has its own borders – this is what allows us to say that there is an objective world, independent of our consciousness" [48, p. 106].

So, knowledge can never be final. It always changes in the interaction between the mind and reality, which means it always includes an element of "what is not yet known".

The difficulty of giving a clear and non-contradictory definition of the category of knowledge can already be seen in the works of Plato. In his dialogue Theaetetus, he gives several consecutive objections: knowledge cannot be the same as perception; it cannot be defined only as true belief; and even the definition "true belief with logos" is not enough [46].

As I. Zahriichuk rightly noted, "Plato tried to remove any possibility of subjectivity from the process of cognition. For this, he needed to find such an object of truth that would remain unchanged. Since the world of material things is full of change, he had to place the object of truth outside their existence. Ideas then became the object of knowledge and the essence of material forms and the relations between them" [60, p. 97].

The problem of the essence of knowledge is also directly connected with a more general question – what is its foundation? In his dialogues Meno, Phaedo, and Phaedrus, Plato presented the idea of Anamnesis, meaning that the human soul "remembers" the knowledge it had when it existed in the ideal world.

Aristotle, in his Metaphysics, concludes that the basis of knowledge is always the experience of sensory perception. This is also natural for animals, but unlike humans, animals do not accumulate experience. Individual experience gives knowledge about things, while the ability to generalize is what Aristotle calls "art", and it does not appear by itself. Art comes only when "from many conclusions gained from experience one general idea about similar things arises". Another important sign that distinguishes the bearer of knowledge is the ability to teach. Aristotle also introduces the concept of "wisdom", as "knowledge about first principles and causes" [3, p.p. 17–19].

Thus, Aristotle builds a classical sequence that later becomes the foundation of philosophical ideas about knowledge: sensory perception – experience – knowledge. However, with the development of philosophical thought, it became clear that this sequence contains deep gaps, each of which represents a significant problem.

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Perception gives us only sensory experiences, but they must be rationalized for further understanding and the formation of experience. Experience, by itself, does not distinguish necessity and repetition, so it cannot be a sufficient basis for knowledge about first principles and causes.

If Plato's ideas laid the foundation for understanding knowledge as eternal ideas, independent of immediate sensory perception, Aristotle consistently argued that such ideas do not exist separately but are inherent in concrete things. In other words, "the Aristotelian system of knowing first causes has a sensualist-rationalist meaning, because the first principles are recognized through a synthesis of sensory and intellectual data" [10, p. 73].

Later, the ancient dialogue between Plato's and Aristotle's ideas found its reflection in the debates of the Scholastics. A representative example in this context is a passage from Confessions by Saint Augustine: "Truly, if there were some mind of such high knowledge and deep foresight, which could know the past and the future as well as I know this well-known little song, then this mind would provoke wonder even to fear and astonishment. For nothing would be hidden from it, neither in the past nor in the future of ages, just as for me, when I sing this song, I can see how many lines I have already sung from the beginning and how many remain until the end… You knew heaven and earth, without changing Your knowledge…" [4, p. 236].

Here we see that Augustine reveals the temporal problem of acquiring knowledge through experience: knowledge requires the ability to see the future, but this is possible only for God, for whom neither past nor future exists. In other words, there is a need to introduce a transcendent aspect to cover past and future, and only through God, who exists outside time, can the gap between experience and knowledge be overcome.

A special attention deserves the period of the "universals" debate regarding the foundations of knowledge between realists and nominalists. Realists, in particular Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas, relied on Plato's heritage, arguing for the ontological status of universals as general concepts that exist independently of things. Knowledge without universals is impossible because we understand not only individual things but general ideas. Anselm also introduced the concept of types of rational speech: the first type is the act of verbal or written expression; the second is the act of thinking about something not directly presented in perception; the third is the combination of a thing given in the senses, which we express by name, and the content that forms its definition [7, p. 12–13].

In contrast, nominalists, such as Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and Roger Bacon, argued that universals exist only in the human mind, and only individual things are real.

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A few centuries later, the dialogue between nominalists and realists found its echo in the debate between rationalists and empiricists. Rationalists – Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz – focused on the principle of order and harmony in the world, and the existence of a priori access to the laws that govern its functioning. Empiricists, such as F. Bacon, J. Locke, T. Hobbes, and D. Hume, argued that knowledge is acquired through the analysis of facts based on experience, and that the main source of knowledge should be experiment. In a broader sense, only empirical observations can form the basis of the cognitive process.

Thus, the discussion moved to a wider question: which method of gaining knowledge should be preferred – deduction or induction? Rationalists argued for the primacy of deduction based on the general intelligibility and harmony of the world. Empiricists, on the other hand, emphasized that knowledge is obtained through the inductive combination of facts derived from experiments. This philosophical problem remains open today.

As K. Reichert notes, "The problem of induction is one of the most famous philosophical problems. On the one hand, some philosophers try to solve it, but on the other hand, some consider it unsolvable. Moreover, there are debates about the importance and significance of this problem, especially given that induction is considered one of the most fundamental ways of forming knowledge" [49, p. 84].

David Hume, in turn, raised a fundamental question regarding the nature of human experience and its relation to causality. First, he categorizes philosophical relations, including similarity, identity, relations of time and space, quantitative relations, degrees of quality, opposition, and causality. Among these, he identifies those that remain constant and depend solely on ideas: similarity, opposition, degrees of quality, and quantitative (numerical) relations.

At the same time, Hume emphasizes that "cause and effect are relations we learn from experience, not through abstract reasoning or pure thought" [33, p. 89].

Hume then argues that the concept of causality arises from repeated experience, yet it is impossible to demonstrate that everything that occurs must necessarily have a cause. He illustrates this with an example: "We recall seeing an object we call fire, and we consistently experience the sensation we call heat… Without further doubt, we label one object as the cause and the other as the effect, concluding that the existence of one follows from the existence of the other" [33, pp. 103–104].

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In this way, Hume challenges the very possibility of knowledge based solely on empirical data, asserting that causal knowledge depends not on the inherent properties of the world, but on the structure of human consciousness. In other words, "a cause is an object that precedes another object, is contiguous with it, and is connected to it in such a way that the idea of one prompts the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of one strengthens the idea of the other" [33, p. 168].

In response to Hume's extreme skepticism, I. Kant suggested that causality can be explained by the presence of pure a priori categories in human knowledge: "Gradually remove from your idea of a body everything that comes from experience: color, hardness or softness, weight, even impenetrability – and still what remains is the space that the body occupied (now completely gone), and you cannot remove it" [34, p. 41].

Kant believed that transcendent categories "must be known as a priori conditions for the possibility of experience (whether it is perception or thought). The concepts that form the objective basis for experience are necessary for this reason" [34, p. 103]. So, Kant argued that experience and causality are not just habits of connecting random events (as Hume suggested), but a property of the human mind. The mind itself makes causality possible, and causality is an a priori category of the mind.

In turn, H. Hegel argued that the immediate existence of Spirit, or consciousness, has two aspects: "knowledge and objectivity, which is negative to knowledge" [29, p. 39]. Our knowledge can never fully reach the objective world, mainly because our sensory experience is limited. Things are given to us in perception, but they are always more than what we immediately perceive. Hegel introduced the idea of the "supersensible," which comes from phenomena but shows their deeper meaning. He wrote: "Sensory particularity disappears in the dialectical movement of immediate probability and becomes generality, but only sensory generality. Thought disappears, and perception takes the object as it is in itself, or as generally universal, and particularity appears as true particularity" [29, p. 99]. Later, sensory experience changes into supersensibility, also through the interaction of contradictions: "immediate sensory perception and itself as existence," and "self-consciousness is shown as a process" [29, p.p 130–131]. However, according to Hegel, knowledge is not individual. As Y. Kushakov notes, "the subject of knowledge in Hegel is not a single person, but the World Spirit (social consciousness) in its historical development" [29, p. 11].

Hegel's dialectical approach was revolutionary, but it also showed that the problem of individual experience cannot be fully solved. For Augustine,

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the continuity of experience and its transition to knowledge happens through God; for Kant, through the human mind; and for Hegel, through humanity as a whole.

We cannot ignore the important fact that philosophy, since ancient times, has faced the question of whether the thing or the idea is primary. This is closely connected with the question of the relationship between perceptual experience and knowledge. If the thing is primary, the basis of knowledge is sensory experience. If the idea is primary, the mind can gain knowledge independently of sensory data. Similarly, the debate about universals reflected the problem of whether it is possible to know objective reality using ideal abstract categories of the mind.

As we have already mentioned, in modern times the dialogue between rationalists and empiricists was still connected with the unresolved problems of deduction and induction. On a fundamental level, the problem of clearly separating and ordering inductive reasoning remains, and there is also the problem of tautology in deductive reasoning, which does not increase knowledge.

Based on this historical and philosophical analysis, we can conclude that, to overcome such deep contradictions, philosophers have always had to go beyond the limits of a closed philosophical system by introducing a transcendent agent. For Kant, this was the "a priori categories of the mind", for Hegel – the "Absolute Spirit". The empiricists were also forced to go beyond, proposing as such an agent the criterion of truth for knowledge derived from experience: "good and usefulness", which later became a part of pragmatist philosophy (C. Peirce, W. James, J. Dewey, and others).

3. Sociogenesis and the social basis of knowledge. However, in our opinion, the most productive approach is to study knowledge based on its social foundation. Society and its existence act as a transcendent integrating agent, because knowledge is born, formed, and transmitted through socially recognized forms and is an inseparable part of social life. As G. Kostromina notes, "Knowledge is a synthesis, an integration of processes and phenomena given to a person through sensory experience, observation, and empirical experience, but mediated by categories of thought that are not a priori or inherent in the subject's consciousness, but are completely social forms and means of generalization that develop historically" [36, p. 217].

It should be noted that the very concept of "sociogenesis" appears to us as a suitable one, since it allows for a comprehensive illumination of the specifically social nature of knowledge. One of the first to use the term "sociogenesis" was N. Elias in his work The Civilizing Process, where he pointed out that the sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigation serves to

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reveal the order underlying historical mechanics and their concrete mechanisms [16, p. 13].

In Ukrainian science, "sociogenesis" is defined as the origin and development of higher mental functions of an individual and interpersonal relationships, which are influenced by the specifics of socialization in different national cultures [38, p. 422].

A modern researcher, G. Saxe, identifies two main aspects of sociogenesis. The first aspect is that sociogenesis begins in the communicative practices of individuals. The second aspect is that these processes themselves form the context for individual development. By learning cultural forms, people create new understandings that are connected with the historical evolution of culture. In this way, collective and individual processes are connected and influence each other, because within collective life, sociogenetic processes of ideas and individual cognitive development are closely linked [53, p. 50].

A. Furman conducted a detailed scientific analysis of the cognitive aspect of sociogenetic processes and proposed the concept of "categoriogenesis", which includes the following forms:

Word – a language unit that expresses a concept about an object or phenomenon of the objective world.

Name – giving objects names, verbal designation of someone or something.

Term – a word or phrase that means a clearly defined concept in science, technology, art, or social life.

Concept – a form of thought that helps to understand the essence (main meaning) of phenomena, processes, and their general features.

Category – the most general concept and a worldview universal [24, p. 57]. Agreeing with this approach in general, it is important to note that a "language unit" is not an abstract, simple carrier of meaning. It is always an expression of language itself, which is a complex phenomenon that has passed a long sociogenetic development. As the founder of structural linguistics, F. de Saussure, noted: "Language is a treasure stored by speech practice in the speakers of a community. It is a grammatical system, potentially (virtually) present in each brain, or more precisely, in the brains of the group of individuals; for language is incomplete in each of them, it exists fully only in the collective. By separating language from speech, we separate: 1) the social from the individual; 2) the essential from the secondary or more or less accidental" [14, pp. 25–26]. Language forms the basis for creating a worldview and, at the same time, is a basic element for external expression, description, and recording the results of cognitive

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processes. Therefore, in our view, excessive formalization of language or the search for an "ideal language", which was once a major direction in analytic philosophy, inevitably faces limitations. Speech is an inseparable part of sociogenetic development, and studying it without considering the historical and socio-cultural context is not productive.

As V. Petrushenko notes, "Knowledge is not genetically innate in humans, and therefore the process of cognition largely depends on social communications, on how a given society organizes the system of preserving, accumulating, and transmitting knowledge and traditions, as well as on the attitudes of that society towards learning, knowledge, and scientists" [44, p. 109]. Thus, knowledge is formed and develops only within a social, or more precisely, socio-cultural space: "On the one hand, knowledge emerges as an organic element of culture, and on the other hand, culture, like knowledge, manifests certain fundamental features of humans and the human condition in the world, which, however, cannot be revealed or understood without considering the cognitive components of culture" [43, p. 250]. In our view, culture shapes a certain "cognitive matrix" through which the world is perceived. As A. Kravchenko observes, "Thinking unfolds as the understanding of another perspective, different from one's own, a perspective that is unusual in terms of perceiving reality, and at the same time as the consideration of one's own ideas and existential experiences in connection with this. A reality is constructed in which the subject and the one they try to understand seem to emerge anew" [37, p. 53].

A special type of knowledge is scientific knowledge. As O. Kyvliuk emphasizes, science itself is a socio-cultural phenomenon, the complexity of defining which "lies in the fact that science is understood both as a form of activity and as a social institution that shapes civilizational consciousness: politics, ideology, art, culture, and so on, as a system of scientific-theoretical knowledge. Therefore, science is one of the determinants of social life" [40, p. 362].

However, since science is a social institution, it would be misleading to speak of the absolute nature of scientific knowledge. As T. Kuhn noted, new facts are always interpreted within the existing scientific paradigm, and "the assimilation of a new type of fact by a theory requires more than merely an adjustment of the theory" [39, p. 67].

Similarly, H. Putnam stressed that a fact is never entirely independent of a value system, because "every fact is value-laden, and every one of our values loads a fact. A fact is something it is rational to believe; "rationally acceptable" and "true" are interwoven concepts. The judgment that the picture of the world is true relies on our comprehensive system of values and

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simultaneously reveals it. A being without values would have no facts at all" [42, p. 210].

The semantic space itself is also socially conditioned. As M. Foucault noted, "The first question is: who speaks?". That is, who has the authority to use a particular language. For example, "the status of the physician includes the criterion of competence and knowledge; it is defined by institutions, systems, pedagogical norms, and legislative provisions, which confer upon him the right –but not without imposing certain limits to apply his knowledge in practice and experimentation" [22, p. 80]. Furthermore, according to Foucault, science itself constitutes a set of discursive practices. He argues that the traditional sequence – "consciousness – knowledge – science", which cannot be freed from indicators of subjectivity and can be contrasted with a more accurate sequence: discursive practice – knowledge – science [22, p. 85].

In this context, the continuous development and refinement of cognitive practices, both at the societal and individual level, is directly linked to cognition and knowledge as the result of individual and collective epistemic processes.

An important milestone in the development of ideas on the social genesis of knowledge was E. Durkheim's work The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Durkheim concludes that knowledge and cognitive practices originate in religion, which functions as a social phenomenon. Religious representations are collective ideas that reflect collective realities, while rituals are modes of action that emerge only within groups, and their purpose is to maintain or reproduce certain mental states of those groups [15, p. 9]. At the same time, religious social practices serve as a necessary precondition for the formation in human consciousness of basic categories, in particular such as "space" and "time".

According to Durkheim, "the representation of space constitutes the primary coordination of the data of sensory experience", whereas temporal orientations, in turn, derive from social religious practices – even the calendar itself "expresses the rhythm of collective activity while ensuring that regularity" [15, p.10]. Thus, for E. Durkheim, unlike I. Kant, a priori categories are not inherent to reason as such, but are formed in the process of social existence.

The next important step, in our view, taken by Durkheim is his attempt to overcome the fundamental contradiction between rationalism and empiricism through the concept of the social. He argues "The fact that the ideas of time, space, genus, cause and personality are constructed from social elements should not lead us to conclude that they are stripped of all objective

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value. Quite the contrary, their social origin leads one indeed to suppose that they are not without foundation in the nature of things" [15, p. 18].

Thus, Durkheim proposed a solution to the age-old "debate about universals" through a fundamentally new conceptual approach: although such "universals" exist in reality as the basic foundations of the world, the very possibility of reproducing them in human consciousness is determined by everyday social practice and should be considered a derivative of social reality. This approach allowed scholars to escape the closed circle created by the conflict between empiricism and rationalism, but at the same time, it left important questions about whether reliable knowledge can be obtained without social interaction.

4. Sociogenetic transformations of knowledge in the digital age: knowledge, information, and data. The points discussed have not lost their relevance in the contemporary digital age; in fact, they have become more complex and challenging. Primarily, this is because social interaction is increasingly mediated by digital tools, and certain aspects of deductive and inductive cognitive processes have taken on a technological character due to the practice of analyzing large datasets with artificial intelligence.

A representative example in this context is the well-known article "The End of Theory" by K. Andersen, the editor of the online magazine "Wired". The article caused a significant reaction in the scientific community because it claims that the new era of Big Data challenges the very foundations of science. Applied mathematics, using algorithms to process petabytes of data, allows for results that are unattainable for traditional sciences – such as psychology, sociology, or linguistics, because it enables analysis of advertising effectiveness, content popularity, or user behavior prediction without any sociological or semantic analysis. While traditional science follows the scheme hypothesis – theory – theory testing, the new principle is "theory is unnecessary", since it is sufficient to analyze correlations in massive datasets. In other words, data can be analyzed not based on hypotheses about the patterns of their relationships, but digital systems themselves can independently identify such patterns through correlations.

Andersen invokes J. Box's maxim as the guiding principle of the new methodological approach: "All models are wrong, and increasingly you can succeed without them" [2].

Massimo Pigliucci, Professor at New York University, disagrees with this approach. He challenges Andersen's arguments on the grounds that the task of science is not merely to identify patterns, but also to explain their underlying causes. Without hypotheses and theoretical models, data risk being reduced to mere "noise." To support his position, Pigliucci cites the

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example of scientist Craig Venter, who collected vast amounts of genomic data from the ocean; however, without a theoretical framework, these results offered little explanatory power and could be considered nothing more than "informational noise" [45].

At the same time, it is important to note that contemporary science actively employs the tools of artificial intelligence, and this does not diminish its role; rather, it expands the capabilities of researchers. A vivid demonstration of these possibilities is the use of the correlational method, which has gained widespread application in modern applied psychology. For instance, psychologist O. Romanenko observes that in psychology, "in correlational studies, scientists observe variables and identify relationships between them in order to detect differences among individuals, while experimenters manipulate variables and observe outcomes to uncover general laws applicable to all people. Scholars have emphasized the significance of the correlational approach, a relevance that has been confirmed over the past decades: thanks to the computational capabilities of electronic systems, complex correlational procedures such as multiple regression and factor analysis have become accessible and widespread" [50, p. 35].

Thus, artificial intelligence has enabled humans to gain deeper knowledge, even about themselves. This includes knowledge derived from correlations that are not immediately obvious to researchers. Such insights are only possible thanks to the powerful quantitative capabilities of AI to analyze vast amounts of data. However, this situation raises important questions: does it lead to an "epistemic incapacity" of modern science, which is forced to operate retrospectively, merely explaining patterns discovered by AI? And how can the validity of such knowledge be verified?

We argue that this issue requires further in-depth investigation. Consider a scenario in which an AI system is designed to detect patterns in data through correlations without a pre-defined objective. Suppose these correlations are identified in the first stage. In the second stage, the system extracts a pattern from these correlations and formulates an algorithm to solve a practical problem. In this case, the discovery of new patterns remains largely opaque to the user. In other words, for a human to acquire knowledge, they would need to analyze the entire sequence of processes that led to the solution. However, when dealing with massive datasets, such an analysis is impossible without the computational power of AI systems. Consequently, humans may eventually face a situation in which only comparable AI systems are capable of verifying the validity of the knowledge obtained.

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The Chinese researcher H. Bai, in the context of analyzing the epistemological role of artificial intelligence systems, argues for the possibility of the existence of "machine knowledge", which he develops as follows. He distinguishes the following types of knowledge: "statistical and inferential," when both phenomena and laws are known; "non-statistical inferential," when the law is known but the phenomenon cannot be observed (for example, determining the position of the Earth a thousand years from now); "statistical but non-inferential," when we do not know what we know – that is, phenomena can be observed, but the laws cannot be generalized (for example, weather systems), representing the most effective domain of machine learning; and "non-statistical and non-inferential", "suggesting that we do not know what we do not know, neither the phenomenon nor the law. Tiis is the problem that artificial neuron net-work-based machine learning (such as convolutional neural networks) tries to solve, namely, generating machine knowledge" [5, p. 46]. The scientist also draws attention to the issue of transparency in the functioning of complex neural networks. In his view, such networks represent an epistemically opaque "black box," since "the transformations between layers of deep neural networks involve hundreds of millions of parameters and complex nonlinearities, making it impossible to transparently understand this formal process" [5, pp. 42–43].

So, the bigger the datasets and the more complicated the correlations and patterns, the harder it becomes for humans to check and understand the knowledge they produce. This could possibly lead to what we might call "epistemic incapacity", where humans lose their active role in gaining and verifying knowledge created by AI systems. In this context, Karl Popper's idea can be reconsidered: today, we may need to go beyond the traditional view of knowledge as connected to a human knower, meaning knowledge without a knowing subject [47, p. 335]. Therefore, we are faced with either the idea of "knowledge without a subject" (which we think is impossible) or, more carefully, the idea that AI systems may develop a kind of "epistemic agency".

However, D. Kim, a researcher at the Max Planck Society who has studied the issue of AI system emergence, argues that phenomena perceived as emergent – i.e., the acquisition of properties by a system that are not inherent to its components–arise because the output data of neural networks are nonlinearly related to their input. This nonlinearity enables such models to detect complex relationships and patterns in real-world data that linear models cannot capture. Nevertheless, in essence, this is nothing more than a numerical inference (forecast generation) based on the analysis of primary data [35].

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Indeed, such a position is fairly well grounded, but it should be emphasized that the impossibility of predicting (or explaining) the numerical results of input data processing already serves as sufficient evidence of the problematic nature of achieving "epistemic transparency". At the same time, this does not remove the main question: can results that are not interpreted by a human and lack a theoretical foundation be regarded as knowledge? Obviously, the answer is no.

However, we argue that this problem can be addressed (at least on the level of a thought experiment). Let us imagine a hypothetical situation in which one artificial intelligence system verifies the results of another system according to certain limited parameters (in the case of high complexity, several systems could be used sequentially, each checking the previous one). The crucial point is that at least the final system in this chain must be "epistemically transparent". Only in this way can the "black box" problem be resolved. Clearly, such an approach remains a philosophical assumption and must be practically tested with respect to its feasibility. The main difficulty in this direction lies in the very theoretical possibility of reducing the processes occurring within a complex artificial neural network to processes within simpler systems, since a complex system cannot simply be reduced to the sum of its constituent elements.

Thus, the problem of the "opacity" of artificial intelligence emerges as one of the most important epistemological challenges of the digital age. Nevertheless, we believe that the key to its resolution may lie in a deeper investigation of the substantial foundation of such systems' functioning – namely, information itself. Overcoming epistemic opacity requires more than merely analyzing the software code; it requires understanding how information is transformed into knowledge at a fundamental level, and what "information" is "An sich", that is, in itself.

As the authors of the Stanford Encyclopedia note, the term "information" was used in the Latin translations of Plato's works in the context of "form" and "representation" of an idea. It should also be mentioned that Plato borrowed many ideas from the Pythagoreans. B. Skowronski, in particular, pointed out that for the Pythagoreans the "number" functioned as the form of being of the idea, serving as the foundation of a harmonious world. This, in turn, created the basis for constructing things in thought [55, p. 32].

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the term "information" has already been used in a technical context thanks to the works of C. Shannon, W. Weaver, N. Wiener and others. Here, information was regarded as a factor reducing uncertainty. [28, p. 539]. Another well-known theorist of

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information, L. Brillouin, emphasized the applicability of an evaluative criterion, since information may, in certain cases, carry quite different value for observers, each of whom has a specific ability for understanding and further use [9, p. 30].

M. Schroeder, in turn, criticized the entropic approach, since it describes not information itself but rather its absence, and thus the very "theory of information" is lost [54, p. 17].

Some researchers point out that it is possible to speak of the presence of information only in the processes of interaction within organic nature, the social world, or interaction with artificial devices – when there arises the "ability not only to perceive and respond to external influences, but also to translate them into signals for oneself and, depending on the nature of these signals, to introduce or not to introduce corrections into the structures or processes of one's functioning" [57, p. 52].

Thus, the study of information cannot avoid the most complex fundamental ontological questions, in particular the question of access to reality. For example, B. Russell in his work The Problems of Philosophy emphasized that we can have direct access only to sense-data, but there remains the problem of moving from perceptual experience to real knowledge about things themselves. Russell agrees that this gap cannot be fully overcome, yet humanity somehow manages to effectively grasp reality and generate knowledge. Therefore, Russell suggests distinguishing between "knowledge by acquaintance" and "knowledge by description." The first type of knowledge arises from immediate sensory perception and the recognition of particular properties of perceived things, whereas the second is connected with the analysis of an already existing description, beyond immediate perception [52].

Great interest in this context is also aroused by the ideas of J. Gibson, particularly those presented in his work "The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception" [25]. Although the focus of his research was on psychology, his contribution also influenced the shaping of contemporary philosophical discourse. Traditionally, perception was thought of as a process in which the brain processes sensory data. However, Gibson proposed a different approach, arguing that the external world already contains information, and thus a person perceives not external stimuli but objects themselves and their properties. The author introduces the concepts of "affordances" and "invariants".

Affordances are related to the fact that an object, in interaction with the perceiver's consciousness, "offers" possibilities for its use. Thus, an object can be perceived in terms of its function, and we do not need to classify

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things in order to understand what they afford us [25, p. 126]. In turn, the information in the surrounding environment consists not of forms and colors, but of "invariants," that is, stable properties of the environment that allow us to directly perceive objects [25, p. 255].

Such ideas, unexpectedly, despite all the differences between the continental and analytic approaches, intersect with M. Heidegger's concept of «Zuhanden», that is, the "ready-to-hand" thing, whose being is revealed in its practical use, while the thing itself "dissolves" in the action [30].

In turn, the representative of the "semantic approach," Y. Bar-Hillel, argued that information must always be considered contextually, and that the main focus of its study should be directed toward semantic content. On the one hand, this approach expanded the tools for studying information, but on the other hand, it raised new questions related to the ambiguity of context and the imperfection of natural language itself [6].

Therefore, for information to be correctly understood, both the "transmitter" and the "receiver" must understand each other and share a common semantic context. This aspect was described in detail by S. Hall in his work Encoding/Decoding, where he emphasized that the communication process should not be seen as linear, but rather as a combination of processes of production, circulation, distribution, consumption, and reproduction of information. The transmission of certain facts and events, particularly historical ones, is always connected with encoding and decoding. Encoding, is carried out by giving a message an appropriate discursive form, while decoding means extracting meaning from it.

Of special interest in this context is Hall's proposed model of information transmission through television, which includes such sequentially connected elements as technical infrastructure, production relations, frameworks of knowledge at input and output, and between them the processes of encoding (through transformation into discursive content) and decoding. In turn, the message itself, in order to be received, must first acquire a proper discursive expression [26].

We also consider M. Buckland's work "Information as a Thing" to be a significant contribution to the development of the modern philosophical understanding of "information", in which the scholar proposes to consider information simultaneously in four dimensions. Two of these dimensions relate to the "tangible", that is, those that can take an external, material form: information "as a thing" (data, document) and the process of information processing (data processing). The other two dimensions are "intangible", that is, immaterial: information as knowledge and information as a process (becoming informed) [11, p. 352].

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This approach makes it possible to study the phenomenon of "information" in a comprehensive way and at the same time avoid the mixing of different aspects of its existence and manifestation, which often leads to contradictions. However, in our view, this approach is not entirely correct in equating information with knowledge, since before becoming knowledge, information must undergo a certain process of transformation based on understanding, awareness, and comparison with already existing knowledge.

At the same time, another problem also arises. If knowledge is conscious, contextually appropriate, and verified information, while information itself contains certain meaning and context, then there must exist something primary, not yet understood, which only potentially can become information.

To address this issue, some researchers suggest using the category of "data". For example, D. Rosenberg, referring to the etymology of the word "data", emphasizes that it is the plural of the Latin word datum, which is the neuter form of the past participle of the verb dare – "to give." Thus, datum in English means something given in an argument, something taken as granted. This contrasts with the concept of a "fact", which comes from the neuter form of the past participle of the Latin verb "facere" – "to do", from which the English word fact originated, meaning something that has been done, happened, or exists. At the same time, "facts are ontological concepts, evidence is epistemological, and data are rhetorical. Data can also be facts, just as a fact can be evidence… When a fact is proven to be false, it ceases to be a fact. In turn, false data still remain data" [51].

T. Stonier emphasized that data, unlike information, are not characterized by being structured. Information, in turn, always represents a system of ordered data, while "knowledge" is obtained when information is verified by reality itself [58].

In this context, it seems necessary to draw attention to the well-known DIKW approach to the relation between data, information, and knowledge, that is, the hierarchy "data" – "information" – "knowledge" – "wisdom." One of the representatives of this approach is R. Ackoff. He noted that data are symbols representing the properties of objects and events. Information, in turn, consists of data that have been processed in such a way as to increase their usefulness. Thus, the distinction between data and information is functional rather than structural. Information is contained in descriptions, in answers to questions beginning with "who", "what", "when", "where", and "how many". Knowledge is conveyed through instructions, in responses to the question "how." Wisdom, in contrast, is timeless: it embodies the pursuit

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of ideals, and it is precisely this that distinguishes human beings from machines [1, p.p. 3–9].

We find it necessary to note that not all researchers agree with this methodological approach. For example, M. Frické raised a number of "uncomfortable" questions regarding such a pyramid: can data be true or false, and if so, should false data be excluded, and what then would information be; under certain conditions data may function as information, and information as data (for instance, the statement that the Earth revolves around the Sun); data cannot provide an answer to the question "why?"; there may exist so-called "weak knowledge", which is true but not based on data, and so on.

The scholar points out that the limitations of this methodology are also due to the fact that Ackoff and his direct followers were system theorists and management theorists. At that time, "wisdom" was reduced simply to the use of such practical knowledge for achieving particular goals. However, this approach is limited and does not take into account the full diversity of the manifestations and interrelations of information, knowledge, and wisdom [23].

It is also necessary to mention the thesis of the well-known researcher of information, L. Floridi, who stated that "information has thus arisen as a concept as fundamental and important as Being, knowledge, life, intelligence, meaning, or good and evil" [19, p. 25].

Therefore, methodological approaches to the essence of information must be equally fundamental. In this regard, Floridi draws attention to two approaches: epistemic structural realism and ontic structural realism.

Epistemic structural realism (ESR), represented by such scholars as J. Worrall, J. Ladyman, and R. Boyd, takes an agnostic position, claiming that "objects can only be postulated as ontic leftovers, that is, what remains in principle unknowable, once the knowable structures of reality are excluded" (Floridi, p. 342). In turn, according to ontic structural realism (S. French, B. van Fraassen, N. Huggett, and others), "structure is all there is in reality... An integral part of this picture is the idea that objects, conceived of as bearers of properties that stand in relations, are metaphysically otiose". [13, p. 869]. The aim of structural realism is not to assert that structure alone exists, but rather to maintain that relations between entities hold primary significance for scientific knowledge, and that our epistemic access is restricted to the relations that entities are capable of sustaining. Consequently, scientific knowledge is, above all, knowledge of these relations and of the dispositions of entities to enter into different forms of relationality under varying circumstances [13, p. 877].

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Graham Harman, by contrast, as a prominent representative of speculative realism in contemporary philosophy, emphasizes in his work The Quadruple Object that we lack any unmediated ontological access to objects. Their reality consists solely in the fact of their being, not in any effects they may exert upon other entities. An object is not reducible to a mere aggregate of its qualities, and thus a thing cannot be reproduced through the duplication and recombination of all its properties. At best, what can be achieved is a phenomenally persuasive simulacrum of the object, never the object itself. Hence, no form of knowledge, nor any mode of translation, can adequately model the object. No scientific model can replace the thing by enumerating its manifold features. Access to objects themselves remains necessarily indirect, mediated, and partial [27, p. 73].

Another representative of speculative realism, R. Brassier, proposes his own epistemic model, maintaining: "We gain access to the structure of reality via a machinery of conception which extracts intelligible indices from a world that is not designed to be intelligible and is not originarily infused with meaning. Meaning is a function of conception and conception involves representation, though this is not to say that conceptual representation can be construed in terms of word-world mappings. It falls to conceptual rationality to forge the explanatory bridge from thought to being" [8, p. 228].

In our view, L. Floridi is conceptually close to this perspective, but he does not merely acknowledge the problem of the unknowability of objects; rather, he proposes a solution through the introduction of the concept of the Level of Abstraction (LoA), that is, the level of detail concerning an object that corresponds to a given research task. Whereas ESR (the epistemic structural realist approach) reduces our knowledge to relations between objects, and OSR (the ontic structural realist approach) goes further in claiming that structure alone exists, the LoA framework requires us first of all to recognize that our knowledge is always constrained by the chosen level. Each level of abstract description allows us to isolate only those structures specific to it.

Floridi then takes the next step and suggests that, since objects are, in essence, information about structure and relations, we should employ the concept of the informational object. Such an object is proposed to be studied through the methodology of object-oriented programming, which makes it possible to consider it as a set of structural data. The objects are then grouped into a hierarchy of classes, and a class, in turn, represents an abstraction, where an abstraction is a named set of attributes and behaviors relevant for modeling a given entity at a certain level of abstraction. As a result, the world itself can be regarded as a collection of informational objects. Floridi further

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concludes that information itself is nothing other than the boundary between the material world and the human consciousness [20].

In his work Informational Realism, Floridi draws a highly significant conclusion: the world surrounding us can indeed be compared to a "black box," but not in the sense employed by Sextus Empiricus. Rather, it should be understood in the sense used in contemporary software engineering, where a "black-box" denotes a testing method that focuses on verifying the functional or behavioral requirements of a program. The program itself is treated as opaque, yet its functional manifestations nevertheless allow us to acquire knowledge about it. So, "knowledge is not a matter of hitting or finding, but of designing and constructing, and one may construct successfully even in the dark" [21].

5. Artificial Intelligence as a source of knowledge: the problem of AI's epistemic agency and the role of humans in the digital world. Whereas the acquisition of knowledge was previously considered a human monopoly, it can now, with some caution, be argued that artificial intelligence also plays a significant role in the construction of knowledge. But what might this role be? In our view, three approaches to the epistemic agency of AI systems can be provisionally distinguished:

- denial of agency in such systems, since the knowing subject can only be human (the limitations of this approach have already been discussed);
- recognition of AI systems as independent sources of knowledge, although there are currently insufficient arguments to support this claim;
- acknowledgment of the emergence of a new epistemic entity, which can be called a "centaur", that is, a combination (a symbiosis) of human and machine. We consider this third approach the most promising, and it will receive more detailed attention below.

The term "centaur", in the context of human–AI interaction, first appeared in Garry Kasparov's proposed discipline of "centaur chess", in which players leverage AI capabilities while making decisions independently. This aspect was analyzed in detail by N. Case in the article «How to Become a Centaur». The author notes that the first centaur team – a human-computer symbiosis, won a chess tournament in 2005. It demonstrated superiority both over human chess masters and over powerful AI systems operating independently. Remarkably, this team consisted of intermediate amateur human players and relatively weak AI systems. Subsequently, "centaur" teams repeatedly demonstrated their superiority across various fields, from engineering to the arts.

This case emphasizes that the human + AI system is fundamentally different from either a standalone human or a standalone AI; the decisive

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factor is precisely the "+". While the AI agent's main strength lies in providing answers, the human's primary strength is in asking the right questions [12].

The very idea of human–computer symbiosis occupies a prominent place in contemporary scientific discourse. One of the first to address this issue was J. C. R. Licklider, although his focus was primarily technical, concerning, for instance, the language of human–computer interaction, visual interfaces, and the use of machine memory. However, in our view, Licklider identified the most crucial aspect: the instructions transmitted to the computer determine the operational pathways, whereas the instructions directed to humans determine the goals [41, p. 8]. In other words, goal-setting distinguishes humans from machines, since defining goals necessarily entails the prior determination of meanings and values.

From somewhat different perspectives, F. Flemisch and M. Baltzer approach the human-AI relationship by proposing two paradigms: "rider-horse" and "centaur". These paradigms correspond to the notions of non-imperative (reversible) and imperative (irreversible) symbiosis. The first type resembles the rider-horse interaction: applied to human and machine, it denotes systems in which humans can still perform tasks without machine assistance. The second type envisages a scenario in which neither symbiont can function independently. In such second-type relations, the researchers, in our view, identify a subtle yet significant feature: the symbiosis may develop in such a way that a particular function of one system is entirely utilized by the other (for example, the symbiosis of a human and a sheep evolving to use its wool for warmth). The authors propose addressing this issue through conscious choice: which symbiotic relationships we wish to adopt or reject, and who or what we aim to be or not be [18].

We believe a particular danger arises from the possibility that, over time, humans may assume a merely auxiliary role in the human–AI interaction–for instance, providing only technological maintenance without directly intervening in the AI's functioning. The primary philosophical problem here concerns the lack of fundamental ontological guarantees of human dominance over AI in second-type symbiotic relations, as it cannot be excluded that, gradually, it will not be AI systems that function as instruments for human purposes, but rather humans themselves may occupy a functional rather than a meaning-generating role.

Thus, the digital age presents humanity with fundamentally new problems that previously did not exist. Chief among these are information flows of such intensity and volume that they cannot be processed by humans alone, necessitating the use of machine-based algorithms. Yet this represents

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only the most superficial layer of the problem. The deepest aspect is epistemic: the acquisition of knowledge itself becomes impossible without AI. This raises the question of the need to shift the ontological perspective on AI from being merely a tool to being an integral component of reality.

M. Heidegger, analyzing the role of technology in his well-known lecture "The Question Concerning Technology", provides the example of a modern hydroelectric plant, which is not integrated into the river; rather, the river is integrated into the plant: "Now it becomes, like a current, a source of water pressure that, in its essence, belongs to the plant itself". [31, p. 16]. Similarly, contemporary humans become "embedded" within global information flows, acquiring the properties of an "information resource". Knowledge, language, and thought are transformed into data for seeking new correlations, and life itself is reduced to processes of data processing. Consequently, the challenges facing humanity are ontological in nature, and the only way to preserve "humanity" is to focus on the realization of genuinely human meanings, as this will constitute the main axis of ontological differentiation between humans and machines in the future.

Funding. The author declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest. The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement. The author declare that no Generative AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Section 2.3. The digital city as a space for intercultural interaction: challenges and opportunities

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Citation:
Horpynych, O.& Krokhmal, N. (2025). The digital city as a space for intercultural interaction: challenges and opportunities. In A. Kravchenko (Ed.), *Sociocultural and Political Metamorphoses in the Era of Identity Competition.* 221 p. (pp. 99–116). Scientific Center of Innovative Research. https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC-99-116

Abstract. *The relevance of the topic is associated with the modern conditions of development of urban communities, where intercultural interaction aimed at ensuring understanding between different socio-cultural groups is of particular importance. Traditional models of multiculturalism do not always offer sufficiently clear mechanisms for creating conditions for effective interaction and preserving cultural identity. In the last decade, an intercultural model of urban development has gained popularity, which involves supporting cultural differences within the framework of democratic values and international human rights standards. The aim of the study is to analyze the challenges and opportunities facing the digital city as a space for intercultural interaction. The research methodology is based on: an interdisciplinary approach that combines theoretical foundations and tools of urban sociology, sociology of culture and digital sociology; a systems analysis that considers the city as a holistic system where digital tools influence social processes; the concept of a "smart city" as an integrated socio-technical system that combines digital technologies, innovative management and social inclusion. In this context, the digital city is a new tool for shaping the sociocultural environment, enabling interactive communication between residents through online platforms, mobile applications, and sociological data collection systems. Digital technologies not only allow for the integration of the cultural and social needs of different groups but also increase community participation in the planning and development of urban space, contribute to the formation of inclusive policies, and strengthen sociocultural capital. Research shows that combining digital solutions with sociological approaches makes it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of urban initiatives, activate interested groups, and support the sustainable development of multi-ethnic communities. Thus, the digital city opens up broad opportunities for the development of intercultural dialogue, while posing challenges for city administrations in terms of ensuring accessibility, data security, and the equal involvement of all residents. The conclusions emphasize the need for a systematic combination of technological, sociological, and cultural approaches to create a harmonious and inclusive urban environment.*

Keywords: *digital city; Smart City; intercultural interaction; social integration; information and communication technologies; multiculturalism; interculturalism, sociocultural environment; digital inequality; urban innovation infrastructure.*

ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

1. The concept of "smart city" is the direction of evolution of the modern city. In the era of globalization and rapid digitalization, urban spaces are gradually transforming not only into economic and administrative centers, but also into dynamic hubs of cultural interaction. The concept of a "digital city" is now understood as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses a combination of technological innovations, social practices, and new models of urban infrastructure management. Modern megacities are increasingly characterized by multi-ethnicity and cultural diversity, which requires the formation of effective intercultural models of coexistence and communication. In this context, the digital city emerges as a unique space where technological development is combined with processes of cultural interaction, creating new opportunities for integration and, at the same time, challenges related to preserving identity and overcoming social barriers.

Over the past decade, the idea of a "smart city" has become particularly relevant. Its spread is driven by increasing urbanization, growing urban populations, and the need to optimize the management of all areas of life – from transportation and healthcare to energy and security. The integration of information and communication technologies, in particular the Internet of Things (IoT), plays an important role in ensuring transparent resource management and improving the quality of life of the population. Monitoring systems, sensors, and digital services create conditions for feedback between citizens and authorities, making the urban environment more flexible and responsive to the needs of residents [2].

Modern digital technologies are becoming not only a space for information exchange, but also an important tool for intercultural communication. Online platforms, social networks, and interactive services allow representatives of different cultures to maintain constant dialogue, create joint projects, and participate in virtual communities, which reduces barriers in the perception of "the other." Such tools open up opportunities for the formation of new formats of intercultural interaction–from joint learning and creativity to the development of the digital economy and global social movements.

At the same time, the digital environment poses a number of challenges. First, it can exacerbate segregation when information platform algorithms direct users into "information bubbles," limiting their exposure to different cultural narratives. Second, there is a growing risk of spreading stereotypes, hate speech, and manipulation, which complicates the process of social integration. Third, digital inequality caused by unequal access to technology and digital skills becomes a barrier to the full participation of certain population groups in intercultural dialogue [8].

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Thus, digital technologies act both as a catalyst for intercultural communication and a source of new social risks, requiring cities to develop balanced strategies for digital integration.

However, the sociocultural aspects of the functioning of a modern city are no less important than the technological ones. Today's urban space is not only infrastructure, but also a complex social environment undergoing transformations as a result of cultural interaction, migration processes, and global communication changes. The expansion of the cultural field leads to the formation of new social groups, the transformation of traditional ones, and the emergence of alternative models of intercultural interaction. In the context of modern transformations, issues of social mobility, the ability of individuals to adapt to new environments, transition between different statuses, and the development of updated systems of norms and values are becoming increasingly important.

The current sociocultural situation in cities, particularly in urban communities, demonstrates social progress while also giving rise to a number of contradictions. Social differentiation is deepening, differences between groups in terms of educational, economic, and cultural criteria are growing, and information technologies are acting as a catalyst for these processes. That is why the study of the digital city in the context of intercultural interaction is becoming a pressing task for contemporary sociology, as it allows us to understand how the transformation of communicative and cultural practices affects the development of local and regional communities, the formation of new identities, and the prospects for social integration. The purpose of the study is to analyze the challenges and opportunities facing the digital city as a space for intercultural interaction.

The phenomenon of the modern intercultural city requires a comprehensive approach that combines the sociology of space and the city (E. Bogardus, E. Burgess, M. Weber, L. Wirth, G. Simmel, J. Trager, R. Florida, E. Hall) with an analysis of cultural consciousness and sociocultural development (Z. Bauman, P. Kozlovski, E. Toffler, A. Touraine, N. Elias) and taking into account the need to consolidate multinational communities (E. Durkheim, R. Merton). In Ukrainian sociological thought, despite the increase in the number of scientific studies in the field of urban sociology (V. Gorodyanenko, I. Yevdokymova, A. Iakovenko, S. Kataev, A. Yachny, O. Semashko, A. Demicheva and others), the issue of intercultural interaction among representatives of Ukraine's multicultural society in the context of contemporary transformations remains insufficiently studied.

Contemporary research emphasizes the importance of digital technologies as a means of intercultural interaction, which not only creates

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new conditions for integration but also raises challenges related to the preservation of cultural identity and processes of social adaptation. The works of A. Mans, D. Chanto, E. Nadiu, K. Rubicondo-Khovanova, D. Pinelli, R. Wilson, I. Gidikova, K. Fredit and others laid the foundations for the functioning of "Intercultural Cities", which are reflected in the programs of the Council of Europe and the documents "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" and "Results of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue" [3].

Thus, the modern digital city emerges as a unique space where technological innovations become a means of developing intercultural interactions, creating both new opportunities for social integration and difficulties arising from cultural diversity and the possibility of increasing social divisions.

The analysis of the digital city as a space of intercultural interaction is carried out within the framework of an interdisciplinary approach that combines the theoretical foundations and tools of the sociology of the city, the sociology of culture and digital sociology. It is complemented by a systemic analysis that involves the study of the digital city as a set of diverse elements (residents, social groups and communities, local governments, etc.), interconnected by connections based on digital technologies and intercultural communication. Methodologically, the research is based on a combination of macro- and micro-sociological levels of analysis, which allows us to identify both the conditions for the functioning of the digital environment of a modern city and the everyday practices of interaction between representatives of its various cultural groups. The theoretical basis of the research is: 1) the concepts of urban sociology (E. Burgess, L. Wirth, M. Castells), which allow us to consider the city as a social space where interaction between individuals and groups takes place; 2) approaches to the analysis of intercultural interaction (Z. Bauman, A. Touraine, N. Elias), which focus on the dynamics of cultural identities in a globalized environment; 3) the position of digital sociology (D. Lee, N. Marres), which explores the impact of digital technologies on social structures, communication and inclusion.

The research is based on the concept of a "smart city" as an integrated socio-technical system that combines digital technologies, innovative management and social inclusion. Thus, the works of M. Castells, A. Greenfield, T. Igitkanlar emphasize the relationship between technological modernization and social sustainability; approaches to digital urbanism focus on the city as a platform for citizen participation, knowledge exchange and the formation of inclusive policies; Theories of social integration (E. Durkheim, R. Merton) complement the aforementioned theories in the

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

context of digital interaction and intercultural dialogue. This approach allows us to consider urban space not only as an infrastructural unit, but as a dynamic environment of interaction of cultures, identities and digital practices.

In this context, it is important to determine the role of smart technologies in supporting intercultural dialogue in modern cities, assess their potential for strengthening social solidarity and harmonizing cultural relations, and analyze problematic aspects that may limit the effectiveness of digital platforms in ensuring equality and integration.

As mentioned above, one of the key trends in the evolution of modern cities is the spread of the "smart city" concept. This process is stimulated not only by the rapid growth of the urban population and global urbanization, but also by the transformation of cities into centers of innovation, where information and communication technologies are integrated into all spheres of life. Despite the widespread popularity of the Smart City idea, there is currently no universal definition of this phenomenon. One of the most common approaches is technocratic, which focuses on the use of modern technologies to solve problems arising in the process of urbanization. The characteristics of smart cities may vary depending on their size, socio-economic context, and regional features, but there are common principles that are inherent in all such cities [13].

"Smart cities, combined with IT and IP, have a significant impact on urban development, improving the quality of life for the population. These innovative technologies provide increased efficiency, convenience, and safety for the urban environment" [18, p. 115]. Monitoring and management systems cover various areas of urban life: transport infrastructure, energy and water management, waste and other components of urban infrastructure, security, environmental initiatives, as well as the active involvement of residents in decision-making processes. For example, smart traffic management systems allow you to track and evaluate traffic flows, regulate lighting, and avoid congestion during rush hour, while smart transportation companies coordinate routes in real time according to passenger needs. The use of solar panels provides autonomous power supply to individual homes. Smart homes are part of the smart infrastructure, increasing the comfort and safety of residents through automation and the use of high-tech devices. An active role is played by the involvement of citizens in city management through digital platforms, mobile applications, and feedback, which allows for a quick response to the requests and needs of city residents and reduces the need for offline interaction with authorities. A key element of such systems is the use of data, sensor systems, smart meters, and other digital

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

technologies to optimize the functioning of the city and improve the comfort of its residents [9].

Smart cities are also focused on overcoming environmental problems, including air pollution, climate change, and reducing emissions through energy-efficient technologies. Intelligent sensors and security systems improve public safety by monitoring potentially dangerous areas or predicting emergencies such as floods, landslides, or hurricanes.

The foundation of the Smart City concept is knowledge, innovation, and the continuous functioning of urban services that meet the needs of residents and businesses in all circumstances. Architects Mark Deakin and Husam Al-Waer highlight the key characteristics of smart city technologies: they must be applied digital or electronic tools aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens, as well as changing working and living conditions through the implementation of digital solutions [12]. Thus, Smart City emerges not only as a technological platform, but also as a sociocultural space where digital innovations serve as a means of intercultural communication and integration of various social groups.

The modern concept of a Smart City is often associated with automation and the implementation of robotic solutions in urban management. Many researchers focus on the technological aspect of this phenomenon, viewing a “smart city” as an integrated intelligent system that operates on the basis of modern digital technologies. Such technologies ensure effective coordination and interconnection of key areas of urban life, including public administration, education, healthcare, public safety, transport, housing and utilities, and the real estate sector, increasing their adaptability and productivity [6].

A smart city is also seen as a model of municipal management in which information and communication technologies are used to optimize administrative processes, establish effective data exchange between authorities and residents, and improve the quality of public services and the overall standard of living of the population.

International rankings show an increase in the number of smart cities around the world. The International Institute for Management Development (IMD) compiles an annual Smart City Index. It includes cities that use modern technologies to improve the quality of life of their residents. Zurich, Oslo, and Canberra are among the top three leaders in 2024 [4].

Successful implementation of the Smart City concept requires a developed technological infrastructure, which can be a challenge for small cities or countries with underdeveloped networks.

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In Ukraine, individual elements of the "smart city" concept are currently being implemented. Favorable factors include demand for innovative solutions, the availability of IT specialists, basic infrastructure, and a high level of digital literacy among the population, as well as the development of startups and innovative entrepreneurship. At the same time, there are obstacles: limited financial resources, a shortage of qualified personnel, the lack of a unified strategy at the state level, fragmented national models of digital platforms, and information security issues [7].

For the effective development of smart cities in Ukraine, it is necessary to create a reliable foundation for secure energy, transport, and medical infrastructure, ensure environmental safety, provide access to information resources using 5G, Big Data, and analytics technologies, and create modern educational spaces for lifelong learning. The integration of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and IoT opens up new horizons for the development of innovative solutions in cities, contributing to increased comfort, safety, and management efficiency.

According to forecasts, by 2040, about 60% of the world's population will live in urban areas, which highlights the critical need for rational use of resources and improved management efficiency in urban centers [19]. Particular attention should be paid to megacities, which consume the largest share of global energy, and their growth rates remain high, creating additional challenges for the planning and development of urban innovations [17].

A. Greenfield notes that thanks to the expansion of Internet access, the miniaturization of electronic devices, and the rapid development of nanotechnology, the concept of a "smart city" is increasingly seen as a high-tech urban mechanism that functions like an intelligent machine or robot [11]. This approach emphasizes the technical aspects of the Smart City, reducing it to an automated system capable of optimizing the management of key processes of urban life.

At the same time, T. Igitkanlar emphasizes the decisive role of public policy in the implementation and development of the smart city concept. In his opinion, effective solutions to social challenges are possible not only through the creation of an appropriate strategy, but also through the establishment of effective interaction between government, business, and civil society [12]. He defines a smart city as a municipality that uses information and communication technologies to improve management efficiency, enhance data exchange with the public, and ensure high-quality public services and the well-being of the population.

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Thus, Greenfield's approach focuses on technical innovations as the basis for the functioning of the city, while Igitkanlar's position emphasizes that the success of the Smart City concept depends on the integration of technologies into the system of interaction between government structures, the private sector, and society as a whole.

2. Digital technologies in Smart City as a tool for intercultural communication. In addition to technical and managerial aspects, digital technologies in Smart City are becoming a powerful tool for intercultural communication. Thanks to interactive platforms, social networks, mobile applications, and intelligent information systems, city residents have the opportunity to exchange knowledge, cultural practices, and experiences, which contributes to the formation of an inclusive social environment. This approach creates new avenues for establishing intercultural dialogue, developing communities, and integrating representatives of different ethnic, social, and age groups into urban life [11].

At the same time, digital technologies create certain challenges for social integration, particularly through digital stratification and limited access to modern technologies among certain population groups, as well as the risk of fragmentation of communication spaces, which can exacerbate social barriers and cultural polarization. This highlights the need for well-thought-out policies and strategies aimed at ensuring equal access to digital resources and supporting intercultural dialogue, which is becoming an important component of sustainable development in modern cities.

Thus, digital technologies in Smart Cities simultaneously act as a catalyst for intercultural interaction and a factor that requires attention in order to overcome social inequalities and ensure the harmonious integration of diverse groups into the urban sociocultural space.

Today, cities are viewed as living sociocultural environments that are transformed by external and internal factors. Although previously the multicultural activity of urban spaces, especially under the influence of political and economic factors, was largely viewed as attracting investment in community development as one of the key tools for implementing municipal and regional strategies [16], highly qualified specialists, modern sociology justifies a much broader range of influences. In particular, sociocultural factors are becoming important determinants of urban development in the long term.

In the context of globalization and digitalization, they function not only as economic centers but also as platforms for the development of intercultural interaction. Previously, the multiculturalism of cities was seen primarily as a tool for attracting mobile capital and highly skilled

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professionals, while contemporary sociology emphasizes the importance of sociocultural factors for the sustainable development of urban spaces.

Studies examining population mobility, migration processes, and cultural diversity management emphasize the importance of classifying groups according to their daily practices, value orientations, and forms of self-identification [5]. These processes contribute to the growth of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity in cities, creating new social challenges. Analysis of ways to support intercultural dialogue shows that cultural diversity affects all areas of urban communities' lives, emphasizing the need to develop intercultural models of coexistence.

At the same time, the modern communicative space of cities remains insufficiently studied as a potential environment for productive interaction between different social groups. This emphasizes the need to rethink existing approaches to the use of this resource and to introduce sociological methods for developing effective mechanisms of social solidarity.

Traditional approaches to multiculturalism have a number of limitations:

- they are based on respect for other cultures, but do not always take into account the significant differences between them;
- they do not provide mechanisms to prevent the negative consequences of overestimating cultural differences;
- they are often used as a tool of identity politics;
- they do not provide clear practical mechanisms for establishing productive intergroup relations [5].

3. Interculturalism as a new philosophy of the modern city. Unlike multiculturalism, interculturalism focuses on developing active interaction between people with different cultural and social positions on the basis of equality and mutual respect. This approach is particularly suitable for modern cities and digital environments, where communication between cultures takes place both directly and through digital technologies.

In this context, the concept of a “smart city” takes on special significance. A smart city combines technological infrastructure, social practices, and management mechanisms for the effective functioning of urban, particularly urban spaces. Information and communication technologies, including IoT, big data, and digital platforms, are becoming tools not only for optimizing urban services but also for developing intercultural communication. With the help of digital services, residents exchange information, overcome language and cultural barriers, and implement joint projects and initiatives, which contributes to social integration [20].

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

At the same time, the introduction of digital technologies poses new challenges for intercultural interaction: excessive automation, algorithmic information filtering, and the threat of digital segregation can contribute to the isolation of certain sociocultural groups or limit equal access to urban resources. It is therefore critical to develop policies and management practices that strike a balance between technological efficiency and social integration.

Thus, the digital city emerges as a unique space where technological innovations and sociocultural practices intersect, opening up new opportunities for cultural integration while creating challenges for ensuring equality, social cohesion, and harmonization of intercultural relations.

The fundamental principle of the concept is the targeted promotion of integration among representatives of different cultural, linguistic, and religious communities, which ensures meaningful interaction and contributes to the formation of mutual understanding. It is evident that, "based on the most general principles of multiculturalism, the principle of interculturalism advocates, first and foremost, active and effective promotion of development, guided by the following principles:

– using every opportunity to engage people of different cultures, languages, and faiths in interaction;
– reducing the risks and possibilities of stratification along political lines;
– establishing new skills, since we are talking not only about abstract “interactions,” but also about building cultural relations in various types of social practices" [5, pp. 15-16].

The vast majority of scholars hold the view that, with adequate support from effective institutions, cultural diversity can become an important resource for the development of society. In the context of globalization processes, as Raj Isar emphasizes, the key task is to perceive culture not as static and unchanging, but as a dynamic and open system. At the same time, the results of professional analysis show that many countries have significant but not yet fully realized potential in the field of intercultural interaction. Numerous studies show that residents of Ukrainian cities are mostly tolerant in interethnic communications and tend to view ethnic diversity as an advantage rather than a problem, while recognizing the natural variability of cultures and their interaction in urban space. However, as experts researching the legal aspects of cultural environment modernization emphasize, the need to comprehensively consider various factors when developing policies to promote intercultural models in multinational cities remains a significant challenge. This is especially true for legal regulation, as current Ukrainian legislation contains certain contradictions in defining the rights of

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

participants in the cultural policy of urban communities and in the practical mechanisms for their implementation. For example, the Law of Ukraine "On Culture" [15] contains certain restrictions on the participation of public initiatives in the field of cultural policy. Thus, in Article 32, "Cooperation between State Bodies and the Cultural and Artistic Community," which regulates the possibility of citizens' participation in the preparation of normative and legal acts or in the representation of Ukraine in the international cultural space, the subjectivity is in fact reduced only to the "cultural and artistic community" [15]. At the same time, Article 1 of the same Law states that this concept refers exclusively to artists, cultural workers, and members of professional creative associations or national cultural societies [15]. This approach contradicts the provisions of Resolution No. 996 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of November 3, 2010, "On Ensuring Public Participation in the Formation and Implementation of State Policy" [14], as it ignores the broader cultural and social environments of cities. At the same time, in democratic states, dialogue and interaction between ethnic cultures are supported not only at the level of legal and constitutional mechanisms, but also in civil society, where they require constant communication and conscious efforts on the part of each individual. According to researchers, an important element in the implementation of the concept is the philosophical understanding of the culture of a multinational city as a space for accepting and understanding differences that are formed in the process of intercultural interaction based on tolerance. In this context, the principle of multiculturalism becomes a criterion for self-reflection: whether conscious work has been done to comprehend and accept the "other" [5]. Unlike bicultural models, which provide for respect for cultural differences, but at the same time give priority to the culture of the titular nation (an example is modern Latvia, whose experience demonstrates the limitations and contradictions of such an approach) [5], the intercultural concept provides for a deeper analysis of the structural causes of inequality, discrimination, and lack of social unity. This refers to the natural tendency toward group consolidation based on ethnic or cultural characteristics in order to secure advantages for "one's own" at the expense of others, which requires the creation of institutions capable of minimizing such closed mechanisms.

In this context, cultural planning as a tool for the development of urban communities in accordance with the principles of interculturalism takes on particular significance in the Ukrainian context, becoming the subject of cultural and sociological research. An analysis of the processes of sociocultural identification of urban communities under the influence of the

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globalization challenges of recent decades provides grounds for a deeper understanding of the transformation processes and opportunities for modernizing cities on new value bases. Researchers emphasize that a key factor in creating a comfortable social environment is the position of the territorial community, which, thanks to close social ties, strengthens its own capacity for self-organization, and the interaction of its members is increasingly based on the principle of subjectivity [5]. A striking example of sociological analysis is a comprehensive study of both objective and subjective factors, where the central aspect is considering the opinions of ordinary residents regarding the quality of the urban environment, the effectiveness of management strategies, and mechanisms for overcoming problems.

In modern sociology of urban space, special attention is focused on the following areas:

– analysis of social problems of the city and the degree of satisfaction with life in the city in general;
– research of the symbolic space of the city and its impact on the internal state of residents, their behavior, and well-being in the city;
– studying the specifics of the sociocultural environment and factors that can determine certain characteristics of residents' behavior;
– studying the personalized sociocultural space of city dwellers, their self-assessment of the urban environment and lifestyle, factors influencing their perception of the city and their attitude towards it;
– researching the image of the city in the minds of individual groups that are significant for the city, identifying active urban subcultures;
– researching typical sociocultural identification practices of city residents;
– analysis of quantitative and qualitative parameters of urban community development, dynamics of sociocultural characteristics of the urban community, nature of current, relevant, and promising methods of self-presentation, strategies of opposition to others, etc.;
– analysis of the methods and forms of activity of city authorities in establishing effective public dialogue on the problems of everyday urban culture;
– analysis of the level of involvement of all actors of the city's sociocultural development in planning, designing, constructing the city's image, and creating its brand [5, p. 17].

4. Technological innovations – a platform for intercultural communication in the Smart City. The concept of a “smart city” is largely supported and actively promoted by leading technology companies

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specializing in the development of Internet of Things (IoT) solutions, including IBM, Cisco, Microsoft, Software AG, and others. Their interest lies primarily in establishing partnerships with municipal authorities to supply innovative equipment and digital platforms that contribute to the modernization of urban infrastructure. Researchers note that the modern concept of a smart city has emerged mainly under the influence of initiatives by technology corporations, and not just classic urban planning approaches. As stated in one study: "The concept of a 'smart city' is constantly being modernized, acquiring new features in an era of rapid technological development, which give it increasingly new and deeper characteristics" [1, p. 31].

According to Gartner [10], at the end of 2018, the number of devices connected to the network in cities reached 1.6 billion. However, the number of devices alone does not guarantee the high efficiency of a city's functioning. A smart city should be viewed as a complex system, similar to a healthy organism, where data plays the role of living cells, ensuring coordination and interaction between different urban systems. Each component of the urban environment must operate autonomously, but at the same time be integrated into the overall system to create added value, increase management efficiency, and improve the well-being of residents.

The modern concept of a "smart city" includes not only the installation of Internet devices or smart meters, but also the comprehensive use of digital platforms that ensure the synchronous functioning of all components of the city. Smart city technologies are used to optimize physical infrastructure, manage transportation, energy, utilities, healthcare, public safety, and education. At the same time, they create conditions for active interaction with residents through e-government, open innovation processes, e-participation in decision-making, and collective design of urban initiatives [5].

At the same time, the concept of a "smart city" is often associated with automation and partial robotization of urban processes. It is based on intelligent computing technologies that make the management of key areas of life – from public administration and education to public safety, transportation, healthcare, and housing and utilities – more intelligent, interconnected, and efficient. Such technologies not only increase the productivity of urban services, but also create a platform for intercultural communication, providing residents with the opportunity to exchange information, organize joint projects, and overcome cultural barriers.

Thus, a digital city can be viewed as a multidimensional integrated system that combines technological innovations and sociocultural practices.

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Such interaction opens up new prospects for improving management efficiency, living conditions, and intercultural dialogue. At the same time, it challenges urban communities to ensure equal access to resources, promote social integration, and foster balanced cultural relations.

The modern digital city is shaping a new sociocultural reality, where interaction between different cultural communities takes place not only in physical space but also in the virtual environment. Virtual platforms are a powerful tool for integrating cultural groups, providing opportunities for knowledge sharing, joint participation in projects, and the organization of cultural initiatives. Such technologies promote intercultural dialogue by creating a safe and open space for communication regardless of the geographical location and social status of participants.

Examples of effective use of digital platforms include online education, which brings together students from different cultures in joint courses and seminars, as well as digital cultural festivals, where representatives of different communities can showcase their heritage, art, and traditions without physical limitations. In addition, e-democracy tools such as online surveys, public forums, and platforms for participation in decision-making enable different sociocultural groups to engage in city development processes and influence management policies.

At the same time, the digital environment contributes to the formation of new types of identities, where personality is determined not only by local or national affiliation, but also by activity in virtual communities, participation in global projects, and digital networks. This development allows for the formation of more flexible, dynamic, and multidimensional models of cultural identity that combine traditional and new elements of social and cultural self-identification.

5. Challenges and opportunities for intercultural interaction in a Smart City. Along with opportunities, the digital city poses a number of challenges for intercultural interaction. One of them is digital inequality: different social and ethnic groups have limited access to technology, which creates asymmetry in opportunities to participate in virtual platforms, obtain information, and use digital services.

Another problem is the threat to cultural identity. Globalization processes and the dominance of certain cultural models in the digital environment can lead to the unification of cultural practices and the loss of local traditions. Language barriers, stereotypes, and prejudices increase the risk of conflict in virtual space, creating difficulties for genuine intercultural dialogue.

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Among the current risks, the problem of cyber security and the threat of manipulative influence on public opinion stand out. Digital technologies are often used as channels for spreading false information, propaganda, or tools for provoking social confrontation. Therefore, ensuring the safe and ethical functioning of digital tools is critical to supporting intercultural interaction and social integration within a smart city.

The digital city creates new opportunities for integrating different cultural communities by offering a wide range of digital services aimed at increasing social inclusion. Among them, e-government services and mobile applications for migrants are particularly important, as they allow migrants to obtain information about housing, education, and social resources, overcome bureaucratic barriers, and facilitate faster adaptation to a new social environment.

Digital media and platforms support cultural diversity by creating a space for the presentation of local traditions, arts, and cultural practices in a global context. They enable the organization of online festivals, exhibitions, cultural lectures, and interactive events, which promotes intercultural dialogue and raises awareness of different cultural communities among city residents.

Innovative approaches to data analysis, including the use of big data and artificial intelligence, create new opportunities for researching and predicting intercultural interactions. By collecting and analyzing information about social practices, cultural preferences, and population mobility, city administrations can plan more effective integration policies, anticipate potential conflicts, and develop strategies to support social cohesion.

A separate area of focus is the development of “digital diplomacy” in urban spaces. Digital platforms and online initiatives allow cities to be active players in international and intercultural cooperation, exchange best practices, attract international resources, and build partnership networks for joint social and cultural projects.

Thus, the digital city not only increases the efficiency of management and the accessibility of services, but also acts as a catalyst for the development of intercultural interaction, creating conditions for a more integrated and harmonious functioning of a multicultural urban environment.

Conclusions. An analysis of theoretical sources on the development of modern urban communities has shown that traditional models of multiculturalism do not always provide clear mechanisms for creating conditions for effective interaction between cultural groups. Over the past decade, the intercultural model of urban development has become widespread, which involves the search for forms and mechanisms to support

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cultural diversity within the framework of democratic values and international human rights standards, while preserving the unique features of urban culture – the diversity of interests, values, and needs of different groups of residents.

Within this model, particular attention is paid to creating conditions for meaningful interaction between people with different cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions, which promotes understanding and social integration. An important role in shaping a comfortable sociocultural environment is played by the activity of the territorial community, which is becoming increasingly self-organised, with the interaction of its members covering all spheres of urban life.

In this context, the concept of a digital city (Smart City) opens up new opportunities for supporting intercultural dialogue, as digital platforms and technologies make it possible to bring citizens together more effectively, provide access to information resources, services, and cultural initiatives, and encourage the participation of different social groups in the development of the urban environment. Digital tools such as online platforms for public consultations, mobile applications for interactive communication, and systems for collecting and analyzing sociological data help identify residents' needs and support the inclusiveness of urban initiatives.

An analysis of the theoretical and practical foundations of sociological support for the development of multi-ethnic cities shows that the integration of digital technologies with sociocultural approaches allows for the combination of concepts of public space, social capital, and urban identity. This opens up opportunities for a comprehensive analysis of the sociocultural development of multicultural communities, the definition of criteria for evaluating effective sectors of the urban environment, and the stimulation of the participation of interested social groups in the implementation of intercultural strategies.

Funding. The author declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest. The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement. The author declare that no Generative AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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Chapter 3
Civilizational Strategies and Political Dynamics of the Digital World

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC
ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Section 3.1. The Formation and Development of European Integration and Political Processes in the EU in the Paradigm of the Russian-Ukrainian War

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Citation:
Husieva, N. & Razitskyi, V. (2025). The Formation and Development of European Integration and Political Processes in the EU in the Paradigm of the Russian-Ukrainian War. In A. Kravchenko (Ed.), *Sociocultural and Political Metamorphoses in the Era of Identity Competition.* 221 p. (pp. 118–170). Scientific Center of Innovative Research. https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC-118-170

Abstract. *European integration reflects a long movement from visions of continental peace to post-1945 supranational communities and, later, the European Union (EU). The Russian-Ukrainian war has intensified debates on sovereignty, solidarity, and security governance. This study analyzes the formation and development of European integration and EU political processes, emphasizing institutional evolution, crisis-driven adaptation, and policy instrument change toward Ukraine and Russia. A historical-institutional approach is combined with structured periodization and qualitative content analysis of treaties, institutional mandates, and official decisions described in the section. A two-phase comparative framework contrasts EU responses during 2014–23 February 2022 and after 24 February 2022, focusing on sanctions, assistance instruments, and enlargement decisions. Sources include EU treaty texts, Council conclusions, European Council conclusions, Parliament resolutions, and scholarly analyses of integration, sanctions, and enlargement under wartime conditions. EU integration progressed from economic cooperation to broader political coordination while retaining a collegial decision model that constrains rapid response. The 2014 aggression revealed limited unity, preference for incremental restrictive measures, and slow consolidation of common positions. After February 2022, the EU expanded sanctions, increased macro-financial and humanitarian support, strengthened military assistance and training mechanisms, and advanced coordination in energy security and cybersecurity cooperation. Enlargement dynamics shifted, as Ukraine obtained candidate status and accession talks were opened, while compromise mechanisms emerged for directing proceeds from immobilized Russian sovereign assets to support Ukraine. The war operates as both stress test and catalyst. It accelerates the EU's security agenda and strategic autonomy discourse, yet exposes cleavages linked to unanimity requirements, asymmetrical threat perceptions, and national interest bargaining. Future studies should assess sanction effectiveness and circumvention patterns, evaluate institutional reform options for foreign-policy voting and crisis governance, measure war fatigue and populist influence on solidarity, and model enlargement impacts on Europe's security architecture.*

Keywords: *European Union; European integration; modernization; democracy; military aggression of the Russian Federation; sanctions; economic assistance; military aid; EU enlargement.*

ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

1. Europe's path to unity: the emergence of integration ideas and practices. Today, the European Union unites twenty-seven countries that are consciously pursuing economic and political unity, even partially relinquishing certain elements of their sovereignty.

The idea of European unification has deep historical roots. At various times, the European space has experienced periods of both fragmentation and integration. Most often, unification took place by force, through the creation of empires (the Roman Empire, the empire of Charlemagne, Charles V or Napoleon). However, alongside this, there has always been another tradition – the pacifist idea of unity through cooperation, conviction and shared values.

The European idea – is a kind of trend in socio-political thought, which for centuries has called for the eradication of war and the search for ways of political unification. Its representatives were well-known thinkers, rulers and cultural figures who adapted the concept of unity to the conditions of their time.

The first mentions of Europe as a separate region date back to the 8th–7th centuries BC. Ancient Greek authors Hesiod and Hecataeus of Miletus distinguished Europe from other parts of the world – Asia and Libya (Africa) (Vidnianskyi, S.V., Martynov, A.Iu., 2011). Later, the ancient Greeks began to use this term to refer to a much larger territory than Greece itself.

In the Roman Empire, the concept of «Europe» had no political significance. The empire was multinational and stretched across three continents, so the Romans thought in terms of imperial rather than European identity. Only after the fall of the Western Roman Empire did the perception of Europe as not only a geographical but also a cultural and political space gradually take root in their consciousness.

Charlemagne, King of the Franks, is considered one of the first symbolic «unifiers» of Europe. On 25 December 800, he was crowned emperor and received the titles «Pater Europae» («Father of Europe») and «Rex Europae» («King of Europe») (Istoriia yevropeiskoi intehratsii, 2013). Charlemagne sought to revive the Christian empire, but after his death it fell into three parts, which became the basis for the future France, Germany and Italy.

Subsequently, strong national states emerged in Europe, weakening the power of emperors and the Pope. Against this backdrop, thinkers and politicians proposed their own versions of a «European peace». For example, French prosecutor Pierre Dubois (1250-1320) put forward the idea of a «Christian republic» in his treatise «On the Return of the Holy Land» – a

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confederation of European monarchies to be governed by a council chaired by the French king (Istoriia yevropeiskoi intehratsii, 2013).

Similar ideas were expressed by the Czech king Jiří z Poděbrad (1420-1471), who proposed the creation of a secular union of European states to counter the Ottoman Empire (Gehler, M., 2002). His project envisaged collective security guarantees, a common budget and an allied assembly with a rotating venue.

The beginning of the Reformation and the division of Europe into Catholic and Protestant worlds finally undermined the universal claims of the Pope and emperors. From then on, the European idea took on an exclusively secular character.

Thus, Duke Maximilien de Sully (1559-1641), advisor to French King Henry IV, proposed in his «Grand Plan» to divide Europe into fifteen states (monarchies and republics) that would unite in an alliance with a common council and free trade. In his opinion, it was important to maintain a balance of power and create mechanisms that would guarantee peace (Panchenko, H.Iu., 2010). However, unlike the pacifists, de Sully believed that such an alliance could only be achieved by military means.

More practical approaches to the unification of Europe were proposed by the French thinker Emeric Cruce (1590-1648) in his treatise *«New Cinea»*. He advocated the creation of an intergovernmental assembly that would unite the world's leading states regardless of their religious affiliation and promote the peaceful resolution of disputes (Kopiika, V.V., Shynkarenko, T.I., 2012).

Similar ideas were developed by Abbot Charles-Irénée de Saint-Pierre (1658-1743). In his *«Project for Eternal Peace»,* he described the prerequisites for the formation of a confederation of European states and proposed specific mechanisms for its creation. In his opinion, «eternal peace» should be based on the principle of «European equilibrium», enshrined in legal norms and permanent institutions (Istoriia yevropeiskoi intehratsii, 2013).

In his work *«An Essay Concerning the Present and Future State of Europe»,* English Quaker William Penn (1644-1718) first expressed the idea of granting pan-European institutions real powers over individual states. To guarantee peace, he proposed the creation of a European league or confederation (European Integration: Historical Trajectories, Geopolitical Contexts, 2019).

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) also made a significant contribution. In his treatise *«Perpetual Peace»,* he emphasised that war is the natural state of humanity and that peace is only possible

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through an international treaty that cannot be denounced unilaterally. According to Kant, the key to peace is the spread of republican rule based on the principles of freedom and equality of citizens (Pfetsch, F., 1997).

The Great French Revolution demonstrated the difficulties of translating the ideas of the Enlightenment into practical politics. It ushered in a long era of wars in Europe, during which the idea of unity was interpreted in different ways. The most radical attempt to implement it was made by Napoleon Bonaparte. His project envisaged the creation of a European confederation under the auspices of «Greater France» with a single legislative code, judicial system, army, currency and measurement standards.

However, Napoleon's plan failed. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, a new system of international relations was established, based on the principles of legitimism and the «European concert». An important element of this order was the Holy Alliance, initiated by the Russian emperor Alexander I, which aimed to protect monarchical regimes and suppress revolutionary movements.

In the mid-19th century, the concept of a United States of Europe (USE) was formed, supported by the liberal bourgeoisie and revolutionary-democratic circles. It was particularly active at the Peace Congresses. Thus, during the Third Congress in Paris (1849), Victor Hugo presented his own vision of the USEU (Gehler, M., 2002). In 1867, the International League for Peace and Freedom was established in Geneva, which also used this slogan. However, the rise of nation states and growing rivalry between them destroyed these plans. Europe was gradually approaching the First World War, which unfolded under the banners of aggressive nationalism.

Despite its devastating consequences, the First World War did not discredit nationalism. On the contrary, the Versailles system only intensified revanchist sentiments, especially in Germany. At the same time, new initiatives emerged in interwar Europe. The most famous was the concept of the Austrian aristocrat Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894-1972), set out in the *Pan-Europe* manifesto (1923). He proposed the creation of pan-European institutions – a Federal Council, an assembly, a court and a treasury, as well as a customs union and a common market.

No less significant was the project of French politician Aristide Briand (1862-1932). In a memorandum dated 1930, he proposed concluding a Pact on European Confederation with a clear institutional structure: a European Conference, an Executive Committee and administrative bodies. The main principles of the plan were (Burgard, O., 2000): 1. priority of political and military union over economic union; 2. preservation of national sovereignty

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while strengthening collective solidarity; 3. creation of a common market and liberalization of the movement of goods, capital and people. However, Briand's death and political turmoil prevented these ideas from being realized.

With the Nazis coming to power in 1933, the idea of European unity was distorted. The «New Order» proposed by the Third Reich was based on racial theories and forceful subjugation. At the same time, democratic projects for future unification were emerging in the wake of the anti-fascist struggle. Among their authors were Italians Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, Frenchman Léon Blum, and Belgian Paul-Henri Spaak. It was they who laid the foundations for post-war integration.

The Second World War showed the destructiveness of nationalist conflicts. After 1945, the idea of European unity got a new lease of life. Its symbolic start was Winston Churchill's speech at the University of Zurich (19 September 1946), where he called for the creation of a «European family» in the form of a United States of Europe. Churchill particularly emphasized the need for Franco-German reconciliation as the basis for a new European order.

The United States played an important role in the establishment of international organizations in Western Europe. The Marshall Plan (1948-1951) explicitly stated that the economic recovery of Europe was only possible through cooperation between states. Under this program, European countries received American goods on preferential terms. For the US, Western Europe was both a political ally in the Cold War and a promising market for its own goods and the capital of transnational corporations.

At this time, regional economic associations began to form. On 1 January 1948, the customs union of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (Benelux) came into effect. In March of the same year, the United Kingdom, France and the Benelux countries signed a treaty on economic, social and cultural cooperation, as well as collective defense.

A significant step was the Congress of Europe, which took place in May 1948 in The Hague. Delegates from 16 European countries, as well as observers from the United States and Canada, discussed integration prospects, including the idea of creating a federal European state (European Integration: Historical Trajectories, Geopolitical Contexts, 2019). This resulted in the establishment of the Council of Europe (1949), which initially focused on coordination in the fields of economics, culture, law and science, and later concentrated its activities on the protection of human rights. Today, 46 states are members of this organization.

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On the initiative of the United States, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was established in 1948, which later transformed into the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which now brings together 37 highly developed countries. In 1950, with Washington's support, the European Payments Union was established, which contributed to the restoration of free conversion of national currencies. The United States also played a key role in the creation of NATO (1949), designed to counter the influence of the USSR.

Thus, most of the newly created associations (except for the Benelux) were classic international organizations with clearly defined functions. They did not envisage the transfer of sovereignty to a supranational level and did not seek to form a political community with a common destiny. This task became a feature of European communities, which made a qualitative breakthrough in the practice of integration.

There are various approaches to the periodization of European integration in the scientific literature. One of the most common options involves four main stages (Vidnianskyi, S.V., Martynov, A.Iu., 2011):

1. **1950-1970** – dynamic development of integration, initiated by the Schuman Declaration.
2. **1970-1985** – a period of "Eurosclerosis" associated with economic crises and "oil shocks".
3. **1985-2004** – a new stage of successful integration projects.
4. **2004 to present** – a period following the largest expansion of the EU, when integration slowed down again.

The first stage of European integration (1950-1970). The impetus for integration was *the Schuman Declaration* (9 May 1950), developed with the participation of Jean Monnet (Schuman Declaration May 1950). Its aim was to reconcile France and Germany by creating joint control over coal and steel production. Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg joined the initiative.

On 18 April 1951, the Treaty of Paris was signed to establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which came into force on 25 July 1952 and became the first supranational entity in Europe.

However, not all attempts at integration were successful. For example, the «Pleven Plan» (1950) to create a European Defense Community and a single army failed, as did the European Political Community project. The main obstacles were mutual distrust and the unwillingness of states to compromise their national interests.

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At the same time, on 25 March 1957, six countries signed the Treaties of Rome, which established the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). They provided for the gradual creation of a customs union and a common market. Subsequently, the Brussels Treaty on «merger» (1965) unified the institutions of the three organizations – the ECSC, the EEC and Euratom – laying the foundation for the modern structure of the EU.

At the same time, the United Kingdom and a number of other countries created an alternative association – the European Free Trade Association (EFTA, 1960), which became a competitor to the «six».

Overall, the first stage of European integration was successful: a customs union was created, a common agricultural policy was launched, and the institutional framework for the future EU was established.

The second stage of European integration (1970-1985). The period from 1970 to 1985 was an extremely difficult and controversial stage in the development of European integration. It coincided with global economic and political upheavals that significantly affected the dynamics of the European Economic Community (EEC).

In the early 1970s, the global economy experienced two major crises. In August 1971, the Bretton Woods monetary system, which was based on the gold-dollar standard, collapsed. Two years later, in 1973, the first oil crisis began against the backdrop of a new Arab-Israeli war. For the EEC countries, which covered more than 60% of their energy needs by importing Middle Eastern oil, these events had serious consequences: the cost of industrial goods rose, balance of payments problems worsened, and the overall economic situation deteriorated (Gillingham, J., 2003).

The crisis was not limited to the energy sector. In 1975, Western Europe experienced its first economic recession since World War II, and in 1981-1982, there was a renewed decline in industrial production. Despite this, it was at this time that the implementation of the plan to create an Economic and Monetary Union, known as the «Werner Plan», began. The document, prepared in 1969-1971, provided for the gradual removal of restrictions on the movement of capital, the rigid fixing of exchange rates, and even the possibility of introducing a single currency by 1980. Although the plan was not fully implemented, an important step was the establishment in 1979 of the European Monetary System with the ECU (European Currency Unit) as its unit of account.

The 1970s were characterized in academic literature as a period of «Eurosclerosis» and «Europessimism». The reason for this was that, in the context of the crisis, member states increasingly deviated from the principles

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of the Treaties of Rome, giving preference to protecting their own national economies and resorting to protectionist measures against their partners in the Community.

At the same time, this period cannot be considered exclusively a period of stagnation. In 1974, at the Paris summit, a decision was made to create the European Council, a permanent body bringing together heads of state and government to make strategic decisions. At the same time, a transition to direct elections to the European Parliament was agreed, which took place for the first time in 1979. Other important institutional steps included the signing of the 1975 agreement on the establishment of the Court of Auditors, the launch of the European Regional Development Fund, and the adoption of the First Framework Programme for Scientific and Technical Development in 1984.

In terms of foreign policy, the creation of the European Political Cooperation mechanism in 1970, which ensured regular meetings of the foreign ministers of the EEC countries to coordinate joint actions, was of great importance.

The first enlargements of the EEC were also an important achievement of this stage. On 1 January 1973, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland joined the Community. In the second half of the 1970s, following democratic transformations in Greece, Portugal and Spain, negotiations on their accession began. In 1981, Greece officially became the tenth member of the Community (Gillingham, J., 2003).

Thanks to the processes of easing international tensions, the EEC countries actively participated in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which began in 1973 and brought together 33 European states, as well as the United States and Canada. It culminated in the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, which enshrined the inviolability of post-war borders in Europe and proclaimed a course of cooperation between states with different political systems in the fields of economics, science and humanitarian interaction.

Thus, the second stage of European integration was controversial: on the one hand, it was characterized by crises and a slowdown in the integration process, and on the other, by important institutional innovations and the expansion of the Community. Despite the difficulties, the European integration project proved its viability, maintained its strategic course towards deeper cooperation and entered a new stage of development.

The third stage of European integration (1985-2004). The period from 1985 to 2004 was a qualitatively new stage in the development of European

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integration, characterized by deepening economic cooperation, institutional reform and large-scale expansion of the European Communities.

The mid-1980s saw the completion of the structural restructuring of the economies of Western European countries, which allowed for a return to stable growth. At the same time, the international situation changed due to the beginning of perestroika in the USSR and, subsequently, the collapse of socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 led to the elimination of the bipolar system of international relations, leaving NATO as the only military-political bloc in Europe and the European Communities as the main economic center. This created favorable conditions for more intensive integration.

The signing of the Single European Act in 1986 (effective from 1987) initiated the creation of the Single Internal Market, which was officially completed by 1992. It ensured the free movement of goods, services, capital and labor. (Single European Act, 1987).

In 1985, the Schengen Agreement was signed, laying the foundation for the gradual elimination of internal borders between member states. Although it operated outside the legal framework of the EEC, the agreement was important for strengthening practical integration mechanisms. On 1 January 1986, Spain and Portugal joined the EEC. The successful integration of these countries confirmed the Community's ability to include states with lower levels of economic development.

The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 (in force since 1993) marked the beginning of the European Union as a new type of political community. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997/1999) expanded the EU's powers in the areas of visa, migration and border policy. The Treaty of Nice (2000/2003) reformed the institutions to ensure effective governance in view of the forthcoming major enlargement.

The Economic and Monetary Union was formed during the 1990s. In 1998, the European Central Bank was established, and on 1 January 1999, the euro was introduced into non-cash circulation. On 1 January 2002, it took the form of cash. This was one of the key achievements of the integration process.

On 1 May 2004, the largest expansion in the history of the EU took place: ten countries from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Cyprus and Malta, joined the EU. The number of EU members increased to 25. The accession of Bulgaria and Romania was postponed until 2007.

Between 1985 and 2004, the EU underwent qualitative institutional and economic changes, achieved the highest level of economic integration, launched an economic and monetary union, and implemented a large-scale

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territorial expansion. This strengthened its position as a leading political and economic center of global development.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the European Union faced new strategic challenges. Among the key priorities were: improving the effectiveness of the common foreign policy, overcoming socio-economic disparities between member states, carrying out deep institutional reform, and formulating new long-term integration goals.

2. Evolution of EU Institutions and Enlargement Dynamics. In 2002, a Convention was convened under the chairmanship of former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Its task was to prepare a Treaty on the Constitution of the EU, which was to replace previous agreements and modernize the Union's institutional mechanism. However, in 2005, the ratification process stalled when the citizens of France and the Netherlands voted against the Constitution in referendums. This caused a deep political crisis. A way out of the situation was found at the 2007 Brussels summit, where it was decided to prepare a new, more pragmatic document. This was the Treaty of Lisbon, signed on 13 December 2007 and in force since 1 December 2009. It not only simplified the treaty base, but also strengthened the political unity of the EU by initiating the formation of the External Action Service.

After the introduction of the euro in 1999-2002, economic integration gained new momentum. In 2002-2014, the euro area gradually expanded: Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta, Slovakia, Estonia and Latvia joined it. Thus, the number of its participants grew to 18.

The EU has moved from fragmented diplomatic initiatives to a more coordinated foreign policy. The 2010 Lisbon Treaty laid the foundation for the creation of the EU External Action Service, which has enabled it to act more actively on the international stage. The main areas of focus were (Vidnianskyi, S.V., Martynov, A.Iu., 2011):

1. strengthening the European security architecture and defense identity;
2. expanding the application of the concept of «soft power», which is based on international law and the rejection of coercive policies;
3. participation in the resolution of global problems;
4. developing policies towards neighboring countries and the post-Soviet space.

Despite its successes, the EU has faced a number of crises. In the 2010s, the debt crisis in the Eurozone countries, the wave of migration from the Middle East, and the process of the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the Union posed serious challenges. Although the end of the debt crisis and a reduction in illegal migration were officially announced in 2018, the very

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fact of Brexit (31 January 2020) demonstrated the ambiguity of further integration.

Thus, in the first decade of the 21st century, the EU sought to combine internal consolidation with the revitalization of its global role. Despite crises and contradictions, the Union remains a unique political and economic entity, uniting 27 member states today and defining the face of modern Europe.

3. EU policy as a factor in the international response to the Russian-Ukrainian war. Russia's aggression against Ukraine forced EU leaders to pay attention to this problem. However, Brussels' response in 2014 was sluggish, not commensurate with the scale of the military conflict and its consequences for Europe and the entire international community today. It took the EU eight years to rethink the significance of the Russian-Ukrainian war for the security of the continent and to begin to take more decisive measures to counter the Kremlin's aggressive plans. That is why it seems logical to consider the transformation of Brussels' foreign policy during the Russian-Ukrainian war in terms of two important stages. The first stage lasted from February 2014 to 23 February 2024 and includes the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine's , the annexation of Crimea and military actions in Donbas. The second stage began on 24 February 2022, when Russian troops launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and continues to this day. The fundamental difference in EU policy during these two conditional stages is the depth of cooperation with Kyiv and other Eastern European countries, as well as the decisiveness of Brussels' actions towards Moscow. Since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the EU's basic cooperation with the Ukrainian leadership has taken place only within the framework of the Eastern Partnership initiative and has not included a security component. However, after the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine, Brussels did not limit itself to political and diplomatic support and provided military and financial assistance to Kyiv as part of its policy towards Eastern Europe.

The internal structure of the European Union itself has a significant impact on the formation of foreign policy and the ability to respond quickly and decisively to international problems. As mentioned above, the unification of Europe took place primarily around the resolution of economic issues within the bloc. Foreign policy and responses to international conflicts require much more time, as they require the coordination of a common position among all member states. Moreover, the EU does not have a single body that shapes foreign policy. These issues fall within the competence of the European Council, the Council of Ministers and the High Representative

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of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The latter heads the European External Action Service (Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2012). The European Council is responsible for defining the strategic directions of the EU's foreign policy. The leaders of the states and governments of the participating countries participate in the work of this institution. The Council of Ministers of the EU, based on the strategic imperatives of the European Council, adopts framework decisions necessary for the implementation of the foreign policy objectives of the entire bloc. In turn, the High Representative of the EU is responsible for the direct implementation of the decisions taken. The diplomatic service of the European Union, as well as the states of this community that have agreed to the formation of a common foreign and security policy, are subordinate to him. In addition, the European Commission participates in international decision-making. This institution is responsible for preparing draft legislation. The European Parliament also has a significant influence on the formation of the foreign policy agenda. Although its resolutions are of a recommendatory nature and are not binding on other EU institutions, the clarity and foresight of its decisions attract the attention of officials in Brussels and often form the basis of official EU policy (Thym, D., 2011). Thus, the process of shaping foreign policy and making specific decisions in this area is quite complex and directly depends on the political will of the participating countries. The collegiality of decision-making on the most important issues in the EU provides certain guarantees to national states, but at the same time significantly slows down the work of institutions and prevents them from responding quickly and decisively to foreign policy challenges.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2014 intensified political processes in the EU and contributed to the intensification of political decision-making on cooperation with Kyiv and other Eastern European countries, including Georgia and Moldova. First of all, the issue of European Union enlargement gained momentum and took on a qualitatively new meaning. The courage and resilience of Ukrainians in the fight against Russian aggression proved to many in Europe that Kyiv shares common values and can be a reliable partner. Some European countries took an additional interest in Ukraine's accession to the EU due to their desire to distance themselves as much as possible from aggressive Russia.

The Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine and Russia's annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, followed by the outbreak of hostilities in Donbas, forced Brussels to become actively involved in resolving the

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Russian-Ukrainian conflict. However, at that time, the European Union did not dare to go beyond moral and political support. On 3 March 2014, the Council of the European Union condemned the Kremlin's actions and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine (Council of the European Union, 2014). At an extraordinary meeting of the European Council on 6 March 2014, there was a heated discussion among representatives of the member states about the EU's further actions in response to the Kremlin's aggressive actions and the annexation of Ukrainian territories. The Baltic states, Sweden, Poland and the United Kingdom took the toughest stance towards Russia. They demanded the strongest possible response to the Russian Federation. However, most countries tried to avoid confrontation with Moscow in order to protect their economic interests and did not support this proposal. These included the countries of Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Benelux countries. Berlin and Paris, the EU's most powerful economies, took a neutral position, trying to maneuver between the two conflicting positions (Luuk van Middelaar, 2021). Lacking unanimity within its ranks, the European Council was forced to resort to a compromise solution. It was decided to suspend negotiations with the Russian Federation on liberalizing the regime and signing a new agreement, and the referendum organized by the Kremlin in Crimea to legitimize its annexation was declared illegal (Extraordinary meeting of EU Heads of State or Government on Ukraine, 2014). In addition, an agreement was reached on the application of sanctions against individual Russian citizens and collaborators involved in the occupation of the Ukrainian peninsula. Among them were, in particular, the Deputy Speaker of the Russian State Duma, S. Zheleznyak, the Chairman of the State Duma Committee on CIS Affairs, L. Slutsky, the Commander of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, O. Vitko, and others. This list was subsequently supplemented with new names and included more than 1,200 individuals in total.

At the same time, EU leaders did not dare to take more decisive political and economic action against Russia. They assumed that this could become a necessary tool of influence in the event of a deepening and expansion of Moscow's aggressive actions in Ukraine. It is difficult to imagine that Europe did not understand the intentions of the Russian leadership at that time. Therefore, Brussels' soft response to the Kremlin's aggression can be explained by the desire of Western leaders to maintain access to cheap Russian raw materials and the lack of a unanimous position on further actions. Thus, at its meeting on 21-22 March 2014, the European Council emphasized that the EU supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of

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Ukraine and condemns Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol (Conclusions European Council, 2014).

The EU's sanctions policy against Russia gradually expanded. However, the pace of increasing economic pressure on the Kremlin was so slow that it had the opposite effect in practice. The Russian leadership understood that Europe did not want to spoil relations and would therefore not interfere with its continued aggressive policy towards Ukraine.

By the end of 2014, the EU leadership had imposed economic sanctions against Russia, which were limited to the territory of occupied Crimea. Restrictions were imposed on Russian companies that cooperated with the Crimean peninsula in areas subject to sanctions, such as transport, energy, telecommunications, etc. It was also prohibited to invest in the Crimean economy, provide tourist services, and carry out export and import operations. Brussels also included Crimean companies that had been seized by the occupying authorities in the sanctions list (Horiunova, Ye.O., 2018). By 2021, EU economic restrictions had also been extended to Russian companies and banks whose activities had spread to the Crimean peninsula. These included RNKB, VTB, OAO STM-Most, OAO Stroygazmontazh, and others. However, despite the introduction of all the above sanctions, the Russian economy did not experience any significant pressure. Only Crimea felt the negative effect, which could not push Moscow to stop its aggression against Ukraine.

Separately, it is worth mentioning the EU's reaction to the downing of Malaysian passenger plane MH17 by pro-Russian separatists in Donbas on July 17, 2014. Citizens of Malaysia and European countries were killed in the crash. In response to this disaster, Brussels agreed on and imposed sectoral sanctions against Russia. These included an arms embargo, restrictions on the export of dual-use goods to Russia, restrictions on Russia's access to oil production technologies, and the suspension of long-term loans and credits to major Russian banks such as Sberbank of Russia, VTB, Vnesheconombank, Rosselkhozbank, and Gazprombank. Although these sanctions could not collapse the Russian economy, they did create certain economic and business difficulties for the Kremlin.

After the start of Russian aggression against Ukraine, Kyiv had to reorient its trade. In this regard, Brussels made a number of decisions aimed at liberalizing trade relations with Kyiv. As a result, as of 2016, the EU became Ukraine's largest trading partner. The European Union imported 37,1% of Ukrainian goods, while exports accounted for 43,7%. Thus, almost 14,000 Ukrainian enterprises supplied their products to the European market.

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In July 2017, the Ukraine-EU summit was held in Kyiv, at which official EU representatives announced the introduction of new sanctions against Russia. The European Council also confirmed the deepening of trade relations with Ukraine by approving temporary trade preferences for it. Although this decision intensified competition within the EU, it was ultimately beneficial to both sides.

In June 2018, J.-L. de Brouwer, Director for Europe, Eastern Partnership, and the Middle East at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid, visited Ukraine. During discussions in Kyiv on resolving humanitarian issues in Donbas, the European representative announced that the European Commission would allocate €24 million to help victims of Russian aggression in Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Holos Ukrainy, June 18, 2018). In addition, the European Council decided to extend sanctions against Russia until June 23, 2019, which prohibited European companies from importing and exporting to Crimea, occupied by Russian troops. A number of other countries joined the EU in this decision, including Ukraine, Georgia, Norway, Montenegro, and Albania (Holos Ukrainy, July 20, 2018).

The EU leadership paid special attention to the illegal elections held by Russia in the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions in November 2018. In particular, the foreign ministers of the member states discussed the situation in Donbas at a joint meeting and stressed the need to prevent the conflict from becoming frozen. Official Brussels also imposed sanctions against the organizers of these illegal elections in the occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. In addition, at the meeting of the Ukraine-EU Association Council in December 2018 in Brussels, both sides signed a number of agreements on financing technical cooperation, energy efficiency programs, youth support, improvement of transport links, etc., for a total amount of €160 million (Uriadovyi kurier, December 24, 2018). Thus, thanks to the European policy of trade liberalization with Ukraine and the introduction of a free trade area, trade between the two sides has grown by 40% over three years. Ukrainian agricultural products ranked fifth in EU imports, surpassed in terms of volume only by Brazil, the US, China, and Argentina (Uriadovyi kurier, January 12, 2019).

Thus, from the beginning of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in 2014 to the full-scale invasion of Russian troops in February 2014, the EU gradually expanded its sanctions list and continued to enforce previously imposed economic restrictions against Russia. However, most of these sanctions did not apply to all of Russia and its economic sectors, but only to individual collaborators from Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk regions,

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Russian officials and military personnel working in the occupied Ukrainian territories, as well as companies conducting business there. That is why the economic restrictions imposed by Brussels could not solve the problems of the Kremlin's hybrid war against Ukraine and the annexation of its territories. Similarly, the EU's sanctions policy was not tough enough to cause significant damage to the Russian economy. The Russian leadership, as well as businesses, quickly learned to circumvent the sanctions, thereby nullifying all of Europe's efforts to resolve the «Ukrainian crisis». It is worth recalling the scandal involving the import and installation of Siemens turbines in Crimea in 2017, in violation of the existing ban on the supply of European energy equipment to the peninsula. Similarly, Russia imported components for high-precision weapons, which it subsequently began to use extensively against Ukraine.

The EU's policy on signing the Association Agreement and Free Trade Area Agreement with Ukraine in June 2014 deserves special attention. As mentioned above, Russian aggression against Ukraine created conditions for a review of Brussels' relations with Ukraine and other Eastern European countries (including Moldova and Georgia). Although this agreement was supposed to be concluded in the fall of 2013, it was disrupted by the administration of President Viktor Yanukovych, but the start of the Kremlins hybrid war against Ukraine brought this issue back to the forefront.

On June 27, 2014, the leaders of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia signed the economic part of the Association Agreement with the EU in Brussels, and in September of that year, the European Parliament ratified it. This event laid the foundation for the formation of a qualitatively new political reality and contributed to the intensification of the efforts of a united Europe to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian war.

It is noteworthy that the EU's policy on Ukraine's European choice and assessment of the Russian-Ukrainian war was not clearly formulated and therefore required additional determination in practical actions. Some European countries were quite skeptical about the idea of rapprochement with Kyiv and the further possibility of EU enlargement to the East. This trend can be clearly seen in the ratification process of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union by its individual members. It took more than three years and was accompanied by numerous difficulties. The European Council on Foreign Relations even commissioned a special study on this issue in October 2016. The results showed that among the EU member states, there were 12 active supporters of the idea of supporting Ukraine (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia), 13

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countries took a more moderate position, close to neutral (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Malta, Cyprus, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain), and three countries did not support the idea of any rapprochement with Kyiv at all (Italy, Austria, and Greece). The lack of unanimity on this issue significantly limited Brussels' ability to pursue a more active policy on resolving the Russian-Ukrainian war and expanding the EU eastward by including Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Moreover, the idea of European solidarity was undermined, which negatively affected the effectiveness of the European Union as a separate actor in international relations (Hustav Hressel. Interviu. Radio Svoboda, 2022). And calls by some European politicians to move from a policy of «concern» to real decisive action in supporting Ukraine and actively pressuring Russia did not find sufficient support among EU member states.

Despite the imbalance among EU countries regarding their attitude to the Russian-Ukrainian war, the intensification of Russian aggression in Donbas forced Brussels to participate alongside the US in the Geneva negotiation format to resolve this issue. The lack of interest of some European states in resolving the «Ukrainian issue» resulted in a change in the format of these negotiations and the delegation of the initiative to resolve the crisis to key members of the European Union – France and Germany. As a result, the format of the negotiations changed from Geneva to Normandy, in which, in addition to the two above-mentioned participants, Ukraine and Russia also took part. At the same time, Brussels continued to determine the key directions of foreign policy, including political and diplomatic support for Kyiv and the provision of financial assistance, sanctions policy against the Kremlin, etc. At the same time, Moscow’s influence on EU policy was evident. In particular, it was at Russia's request that Brussels postponed the implementation of the Free Trade Area with Ukraine in 2014. This was an indication that not all members of the European Union wanted to worsen relations with such an important and economically advantageous trading partner as Russia. Even the latter’s aggressive policy towards an independent European country was not a sufficient argument in favor of taking decisive measures to protect Ukraine’s sovereignty and restore international law. Thus, the expansion of sanctions against Russia promised by Brussels remained a subject of heated debate among European states, which defended their national economic interests in cooperation with Moscow. Only the downing of a civilian airliner in Donbas by pro-Russian separatists forced Europeans to agree to impose sanctions against Russia. Stability on the continent became a more compelling argument in favor of increasing

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pressure on Putin's leadership, and even German and Dutch businesses closely linked to the purchase of cheap Russian raw materials supported this view (Luuk van Middelaar, 2021).

One of the first attempts at a diplomatic settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian war was a meeting in 2014 between Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Vladimir Putin in Normandy, attended by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande, who organized the event. However, this did not bring the desired results, and the war in eastern Ukraine continued. In the summer of 2014, Moscow threw its regular troops into the battle against the Ukrainian army, which meant an escalation of the conflict. In the fall of 2014, with the active mediation of Germany and France, a meeting between the Ukrainian and Russian leaders was organized in Minsk, which resulted in a temporary cessation of active hostilities in Donbas. At that time, the prevailing opinion in the EU was that an agreement could be reached with Moscow, and a political compromise was considered the ideal way to end the Russian-Ukrainian war. However, this did not work, and in January 2015, military operations in Ukraine resumed with renewed vigor. This was a disappointment for Brussels, but Europeans continued their efforts to appease the Russian aggressor. EU leaders feared the expansion of military action on the European continent and the potential involvement of the US in the conflict through the supply of weapons to Kyiv. Europeans did not believe in Ukraine's ability to resist Russian aggression and therefore saw the solution to the problem in the Ukrainian side's demonstration of compliance with the Kremlin's demands. German Chancellor Angela Merkel openly told journalists that even with the latest Western weapons, the Ukrainian army would not be able to withstand a Russian offensive (Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel anlässlich der 51. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz, 2015). The leaders of many European countries shared this view and therefore opposed providing Kyiv with lethal weapons.

European diplomacy focused on organizing another meeting between the leaders of Ukraine and Russia with the aim of peacefully resolving the conflict between Moscow and Kyiv. For Europe, the main task was to stop the hostilities on Ukrainian territory. The issues of justice and compliance with international law by all participants in these negotiations were not actually on the agenda. Thus, Kyiv was forced to sign documents in Minsk on February 11, 2015, at a meeting of the «Normandy Four» on another ceasefire. This was the so-called Minsk-2–another attempt by Germany and France to peacefully resolve the Russian-Ukrainian war by making concessions to the Kremlin's demands. These agreements proved to be more

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durable than the previous ones (the so-called «Minsk-1») and were violated for the second time by Moscow in February 2022 with a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Thus, Europe once again became convinced that it is impossible to negotiate with the Kremlin. The Russian leadership makes promises not to seize new Ukrainian territories and then violates them, each time putting forward new, tougher demands.

The European Union's policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war was not limited to signing a truce between the two warring parties. Brussels continued to cooperate with Kyiv in various areas, including economic and defense. In this context, the agreement on permanent structured cooperation on security and defense, signed on November 13, 2017, by 23 EU member states, was significant. It was designed to deepen the development of defense projects in Europe. It became the basis for deepening cooperation with Ukraine in the defense sphere. An EU office dealing with civil security issues was opened in Odesa.

The 20th Ukraine-EU Summit, held on July 8, 2019, demonstrated the deepening cooperation between the European Union and Kyiv. As a result, agreements worth a total of approximately €120 million were signed between the two sides (Holos Ukrainy, July 8, 2019). In addition, in the context of deepening cooperation between Ukraine and the EU, it is worth mentioning the fifth meeting of the Ukraine-European Union Association Committee, at which the Ukrainian side emphasized the need to deepen mutual cooperation in various areas in order to improve the business climate and raise the living standards of citizens. The previously signed Association and Free Trade Agreements have proven their effectiveness as of 2019. Thus, the EU has become an important partner for Kyiv in carrying out reforms and countering the Russian Federation.

On October 6, 2020, the 22nd Ukraine-EU summit took place, at which Brussels agreed to begin the process of updating the Association Agreement with Ukraine in accordance with the proposals of the Ukrainian side. In particular, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko proposed expanding opportunities not only in trade between the parties to the agreement, but also in access to the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people. The European Union also agreed to restore the visa-free regime in its classic form after COVID-19 subsides. It should be noted that thanks to the above-mentioned agreements, Ukrainian businesses have redirected a significant part of their exports from the CIS markets to Europe. In 2020, the EU accounted for 40% of Ukraine's trade turnover, compared to only 26,5% of total exports in 2013 (Nahorniak, I., 2021).

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In March 2021, European Council President Charles Michel paid a landmark official visit to Ukraine, which, in particular, demonstrated progress in bilateral cooperation and Brussels' unwavering' support for Ukraine's European integration. The European representative visited Donbas and, at a final press conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, declared the European Union's strong and unwavering support for Ukraine, without which a united Europe would be impossible. He also condemned the actions of the Russian Federation against pro-Russian militants in Donbas and noted that Brussels and Kyiv share common values, such as human rights, the rule of international law, and democracy, which form the basis of cooperation between the countries. (Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Sharl Mishel discussed energy security, vaccination issues, and bilateral cooperation, 2021).

In early 2021, some EU countries intensified their efforts to support Ukraine's accession to the community. In particular, in March this year, Lithuanian President G. Nausėda and Ukrainian President V. Zelensky signed a declaration stating that after Kyiv submits its application for EU membership to Brussels, Lithuania will definitely support this decision in the vote. The declaration set a precedent for other Baltic and Central European countries. Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia, and Poland have also committed to supporting Ukraine's accession to the EU during the vote. In turn, Romania and the Czech Republic have begun negotiations with Kyiv on signing a similar declaration (Sydorenko, S., 2021). Although this campaign to support Ukraine's accession to the EU was primarily declarative in nature and did not translate into practical action, it was an important signal to the Ukrainian leadership and people that the path they had chosen was finding resonance in Europe. In addition, democratic forces in Moldova and Georgia also received a powerful signal that their aspirations to join the EU are not hopeless and have the support of European states.

The gradual rapprochement between Brussels and Kyiv was supported by a significant social base in Ukraine. As of the end of 2021, 62% of Ukrainians supported the idea of Ukraine joining the EU, and 58% supported joining NATO (Ponad polovyna ukraintsiv pidtrymuiut vstup do YeS i NATO – sotsopytuvannia «Reitynhu», 2021). However, there was no consensus among European leaders on this issue. Even at the beginning of 2022, when the entire Western world was aware of the inevitability of full-scale aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, Brussels was unable to give Kyiv a clear prospect of EU membership. Moreover, the Ukrainian government asked the European Union to impose preventive sanctions against Russia in order to force it to refrain from escalating its

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aggression. But at an informal summit on the escalating security situation in Ukraine, held on February 17 in Brussels, the Europeans refused to grant this request. The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, said that since 2014, the European Union had already provided Ukraine with €17 billion in aid, thereby demonstrating its support. In his opinion, the introduction of preventive measures against Moscow could have the opposite effect – motivating Putin to expand the scale of the war in Ukraine and thereby undermine the security situation on the European continent.

There were no significant changes in the position of EU countries regarding the criminal actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine in February 2022, on the eve of the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukrainian territory. In particular, Brussels condemned the Russian leadership, which announced the recognition of the independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions annexed in Ukraine. In this regard, the European Union announced the introduction of sanctions, which, however, only affected 351 members of the Russian State Duma and restricted the Kremlin's access to the financial services market. Such moderation and caution on the part of the EU towards Russia only added to Putin and his entourage's confidence in their impunity for criminal actions and gross violations of international law, and encouraged them to intensify their aggression against Ukraine.

The EU's position on the Russian-Ukrainian war has not changed in general terms since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022. On that day, an emergency summit was held, at which the European Union announced its support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, promised economic support to Kyiv, imposed sanctions against the Kremlin, condemned Russia's aggression, and demanded that it withdraw its troops (European Union Council, 2022). At the same time, Europeans managed to agree on the first packages of sanctions against Russia. In particular, on February 27, 2022, Russian airlines were denied access to EU airspace. The US joined this decision in early March, followed by 36 other countries.

The expansion and intensification of military operations in Ukraine forced EU countries to think about their own security. In this regard, on March 21, 2022, a meeting of the foreign and defense ministers of the European Union countries was held, at which, for the first time in the history of this association, a common strategy in the field of security and defense was adopted. It was named «A Strategic Security and Defense Compass for the European Union that protects its citizens, values, and interests and contributes to international peace and security». The implementation of this

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common strategy is planned by 2030. The document contains many purely declarative statements that do not allow for a resolution of the security situation in Eastern Europe. In particular, the EU condemned Moscow's annexation of Crimea, outlined the definition of unjust Russian aggression against Ukraine, etc. At the same time, however, there is every reason to believe that with the adoption of the Strategic Security and Defense Compass, Brussels has demonstrated the possibility of uniting the efforts of all EU member states around addressing security issues on the continent. These efforts include strengthening sanctions against Russia and providing comprehensive support to Kyiv, including financial, economic, humanitarian, and military support.

3. Security, Defense, and Sanctions Policy of the European Union. The weak point of the EU's policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war at the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army was the underestimation of the Ukrainian Armed Forces' ability to effectively resist the aggressor and prevent the complete capture of the territory. That is why, apart from declarative statements, Europeans did not take active practical steps to stop the Russian army in Ukraine and force Putin to withdraw his troops from the occupied territories. On this occasion, Josep Borrell stated at a general meeting of EU ambassadors that Brussels had misjudged the situation before the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine. They did not believe the Americans that Putin would dare to wage a major war, nor did they consider it realistic that the Ukrainians would be able to withstand the onslaught of Russian troops («My vkhodymo v idealnyi shtorm», 2022). On January 30, 2023, The Washington Post published a commentary by former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, in which he argued that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine could have been avoided if the West had dared to accept Ukraine into NATO. He rightly noted that Brussels had pursued an ambiguous policy toward Kyiv for decades, which ultimately ended in disaster. Ukrainians were promised the possibility of joining NATO, while Moscow was assured that this would never happen. Even among NATO member states, there were many skeptics about the Alliance's eastward expansion through Ukraine's accession (Johnson, B., 2023).

In this context, it is worth mentioning the peculiarities of the work of the European External Action Service, headed by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. This institution is responsible for the main goal of the European Union's creation: protecting the economic, trade, and financial interests of its member countries. At the same time, military-political and defense issues have always remained in the

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shadows. In European diplomacy, political leadership has always belonged to the most economically powerful states. Therefore, France and Germany traditionally play a leading role, including in the EU's foreign policy. Another weakness of the European External Action Service is the procedure for adopting foreign policy decisions by the European Council. Article 15 of the Treaty on European Union provides for consensus decisions by all members of the organization, which, given the Russian Federation's active propaganda activities, has proved to be an extremely difficult task. The Russians are luring European politicians, public figures, and journalists to their side in various ways, and therefore the idea of an integrated EU foreign policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war has proved unviable. This is evidenced by the EU's weak response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, as well as in 2022. European diplomacy has not only failed to prevent the Russian military offensive, but also to stop Russia's aggression during more than 10 years of military action on Ukrainian territory. Central European and Baltic countries are interested in radical EU action against Moscow, while the leading states of European diplomacy, Germany and France, did not want to spoil their lucrative economic relations with the Kremlin, which provided them with cheap raw materials for the development of their economies. Thus, Brussels failed to form a unified position on countering Russia's aggressive policy. Moreover, it was not even possible to determine the list of components and the amount of aid to Kyiv, which also had a negative impact on the ability to defend against the Russian army's offensive and on overall European security, which has remained undermined since 2014, with the crisis only deepening with each passing year.

The inability of EU countries to formulate a clear position on countering Russian aggression in Ukraine has prompted some Central European and Baltic countries to take independent action in the military-political and diplomatic spheres. They are located closest to the theater of war in Ukraine and therefore could not jeopardize their own security simply because some members of the European Union prioritize economic aspects over security in their foreign policy. Thus, a center of diplomacy focused primarily on protecting military and political interests gradually began to form in Eastern and Central Europe. This was a response to the unsatisfactory performance of the European External Action Service, which, since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, had failed to respond to the new security circumstances on the European continent. From then on, the unity and effectiveness of EU foreign policy began to depend directly on the ability of the European External Action Service to refocus on addressing pan-European security issues. This, in turn, meant that there was an urgent need

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for institutional changes in the activities of the aforementioned service that would allow it to respond quickly and effectively to emerging security and defense issues.

4. Ukraine's EU Membership Prospects and Internal EU Debates. The full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine in 2022 prompted Kyiv to increase pressure on Brussels on the issue of EU accession. On February 28 this year, Ukraine submitted an application to the EU, demanding swift action towards the eastward expansion of the European Union. A few days later, Moldova and Georgia made similar appeals. Given that there was no consensus among European countries on this issue, this posed a challenge for Brussels. Refusal to grant this request would have signaled that Ukraine had been rejected in favor of Moscow. Therefore, on March 1, 2022, the European Parliament recommended granting Ukraine EU candidate status. That same month, an extraordinary meeting of the European Council was held, at which this issue was discussed for five hours. The main opponents of quick decisions on this issue were France and the Netherlands. However, after heated discussions and many compromises, European leaders decided to launch the process of Ukraine's integration into the EU (Statement of the heads of state or government, meeting in Versailles, on the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, 2022). Officially, this issue was continued on June 17, 2022, when European Union leaders at a Euro Council meeting officially announced the granting of candidate country status to Ukraine and Moldova, and also recognized Georgia's «European perspective» (which is considered a significant step towards obtaining official candidate status). It should be noted that Ukraine and Moldova received candidate status with certain conditions from Brussels. These include, in particular, the completion of judicial reform and the fight against corruption and oligarchs by Kyiv and Chisinau (European Council conclusions on Ukraine, 2022). Thus, the Russian-Ukrainian war forced EU countries to compromise on the issue of expanding the organization to the East at the expense of Ukraine and Moldova (and, in the future, Georgia), although without any real practical results at that time.

The decision by European leaders to grant Ukraine and Moldova EU candidate status has blurred the line between Western Balkan countries with clear European prospects and their eastern neighbors, which had not previously received such promises from Brussels. All of them had previously cooperated with the EU within the framework of the Eastern Partnership initiative. The Europeans encouraged democratic and legal reforms with the aim of bringing them closer to EU standards. The war in Ukraine prompted Brussels to take a new approach to solving the problems of the organization's

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expansion. Although the decision on Ukraine and Moldova can be considered more of a symbolic step, it demonstrated solidarity and support for the Ukrainian people during the most difficult period in their history and sent a signal to the Kremlin that the Western world does not accept the aggressive actions of the Russian army and will make efforts to neutralize them.

On March 11, 2022, EU leaders adopted the Versailles Declaration (2022). This document stated that Russia and Belarus were fully responsible for the aggression against Ukraine and emphasized the need to punish all those guilty of this violation of international law. The declaration specifically mentions the suffering of the Ukrainian people as a result of the war, the Russian army's attacks on Ukrainian civilians and facilities, which ultimately led to the largest refugee crisis on the European continent since World War II (Shcherbaniuk, O.V., 2022).

The Versailles Declaration, like a number of other documents adopted in Europe as a result of Russian aggression against Ukraine, is purely theoretical in nature and does not provide for any practical steps to counter the Kremlin. Given the purpose of its creation, the European Union has strong regulatory characteristics and limited capacity for basic state powers. In practical terms, this has resulted in Brussels lacking coercive power, administrative authority, fiscal autonomy, etc. The organization has never faced the task of countering a major military threat, and therefore nothing has been done structurally to effectively address such problems (Genschel, P., 2022). The Russian Federation's attack on Ukraine in 2022 had almost no impact on the development of the EU's potential, particularly in terms of centralizing key state powers. Some scholars compare the EU's response to the coronavirus pandemic with that seen after the start of the EU's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This means a strengthening of the national component in the European Union, a decrease in solidarity between countries, and a change in roles in crisis resolution (Anghel, V., Jones, E., 2022).

A similarly ambiguous situation arose among EU member states regarding Ukraine's accession to the organization. While neighboring countries actively supported Kyiv in its integration with the European Union, other members of the organization did not share this enthusiasm. The further west, the fewer supporters of the idea of EU enlargement to the east. The reason for this geographical division can be attributed to the national interests of EU member states. In particular, there are strong historical, cultural, and economic ties between Central European countries and Ukraine, which underpin their economic and social stability. EU enlargement through the accession of Eastern European states would push

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

back the borders. This means shifting the costs of maintaining the border zone to new EU members. In addition, the integration of new members into the European Union would mean shifting the center of political organization to the East. As a result, the political influence of the organization's member countries would be equalized across all parts of the community. In turn, opponents of EU enlargement to the East cannot ignore the fact that rejecting Ukraine would deal a devastating blow to the European Union's reputation as a regional power, which has already been somewhat undermined by Brussels' indecision on enlargement in the Balkans and its delay in taking effective measures to stop Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 caused significant damage to the country's economy and led to a flow of Ukrainian refugees to Europe. Responding to this difficult situation, the European Union quickly agreed to provide economic assistance to Kyiv. In particular, the Council of Ministers decided to abolish customs duties on Ukrainian exports. On May 19, the European Parliament voted to support this decision to abolish import duties on goods from Ukraine. In addition, in March of the same year, Brussels began providing Ukraine with funds for the purchase of weapons for the first time within the framework of the European Institute for Peace Support. Thus, by May, four tranches totaling €2 billion had been disbursed. The main item of expenditure was the purchase of lethal weapons. This was despite the fact that some EU member states provided military assistance outside the framework of pan-European decisions and financial commitments. The European Council decided to provide Kyiv with macro-financial assistance totaling €9 billion. From the very beginning of the full-scale invasion by Russian troops, the EU's financial and economic support for Ukraine played an important role in stabilizing the socio-economic situation in Ukraine and its ability to actively resist the enemy's advance. The provision of lethal weapons to the Ukrainian army made it possible not only to stop the advance of Russian troops, but also to push them back in some areas of the front. This gave Ukrainians and their allies confidence in their ability to effectively counter the Russian army, which had previously been considered the second most powerful in the world.

On May 6, 2022, an international donor conference was held, initiated by the governments of Sweden and Poland. Participants discussed the details of providing assistance to Ukraine during the war and plans for post-war reconstruction. The meeting was attended by representatives of 37 countries – heads of state, government, and ambassadors who joined the Polish-Swedish initiative in person or online. At the opening of the conference, European Council President Charles Michel noted that this meeting would

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be the starting point for the «Marshall Plan» for Kyiv. Through the joint efforts of the participants of this meeting, €6.5 billion in aid was raised for Ukraine and the need to strengthen sanctions against Russia was raised. In particular, they discussed the possibility of imposing a complete embargo on oil and gas from Russia, as well as the confiscation of Russian assets and federal reserves located in Europe.

It is also important to note the «Solidarity Routes» initiative launched by Brussels in 2022, which provides for the financing of transport infrastructure development on Ukraine's borders with EU countries. The program covers the export of Ukrainian goods to Europe. In particular, it concerns the transportation of agricultural products to the European Union. Thanks to European investments in infrastructure modernization, Ukraine has strengthened its economic potential, which, under the blockade of Black Sea ports by the Russian navy, has become even more dependent on exports to Europe.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation marked the strengthening of European sanctions against Moscow. Between March and June 2022, the EU adopted several packages of sanctions, both personal and general in nature. In particular, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu were added to the list of economic restrictions. Russian state institutions, including the Ministry of Defense, the Foreign Intelligence Service, and the Presidential Administration, were also included in the sanctions lists. In addition, economic restrictions also affected the Russian military-industrial complex, transport, and energy sectors. Brussels tightened control over the supply of dual-use goods to Russia and banned the export of electronics and certain semiconductors. Previously imposed sanctions on lending to Russian institutions and organizations have now been supplemented by the disconnection of leading Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system, which has negatively affected the work of Russian businesses. Brussels also froze the assets of the Central Bank of Russia located in the EU. In the transport sector, in addition to closing airspace to Russian aircraft, seaports were also closed to ships from Russia. Russians were deprived of the right to buy, lease, repair, and maintain aircraft by European companies.

Russian media outlets were an important component of the EU's sanctions package against Russia. For many years, Moscow spread its propaganda in Europe through TV channels such as PT, Sputnik, Russia RTR/RTR Planeta, Russia 24, and Center International. With the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, these propaganda resources were gradually

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stripped of their broadcasting licenses in EU countries. The same fate befell Russian institutions and organizations operating in Europe, promoting Kremlin propaganda narratives through «soft power». These include the Russkiy Mir Foundation, the Gorchakov Fund for Cultural Diplomacy, and others. As a result, within a few months of 2022, sanctions were extended to more than 200 Russian organizations operating in EU countries. This is more than six times the number imposed since 2014. The Kremlin's escalation of the war in Ukraine forced Brussels to seriously consider the issue of European security, which directly affected its sanctions policy towards the aggressor.

The most difficult task for Brussels was to impose sanctions against Russia in the energy sector. Russian oil and gas accounted for about 40% of the EU energy market, and coal for 25%. Europe's rejection of Russian energy resources will reduce the Kremlin's ability to finance the war in Ukraine. However, Europeans first had to find alternative suppliers of these critically important resources in order to prevent economic decline and social upheaval in the Eurozone. And while the European Union countries were able to quickly and easily abandon the purchase of Russian coal, which brought the Russian Federation more than €8 billion in profits annually, the task proved to be much more difficult with oil imports. Hungary refused to support the sanctions because it received discounts on oil from Moscow. Therefore, the EU was forced to postpone the ban on oil purchases from Russia (Russia's aggression against Ukraine: EU adopts sixth package of sanctions, 2022). This move by Brussels prompted the governments of southern European countries to increase their purchases of Russian oil, thereby significantly weakening the impact of European energy sanctions against Russia.

Even greater controversy within the EU was caused by the issue of imposing sanctions on the purchase of Russian natural gas. European countries were heavily dependent on this raw material, which had been supplied by Russia for decades. Some EU countries managed to obtain discounts on the purchase of «blue fuel» from the Kremlin, which gave them a reason to block the decision to impose sanctions in this area. At the same time, everyone in Europe understood that Moscow was using gas as a weapon and a tool for blackmail, unilaterally changing the volume of resource supplies. Lithuania, Poland, and Bulgaria were the first to refuse to purchase Russian gas, signing long-term agreements with alternative suppliers. The full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine forced other EU countries to reduce consumption and quickly seek new sources of blue fuel supplies. Given the complexity of resolving issues related to natural gas

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

supplies from alternative sources, the EU decided to gradually abandon Russian fuel by setting price caps. In this way, EU countries managed to find compromises on complex issues related to imposing sanctions against Russia due to its aggressive policy towards Ukraine. It took Brussels several months for the economic restrictions against Moscow to take effect. At the same time, as EU High Representative Josep Borrell noted, «it may take a long time to see the positive effects of the sanctions policy against Russia» (The sanctions against Russia are working. An official website of the European Union, 2022).

Despite certain contradictions in the formation of EU policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war, in 2023 it continued its course of comprehensive support for Ukraine. In particular, the European Union did not stop funding humanitarian aid to Kyiv, as provided through UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, etc. As of April 2023, the total amount of aid reached €685 million (YeS vydilyt shche 55 mln yevro na humanitarnu dopomohu Ukraini – yevro komisar, 2023). Also, on April 13 of the same year, the EU Council decided to allocate €1 billion for ammunition for the Ukrainian army. With this decision, Brussels' total contribution to Ukraine within the European Peace Fund was increased to €4.6 billion. In this way, the European Union confirmed its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the right of Ukrainians to defend themselves against the Russian aggressor.

Brussels' decision in July 2023 to allocate a grant of €500 million for the restoration of Ukraine's critical infrastructure is noteworthy. This primarily concerned the reconstruction of transport, water supply, and energy facilities that had suffered significant damage as a result of the hostilities. As a result, the Ukrainian government was able to restore a number of critically important bridges, roads, energy networks, as well as hospitals and schools.

Brussels' policy of supporting Ukraine in the war with Russia is constantly being opposed by some EU members. For example, the adoption of the ninth package of sanctions against Russia was blocked by Hungary, which demanded amendments in favor of the Kremlin. In particular, three Russian ministers were excluded from the sanctions list. But despite internal struggles, Brussels continues its official course of supporting Ukraine. On the symbolic date of February 24, 2023, the anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops, the EU adopted a tenth package of sanctions against the Kremlin. These restrictions complemented the

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American sanctions adopted by the White House against Moscow for starting the war.

Noteworthy in the context of the EU's policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war is the European Parliament's annual report on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy, adopted in January 2023 (REPORT on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy – annual report, 2023). The document was voted for by an absolute majority of deputies – 407 to 92. The key point in this document was the outline of further steps by the European Union towards ending the Russian-Ukrainian war. The report states that the war must end without any compromises on the part of Ukraine. It also notes that the Russian Federation has committed war crimes against Ukraine, threatened to use nuclear weapons, and therefore EU states must take decisive measures to counter the aggression. Specific steps proposed include:

- recognizing Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism and a terrorist state;
- immediately imposing a ban on Russian imports of fossil fuels and uranium ore;
- to stop using and permanently close the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines;
- all leaders of EU member states to refuse separate negotiations with the Kremlin;
- to transfer the right to start negotiations with Russia to the Ukrainian government.

It is also important to note that the document emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensive support to Ukraine until Kyiv declares victory in the war with Russia. Members of the European Parliament consider victory to be «the restoration of full control by the Ukrainian authorities over its entire territory within internationally recognized borders». The importance of this point is justified by the fact that «only a final victory over the Russian Federation will be able to protect the world order and deter other aggressive actors in international relations from carrying out acts of aggression» (REPORT on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy – annual report, 2023).

The European Parliament's determination is also evident in its call for the creation of a special military tribunal to punish Russia's military and political leadership for the crime of starting the war against Ukraine, as well as for the continuation of the investigation of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against Ukrainians in the International Criminal Court. In the above-mentioned report, MEPs stressed the need for Russia to

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compensate Ukraine for all the damage and destruction it has caused. At the same time, the European Union's task is to ensure a mechanism for the enforcement and payment of reparations by the Russian government to Ukraine. Thus, based on an analysis of the European Parliament's report on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy in 2023, there are grounds to assert that MEPs are aware of the importance of events in Ukraine for the future of Europe as a whole. It is precisely this dominant view within the EU institution that has made it possible to outline the key tasks of the European Union's policy on resolving the Russian-Ukrainian war. The basic goal for the EU should be Ukraine's victory and ensuring that Russia is punished for its aggression.

In our view, the conclusion of European MPs regarding the need to change the decision-making system in the EU was progressive. This primarily concerns abandoning the principle of consensus in foreign policy issues, as well as ensuring the EU's participation in all multilateral platforms, including the UN Security Council. On the issue of the need to reform the Security Council, the EU is in solidarity with the official position of Kyiv (Sydorenko, S., 2023).

The adoption by Brussels in 2023 of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth packages of sanctions was important in terms of pressure on the Russian economy and the Kremlin's ability to finance the military-industrial complex. These restrictions affected the basic sectors of the Russian economy that are directly related to meeting the military needs of the aggressor's army. In order to reduce the potential for the development of strategic industries, bans on investment in the Russian economy were expanded. At this stage of economic pressure on Moscow, Europeans also established rules for cooperation with third countries in order to prevent the circumvention of sanctions and control the supply of prohibited goods. Unfortunately, all these measures cannot guarantee that the Kremlin will be completely cut off from access to prohibited goods, which have now only become more expensive and have longer supply chains. That is why the EU continued its pressure on Russia and adopted a fourteenth package of sanctions, immediately beginning discussions on a fifteenth package (Rabinovych, M., Pintsch, A., 2024). At the same time, the weak and slow implementation of decisions adopted in the EU, as well as the peculiarities of the bilateral policy of the European Union and European countries, which does not prohibit circumventing sanctions against Moscow, have left the Russian leadership with sufficient opportunities to maintain its military potential and continue military operations in Ukraine.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

An integral part of the EU's policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war is to provide training for Ukrainian military personnel at European training grounds. This cooperation includes the training of instructors, the use of the latest military equipment and European combat tactics, and training to improve the qualifications of the Ukrainian army. Another important component of EU policy towards Ukraine is the restoration of regions affected by the Russian-Ukrainian war, the provision of medical assistance, and the conduct of logistical operations. Funds for these measures are channeled through the European Peace Fund. The latter is an important component of the mechanism for providing comprehensive support to Ukraine in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity. As of 2024, EU assistance has reached €5.6 billion and includes not only the supply of weapons, but also technical and logistical support and the provision of military infrastructure (Nosenko, S., 2024).

In order to train Ukrainian soldiers and officers and provide technical advice and support to enhance the country's defense capabilities, the European Union Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) was established in 2022. It continues its work to this day and remains an integral part of the EU's overall strategy to support Ukraine in countering Russian aggression.

Cooperation in the field of digital and cyber security has become important for relations between the EU and Ukraine. This was in response to the increase in cyber attacks, which pose a threat to critical infrastructure and have become particularly dangerous during wartime. Thanks to the establishment of successful cooperation, Brussels and Kyiv are now successfully collaborating in the exchange of intelligence on cyber threats and providing recommendations on how to protect against them. Special platforms have been created and are successfully functioning to exchange information about cyber threats and experience in countering them. Europeans are providing Kyiv with technical support to improve cybersecurity. In particular, this involves the transfer of the latest technologies by EU countries and the development of cyber defense networks, training of specialists, etc. Also, using EU4Digital and other similar programs, the European Union provides funding for projects to modernize Ukrainian cyberinfrastructures. The work of the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) deserves special mention. It plays a leading role in coordinating cooperation between European Union member states and Kyiv. The Ukrainian side receives expertise, analysis, and assistance from the agency in strengthening cyber defense. Ukrainian cybersecurity specialists undergo training and receive

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

advice from ENISA on improving the system of protection against cyberattacks.

It is also worth noting the EU's efforts in organizing regular cyber training exercises. By simulating various crisis situations in the field of electronic security, these exercises enable all participants to raise their professional level in the fight against cybercrime and improve coordination in the event of a real threat. Brussels has agreed to integrate Ukraine into its digital market. This means establishing uniform data protection standards. In particular, this also concerns the protection of critical infrastructure and the provision of cyber protection guarantees in electronic services. It is therefore not surprising that Ukraine began actively working to bring its digital standards closer to European ones at the beginning of the full-scale invasion by Russian troops in February 2022. In the context of a classic and hybrid war with Russia, Kyiv was able to contain the enemy thanks to the support of its Western allies, and a unified cyberspace is an integral part of such cooperation.

The European Union has deepened its cooperation with Ukraine in the field of energy security. Brussels was forced to respond to the difficult situation in the Ukrainian energy sector caused by large-scale bombing by Russian troops. In response to the large-scale destruction of infrastructure and the critical level of energy independence in Ukraine, the EU made efforts to synchronize Ukrainian energy systems. Thus, back in March 2022, Ukraine was granted permission to join the European energy network ENTSO-E. Thanks to this step, Ukraine received a stable supply of electricity even during Russian strikes on energy facilities. In addition, Kyiv gained energy independence from Belarus and Russia, which is critical in the context of a full-scale war.

The EU's cooperation with Ukraine in the energy sector during the full-scale invasion by Russian troops also includes supplying Kyiv with gas and electricity, providing equipment to restore energy facilities after Russian air strikes, and financing the reconstruction of critical infrastructure. Renewable energy is another important area of cooperation between Brussels and Kyiv. The EU provides funding and technical support for green energy development projects in Ukraine, which has great potential in this area. In the long term, this bilateral cooperation envisages the post-war restoration of Ukraine's energy system with an emphasis on environmentally friendly sources.

The EU's policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war includes cooperation with Kyiv in the field of security and defense. After the full-scale invasion of Russian troops, Brussels' efforts in this direction have noticeably

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intensified. The EU has facilitated the reform of the Ukrainian army in accordance with NATO standards in order to increase its combat capability. Ukraine has been able not only to familiarize itself with, but also to adopt the standards of the North Atlantic Alliance in order to more effectively combat the Russian aggressor. In particular, during the first three years of full-scale war with Russia, the Ukrainian command successfully adapted military doctrines to the new realities of war. It has succeeded in integrating the latest technologies, information operations and cyber warfare programs. The troop command system has also been modernized, management processes have been improved, and the compatibility of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with NATO armies has been enhanced. Moreover, the EU's defense policy includes comprehensive assistance to Kyiv in the field of upgrading air defense systems, unmanned aerial vehicles, artillery, reconnaissance and communication equipment, etc. European countries supply equipment to Ukraine and provide training for Ukrainian military personnel. With the financial and technical support of the EU, Kyiv has managed to establish its own production of weapons and ammunition and significantly expand its range. The implementation of Western defense and industrial strategies has enabled Ukraine to increase the efficiency of domestic production and thereby expand its capabilities to counter the Russian aggressor.

Brussels' support for Kyiv during the Russian-Ukrainian war was complemented by assistance from individual EU member states. Among the latter, Poland and the Baltic states, which are most concerned about their own security due to their location on the border with Russia, deserve special mention. In particular, since the start of the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine, Warsaw has provided Kyiv with a significant amount of military equipment, weapons, and ammunition, including tanks, multiple launch rocket systems, air defense systems, and other equipment. The transfer of weapons was accompanied by the organization of special training for Ukrainian military personnel on the proper use of new equipment and tactics for its application.

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, objectively assessing the threat from Russia, took the initiative to provide Ukraine with additional military assistance to stabilize the front and strengthen security on the European continent. Together with Poland, they provided the Ukrainian army with military equipment, weapons, and ammunition. Ukrainian military personnel underwent training at training centers in the Baltic states (Ukraine takes an important step towards EU membership, 2023). It is also worth noting that Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are the most active lobbyists for Ukraine's

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

interests in the EU and NATO. They have made considerable efforts to pressure Brussels to impose sanctions against Russia. The voice of these countries is also significant in promoting the idea of Ukraine's rapid integration with the European Union and NATO. Thus, we have every reason to assert that not only the EU but also its individual member states have intensified their support for Kyiv since the start of the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The basis for such cooperation is not only common strategic interests, but also democratic values such as human rights, sovereignty, collective security, etc. Repelling Russian aggression in Ukraine will mean stabilizing pan-European security. Therefore, the provision of diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and military assistance to Kyiv by Brussels and individual EU member states is a fully justified decision by the collective West and is in the interests of the European Union and Ukraine.

The EU's policy on Russian sovereign assets, which were frozen following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops in February 2022, deserves special attention. On this issue, as in the case of providing assistance to Kyiv and its possible integration with European structures, there is no consolidated position among the member states of the European Union. That is why Brussels had to go through a long series of discussions and compromises in order to reach a collective decision.

As of 2021, approximately $350 billion in Russian currency reserves were held in EU jurisdictions. This is the amount indicated in the latest report of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation available to the general public. The largest amount of these assets is held in Belgium. The frozen Russian currency reserves are held in the EU in the accounts of the clearing companies Euroclear and Clearstream. It is through these companies that securities settlements are made (Kosarevych, S., 2024).

It is also noteworthy that Brussels' decision froze the funds of about 1,500 Russian individuals and legal entities subject to sanctions. The total amount is $24 billion. European legislation provides for criminal liability for evading sanctions. Despite attempts by sanctioned Russians to recover their funds through the courts, most of the decisions in these cases have not been in favor of the plaintiffs.

Brussels' actions regarding frozen Russian assets are moderate and measured. This policy is dictated by the need to maintain the confidence of international investors in European financial institutions and the desire to prevent the Kremlin from using funds frozen in EU countries to intensify its aggression against Ukraine. Therefore, from 2022 to the first half of 2023, there were active discussions among EU member states about the possibility

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of confiscating Russian currency reserves in favor of Ukraine. At that time, Brussels was unable to reach a final positive decision on this issue due to differences in approaches to solving the problem. At that time, Germany was an active opponent of this idea. It explained its position by its unwillingness to violate international law and the principle of sovereignty and immunity of state property. This opinion was supported by the European Central Bank. Its representatives argued that the confiscation of frozen Russian currency reserves could undermine the euro's position as a reserve currency due to its rejection by other states. This, in turn, would mean an outflow of customers and investors, a decline in the stability of the European currency, and, as a result, an increase in the cost of services for EU consumers. Without the unanimous consent of the 27 members of the bloc, Brussels continued to work on finding compromises.

The revised version of the use of Russian assets frozen in Europe for the benefit of Ukraine provided for the introduction of a special tax on these funds as part of the EU sanctions regime. This made it possible to obtain funds to support Kyiv with little risk to the European financial and economic system and provided reliable tools to protect against possible claims from the Kremlin. Further development of the above concept led to the idea of using the profits from Russian assets frozen in EU countries in the interests of Ukraine. With the somewhat reduced effectiveness of using Russia's foreign exchange reserves in Kyiv's interests, this version received greater support among European Union member states and was therefore taken by Brussels as a basis for further implementation.

In the fall of 2023, the European Commission and the Council of the EU began consultations on the introduction of a tax on income derived from frozen currency reserves of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation (EU countries discussing issue of using Russia's frozen assets, working group to meet on Sept 27 – EU, 2023). On December 12, 2023, the European Commission proposed placing all income from sanctioned Russian assets in separate accounts for further use to support Ukraine (Aurélie Pugnet, 2023). On January 23, 2024, EU member states supported this proposal, thereby paving the way for the start of the procedure for adopting a corresponding decision within the entire bloc (Tamma, P., 2024). The practical stage of building a mechanism for using Russian assets in the interests of Kyiv began on February 12, 2024, with the adoption of European Union Council Decision No. 2024/577 (COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2024/577, 2024). This document outlines a ban on any transactions involving the management of reserves and assets of the Central Bank of Russia. Among the permitted transactions involving the management of Russian assets are, in particular,

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the reinvestment of accumulated cash balances, the redemption of bonds, and the payment of deposits upon maturity.

It is difficult to disagree with the opinion that this decision was not the most effective option for using frozen Russian assets in the interests of Ukraine. However, it was the result of a compromise between all EU member states. In this way, Brussels managed to overcome the numerous fears and reservations of countries such as Malta, Austria, Ireland, Cyprus, Hungary and Slovakia, which, for various reasons, did not want to completely ruin their relations with the Kremlin. And given that EU countries must approve this decision at the national level for it to take effect, finding compromises was extremely necessary. That is why Brussels agreed to give neutral countries the right to refuse to use the proceeds from frozen Russian assets to supply Ukraine with weapons and other military goods.

As for the approximately $5 billion in proceeds from frozen Russian assets accumulated before the above-mentioned decision came into force, they are currently prohibited from being transferred to support Ukraine's defense capabilities. Euroclear is holding these funds until further instructions are received (Sorgi, G., 2024).

EU ambassadors agreed on the text of the proposal on the use of frozen Russian assets in the interests of Ukraine on May 8, 2024. According to the final version of the decision, 90% of the funds should go to the military aid fund for Ukraine. The European Union is the administrator of these funds. The remaining 10% of the total amount is earmarked for providing assistance to meet Ukraine's immediate needs (Payne, J., 2024). The procedure for using the proceeds from the frozen currency reserves of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation in the interests of Kyiv was finally formalized on May 21, 2024, with the adoption by the Council of the EU of Regulation (EU) No. 2024/1469 (Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1469 of May 21, 2024, amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014, 2024). The scheme provides for the transfer of 100% of the amounts to be allocated to support Ukraine to the Ukraine Facility program. At the same time, up to 10% of the total amount may be allocated to other needs. It can be assumed that this refers to the provision of direct financial assistance to Kyiv with the aim of stabilizing the internal situation and strengthening the country's financial and economic sphere.

Despite significant progress in the activities of the EU Council and the European Commission, some European Union member states disagree with the idea of confiscating Russian assets in favor of providing support to Ukraine. They express concern that the use of Russian funds in the future could lead to a confrontation with the Kremlin, which is economically

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disadvantageous for many. The position of skeptics regarding the idea of confiscating Russian assets has been supported by some European banks, which predict serious legal proceedings initiated by Russia in the future. Against this backdrop, some banks have asked the governments of the countries where they are registered to provide guarantees of compensation in case the EU's plans to confiscate income from Russian sovereign assets are extended in the future to the assets of sanctioned individuals and companies. Thus, the struggle for the idea of confiscating Russian currency reserves in favor of Ukraine continues. Brussels has achieved significant success in this regard. However, the structure and organizational features of the European Union do not allow for more radical steps to be taken in this direction. Such decisions require the unanimous consent of all member countries of the organization. However, given the contradictions between the national interests of European countries as of autumn 2025, Brussels has not yet managed to achieve a consolidated position on all aspects of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Despite the lack of consensus on how to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian war, the European Union has never stopped supporting Ukraine. In particular, an important decision by Brussels was the approval (extension) by the EU Council on May 13, 2024, of the suspension of import duties and quotas on Ukrainian and Moldovan exports to the bloc for another year. Given Ukraine's difficult economic situation after two years of exhausting war with Russia, this step by Brussels had both symbolic and practical significance. On the one hand, the Europeans confirmed the stability of their policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war and strengthened the protection of their farmers in the area of certain problematic agricultural crops. On the other hand, this move by the EU expanded Kyiv's opportunities to balance the state budget and thereby strengthen the country's defense capabilities.

A symbolic gesture on the part of the European Union was the official opening of negotiations with Ukraine on its accession to the organization at an intergovernmental conference in Luxembourg on June 25, 2024. There are serious contradictions among EU member states regarding the prospect of expansion to the East. The arguments of those who disagree with Ukraine's accession to the European Union are quite strong, and Brussels has not yet found a successful solution to this issue. However, the very fact that negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU have begun indicates the seriousness of the organization's intentions regarding the prospects for expansion to the East. This serves as moral support for Kyiv and encourages the Ukrainian authorities to carry out reforms in the country to bring it closer to European standards.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

In the second half of 2024 and the first half of 2025, EU cooperation with Ukraine in the field of security continues to develop in the context of the war with Russia. In connection with strategic changes in the European security system, Brussels and Kyiv continue to make joint efforts to deepen Ukraine's integration into European security structures and strengthen its defense capabilities in countering Russian aggression. The European Union is interested in and is making considerable efforts to support stability in the region. The continued supply of modern weapons to the Ukrainian army in 2025 is an integral part of the EU's security policy. In particular, the countries of the European Union are supplying Kyiv with modern air defense systems, artillery, and armored vehicles, as well as providing technical support to enhance Ukraine's defense capabilities and effectively counter the advance of Russian troops (2024). In 2025, official representatives of the EU and individual countries of this organization repeatedly emphasized the need to continue supporting Ukraine in the war with Russia. Brussels continues to use the European Peace Fund to finance military aid to Ukraine. Europe's role in providing comprehensive support to Kyiv during the Russian-Ukrainian war increased significantly in 2025 after President Trump's administration came to power in the US. The new White House owner refused to actively support Ukraine and sold American weapons and equipment, which are critically important for the Ukrainian army, to EU countries with the right to transfer them to Kyiv. Thus, in 2025, the European Union assumed the lion's share of the costs of ensuring Ukraine's defense in the context of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war.

Over the past year, the EU has made efforts to expand training programs for Ukrainian military personnel. Providing them with weapons and military equipment requires significant financial allocations from Brussels. In order to bring the Armed Forces of Ukraine into line with NATO and EU standards, it is necessary to organize the training of commanders, special forces, and engineering units. That is why the European Union, within the framework of its cooperation with Ukraine, places particular emphasis on reforming the defense sector. In the near future, with the active support of Brussels, it is planned to introduce European standards of management and command into the Ukrainian army. Also on the agenda is the reform of Ukraine's defense-industrial complex with the aim of achieving higher levels of efficiency and transparency. Throughout the summer and fall of 2025, official representatives of the European Union repeatedly stated their intention to continue supporting Kyiv in its confrontation with Russian aggression, including diplomatic, economic, and military assistance, as well

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

as improving civilian oversight of the defense sector in order to improve accountability and control over the use of resources.

Cooperation within the framework of good neighborliness occupies a prominent place in EU policy towards Ukraine. It is here that Brussels has made considerable efforts to support social programs in Ukraine during the Russian-Ukrainian war. In particular, significant funds have been allocated to support internally displaced persons, provide financial assistance to groups of the population affected by hostilities, etc. European grants have enabled the Ukrainian government to finance social assistance for pensioners and low-income families while maintaining a balanced budget. In 2025, the EU continues to allocate funds for reform programs in Ukraine. These include, in particular, anti-corruption programs, judicial reform, and decentralization of governance. The European Union has provided Kyiv with €500 million for the modernization of Ukrainian state institutions and ensuring effective governance during the war. Although not a military alliance, the EU has also provided significant assistance to Ukraine during the Russian-Ukrainian war in the form of non-lethal military equipment. The European Peace Fund remains the main channel for financing and supplying aid. The transfer of weapons and military equipment to Kyiv and the organization of training for the Ukrainian army are carried out through financial channels and with the political will of individual EU member states. In this way, a united Europe plays a significant role in deterring the Russian aggressor in Ukraine by providing comprehensive assistance to Kyiv.

In 2025, in the fourth year of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, the European Union continues its policy of active support for Ukraine. Thanks to significant financial allocations from Brussels, the Ukrainian government is able to cover key expenses in the context of active hostilities. In Ukraine, the entire social sphere and budgetary organizations continue to function effectively, and infrastructure is being restored after Russian air strikes. The European Union plays a key role in stabilizing the Ukrainian economy and ensuring the functioning of the state. This policy guarantees security and stability in Europe and predictability at its borders.

It should be noted that Brussels is actively involved in developing a strategy to support Ukraine’s recovery after the end of the war. The overall plan for post-war reconstruction involves large-scale investments in energy, infrastructure, and the development of innovative sectors of the economy. As of 2025, the European Union, together with the G-7 countries, as well as the World Bank, the IMF, and other international partners, are actively involved in developing specific plans for Ukraine's recovery. Official Kyiv presented its vision for post-war reconstruction back in June 2023 at a

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

conference in London. This plan, which was taken as a basis by Western partners, includes several key aspects. First, it concerns strategic infrastructure projects. In order to deepen Ukraine's integration into European infrastructure, it is planned to develop new energy facilities, highways, and infrastructure links with the EU. Second, the digitization of public services. This step aims to continue and expand the development of digital technologies for individuals and legal entities, thereby helping to reduce bureaucracy and increase transparency and management efficiency. Third, the organization of financing through funds and initiatives. Here, it is proposed to create special mechanisms similar to Next Generation EU, which were used to overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (EU response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, 2025), to finance Ukraine's recovery.

Under the influence of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the European Union has made adjustments to its development strategy. In particular, this involves shifting the focus towards achieving strategic autonomy. Europeans have realized the need to fully ensure their own security, technological development, economic stability and the ability to defend their political interests on the international stage on their own in conditions of growing instability. The Russian Federation’s gas demarche after the start of the full-scale invasion convincingly demonstrated to the EU the need to reduce its dependence on Russian energy resources. In the absence of sufficient reserves of oil and natural gas, Europeans have focused on expanding the use of alternative energy sources, such as wind, solar, and hydro energy. There are also plans to increase energy imports from reliable countries. Thus, the active implementation of plans to achieve climate neutrality while increasing green energy generation should contribute to increasing the EU’s independence from external suppliers and strengthening the competitiveness of the economy. Given the unstable geopolitical situation in Europe and the world, strengthening the European Union’s resilience is only possible if the member countries achieve internal unity and strategic autonomy.

The EU’s policy of achieving strategic autonomy envisages Ukraine’s growing importance in European energy security. The Russian-Ukrainian war has clearly demonstrated to Brussels that relying on cheap energy resources from Russia is dangerous. In order to establish oil and gas supplies to Europe from alternative suppliers in the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf, it is advisable to use Ukrainian territory for transit. This and a number of other circumstances underscore Ukraine's strategic importance to the EU. Against the backdrop of this geopolitical and geo-economic situation, the European Union has made helping Ukraine counter Russian aggression its priority.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

The EU's policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war has put the importance of partnership among the countries of a united Europe and within NATO on the agenda. Despite the EU's significant economic and technological potential, modern warfare requires considerable financial resources and large quantities of weapons. Maintaining such a powerful military organization would be an unbearable burden for any individual European state. In addition, the industry of EU countries has long been reoriented towards civilian production. Security issues in recent decades have been covered by the US with its powerful military-industrial potential. When, after the Trump administration came to power, the United States refused to actively support Europe within NATO, the issue of collective security in Brussels took on particular importance. And the provocations with Russian unmanned aerial vehicles in the airspace of Poland, Estonia, and Denmark in September 2025 only reinforced the need for European countries to join forces to organize collective security. In this context, continuing and strengthening support for Ukraine in its confrontation with Russian military aggression is of particular importance for EU countries.

Against the backdrop of a complex geopolitical situation in Europe and the world, as well as a whole range of measures to support Ukraine in the Russian-Ukrainian war, EU policy is encountering difficulties in Eastern Europe. First and foremost, it should be noted that there are numerous obstacles in the process of providing military assistance to Kyiv. As of early fall 2025, Brussels has not yet managed to achieve a consolidated position on the issue of providing comprehensive support to Ukraine to protect its territorial integrity and independence. Therefore, not all EU countries support the idea of allocating funds for these needs. For example, the Baltic states and Poland, which border Russia, actively advocate for providing comprehensive assistance to Kyiv, while Slovakia and Hungary consider it expedient to maintain good relations with the Kremlin in exchange for cheap Russian energy resources. Fear of escalating the conflict and unwillingness to act contrary to their national interests in order to achieve collective strategic goals often nullify Brussels efforts to provide assistance to Ukraine or significantly slow down this process, which negatively affects the Ukrainian army's ability to resist the Russian offensive (Kaca, E., 2024).

Organizing the logistical infrastructure for the delivery of military equipment, weapons, and other materials to Kyiv has proven to be a difficult task for Brussels. Transporting such cargo across the borders of European countries to Ukraine requires clear coordination between them on transport routes, proper storage conditions, and security. Solving these problems requires coordination with NATO, which often involves delays.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

The question of whether there are enough weapons to transfer to Ukraine remains unresolved. Over the past decades, European countries have allocated minimal budgets for military needs, relying on the protection of the US and NATO. When the need arose to provide military assistance to Ukraine, it turned out that Europe did not have enough weapons to send to Kyiv while maintaining its own defense capabilities. The available quantity of weapons, ammunition, and military equipment in EU countries is insufficient to meet all of Ukraine's needs in deterring the advance of Russian troops. During the Russian-Ukrainian war, Europeans were forced to start producing weapons. But this process will take a long time. Therefore, Brussels is currently negotiating with the US to purchase the necessary amount of weapons and other equipment for further transfer to Ukraine.

Brussels faces certain difficulties in organizing the repair, maintenance, and servicing of complex military equipment transferred to Ukraine. This not only creates an additional burden on logistics, but in some cases becomes impossible outside certain European countries. It is worth considering the fact that most complex weapon systems are of American origin, and therefore not every factory in Europe can cope with the task at hand. The problem is even more acute given that some European countries are afraid not only to supply weapons to Ukraine, but also to repair them, so as not to destroy close economic ties with Russia and not to contribute to the escalation of confrontation. These circumstances also cannot but affect the overall pace of military aid supplies to Ukraine by EU member states.

EU countries will steadfastly adhere to democratic values. This means that their governments must take into account the will of the people in pursuing their policies. The protracted Russian-Ukrainian war has had a negative impact on the economies of European countries and has given rise to a number of social problems in the European Union. As of 2025, inflation and the energy crisis have become noticeable, food prices are rising, and social inequality has increased, creating tension in the societies of many European countries. There is a general fatigue with the war, which is particularly evident in the decline of interest in this topic in the media. These circumstances reduce the willingness of EU member states' governments to provide assistance to Ukraine, as they need to focus primarily on solving internal problems. In addition, anti-war sentiments, often with Russian influence, have begun to grow in some European countries. Participants in such peace movements advocate for the start of negotiations with Russia and condemn the supply of weapons to Ukraine. Against this backdrop, favorable conditions are emerging for the growth of far-right political movements, which could not only stop the supply of aid to Kyiv, but also cause a lot of

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

trouble in their own countries. The growing popularity of populist parties in Europe is a clear confirmation of this. The deepening trend of war fatigue in some European countries could lead to their withdrawal from the camp of supporters of providing assistance to Ukraine in repelling Russian aggression, which will make it even more difficult for Brussels to implement its policy of comprehensive support for Kyiv in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Even a reduction in arms supplies by individual European countries could negatively affect Ukraine's ability to effectively resist the aggressor on the battlefield. And the loss of military support could have unpredictable consequences for the course of the war. The EU cannot allow the threat to Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty to grow, as this would lead to destabilization on its eastern borders. This would put the security of EU countries at risk. Brussels also finds Ukraine's defeat in the war with Russia or a protracted conflict unacceptable, as this would inevitably lead to instability in Europe, provoke new migration crises, and increase the threat of terrorism.

The issue of EU enlargement remains unresolved. The essence of the problem lies in the very structure of the organization. The most important decisions are made by consensus of all 27 EU member states. The Russian-Ukrainian war has revealed serious differences in views on a number of important domestic and foreign policy issues among European countries. Brussels is struggling to maintain a common course of support for Kyiv in repelling the attacks of the Russian aggressor (Ukraina otrymala status kandidata na chlenstvo v YeS, 2022). The accession of new countries to the EU could negatively affect the organization's ability to function effectively, deepening the existing crisis in decision-making. Therefore, there are many opponents of EU enlargement in Europe. This is especially true when it comes to a large country like Ukraine with its multi-million population. To resolve these issues, it is necessary to reform the institutions of the European Union to adapt to the new realities. Otherwise, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to make important decisions at the level of the entire Union. At the same time, institutional reforms require a unanimous decision by all current members of the organization, which also remains a serious problem. Thus, the issue of EU enlargement has entered a vicious circle and is not moving forward.

Ukraine occupies a special place in the issue of EU enlargement. Official Kyiv has repeatedly appealed to the European Union to grant permission to join this organization. During the war, the Ukrainian government is actively implementing reforms to meet all of Brussels' requirements. However, despite all these efforts and the comprehensive

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support of the European Union, the question of setting a date for Ukraine's accession to the EU is constantly being postponed. EU member states understand that after the war, the Ukrainian economy will be in crisis and significant investments will be needed for its recovery. This will mean an additional burden on the EU's financial system, which is already under considerable pressure due to the protracted Russian-Ukrainian war. At the national level, many EU member states have faced economic difficulties due to Russian aggression in Ukraine and the need to provide assistance to Kyiv, and therefore not all of them are ready to allocate funds for the post-war recovery of Ukraine. However, in the event of new members joining, all EU members are obliged to provide financial assistance within the framework of European support programs. In addition, the level of economic development of most EU countries and Ukraine differs significantly, and this inequality reduces the attractiveness of a successful resolution of the issue of Kyiv's European integration. The governments of some European countries are concerned that the admission of countries with lower GDP and living standards will cause migration flows to more developed EU countries and thus cause additional economic and social tensions. And while for Ukraine this situation would mean an outflow of skilled workers, for the European Union it would mean exacerbating problems with employment, integration of new migrants, and increased social benefits (Melnyk, T., 2023). The reluctance of a number of European countries to address all these issues is causing resistance to the idea of EU enlargement and may deepen political divisions within the organization. Currently, there are differences among European Union member states regarding migration policy, the rule of law, human rights, and ways to overcome economic difficulties. If the organization expands, not all new members will be ready to quickly adapt to EU standards, and these differences may become even more acute. Many citizens of European countries do not see any direct benefits for themselves in EU expansion, which generates skepticism about the idea of new members joining. If these trends continue in Europe, political forces that block any further integration processes, regardless of how many conditions new candidates for accession have already fulfilled, may gain the upper hand (Demertzis, M., Grand, C., Lery Moffat, L., 2023). This, in turn, would jeopardize Brussels' policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war in its current form, which provides for comprehensive support to Ukraine in order to maintain pan-European security.

Conclusions. Regional integration in Europe was shaped by unique historical circumstances that reflect humanity's desire for peace, stability, and cooperation after the traumatic experience of World War II. This process

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was greatly influenced by post-war social attitudes towards unification, as well as geopolitical changes, in particular the formation of a bipolar system of international relations and the decline of the colonial system. These factors laid the foundation for the creation of the European Union (EU) as a unique project combining economic, political, and social integration.

Throughout its history, the EU has gone through periods of both significant achievements and challenges. However, in the long term, European integration has shown steady progress. Starting with the formation of the European Communities in the 1950s, the integration process has steadily evolved from a customs union to a single internal market and, ultimately, to a monetary union. This development has been accompanied by an expansion of geographical boundaries and areas of activity. Founded in 1951 by six countries, by 2007 the EU already had 27 member states. The year 2004 was particularly significant, when the accession of Central and Eastern European countries transformed the EU into a truly pan-European union, symbolizing the unity of the continent.

Integration has spread to more and more areas of public life – from the economy and trade to transportation, science, the environment, energy, culture, and common foreign policy. Progress in security and defense shows how ambitious the European project is, aiming to bring stability and prosperity to people in member countries. The modern EU influences all aspects of its citizens' lives, promoting the harmonization of standards and the creation of a common space for cooperation.

The success of European integration is largely due to the EU's unique political culture and developed legal system. The functioning of the Union is ensured by a complex network of institutions, norms, procedures, and mechanisms that have been developed over decades. This system allows for the effective coordination of the interests of different parties, ensuring balanced decisions and monitoring their implementation, promoting fairness and transparency in governance.

On the international stage, the EU has established itself as an influential actor that actively promotes the values of democracy, the rule of law, and sustainable development. While in the early stages the EU's external relations were limited to trade agreements with partner countries, particularly former colonies, today the Union maintains an extensive network of cooperation with states, regions, and international organizations. This cooperation covers economic, political, legal, scientific, and cultural aspects. The EU plays a key role in reforming the global system of international relations, advocating multilateral dialogue and the protection of common human values.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Thus, European integration is not only an example of successful regional cooperation, but also the embodiment of the desire for unity, peace, and prosperity. Thanks to its unique governance model and value base, the EU continues to influence global processes, contributing to the creation of a more just and harmonious world.

The Russian-Ukrainian war, which began in 2014 and continues to this day, has become a real challenge to the unity and stability of the European Union. It has revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. In particular, it has highlighted the problem of the ability to make quick strategic foreign policy decisions. The internal structure of the EU is geared towards addressing primarily economic issues. The economy was the driving force behind the creation of this organization. Russia's aggression in Ukraine in 2014 required decisive action from Brussels. However, at that time, Europeans failed to consolidate their efforts to force Moscow to abandon the military option in resolving foreign policy issues. The principle of unanimous decision-making remains a stumbling block for EU member states on this path. As it turned out, not all European countries are willing to compromise on matters of national interest in order to achieve collective advantages within the framework of EU policy. This significantly reduces the effectiveness of Brussels' actions on the international stage, as evidenced by the inability of collective Europe to prevent Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, as well as to jointly force the Kremlin to end the war after its full-scale invasion of Ukrainian territory on February 24, 2022.

The escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022 forced Brussels to intensify its efforts to ensure security on the European continent. The threat of the war spreading to the West prompted EU countries to at least partially set aside their internal differences and agree to support Kyiv in confronting Russian aggression. Thus, it was decided to provide active political and economic assistance, and the issue of strengthening international security based on the rule of law was put on the agenda. Since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the European Union has condemned the Kremlin's actions and supported UN resolutions calling on Russia to withdraw its troops and supporting the idea of establishing peace and restoring Ukraine's sovereignty. Brussels' support is of great moral importance to Ukrainians in their struggle to defend the territorial integrity of their state.

The EU's policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war provides for substantial financial and economic assistance to Kyiv in order to strengthen its ability to counter the Russian military offensive and ensure peace in Europe. In particular, to support the Ukrainian economy, stabilize the financial system,

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and balance the budget, the European Union has allocated billions of euros to Ukraine, which it continues to receive in the form of grants, loans, and macro-financial assistance. EU funds have enabled Kyiv to develop social programs during the war, rebuild infrastructure destroyed by Russian attacks, pay salaries and pensions, and thus maintain a satisfactory standard of living for the population and internal stability in the country.

The EU's policy on providing military assistance to Ukraine deserves special attention. Given the significant opposition to this decision among European countries, Brussels had to make considerable efforts to find ways to successfully resolve the issue. With the US giving Ukraine less support after President Trump took office, the EU's political, financial, and military support has become crucial for Kyiv in protecting its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Therefore, despite numerous difficulties and unresolved acute problems, the EU's policy on the Russian-Ukrainian war after February 2022 has taken on clear contours and involves the use of a whole range of instruments of direct and indirect influence on the Russian Federation with the aim of stopping its aggressive actions against Ukraine. In particular, 18 packages of sanctions have been imposed against Russia, its individual citizens, and companies. Brussels is currently working on a 19th package of sanctions, which is expected to create even more difficulties for the Russian economy. In addition, the European Union is providing substantial financial assistance to Ukraine and has organized the supply of weapons, military equipment, and gear. Logistical support is no less important, as it enables the delivery of all critical resources needed to deter the Russian army to Ukrainian territory. At the same time, Brussels continues to work actively among EU member states to resolve differences in approaches to the Russian-Ukrainian war and to find compromise solutions that would preserve Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and thus ensure security on the European continent. Thus, given the EU's numerous practical actions to counter Russian aggression, it remains a key player in supporting Ukraine and upholding the principle of the rule of law in international relations.

Funding. The author declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest. The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement. The author declare that no Generative AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

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https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Section 3.2. Society 5.0: the New Reality of Digital Civilisation

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Citation:
Kyzymenko, I. & Krasilnikova, O. (2025). Society 5.0: the New Reality of Digital Civilisation. In A. Kravchenko (Ed.), *Sociocultural and Political Metamorphoses in the Era of Identity Competition.* 221 p. (pp. 171–198). Scientific Center of Innovative Research. https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC-171-198

Abstract. *This section conceptualizes Society 5.0 as an emergent reality of digital civilisation in which technologies move from external instruments to constitutive elements of consciousness, identity, and everyday social practice. It argues that metaverse environments, mixed reality, artificial intelligence, and NBIC convergence reconfigure communication, labour, education, and the very experience of "reality," while simultaneously intensifying ethical risks related to privacy, autonomy, security, and inequality. The objective is to provide a comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis of Society 5.0 as a qualitatively new phase of human–technology interaction, to clarify its sociocultural, philosophical, educational, and ethical dimensions, and to outline strategies for harmonising technological innovation with humanistic values. The study applies an interdisciplinary design combining sociological, philosophical, technological, and ethical analysis. It uses systems analysis to trace structural changes in social relations, comparative analysis to differentiate Society 5.0 from earlier stages of development, content analysis of academic and strategic documents to map key trends, expert evaluation to synthesise positions of contemporary thinkers and futurists, case study analysis of corporate platform implementation, and prognostic reasoning to assess future scenarios and risks. The section demonstrates that physical and virtual realities increasingly merge into a single sociotechnical space, producing new forms of interaction, labour organisation, and learning. It identifies digital skills as a prerequisite for participation in the labour market and civic life, while virtual education expands access and personalisation through immersive and AI-driven environments. At the same time, it records key challenges: digital inequality, algorithmic bias, job displacement, deepfakes, surveillance pressures, and the need for enforceable digital ethics. Society 5.0 is framed as a human-centred civilisational paradigm whose sustainability depends on coupling NBIC and AI capabilities with rights-based governance, inclusivity, and value-oriented education. Further research should develop measurable models of digital ethics and inclusivity, evaluate the long-term effects of immersive learning on cognition and socialisation, investigate governance mechanisms for trustworthy AI and metaverse ecosystems, and compare policy approaches that reduce digital skill gaps across regions and generations.*

Keywords: *society 5.0; digital civilization; metaverse; mixed reality; NBIC convergence; digital skills; virtual education; digital ethics; artificial intelligence.*

ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

1. From “digital tools” to “digital civilisation”. We are living in a time of tremendous change, when digital technologies are fundamentally transforming not only certain areas of our lives, but also the very foundations of social interaction. The terms "cybersociety", "society 5.0" and "digital civilisation" emphasise that technology is no longer an external tool, but is becoming an integral part of our consciousness, identity and life. They are changing the way we think about work, education, communication, reality and even humanity. In this new digital era, we are faced with a key question: how do we remain human in a world where the boundaries between the real and the virtual are becoming increasingly blurred?

The question is extremely relevant in a context where technology is rapidly changing not only our everyday life, but also the very essence of social, cultural and economic relations. We live in a time when technological innovations, including virtual reality, artificial intelligence, digital skills, and the latest scientific advances such as NBIC convergence, are transforming the way we see the world and our own identity. These processes are changing the way humans and machines interact, as well as shaping new social structures and ethical challenges.

Humanity is on the verge of an era where the concept of reality is becoming increasingly blurred. Mixed reality, which combines the physical and virtual worlds, places new demands on how we build our relationships, how we learn, and how we organise our lives in the face of constant technological transformation. NBIC technologies (nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive sciences) offer new opportunities, but they also require responsibility, as they affect the very essence of human existence.

This study covers a number of important issues that cannot be ignored. The metaverse, as a new virtual reality, not only allows us to change the way we communicate, but also radically affects cultural and social processes. Technology is becoming not just a tool, but also an active participant in shaping new realities. Mixed reality, which integrates simulations, virtual worlds and material existence, blurs the line between the real and the virtual, forcing us to rethink the basis of our interaction with the world around us.

But with these opportunities come challenges. Technology raises ethical questions that have never existed before, including privacy, autonomy, equal access and the impact of technology on human consciousness. In addition, there is a growing need for digital skills, which are becoming not just an advantage but a necessity in today's world, where everything is rapidly becoming digital.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

Education is also undergoing dramatic changes. Virtual education opens up new horizons for learning, allowing us to cross borders between countries and cultures. At the same time, this process places new demands on how we learn, how we organise learning processes, and what are the core competencies for future generations.

Equally important is the role of artificial intelligence, which is changing the very nature of work and the way people interact with technology. The philosophy of intelligent machines requires a new understanding, where the boundaries between human and machine intelligence are becoming less and less obvious.

Therefore, covering issues ranging from the Metaverse to digital skills, from ethical challenges to virtual education helps us to better understand how technology affects us and what exactly makes this society a "society 5.0". These are not only technical changes, but also profound socio-cultural, moral and ethical transformations that determine our place in the new reality of digital civilisation.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in defining Society 5.0 as a qualitatively new stage of human–technology interaction, within which physical and virtual realities are integrated into a unified sociocultural space. The study reveals the philosophical and ethical foundations of the digital age through the ideas of N. Bostrom, F. Fukuyama, A. Toffler, and Y. Harari, and introduces the concept of digital ethics as a prerequisite for harmonizing technological progress with humanistic values. It also outlines key trends in virtual education and the development of digital skills as fundamental factors of human adaptability and resilience in the digital environment. The findings emphasize that only the integration of technological innovation with the preservation of core humanistic principles can ensure sustainable and human-centered development within digital civilization.

The study uses an interdisciplinary approach that combines sociological, philosophical, technological and ethical analysis of digital transformations in Society 5.0. Several key methods were used to understand the large-scale changes taking place in the social, economic, cultural and educational spheres under the influence of the latest technologies.

Systems analysis helps to trace how technological innovations change the structure of society, its interconnections and forms of interaction. The comparative method helps to identify the differences between traditional and digital models of social relations, as well as to understand what makes Society 5.0 unique compared to previous stages of development. Content analysis of scientific publications, reports, analytical studies and digital

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development strategies makes it possible to assess general trends and directions of change.

A special role is played by the expert evaluation method based on the analysis of opinions of researchers, digital specialists, philosophers, sociologists and futurists. Their findings help to better understand not only the technical aspects of digital transformation, but also its impact on social consciousness, values and the way people interact. Case study analysis allows us to explore specific examples of the introduction of digital technologies in various spheres of life, including education, the economy, the labour market and social communications.

The prognostic method is used to assess future scenarios for the development of digital civilisation: what opportunities new technologies offer, what challenges we may face, and how we can minimise the risks associated with digitalisation. The study is based on empirical data obtained from open sources, materials from scientific conferences, government and international digital development strategies, as well as real-life examples of technology implementation in everyday life.

2. Metaverse 5.0 as a sociocultural phenomenon. The metaverse opens the gateway to the era of Digital Civilization 5.0, transforming not only communication but also the spheres of work, education, and culture. The NBIC convergence technologies (nanotechnology, biotechnology, information and cognitive sciences) are helping to create innovations that can improve our lives. At the same time, we are facing important questions: how to ensure the security of personal data, how to avoid digital isolation and preserve ethical principles in the new world?

Mixed reality, which blurs the boundaries between the physical and digital worlds, opens up many new opportunities for learning, creativity and interaction. It allows us to look at the educational process in a new way, providing the opportunity to learn and work in interactive, immersive environments where the physical and virtual worlds are intertwined. This technology allows everyone to access new knowledge and experience without even leaving home. Online courses, virtual lectures, interactive platforms - all of this is giving us a new era of education where everyone can gain knowledge regardless of geographic location or social status. But with these enormous opportunities, the question arises: will we be able to preserve real live communication and the warmth of human relationships in a world where digital technologies are increasingly taking over?

Digital skills are now a necessity to stay competitive in today's labour market. They open doors to new opportunities in our professional lives, help us interact effectively with technology and adapt to a rapidly changing world.

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

However, at the same time, we have to ask ourselves the question: will we lose some important human qualities with the development of technology? Will the modern world become so automated that people will cease to be the main value? Will the ability to think critically, to show empathy and to be creative disappear from our lives if we rely more and more on digital tools? And how can we find a balance between the need to implement new technologies and preserve our humanity?

Artificial intelligence is changing our world and posing serious challenges. These technologies are capable of performing tasks that were previously only available to humans and can even help us solve complex problems. However, can a machine really understand us as well as another human being? Is artificial intelligence capable of truly understanding human emotions, feelings and needs, or does it only mimic these processes? How can we find the right balance between automation and preserving human values? This question does not have a clear answer, but it requires serious reflection on how we, as a society, want to interact with technology.

Technology and humans are interacting on a new level - this is not only a technological leap, but also a serious challenge for all of us. It depends on us whether we can preserve our humanity in this digital world, whether we will not lose our ability to be real people if we only blindly follow technological progress. In this world, it is important to ensure comfort, safety and accessibility for everyone, while preserving the core values that make us human. While remaining open to new opportunities, we must remember the importance of maintaining real connections between people, not just through screens. Yes, technology can be incredibly useful, but it should not replace interactions that preserve our dignity, emotional depth and capacity for genuine compassion. All these aspects must be interconnected and complementary so that we can build a world where humanity and technology coexist in harmony.

A world where physical and digital realities are intertwined, where our avatars interact in virtual spaces as easily as we do in our everyday lives, is not a distant future - it is the era of Metaverse 5.0, which is already on the horizon and opens up new opportunities for humanity.

What is Metaverse 5.0? Metaverse is a virtual world created using augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies where users can communicate, work, learn and have fun. The 5.0 revolution means a new level of integration and interaction between the real and virtual worlds, thanks to technological advances in artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT) [1, 2].

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Electronic personalities and avatars rarely reproduce the actual appearance or behaviour of people. Even more rarely do they look like their owners or users. Usually, an electronic avatar is an imaginary, generalised or idealised image of a person or a fictional character with fantastic powers or superfunctions that are possible only in the metaverse. The definitions of terms such as metaverse, e- human, e-person, and e-avatar are still not clearly defined. This leads to numerous variations in their use in popular literature and in everyday life to describe events taking place in virtual realities [3].

Today, companies are actively investing in the development of virtual reality and metaverse technologies, opening up new horizons for users around the world. Recent acquisitions and investments by major market players demonstrate the growing importance of these areas. ByteDance, known as the developer of the popular social platform TikTok, has made a significant step towards the development of virtual solutions by acquiring Pico, a company specialising in the development of high-quality virtual reality products, and this deal opens up new opportunities for ByteDance. The main goal of is to develop the areas of electronic twins and 3D reconstructions of objects. By using Pico's technology, ByteDance plans to enhance its platforms, allowing users to create detailed digital copies of themselves and those around them, as well as recreate real objects in a virtual space. This could dramatically change the way people interact in virtual worlds, taking the user experience to a new level.

Another significant event in the world of virtual reality is NetEase's investment in IMVU (Instant Messaging Virtual Universe). IMVU is the world's largest social network built around avatars, virtual goods, and 3D worlds. With over 50 million registered users, IMVU offers a unique platform for social interaction in a virtual environment. NetEase's investment in IMVU is a testament to the growing importance of social media in 3D worlds. NetEase plans to leverage IMVU's expertise to enhance its own projects and create new experiences for users. This may include developing new ways to communicate, exchange virtual goods and participate in shared virtual events.

The creation of electronic twins and 3D reconstructions of objects will allow users to interact more realistically in virtual worlds. Social networks in 3D worlds, such as IMVU, will provide new ways for social interaction and self-expression: unique avatars, buying and exchanging virtual goods, participating in virtual events and creating your own virtual space. Unlimited possibilities for creativity and communication will make virtual realities an integral part of our daily lives. This means that in the coming years, we can

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

expect significant changes in the way we interact in virtual space, offering users new and exciting opportunities for development and self-expression.

Epic Games, a well-known developer of interactive games, has announced the creation of its own metaverse called Epic Games. This platform will be designed for interactive fantasy games, allowing players to immerse themselves in fascinating virtual worlds with rich graphics and complex plots. Epic Games' goal is to create a space where players can interact with each other while engaging in exciting adventures and quests. Using advanced technologies such as the Unreal Engine, the company plans to ensure high quality visuals and realistic gameplay. This metaverse promises to be a unique place for gamers to not only play but also create their own stories and worlds [4].

Recently, the Chinese search giant Baidu announced an ambitious project to colonise the first planet of the metaverse, known as Xirang, or the Land of Hope. At the same time, other major Chinese companies are uniting to create the Metaverse Industry Committee, which aims to attract Chinese citizens to the metaverse on a massive scale. The project provides for the simultaneous operation of up to 100,000 avatars, making it one of the largest virtual spaces created to date. The first major test of this space will take place during the Baidu AI Developer Conference, where participants' avatars will be able to interact in real time, discussing new technologies and innovations. The wonderland-like immersive virtual planet will give conference participants an unforgettable experience. Here, the avatars of all participants will watch panel presentations and participate in discussions, party at discos, visit exhibition stands, enjoy concerts with cartoon characters (Optimus Prime from Transformers, etc.), travel to ancient monasteries where monks will teach them Shaolin Kung Fu, and do many other things: shop, meet new people [5].

Metaverse 5.0 promises to fundamentally change the way we approach education, opening new horizons for students and teachers around the world. Using virtual classrooms, laboratories, and simulations, learning becomes not only more interactive, but also more accessible to a wider range of people. This is especially important for disciplines where practice is an integral part of the learning process, such as medicine and engineering. Instead of traditional lectures and textbooks, students will be able to interact with the material in a virtual environment, making learning more effective and interesting. Reproduction of real scenarios and situations in a virtual environment will allow gaining practical experience and skills that can be applied in real life [6].

https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)

The virtual world, Metaverse 5.0, is a new stage in the development of the future of humanity, which combines the physical and digital worlds through augmented reality and virtual reality technologies. This opens up new opportunities for humanity in communication, work, education and entertainment.

The main characteristics of Metaverse 5.0 include the creation of electronic personalities and avatars that allow users to interact more realistically in virtual worlds, as well as social networks in 3D worlds that provide new opportunities for social interaction and self-expression. Companies are investing heavily in the development of these technologies, which demonstrates their significance and importance.

Projects such as Epic Games and Xirang reflect the diversity of uses for metaverse 5.0, from gaming to social platforms and virtual planet colonisation. These initiatives have the potential to fundamentally change the way we interact in virtual space and in education, making virtual realities an integral part of everyday life. The era of virtual reality promises to be a key tool in improving the quality of education and training of future generations of leaders and innovators.

3. NBIC Convergence: Technological Synergy and Humanitarian Challenges. The concept of NBIC convergence is becoming increasingly relevant, opening endless opportunities and challenges for society. NBIC convergence brings together nanotechnology (N), biotechnology (B), information technology (IT) and cognitive sciences (C), interacting with each other and referring to each other. This synergistic approach has the potential to change all aspects of life in society, including medicine, industry, education, economics and ethics.

Philosophers and ethicists are actively engaged in studying and discussing the impact of NBIC convergence on society and put forward different points of view on this topic. Some emphasise the limitless opportunities it provides and see it as having the potential to improve the quality of life. They emphasise the importance of scientific research and technology development for gaining new knowledge and implementing innovative solutions in various fields. Others question the unlimited optimism and are concerned about the consequences that may arise [7, 8, 9, 10].

One of the most obvious impacts of NBIC convergence on society is the revolution in medicine. Thanks to the combination of nanotechnology, biotechnology and information technology, doctors are gaining new opportunities for diagnosing, treating and preventing diseases. Nanorobots implanted in the body can detect and treat diseases at early stages, providing

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more efficient and accurate medical care. In addition, the development of implants and prostheses using nanomaterials and biocompatible materials opens up new prospects for reconstruction and improvement of people's physical capabilities [7].

NBIC convergence is an incredibly powerful process that combines nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science. These technologies are not only changing the face of industry and the economy but are also capable of rewriting the rules of the game in education, creating new opportunities for development and innovation.

In the industrial sector, NBIC technologies offer huge potential for improving production processes. For example, nanotechnology makes it possible to create materials with completely new properties: lighter, stronger, and more environmentally friendly. This is important for industries such as electronics, aviation, automotive and energy, as it helps to create products that last longer, require fewer resources and are less harmful to the environment. Biotechnology adds another important aspect: it enables the development of biologically sustainable materials, the production of clean fuels and the creation of environmental clean-up methods that do little to harm natural systems. It's not just innovation - it's the path to a cleaner and healthier future.

But NBIC convergence is not limited to industry. It is also having a major impact on education. Thanks to information technology and cognitive science, learning is becoming more personalised and accessible. It is now possible to create individualised curricula that are tailored to the needs of each student, helping them to learn at their own pace and in their own way. Thanks to the use of artificial intelligence, learning platforms can analyse a student's progress and provide them with tasks that best suit their level. Virtual and augmented reality allows for the creation of learning environments where students can interact with objects and processes as if they were already working in the real world. Doctors can train their skills in operating theatres, engineers can test new designs, and sociologists can analyse various social situations in real time.

An equally important advantage of these technologies is that they make education more accessible to people with special needs. Thanks to voice assistants, special touchscreen devices and AI-powered software, students can receive individualised support to help them overcome barriers to learning. For example, students with visual impairments can listen to texts, and AI-powered technologies adapt learning content to their needs to ensure that it is easy and effective to understand. For those with hearing impairments, there are technologies that automatically translate speech into

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text or even synthesise sign language, allowing them to receive information in the most convenient format. All these innovations give students the opportunity to feel like equal participants in the learning process and support their development in the aspects they need most. This not only removes physical barriers, but also opens up opportunities for inclusive, individualised learning, where everyone can move at their own pace and achieve their goals without feeling restricted.

However, along with the many opportunities, NBIC convergence also poses challenges and ethical issues for society. For example, the use of nanotechnology and biotechnology raises questions about the safety and control of these technologies. It is important to develop ethical norms and legal frameworks to prevent possible misuse and abuse of NBIC technologies [9].

For example, it is important to consider the ethical aspects of using nanorobots in medicine, to ensure the confidentiality and protection of personal data in the field of biotechnology, and to balance the use of information technology and cognitive sciences with the issues of privacy and ethical use of the data obtained.

In addition, NBIC convergence may lead to social inequalities and a gap between those who have access to these technologies and those who do not. The high costs of research and development of new technologies can limit the accessibility of innovations to the general population. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the benefits of NBIC convergence are accessible and equitably distributed, in particular by developing policies to bring the technologies to regions with less developed infrastructure and to provide access to education and training on these issues.

Overall, the NBIC convergence opens up many opportunities for society in various fields, including medicine, industry and education. However, the successful integration of these technologies requires not only scientific advances, but also ethical consideration, management and resolution of the social and economic challenges that accompany this process. The following steps will be critical to determine the path of NBIC convergence, ensure sustainable growth and maximise its positive impact on society [9].

NBIC convergence has the potential to change the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us. The integration of cognitive sciences into this concept makes it possible to explore and understand the principles of human brain and consciousness functioning. This opens the door to understanding the processes of thinking, memory, learning and creativity. In

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the future, this can lead to the development of technologies that change the way we perceive, see ourselves and interact with the world around us.

However, along with its many benefits, NBIC convergence also raises questions about security and privacy. As the ability to collect, process and analyse large amounts of data grows, questions arise about maintaining confidentiality and protecting personal information. For example, the use of biometric data for identification and authentication can pose potential risks of misuse and privacy violations.

In addition, NBIC convergence has the potential to create new forms of inequality and exclusion. If these technologies become available only to a limited number of people or countries, a new kind of inequality may emerge that could deepen social divisions. It is therefore important to ensure broad access to these technologies and to develop inclusive development strategies.

Finally, the NBIC convergence opens the door to incredible opportunities for the development of society: industry, education, medicine, research and many

other areas. Through the combination of nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science, we can develop new materials, devices, methods and generate knowledge that have the potential to benefit society.

One of the most important impacts of NBIC convergence is to improve the quality of life. In medicine, these technologies can help detect and treat diseases at early stages, providing more effective and individualised treatment. The use of nanotechnology in the development of implants and prosthetic devices allows people with disabilities to regain their physical independence. Biotechnology can help develop new medicines and vaccines, as well as improve agriculture and food security. Information technology and cognitive sciences are developing new teaching methods that contribute to the development of society's intellectual potential.

NBIC convergence also affects the economy, creating new opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship and the development of new industries. It promotes the emergence of new markets and accelerates technological progress. For example, the development of new materials and devices opens the way to new products and services, which leads to increased production and employment.

In addition, NBIC convergence can have a significant socio-cultural impact on society. It helps to change our understanding of humans, their capabilities and interaction with technology. New ethical dilemmas and moral issues are emerging that require in-depth discussion and definition. For example, the use of smart devices and artificial intelligence can raise

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questions about data privacy and security and affect our relationships and social connections.

The cultural impact of the NBIC convergence is also evident in the arts and entertainment sector. Interactivity, virtual reality, and augmented reality open up new possibilities for creativity and self-expression. Art can be enriched by new forms of interaction, interactive immersive installations, and art generation using artificial intelligence. The entertainment industry can also take advantage of NBIC technologies to create more realistic and immersive experiences in films, video games, and content production [10].

An important aspect of successful integration of NBIC convergence is education and training. Programmes and courses need to be created that develop the skills and knowledge necessary to understand and use these new technologies. Educational institutions should actively introduce disciplines covering NBIC convergence and support research in this area. It is also important to develop educational programmes for the general public to raise awareness and understanding of the impact of NBIC technologies on society [10].

The NBIC convergence opens up unprecedented opportunities for humanity, changing not only the economy, science and society, but also our everyday experience. These technologies can improve the quality of life, help solve global problems and expand the boundaries of human capabilities. However, it is important to keep in mind the ethical and social challenges associated with their implementation: how to ensure safety, equal access and preservation of humanity in a rapidly changing world?

4. Mixed Reality and the Phenomenology of Perception. One of the most striking examples of this technological breakthrough is mixed reality (MR). It is no longer just an idea from the pages of science fiction, but a real tool that combines the physical and digital worlds, changing our perception of reality. MR opens up new opportunities for learning, creativity, communication and even self-discovery. But at the same time, it raises important philosophical questions: what is reality in a world where the boundaries between the material and the virtual are becoming increasingly blurred? Can be considered a new level of existence? And how can we avoid losing what makes us human in this process?

In 1994, Milgram and Kishino (1994) defined Mixed Reality (MR) as "a combination of real and virtual environments in which objects from the real world interact with virtual objects in real time" [11].

Researchers describe mixed reality as an environment where users can interact with real and virtual elements simultaneously, and both worlds have a certain degree of presence.

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Once upon a time, reality was clearly divided into material and imaginary. Today, this division is blurring. We live in a world where digital objects can interact with physical objects, and physical objects can acquire digital properties. Imagine a city where traffic is regulated by artificial intelligence systems that analyse the situation in real time, or classrooms where students can experiment with physical laws in an MR environment. This is not just a technological advancement - it is a new way of being.

Plato (2000), through the myth of the cave, depicts the idea that the visible is not the true being, but only its shadow [12, p. 209 - 239]. Similarly, in mixed reality, we observe the superimposition of digital objects on the physical world, which raises the question of their ontological status. Are they just shadows, or do they have their own level of being?

In his phenomenology, Edmund Husserl emphasised that our consciousness is always directed towards something, and this is what determines the way we perceive reality [13, p. 83 - 96]. In other words, we do not just passively observe the world - we actively attach meaning to everything around us. This applies not only to material things but also to virtual objects. Even if they do not have a physical form, they can become real to us through interaction with them, becoming part of our experience.

Mixed reality, which combines the digital and physical worlds, further expands the possibilities of our consciousness. It creates a single cognitive space in which virtual phenomena can be as meaningful as real ones. For example, digital avatars, holograms, or even artificial intelligence are no longer just images on a screen – they become part of our interaction, evoke emotions, and shape our thinking.

That is why Husserl's phenomenology helps us understand how mixed reality changes our perception. Imagine working with a virtual assistant or participating in a virtual event – at this point, the digital world becomes almost as real to you as the physical world. Consciousness seems to "switch" between these levels, adapting to new conditions. This phenomenon can be called the "lift of intentionality" – the ability of our minds to move between different realities without losing the sense of presence.

Husserl also emphasised the importance of subjective experience. Through phenomenological analysis, we can understand how mixed reality affects our attention, memory, and even identity. After all, today digital technologies not only complement our world, but also re-shape it, creating new opportunities for learning, communication, and creativity [13].

Thus, phenomenology helps us to look at mixed reality not only from a technical but also from a human point of view. It is not just a new technology,

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it is a way of interacting with the world in which our consciousness plays a key role in shaping our experience.

When we talk about mixed reality, we inevitably touch upon the issue of simulation. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard considered the simulacrum as a sign that has no real referent, but in mixed reality, simulation does not just imitate reality - it constructs it. In the digital world, virtual objects can interact with physical ones, creating situations that become ontologically significant [14, p. 175].

That is, if simulation begins to influence our perception and behaviour, doesn't it become a part of being? Today we see how digital objects do not just copy the real but create a new dimension of our existence. We are no longer just observers, but participants in the world that is being formed before our eyes.

Twentieth-century philosophers, such as Gilles Deleuze, interpreted the virtual as something potential that can become actual. In the context of mixed reality, virtuality is no longer something purely imaginary – it materialises in the form of digital objects that interact with humans and the physical world. For example, in medicine, MR is used to create surgical models that, although not "material" in the traditional sense, influence the physical actions of doctors. This shows that the boundary between the virtual and the real is not just blurred but transformed [15].

In classical philosophy, existence was defined through materiality. However, in mixed reality, new forms of existence are emerging digital objects that can have a physical impact, and physical objects that are extended by digital properties. For example, smart environments, where digital algorithms control physical processes, create situations in which existence becomes hybrid. Here, we can draw a parallel with Bruno Latour's concept of actor-network theory: digital entities in MR become agents that influence the material world [16].

The digital world brings with it not only opportunities but also new questions. How does mixed reality affect our identity? Can we talk about the existence of a personality in virtual space in the same way as in physical space? People are already creating digital avatars, holding meetings in VR, and forming relationships in a world where physical contact is not mandatory. Does this mean that we are gradually moving to a new form of social interaction?

Mixed reality doesn't just expand the boundaries of our world – it changes the very way we perceive and interact with it. But with new opportunities come new challenges. As digital technologies become part of

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our everyday lives, how do we find a balance between reality and virtuality, between freedom and responsibility?

However, technological progress brings not only convenience and new opportunities, but also important ethical issues. How do we maintain privacy in a world where information has become a currency? How do we make sure that technology works for the benefit of people rather than restricting their freedom? All this requires not only technical knowledge but also a deep understanding of what values we want to preserve in the digital age.

The Internet, as a global computer network, provides users with vast amounts of information, which can be used to develop the ability to search for, process, store and transmit information using modern communication technologies. The use of Internet technologies has become essential for many aspects of our lives, including work, study, communication and entertainment. However, the growing use of these technologies can also have negative consequences for society, which requires attention to ethical aspects.

Social networks and social media have created a new world where people have become particularly vulnerable, as further developments in science and technology create new ethical challenges. In today's world, there is an acute problem of personal data, which has become especially relevant with the growth of personal information collected and processed on the Internet, as well as the problem of cyberbullying, which has become widespread among young people and has a significant impact on the psychological well-being of young people.

5. The Philosophical and Ethical Dimension of the Digital Age. At the same time, the development of artificial intelligence raises new ethical challenges related to its use. One of the main issues is that artificial intelligence can replace human labour and affect employment. This could have serious economic and social impacts on society. In addition, artificial intelligence can create inequality in access to the latest technologies and skills, which adversely affects people who do not have access to them [17, p. 40].

Ethical issues in the digital environment are of relevance, as technology is developing rapidly, and new ethical challenges are emerging along with it. It is becoming an important task for society and scholars to understand how these changes affect our lives, interactions, and social norms. Digital ethics, which explores these issues, has become one of the key topics in the works of philosophers and futurists who seek to understand how technology is transforming our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

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Francis Fukuyama, a renowned futurist, examines trends in society and analyses in depth the role of technology in shaping our identity and the interaction between people and institutions. For him, the issue of digital ethics is one aspect of the overall process when technological progress affects our perceptions of ourselves, our dignity and place in society.

Fukuyama draws attention to the need for ethical use of artificial intelligence and automated systems. He emphasises that technology should serve the benefit of people, not become tools of manipulation or injustice. However, in his opinion, there is a risk that without proper ethical attention to this issue, we can get not only effective but also dangerous tools for society. The researcher calls on developers and technology companies to be aware of these risks and strive to ensure that artificial intelligence and machine learning are used responsibly, with respect for human rights and dignity [18, p. 37].

These problems are no longer just theoretical; they actively affect our real-life processes. Therefore, digital ethics is not only a subject of research, but also a vital component of our daily lives that we must take into account in order to ensure justice, equality and humanity in a world that is changing at a rapid pace.

One of the leading futurist philosophers who has devoted much attention to digital ethics is Nick Bostrom. In his writings, he explores the ethical issues associated with the development of artificial intelligence, robotics and other technologies. Bostrom argues that the growing power of technology can lead to significant ethical problems, such as threats to personal data and security, inequality and discrimination, and threats to human life and health [7, p. 201].

Alvin Toffler, an American sociologist and futurologist, known for his theories on the information society and technological changes on a global scale, in his book "A Future Shock" considers the ethical challenges arising from the development of digital technologies and the information society.

One of these challenges is the issue of personal data and security on the Internet. According to Toffler, the increase in the amount of personal information stored on the Internet can lead to ethical violations and unsafe use of this data. This can stand in the way of the development of the Internet economy and research that requires a large amount of personal data.

Another challenge is the issue of digital inequality and access to information. Digital inequality arises from unequal access to technology and the Internet, which can lead to a lag in the development and economy of countries and certain groups of people. It can also pose challenges to human rights to information and freedom of expression.

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In addition, Toffler draws attention to the challenges associated with intellectual property and cultural heritage in the digital world. In particular, the growing possibility of copying and disseminating information on the Internet may pose a threat to copyright and intellectual property. Also, the possibility of rapid dissemination of materials may lead to the loss of cultural heritage and historical monuments, as some materials may be lost or altered on the Internet.

Toffler notes the importance of developing ethics in the digital environment. According to him, the growth of information and technology requires an increase in ethical awareness in the use of these tools. For example, this may relate to data security, rules of interaction in social networks, and ethical responsibility in working with artificial intelligence [19, p. 90].

The ethical challenges of the digital age concern each of us. They determine what our future will look like in a world where technology is increasingly penetrating everyday life. To ensure that the digital space remains safe, fair and comfortable for everyone, an ongoing dialogue between scientists, educators, the public and technology companies is needed. Only by working together can we create an environment where technology helps people rather than threatens their privacy, security or moral values.

6. Virtual Education and Digital Skills. One of the most significant areas where digital technologies are changing our perceptions of what is possible is education. Virtual learning used to be just an interesting experiment, but now it has become an integral part of the educational process. This opens up new horizons: access to knowledge is no longer limited to the place of residence or the ability to attend lectures offline. But at the same time, questions arise: how to maintain the quality of education in the digital environment? How to avoid losing the live dialogue between students and teachers? How to teach not only facts, but also critical thinking, cooperation and empathy?

The education of the future is not just a set of digital tools, but a way to build a society where technology works for the benefit of people. And our task today is to make this world as human as possible.

Distance learning is becoming a real revolution in pedagogy. The use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) opens up new horizons for students. These technologies allow students to immerse themselves in a virtual environment and interact with it, even if they are physically in another place [20].

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Virtual reality (VR) creates virtual environments that can be used to simulate real-life situations. It is especially effective for training in medical, engineering, and other sciences. Augmented Reality (AR) allows virtual objects and information to be added to the real world, which can improve understanding of concepts and provide new learning opportunities. AR can be used to create interactive textbooks that interact with real objects and environments [21, p. 46-62].

Interactive video and gaming technologies simulate learning scenarios in which students can interact with the content, giving them the opportunity to solve problems and receive instant feedback. The creation of virtual scenarios and tasks where higher education students can apply knowledge in real-life situations contributes to the development of critical thinking and practical skills.

Virtual communities formed on the basis of virtual classrooms are a key element of global learning. They can bring together students, teachers, and experts from different parts of the world, providing an opportunity to network, share ideas, and collaborate on projects. Virtual forums, chats and shared resources create open spaces for discussion and interaction.

The use of artificial intelligence in virtual education creates a platform for an adaptive learning system. Algorithms can analyse students' progress and individual needs, providing personalised tasks and materials for optimal learning. Immersive technologies can collect data on student activity, allowing teachers and assessment systems to analyse progress and improve teaching methods.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) allow thousands of students to receive education simultaneously from renowned teachers and leading universities in different parts of the world, such as Prometheus, Coursera or Future Learn. This provides global access to high-quality education and opens up new opportunities for self-education.

Michio Kaiku is confident that the education of the future will no longer be based on memorisation. The necessary information will be easy to find instantly online, and people will have more time to analyse the facts. Online learning will be a common form of education. The education of the next 50 years will be mainly virtual universities, where learning will be based on a cloud-based system. Online universities are already becoming very popular, offering many interesting free courses. Soon, computers and Google Glass will be transformed into tiny lenses that allow you to download all the information you need. There are already augmented reality glasses that have this feature. Therefore, in a year or two, schoolchildren and students during

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exams will be able to easily search for answers to questions on the Internet: just blink and the necessary information will appear [22, p. 42].

The modern generation is facing new realities that force it to consider problems that have not yet been relevant. Society must prepare for life in a world that is constantly changing and can be seen as a "project". Education affects not only the current situation but also shapes the future, so the philosophy of education is constantly influenced by situational trends in educational policy. The vicissitudes of the modern educational process often lead to situations where it is difficult to predict the prospects of the desired future.

If the future of humanity is linked to the optimistic predictions of transhumanism, and science is used as an ally, then, as Michio Kaiku writes in his bestselling book The Physics of the Future, the future is in our hands: "The future is like a huge freight train rushing along the railway tracks in our direction. Behind this train - is the hard work of thousands of scientists who are inventing the future in their laboratories. You can hear the horn of this train. It proclaims: biotechnology, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, telecommunications. However, some people resist: "I'm too old. I will not comprehend this anymore. I'll just lie down on the tracks and let the train run me over." Meanwhile, young, energetic, ambitious people react differently: "Take me on this train! This is my future. This is my destiny. Let me take the driver's seat" [22, p. 393].

Since time immemorial, Yuval Noah Harari writes, life has been divided into two parts: a period of study, followed by a period of work. In the first part, you accumulated information and developed skills, in the second, you used them. Forget it. This schedule is over. "We have no idea what we will have to learn in 20 years. What we do know is that we will have to learn new things." Therefore, the best we can do is to prepare society for the constant updating of knowledge and skills [23].

Virtual education opens up new horizons, making learning more accessible, interactive and flexible. It blurs the boundaries between countries and cultures, allowing people from all over the world to learn together, exchange ideas, and create joint projects. Thanks to digital technologies, everyone can choose their own pace of learning, gain knowledge at a convenient time, and use modern tools to better absorb the material.

However, to truly take advantage of the full potential of virtual education, it is important to have digital skills. They help us not only to navigate the information space, but also to communicate, work and develop effectively. We can no longer imagine our lives without online communication, searching for information on the Internet, making electronic

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payments, or even socialising on social media. Digital skills give us confidence in the modern world, helping us to use technology for the benefit of ourselves and society.

Ultimately, the future is not just about new technologies, but about people who know how to use them to learn, develop themselves and improve their lives. And our task is to make this world not only technologically advanced, but also comfortable, safe and humane.

The development of digital technologies has dramatically changed the labour market, leading to the emergence of new professions and transforming existing ones. Most jobs now require at least basic digital skills combined with non-cognitive skills. The development of mobile technologies and cloud computing has established new forms of work organisation and led to the emergence of the third generation of virtual work, and the Covid-19 pandemic has made virtual work a reality for many. Therefore, digital skills are now not only desirable, but also necessary for success in any profession. Even professions that were traditionally considered "non-digital" now require a certain level of digital literacy.

In 2009, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics defined digital skills as "the ability to use digital devices, applications and networks to access and manage information" [24]. These skills allow you to create and share digital content, communicate and collaborate with others, solve problems and find creative opportunities. According to the Council of Europe's recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning, digital competence covers a wide range of skills that enable a person to use digital technologies confidently, critically and responsibly for learning, work and active participation in society.

It should be noted that digital skills are not only technical skills, such as the use of digital devices and software, but also the ability to think critically, analyse information, protect one's data on the Internet and use digital technologies effectively in all areas of life. Particular attention is paid to the ability to use digital technologies to support civic engagement, social inclusion and the achievement of personal and commercial goals. Digital skills are thus much more than just basic digital proficiency, as they also encompass critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The EU's Framework for the Digital Competence of Citizens (DigComp) defines a list of digital skills needed to succeed in today's digital world. These skills are essential for competitiveness in the labour market, effective communication, online shopping and learning. There are two main categories of digital skills: general skills, which are used in everyday life and at work (for example, using a PC, tablet or mobile device to work with email

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or the Internet) and professional skills, which are intended for ICT experts (the ability to develop applications or program). DigComp defines 4 skill levels: beginner, intermediate, advanced and highly specialised [25].

Digital skills can also be classified into different categories, depending on the area of application: 1) basic digital skills - for active participation of citizens in the digital society; 2) professional digital skills - for successful work, in particular in the digital economy; 3) expert digital skills - for ICT professionals and other digital experts in various industries; 4) pedagogical digital skills - for teaching and learning digital skills throughout life.

In 2021, the University of Edinburgh named the five most important digital skills for learning. These are effective literature and source searching, data management, communication, software use, and cybersecurity. Bubble added two more skills to this list, which were mentioned in a thematic survey of experts by the American company Salesforce - word processing and data visualisation [26, p. 611].

According to the European Commission, only 54% of Europe's population has the digital skills needed for today's digital world. This means that almost half of the population does not have sufficient skills to fully participate in the digital society. In 2021, one in six Europeans aged 16 to 74 had no digital skills at all, and one in four had only a low level of digital skills. The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI 2022) also showed that about 35% of European citizens do not have even basic digital skills [25].

According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, the level of digital skills of the population tends to grow steadily. This is evidenced by a decrease in the proportion of adults with no digital skills and an increase in the number of people with "basic" and higher skills. As of 2023, digital skills were possessed by: 93% of the adult population of Ukraine aged 18-70, which is 8% more than in 2019; 95% of adolescents aged 10-17; 99% of people with hearing impairments aged 18-59 (+15% in 4 years). There is also a positive trend in the growth of digital skills among the adult population. The proportion of people with below-basic skills decreased from 53% in 2019 to 40.4% in 2023. This indicates that more and more people are mastering basic digital skills.

During the study period (2019-2023), 38% of the adult population mastered advanced digital skills. This is also a positive indicator, as it shows that a significant part of the population not only has basic skills, but also wants to develop further and master more complex digital tools. Overall, there has beensignificant progress in the development of digital skills among the adult population over the past 4 years. The proportion of people with

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below-basic skills has decreased by 12.6%, while the proportion of people with advanced skills has increased by 12.5% [27].

Deep transformations are turning work into global work, and communication is becoming instantaneous. We can get information at any time of the day, which changes the way we live and interact. That is why digital skills are becoming extremely important: they help us not only to adapt to new conditions, but also to be successful at every stage of our lives. In a world where the labour market is changing at a breakneck pace, the ability to learn quickly and adapt to new technologies is becoming essential for everyone.

One of the most impressive and rapidly developing technologies is artificial intelligence. From working with large amounts of data to the ability to make complex decisions or interact with the world around us, artificial intelligence is doing things that seemed impossible just a few decades ago. Today, it is already having a significant impact on medicine, transport, manufacturing and many other areas, changing not only the way we work, but also the very idea of how we can live and work in the future.

However, one of the biggest questions this development raises is about consciousness and self-awareness. Can a machine have a consciousness like ours? This is not just a theoretical question - it is a question that directly affects our future as a society. On the one hand, we can believe that consciousness is something that is inherent only in living beings. On the other hand, there is a belief that the physical processes in the brain that enable consciousness can be replicated in artificial systems.

Regardless of whether artificial intelligence will ever be self-aware, we are already facing ethical and moral issues. After all, what will happen if a machine starts to understand its existence and influence the world around it? Can we allow the use of such technologies in situations where it could harm people? This poses an important challenge for us - to develop artificial intelligence in a way that serves the benefit of humanity rather than harm it.

Researchers believe that artificial intelligence cannot have consciousness and self-awareness, as they believe that these abilities are related to the biological nature of human mental activity. Other scientists believe that an intelligent machine can have consciousness and self-awareness because they believe that these abilities depend on certain physical processes, such as electrical signals in the brain. These researchers believe that if computers can have electrical signals that are similar to those in the human brain, then they can have consciousness and self-awareness [7].

However, regardless of whether an intelligent machine can have consciousness and self-awareness, the question of ethics and morality of

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using artificial intelligence technologies arises. If a machine is aware of its existence and interaction with the environment, questions may arise as to whether it can be used to solve tasks that may cause harm to human life and health.

For this reason, it is important to ensure that artificial intelligence is developed with ethical and moral standards. This can be beneficial and safe for human society. In addition, it is important to ensure a balanced development of artificial intelligence and human mental activity in order to preserve the main thing - human uniqueness and creativity [28].

It is known that the use of artificial intelligence can lead to some serious problems. For example, the automation of routine operations may lead to a reduction in the number of jobs held by people. People's privacy may also be violated through the collection and use of their personal data. In addition, Deepfakes technology can be used to create fake images and videos, which can lead to serious consequences. There is also a risk of using automated weapons that can target living objects without the control of human operators. In addition, artificial intelligence systems can make incorrect and biased decisions due to incorrect training data and algorithmic bias [29].

Indeed, the risks associated with artificial intelligence reflect mainly the actions and decisions of the people behind the development, training and application of these systems. This means that the responsibility for managing these risks lies with people who understand the capabilities and limitations of artificial intelligence. Therefore, it is important to ensure the ethical and responsible development of artificial intelligence technologies, as well as to ensure that a wide range of professionals and civil society organisations are included in discussions and decision-making on the use of these technologies.

The future of humanity depends on how artificial intelligence is used. There is a risk that artificial intelligence systems can be used for total control of people, which threatens to lead to loss of privacy and jobs, as well as automated weapons and falsely biased decisions due to algorithmic bias. However, there is also the possibility of using artificial intelligence systems to free people from routine and channel their creativity. We must understand that the responsibility for the use of artificial intelligence lies with people, and it is only our wisdom and understanding of the possible consequences that will determine which path of the future we choose [29].

This issue is of particular importance for new generations growing up in a world where technology is literally penetrating all spheres of life. Generation Z, alpha, and those who will emerge in the future are already born and raised in the digital age, for whom technology is not just a tool but

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an integral part of their existence. These generations not only observe the changes, but also actively use them, adapting the latest technologies to their everyday needs - in learning, creativity, and communication. However, the development of new technologies also brings new challenges: for example, a superficial perception of important aspects of life, a decrease in critical thinking, which can lead to a loss of depth in perceiving the world.

It is these generations that have the potential to become the driving force behind the development of ethical standards for the use of artificial intelligence. They can find a delicate balance between technology and preserving human uniqueness, creativity, and even emotional intelligence. The ability not only to adapt but also to preserve humanity in this technological world will be the key to a future that can be not only technologically advanced but also ethically mature.

But, as reality shows, the development of artificial intelligence also poses serious challenges. Automation certainly has its advantages, but it can also deprive people of their jobs, creating new social and economic inequalities. Technologies like Deepfake can turn tools for manipulation into a real threat to trust and truth. Privacy issues, the use of automated systems to make decisions without human intervention - these are all real threats that are already affecting our lives.

However, it is important to realise that these risks are not inevitable, as they arise from human decisions. Technology is a tool, and it's up to us to use it. We can create artificial intelligence that will make our lives easier, safer and more creative, but we need to set ethical boundaries. The challenge is not only to develop technologies, but also to develop our ability to use them responsibly, while keeping in mind our humanity.

As Klaus Schwab's research shows, as well as ethical approaches being developed within the UN and other international organisations, we must learn to build strategies for the development of artificial intelligence, focusing not only on efficiency but also on the good of humanity. Technology can and should serve people, not replace them [30].

Ivan Yefremov's prophetic novel The Hour of the Bull contains important reflections on the future of humanity and technology. The novel depicts two civilisations that resulted from different approaches to the development of technology. One of them is a world where technology is used for total control over humans, and the other is a world where technology promotes freedom of creativity and development. Although the novel was written more than half a century ago, its ideas are still relevant today [31].

Efremov warns us that if we do not preserve our individuality and freedom, technology can become a tool of control. But there is another

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possibility: we can use them for development, for making life easier, for enhancing our creativity. The choice is ours. How we interact with technology will determine what our future will be like [31].

And it is here that it is important that we as a society can maintain a balance between the use of the latest achievements and the preservation of our ethical principles and human values. This is the only way we can create a just and harmonious world where technology will serve the benefit of all people.

Conclusions. Society 5.0 is no longer a distant vision but a reality actively unfolding in the contemporary world. We are living in an era of accelerated technological transformation, where artificial intelligence, NBIC convergence, mixed reality, the metaverse, and digital competencies have become integral to everyday life. The critical factor shaping this new stage of civilization is not merely technological advancement but society's capacity to integrate innovation into culture, ethics, education, and interpersonal relations.

Humanity has always sought to expand the boundaries of possibility, and today it possesses tools that can not only enhance the quality of life but also redefine its very essence. The metaverse offers new dimensions of communication, creativity, and labor while simultaneously blurring the distinction between the real and the virtual. NBIC convergence provides unprecedented opportunities in medicine, science, and industry, yet it also raises profound ethical questions regarding human agency, identity, and responsibility.

Among the most significant dimensions of these transformations is education. Virtual and hybrid learning environments are reshaping access to knowledge and redefining the meaning of being an "educated person." In the digital era, the essential competencies extend beyond traditional literacy to include digital fluency, critical thinking, ethical awareness, and lifelong learning. Digital skills have become a prerequisite for full participation in social and professional life.

However, technological progress must be accompanied by a critical understanding of its consequences. The ethical challenges of digital civilization – privacy, data security, equitable access to technology, and responsible use of artificial intelligence–require urgent and coordinated responses. Innovation must serve humanity, not replace it. Achieving a sustainable balance between technological advancement and humanistic values is essential to ensuring social well-being and justice.

New generations–Z, Alpha, and digital natives–are growing up in an environment where technology shapes cognition, communication, and

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socialization. They demonstrate high adaptability, multimodal communication, and an intrinsic connection between physical and digital realities. This necessitates a paradigm shift in education: learning must be more interactive, personalized, and ethically grounded, fostering not only technological competence but also conscious and responsible engagement with digital environments.

The digital-born generation represents not merely a demographic shift but a new phase in human evolution. They embody immense potential for creativity and social transformation while simultaneously demanding greater attention to the ethical and humanitarian dimensions of technology. The future will depend on our collective ability to merge innovation with humanism, creating a digital civilization that is both technologically advanced and socially inclusive.

The study of Society 5.0 illustrates how digital technologies reshape work, education, communication, and even human perception of reality. While these processes introduce new inequalities and ethical dilemmas–such as limited access to digital infrastructure, erosion of privacy, and the changing nature of labor–they also open vast opportunities for human development. The path forward lies in cultivating digital ethics, promoting responsible AI, and designing educational systems that prepare individuals for a rapidly evolving world.

In essence, Society 5.0 embodies a new civilizational paradigm in which the harmony between humans and technology defines the trajectory of progress. Technologies must serve human flourishing rather than supplant it. Digital ethics, inclusivity, and education constitute the foundational principles of sustainable digital development. The future belongs to those who successfully unite innovation with humanity, ensuring not only technological sophistication but also moral integrity and social harmony in the age of intelligent technologies.

Funding. The author declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest. The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement. The author declare that no Generative AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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CONCLUSION

In the contemporary world, where reality is increasingly turning into a moving matrix of meanings, technologies, identities, and conflicts, human existence reveals itself as a space of radical openness and, at the same time, profound vulnerability. The human being of the twenty-first century appears in a state of continuous borderland – between past and future, between the bodily and the digital, between personal experience and global data flows, between the need to belong and the freedom to be other.

The space of modernity acquires the features of a frontier – not a geographical, but an existential one. It is a space of unstable boundaries, where there are no ready-made maps or guaranteed points of orientation, where identity is not inherited but constructed in constant motion. In this mobility, which can no longer be stopped, the human being enters a state of transgression – a crossing beyond one's own limits, a passage into the unknown, into a new and at times uncomfortable space that simultaneously threatens and promises. As contemporary philosophy of the borderland emphasizes, crossing the boundary is not an act of destruction but an act of the birth of a new mode of existence: *in losing what is stable, the subject gains a chance to discover what is authentic*.

The newest sociocultural and political metamorphoses not only change the contexts of life but also reformat the very anthropological architectonics of the modern human being. Increasingly, the human lives in a state of existential interspatiality, in which the world ceases to be an ordered background and becomes a structure with shifting parameters. The lifeworld – that which once served as the unconditional foundation of human experience – is now prone to splitting, fragmentation, and reconfiguration by digital flows, migration routes, political wars, and information regimes.

In this situation, the encounter with the Other acquires special significance. It is no longer only an event of communication or cultural difference; it shapes subjectivity itself. The Other – a stranger, neighbor, migrant, interlocutor, digital avatar, or algorithm – becomes a mirror in which the individual attempts to discern their own contours. In this process, hybrid forms of being are born: *double, multiple, networked identities; flexible, open models of selfhood; a performative "I" that exists at the intersection of cultural codes*.

We may therefore assert that the central phenomenon of modernity is multiplicity – the multiplicity of forms of knowledge, models of identity, modes of communication, political meanings, and spiritual orientations.

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Multiplicity is not chaos; it is the new logic of a world in which every structure is subject to revision and every order has its own limits. The boundary is not an end but a *moment of transition*, not a prohibition but a threshold situation in which the true scope of human freedom is revealed.

It is precisely in these places – in the cracks in what is established, *the ruptures between worlds, the invisible joints between cultures, the critical zones of coexistence, the informational and cognitive breaks* – that new horizons for understanding human existence are born. Borderland ceases to be an exceptional situation: it becomes the norm of the existential condition, a figure of modernity, a universal experience of the human being in a globalized and digital world.

Life at the boundary becomes the fundamental anthropological experience. And it is this experience that defines the new ontology of the human being: *the human as a being of the borderland, as a subject who simultaneously chooses and undergoes, overcomes and creates, destroys and rebuilds themselves in the process of transitions*.

In this world of multiplicity and borderland, where the human being repeatedly finds themselves in a space of transition, existential tension becomes particularly acute – a tension provoked not only by external changes but also by an inner imbalance between needs, values, and the real possibilities of satisfying them. The contemporary sociocultural space does not merely complicate the structure of life; it changes the very logic of human existence, conditioning a different configuration of needs and meanings.

The human being finds themselves in a situation that Karl Jaspers called a limit situation – a state in which familiar explanations lose their force, and the provision of basic conditions for survival no longer guarantees inner stability. The existential challenges of modernity are not reducible to markers of economic or physical well-being; they bring to the fore questions of dignity, freedom, spiritual autonomy, and the capacity for self-understanding. Limit situations today are not an exception but a mode of life: wars, technological ruptures, social cataclysms, information flows, cultural mixtures – all this shapes a new topology of human experience, in which criticality and uncertainty become constant companions of existence.

It is for this reason that the person of today is compelled to reconsider their own hierarchy of needs, discovering levels deeper than those described by traditional social or psychological models. Basic needs – security, safety, belonging – no longer guarantee a sense of meaning, identity, or inner integrity. The culture of consumption, which promised to fill the existential void, is gradually revealing its incapacity: symbolic goods, status roles, and the appearance of success do not provide spiritual fullness. On the contrary,

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they often intensify feelings of narrowness, disproportion, and self-dispersion.

In this context, the need for spiritual development becomes particularly important – the need to seek an answer to the question of what truly determines the quality of human existence. The significance of such dimensions as moral sensitivity, the capacity for empathy, mastery of one's inner freedom, and the ability to accept responsibility in situations of uncertainty grows. The need for identity ceases to be a sociological category – it turns into an existential imperative, without the fulfillment of which the human being loses inner support and the capacity to act.

Contemporary crises – war, the inflation of information, the breakdown of traditional institutions, the exacerbation of global inequalities – make it evident that the human being is not only a biological or social creature but also a spiritual one. It is precisely the spiritual dimension that becomes the level at which new criteria of value and new vectors of meaning are formed. In a world of constant changes, where social roles are unstable and cultural frameworks fluid, the human being seeks integrity not outside but within themselves, in that which defines their uniqueness and responsibility – in the capacity to reflect, to empathize, to build an inner support, to find equilibrium between freedom and connectedness with the world.

Such an anthropological shift means that modernity is forming a different model of the subject – the subject of inner work, a subject who must learn to maintain their own stability under conditions of external instability. The human being can no longer rely solely on traditional forms of morality, social order, or cultural memory; they must rethink them, adapt them to new conditions, or even recreate them anew.

And it is precisely this inner work – this capacity to pass through limit states and to find meanings at the transitional points of existence – that becomes the most important characteristic of contemporary subjectivity. Where old structures collapse, where habitual order disappears, the human being is called to restore harmony between needs and values, between the material and the spiritual, between personal autonomy and communal responsibility.

Thus, modernity demands not only adaptation but also a revaluation of life orientations. If spiritual needs were previously perceived as the highest but optional level of human development, today they become the foundation of resilience and a condition for preserving humanity. In a world where constant shocks have become the norm, it is precisely the spiritual dimension that ensures the ability not to dissolve in chaos, not to lose oneself,

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not to impoverish one's existence to the level of functional reactions to external stimuli.

For this reason, modern transformations require the formation of a new culture of selfhood, one that unites sensitivity to one's own needs with the ability to go beyond them, to overcome inner inertia, to free oneself from imposed roles, and to make a profound existential choice. In this choice, a new anthropology is born – an anthropology of responsible freedom, spiritual autonomy, and inner dignity.

As modernity plunges ever deeper into digital reality, transformations in the sphere of identity, knowledge, and social interaction acquire unprecedented intensity. The human being finds themselves in a multilayered information environment, where every dimension of existence – from the individual to the global – moves to another level of complexity. In this environment, crisis is not an anomaly; it becomes a method of access to new truths, a way of testing the limits of identity and cognitive capacities.

Contemporary identity is formed in a space where the traditional integrity of the subject disappears: it is torn between multiple discourses, roles, symbolic obligations and temptations, between the aspiration for liberation and the invisible pressure of social forces. Algorithms, networked structures, and discursive practices create a situation in which the human being simultaneously constructs themselves and is constructed by external instances of power – the state, the community, the media, technological platforms. Therefore, the crisis of identity appears not as a mere loss of stability but as *a symptom of a new configuration of subjectivity*, born in the intersecting field of power, technologies, and self-knowledge.

This shift is accompanied by a radical restructuring of the very structure of knowledge. In the digital era, knowledge is increasingly detached from its classical ontological and epistemological foundations. It ceases to be the result of human experience, gradually turning into the product of algorithmic calculations. Data streams become autonomous, and their processing becomes a process that cannot always be reproduced or explained by human consciousness. This creates a new episteme in which the phenomenon of the "black box" – opaque neural networks and machine learning models – challenges the very idea of knowledge as a meaningful interpretation of the world.

The human being risks losing their monopoly on intellectual operations: more and more processes – from forecasting to analysis – occur beyond their direct control. The question arises: *can that which is not accessible to human interpretation be considered knowledge?* In this new informational order, the danger of "epistemic incapacity" grows – a

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condition in which the human being can no longer guarantee the reliability or comprehensibility of the knowledge produced by artificial systems. At the same time, this very situation opens the way to a new type of thinking, where critical reflection becomes no less important than algorithmic speed.

Yet digital transformations encompass not only the domain of individual subjectivity and knowledge; they radically change the structure of social spaces as well. The city – material and digital at once – becomes a laboratory of a new type of sociality. Here, in the network nodes of communication, at the crossroads of cultures, in flows of data and movements, a new form of social coexistence is born. The contemporary city is transformed into a *smart space* in which infrastructure merges with algorithms, in which the interactions of inhabitants are moderated by platforms, and in which the clear boundary between culture and technology disappears.

Under such conditions, the issue of interculturality acquires a fundamentally new resonance. It is no longer merely a policy of recognition or tolerance; it becomes a way of survival in a multidimensional reality where people with different experiences, histories, and values are compelled to co-create a common space. Intercultural interaction moves from the plane of abstract multiculturalism to practices of coexistence that require not only acceptance but also *an active encounter*, dialogue, the capacity to understand the other under conditions of increasing technosocial complexity.

However, digital cities also carry new risks: algorithmic segregation, information bubbles, digital inequality, and the shrinking of physical spaces of shared experience. Algorithms can not only unite but also divide – imperceptibly, quietly, yet deeply. Therefore, the future of intercultural coexistence depends on whether cities can develop a balance between technological efficiency and social integration, between innovation and ethics, between rationality and humanity.

Thus, we can see that the digital age does not merely transform the environment of human existence – it changes the very logic of the formation of identity, the structure of knowledge, and the modes of social being-together. Modernity increasingly resembles a complex ecosystem in which social, cultural, and technological processes cannot be separated. They form a single, constantly moving matrix in which the human being must learn to live, think, and interact without losing the capacity for critical reflection and moral choice.

For this reason, the main challenge is not technological breakthrough, but the necessity of preserving human subjectivity in a world where increasingly it is technologies that seek to speak in place of the human. Only

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under the condition of combining intellectual sensitivity, cultural openness, and ethical awareness can we overcome the dangers of the digital age and turn it into a space of development rather than alienation. And it is precisely in this – in the ability to harmonize human nature with the rapidly changing digital reality – that one of the key meanings of contemporary humanism emerges.

The current civilizational shifts in the sphere of politics, technologies, and global interaction reveal yet another important perspective of analysis, where the social and the political intertwine with the technological, and humanity enters a phase increasingly described as the emergence of a new digital civilization – Society 5.0. This is not merely a society of innovation or automation but a profound cultural and anthropological rupture in which not only the tools of activity change, but the very principles of social order. In such a world, the human being is no longer the central point of coordinates, no longer the absolute subject of history. They become an element of a complex ecosystem in which artificial intelligence, information networks, cyber-physical systems, and decision-making machines turn into active participants of the social process.

This new reality makes it evident that the question of the future cannot be considered outside the framework of ethics. If artificial intelligence is capable of analyzing, predicting, and even learning autonomously, a fundamental dilemma arises: *can a machine be a bearer of moral responsibility?* Can algorithms make decisions that affect human lives without the participation of human consciousness? Contemporary debates show that regardless of whether artificial intelligence is capable of self-awareness, the space of human responsibility cannot be delegated to machines. On the contrary, the more powerful technologies become, the more important the human being becomes as a source of ethical judgment and a guarantor of dignity and morality.

But it is precisely here that the paradox of our era lies: by increasing technical capacities, we simultaneously strengthen the vulnerability of the human world. Automated decisions may be effective, yet they are capable of threatening human rights, privacy, equality, and justice. Deep fakes, manipulative information campaigns, cyberthreats, algorithmic biases, autonomous weapons systems – all these phenomena undermine traditional political institutions and create new regimes of power that operate imperceptibly yet radically. Contemporary democracy depends less and less on citizen participation and more on who controls algorithms, data, and the information environment. This leads to the emergence of a new official of modernity – an *algorithmic curator of reality*, who determines what people

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see, how they think, what they argue about, and which decisions they consider obvious.

Such processes become particularly dramatic under conditions of war, when information technologies turn into instruments of manipulation, pressure, disorientation, and the destruction of social cohesion. The Ukrainian experience shows that war in the twenty-first century is not only a war for territories, but also a struggle for cultural memory, for the right to historical truth, for the integrity of political identity. European integration in such a situation becomes not merely a political course but a form of value-based choice, an attempt to preserve humanity in a space where it is systematically targeted for destruction – both through physical aggression and information terror.

Transformations of the political sphere reveal a deep change in the very nature of power. Whereas in the past power was predominantly vertical and institutional, it is now acquiring a networked, distributed, algorithmized form. The human being in the digital world appears not only as a citizen, but as a user, as data, as an object of prediction. They must learn to be not merely a receiver of information, but a subject capable of critical resistance, of ethical and intellectual self-assertion. In this new world, political subjectivity includes such traits as digital literacy, cultural identity, the ability to recognize manipulation, resilience to information attacks, and the capacity to preserve moral autonomy amid digital temptations.

At the same time, contemporary civilization requires not only defense against technological threats but also the creation of new models of coexistence. Digital culture can become not only an environment of fragmentation but also a space of inclusion, cooperation, and intercultural dialogue. It opens the possibility of forming inclusive social spaces that go beyond traditional political structures. Networked communities, digital cities, and international platforms can create a new configuration of solidarity that has the potential to unite people across borders and historical differences. However, this is possible only under the condition that technological rationality is combined with humanistic values – with respect for freedom, dignity, and cultural uniqueness.

Thus, contemporary society faces the necessity of rethinking the very concept of civilizational development. Progress can no longer be measured solely by indices of innovation or the speed of implementing digital solutions. It must be assessed by the capacity of society to protect the human being – their creativity, their right to error and development, their identity and dignity. The future cannot be built on the logic of control or technocratic

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efficiency; it must be grounded in the idea of human coexistence, where technologies work not over the human, but together with the human.

In this perspective, the digital era becomes not only a challenge but also a chance – a chance to build a world in which innovation is harmonized with ethics, in which political integration is combined with cultural diversity, in which technological power is complemented by responsibility, and digital rationality by wisdom. Such a world requires a new humanism – not one that opposes the human to the machine, but one that is capable of opening new horizons of humanity under the conditions of technological revolution.

Summing up the study, we may state that modernity appears as an era of profound civilizational shifts in which existential, sociocultural, technological, and political processes are intertwined. The human being finds themselves in conditions of radical instability – in a world where identity becomes multiple, knowledge turns into an algorithmic resource, technologies acquire the traits of co-acting agents, and political structures reconsider their own boundaries and forms of legitimation.

In this complex reality, the significance of the subject's inner work increases: the capacity to preserve integrity amid turbulence, to find meaning in limit situations, to restore moral autonomy in the face of the challenges of the digital and global world. The future is not reducible to technical progress or information abundance; it is determined by whether the human being will be able to preserve their spiritual core, their capacity for responsibility, empathy, and creativity.

There arises a need for a new, responsible humanism – one that acknowledges the power of technologies but does not subordinate human dignity to them; that accepts the multiplicity of the world but does not allow it to destroy the inner support of the individual; that recognizes the complexity of modernity and, precisely within this complexity, opens up space for development, solidarity, and meaningful coexistence.

In this sense, the future of humanity depends not on the speed of civilizational change but on the capacity of the human being to remain its responsible subject – a creator, and not a product, of the epoch.

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SOCIOCULTURAL AND POLITICAL METAMORPHOSES IN THE ERA OF IDENTITY COMPETITION

Monograph

Number of copies: 300
First printing: November 27, 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.36690/SPMEIC
Distributed worldwide by Scientific Center of Innovative Research OÜ office@scnchub.com
Full text available online at https://scnchub.com

ISBN 978-9916-9389-8-0 (pdf)