

SCTMG 2020**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the
Context of Modern Globalism»****UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE IN THE FACE OF GLOBAL
CHALLENGES AND THREATS**

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Abstract

Globalization has created new challenges and threats. The article identifies threats and challenges of globalization that have the most devastating effect on cultural and natural heritage. It analyzes efforts of the international community to minimize them. The article studies economic, foreign policy, environmental and cultural threats to the world cultural heritage. Heritage sites can be destroyed as a result of environmental and technological challenges, extremist movements and wars, uncontrolled urbanization, predatory exploitation of nature and cultural objects for commercial purposes, and rapid development of international tourism. All these factors have a negative impact on cultural and natural heritage sites. The problem of protection of natural and cultural heritage is of institutional and documentary nature. The UNESCO international organization deals with World Heritage issues, compiling a list of endangered objects of cultural and natural significance. It combines international efforts to preserve and popularize them because of their special cultural, historical or environmental significance. Damage or extinction of cultural objects is tragic for the world heritage. Due to new dangers, the entire international community must participate in the protection of the natural and cultural heritage sites. Problems that cause irreparable harm to the world heritage are due to human activities. It is necessary to develop measures that could be a response to the problems of cultural heritage protection in the context of globalization. It is necessary to make people respect cultural and natural heritage and inform them about dangers threatening cultural objects.

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Keywords: UNESCO, world cultural heritage, threats, challenges, conservation, globalization.



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1. Introduction

There are several challenges and threats that damage and destroy natural objects or cultural monuments.

Firstly, these are economic threats of globalization. They are manifested in the rapidly widening gap between rich (countries of the North) and poor (countries of the South) countries which causes global inequality. The uneven development of the North and the South, the widening gap in the living standards, an increase in the number of people living below the poverty line creates the basis for conflicts between them.

Secondly, these are foreign policy threats and challenges of globalization. These are manifested in such dangerous consequences as nationalism, right-wing radicalism, international terrorism, rejection of Western influence, Western culture and Western civilization as a whole. The result is inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts and wars. The problem of wars causes the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction which threaten security of mankind, including information security.

Thirdly, these are environmental challenges and threats: climate change and global warming, environmental pollution, depletion of the ozone layer and water resources, rising sea levels, disappearance of biological species and raw materials, energy problems, etc. which can cause environmental disasters.

Fourth, these are cultural global challenges and threats: the total spread of mass culture entailing the unification of tastes, perceptions, preferences, commercialization of culture and cultural expansion. The cultural unification caused by the globalization of culture is in conflict with national cultural traditions. Local cultural traditions are eroding, the existence of “small” cultures is threatened. There is a threat to cultural and linguistic diversity. Globalization causes intensification of cultural contacts, enhances the dominance of some value systems over others. As a result, cultural inequality between countries and peoples deepens, they are divided into “cultural leaders” and “cultural outsiders”.

2. Problem Statement

The approach to cultural and natural heritage is complex. The negative impact of threats and challenges of globalization on the cultural and natural heritage of mankind is diverse. In 1972, the UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The Convention proclaims the need to unite efforts of the world community and governments to preserve and popularize cultural and natural values due to their special cultural, historical or environmental significance. (UNESCO, 1972). Currently, 193 countries are parties to this convention. Since 1978, UNESCO has been compiling a World Heritage List, which includes the most valuable objects created by man or nature.

However, there is a list of objects which are at risk. This list includes objects of cultural and natural heritage that are in serious danger due to the improper care, construction and other works, urban growth, tourism development, abandonment, natural disasters (fires landslides, volcanic eruptions, floods, etc.), man-made disasters, armed conflicts. The inclusion of an object in this List means the need for immediate actions to preserve it (Battini, 2011).

The first monument was included in the List of Endangered Objects in 1979. It was the natural and cultural-historical region of Kotor (Montenegro) removed from this List after a series of restoration works. However, the subsequent dynamics of the inclusion of cultural and natural heritage monuments in the list is disappointing. If during the 1980s, only 9 objects were included in the List, in the 1990s, their number was 23. This was facilitated by a series of military conflicts in Yugoslavia (1991–2001) and Congo (1998–2002), the NATO war in Afghanistan (2001–2014).

An even more depressing picture was observed at the beginning of the XXI century: since 2000, 115 monuments of natural and cultural heritage have been included in the List of objects under threat. The largest number of monuments appeared in the list in 2012 (5 objects), 2013 (7 objects) and 2016 (8 objects). The wars in Iraq (2003–2011), Libya and Syria caused a heavy damage to many world heritage sites. The largest number of monuments are located in countries affected by war activities – the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5), Libya (5) and Syria (6).

There are several groups of global challenges faced by the World Cultural Heritage.

2.1. Uneven development of the northern and southern countries and global inequality

One of the main problems of globalization – "global inequality of the North and the South, which affects the cultural and natural heritage. It is unequal opportunities of the poor and rich countries. The former are not able to protect the World Heritage Sites, lack financial resources to maintain cultural and natural heritage sites. As a result, many monuments located in these countries were included in the List of World Heritage Sites under threat: the ruins of Kilwa Kisivani and Songa Manara in Tanzania, the fortifications of Porto Belo and San Lorenzo in Panama, the Basilica of the Nativity of Christ on the West Bank, Mtskheta in Georgia, the Jamaican minaret in Afghanistan.

World heritage sites are unequally distributed in the UNESCO List. Almost half of all World Heritage Sites (47.2 %) are located in Europe and North America, i.e. in the developed countries, while in Africa, there are only 8.5 % of objects. At the same time, in the List of objects under threat, one can observe the predominance of monuments located in the African region (30 %). In Europe, the number of such monuments is 8 %. The data indicate that the developed countries are making greater efforts to maintain the monuments included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Many objects located in the poor countries of Africa or Asia are under threat due to the lack of government support, a large number of political, economic and social problems, poaching, instability and permanent armed conflicts.

Based on the principle of cultural equality, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee seeks to balance the presence of monuments in developing and developed countries so that the imbalance between the countries of the North and the South is not noticeable. For example, the 41st session of UNESCO held in 2017, included monuments located in Angola and Eritrea into the World Heritage List. The first object, Mbansa-Congo, is the ruins of the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Congo in Angola, a unique monument to the political and spiritual Kingdom of Congo, one of the largest states in South Africa from the 14th to 19th centuries. Another object – Smera – is the capital of Eritrea, which received the title of the modernist city of Africa. In the second half of the 19th century, it was a military outpost of the Italian

colonial power, and since 1935, a large-scale construction program was carried out according to the Italian rationalistic architectural style of the modern era. (UNESCO, 2017).

2.2. Military conflicts and international terrorism

At the beginning of the XXI century, the destruction of monuments as a result of wars has become large scale and cynic. Many countries of the Middle East and northwest Africa became the scene of civil or religious wars, as a result of which an irreparable damage was inflicted on the natural and cultural heritage. Wars are often accompanied by “wars of cultures,” which lead to the deliberate infliction of harm to “alien” cultural achievements.

A feature of the beginning of the XXI century was the rapid growth of terrorist threats as a result of which many monuments of cultural heritage were damaged. Terrorists defiantly destroy cultural monuments. The first victim of international terrorism was the cultural objects of Afghanistan. In 2001, militants of the Taliban terrorist organization blew up two giant Buddha statues (6th century AD), 55 and 37 meters high, which were part of the Buddhist monasteries in the Bamiyan Valley. The Taliban leader Mohammed Omar wanted to put pressure on the world community and destroy the “pagan” statues. The Taliban completely looted and partially destroyed the collections of the National Museum of Afghanistan. (Ba, 2019)

In 2002, under the auspices of UNESCO, the International Coordinating Committee for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Afghanistan was established. The Committee's recommendations help the government develop measures for the long-term protection of heritage. In 2013, UNESCO and the governments of Italy and Afghanistan launched a project aimed at restoring Shahr-i-Zohak (Red City), a fortress that defended the entrance to Bamiyan in the XII-XIII centuries. The project involves the joint cooperation on heritage management and raising awareness of other UNESCO World Heritage sites in Afghanistan (Herat Citadel, Mosallah complex, Babur's garden, etc.) (UNESCO, 2015).

Unfortunately, Afghanistan is not the only country where cultural monuments were destroyed by terrorists. In 2006, during the civil war in Iraq, militants of the al-Qaeda terrorist group bombed one of the Shiite shrines – the Al-Askari mosque erected in 944. As a result, the golden dome of the mosque was completely destroyed.

In 2015–2016, the cultural monuments of Iraq were destroyed. The militants of the Islamic State terrorist organization bulldozed the ancient Assyrian city Nimrud. The temple library was destroyed as well. The famous museum in Mosul its exhibits were destroyed. The famous statues of winged bulls (9th century BC), a symbol of the Assyrian kingdom, and the "Gate of God", through which the entrance to the Assyrian city Nineveh passed were also destroyed. The main library of Mosul was blown up, and about 10,000 books and 700 rare manuscripts were lost.

International terrorism has become a new challenge to the entire world community. It has terrible consequences, including for the cultural heritage. UNESCO is currently developing a special strategy for the formation of special forces to save natural and cultural monuments in the zone of military operations or natural disasters.

2.3. Environmental problems

In the context of globalization, environmental problems are exacerbating. The intensification of economic activities has a negative impact on natural and cultural objects. Climate change and global warming, drought and an increase in the duration of forest fire seasons, air pollution, worsening weather conditions, and rising sea levels — this is an incomplete list of the most pressing environmental problems caused by globalization.

In 2017, UNESCO published a list of natural and cultural heritage sites that are threatened due to the aggravation of environmental problems. Among these objects there are nature reserves and historical places. Thus, an increase in the duration of forest fires caused by global warming threatens the oldest national park – Yellowstone National Park in the United States. Global warming can reduce forest areas, which, in turn, may cause the extinction of the impenetrable Bwindi forests in Uganda, which are the habitat of mountain gorillas. Greenland Fjord Ilulissat also suffers from global warming. As a result of climate changes, Komodo National Park in Indonesia, Huascarán National Park in Peru, Galapagos Islands in Ecuador, Coral Islands Chelbacheb in Palau, Coro in Venezuela, the ruins of Chan Chan in Peru may disappear.

In 2017, at the 23rd UN Climate Conference in Bonn, a report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature on Climate Change was presented. According to it, every fourth object from the UNESCO World Heritage List is under threat due to global warming. Global warming is a particular threat to coral reefs, glaciers and wetlands. Moreover, the number of vulnerable facilities has doubled over the past three years (from 2014 to 2017). Experts noted a critical threat level for 7 % of UNESCO sites, including the Everglades National Park in the USA and Lake Turkana in Kenya (IUCN, 2017).

The deterioration of weather conditions, storms, earthquakes, floods, soil erosion negatively affect heritage sites. These factors jeopardize the existence of such cultural sites as Rice Terraces in the Philippine Cordillera, Stonehenge in England, Rapanui National Park on Easter Island in Chile. A crushing earthquake in Nepal destroyed the heritage of Kathmandu. In particular, the 60-meter tower of Dharahara (built in 1832) was damaged.

UNESCO experts express concern about the fate of all these sites and urge national governments to develop more stringent environmental standards to protect nature and cultural monuments (Holleland et al., 2019).

2.4. Economic activities

Human activities have a negative impact on the world cultural and natural heritage objects. The overwhelming majority of UNESCO monuments are in danger as a result of economic activities. The anthropogenic factor has become a real threat to the world heritage. The Elbe River valleys in the vicinity of Dresden were excluded from the World Heritage List. The monument of the historical landscape “Reserve of the Arabian antelope in Oman” was excluded from the World Heritage List due to the poaching and oil production (Brown et al., 2019).

The priority of the economic factor before preserving the cultural and natural heritage has led to the inclusion of Liverpool in England, Abu Men in Egypt, Zabid in Yemen, the saltworks Humberstone

and Santa Laura in Chile into the List of endangered cities. In 2017, the historical center of Vienna was added to the “disturbing” List of UNESCO.

As a result of economic transformations of the 1990s, there was a threat of inclusion of the historical center of St. Petersburg into the List due to the project aimed at constructing “Okhta-center” opposite the Smolny Cathedral. In 2005, the Administration of St. Petersburg prepared a draft document “Clarification of the boundaries and protection regimes of the central districts of St. Petersburg”. UNESCO experts recommended the city government to strengthen “the preservation of St. Petersburg, which is of outstanding global significance” (St Petersburg Government, 2005).

Economic activities threatening UNESCO heritage sites are carried out in other regions of Russia. Exploration is carried out in the Komi Virgin Forests reserve; nearly 2,000 hectares have been removed from the Yugyd Va National Park. The Baikal Pulp and Paper Mill is working on the territory of the UNESCO natural site “Lake Baikal”, discharging wastewater into the unique lake. Problems of Lake Baikal pollution were emphasized in the decisions by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

In 2016, UNESCO experts published a report on how human activities which affect the World Heritage Sites. The results are disappointing: 114 out of 229 objects located in 96 countries face serious threats due to the oil and gas industry, deforestation, construction and other industrial activities.

2.5. The problem of commercialization of cultural and natural heritage

In the context of globalization and integration processes, tourism is one more threat to cultural heritage. It has been considered as a natural disaster, a threat to unique cultural monuments and natural heritage. During the compilation of the UNESCO List, scientists and well-known experts in the field of cultural heritage said that the inclusion of an object in the List increases the prestige of territories and their institutions, provides a significant revival of the tourism market. Consequently, the development of domestic and inbound tourism affects the economy, contributes to new jobs, creates a favorable investment climate. However, cities and territories whose cultural and natural heritage is protected face the unregulated and uncontrolled flow of tourists which has a negative impact on safety of objects and the social and economic climate of those unique places where cultural and natural monuments are located. (Adie et al., 2018)

Tourism is an acute problem in Venice, a city whose unique historical and cultural monuments and the entire historical center were included in the UNESCO List in 1987. In 2016, the inhabitants of Venice took part in protests. The demonstrators cried: “We do not want to leave the city, we want to live here, we ask the city to help us stay in Venice.” Local residents said that, “the population is being reduced by about one thousand people per year. At the same time, Venice receives more than 20 million tourists and almost the entire infrastructure is aimed at meeting their needs. The Venetians complain about too high prices for goods and services that are set for tourists (Uzbekova, 2016).

The protest against tourists is directly related to the problem of preservation of unique historical and cultural monuments. The situation with the Taj Mahal – a “visiting card” of India – is indicative. The Ministry of Tourism of India said that “the interior of the mausoleum was destroyed by the constant flow of tourists. The architectural monument lost its snow-white color. The Indian authorities increased the

cost of entrance tickets and reduced the time spent in the Taj Mahal, but these measures cannot radically change the situation.

Natural objects also suffer from tourists. In 2011–2012, the Torres del Paine nature reserve located in Chilean Patagonia was engulfed in fire. As a result, the area of more than 10 thousand hectares burned out, the reserve's vegetation was destroyed, residential buildings burned down, and local residents died. The cause of this terrible fire was an unquenched cigarette butt thrown by a tourist. Now the reserve is being restored (Canale et al., 2019).

Thus, tourism has an ambiguous effect on the preservation and popularization of the world cultural and natural heritage, and the risks should be taken into account by countries seeking to submit natural and cultural monuments to the List of authoritative international organizations of UNESCO.

3. Research Questions

The main questions of the study:

1. What threats and challenges of globalization have the most detrimental effect on the objects of cultural and natural heritage?
2. What is the effect of challenges and threats of globalization on world heritage sites?
3. What role does UNESCO play in protecting World Heritage objects?
4. What are the prospects for the protection of world cultural and natural heritage in the context of globalization?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to determine which threats and challenges of globalization have the most detrimental effect on the world heritage sites and what measures are being taken to minimize this impact.

5. Research Methods

The research methodology is based on the value approach to the world heritage based on its legislative regulation, in particular, the 1972 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The research is based on the axiological approach developed by Howard (2003), Likhachev (1987), Lotman and Uspensky (1971), Piotrovsky (1976), and Flier (1999) which define the World Heritage as objects that should be preserved for future use. The works by Falser (2015) and Sandis (2014) consider the World Heritage as a defining aspect of various civilization missions and the ethical basis of modern civilization.

The systematic approach to the protection of cultural and natural heritage and the forecasting method were used to develop scenarios for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage in the face of global challenges and threats.

6. Findings

The List of Endangered Nature and Culture Monuments contains 54 monuments located in 33 countries, including Afghanistan, Austria, Great Britain, Venezuela, Guinea, Honduras, Georgia, Egypt, Israel, Indonesia, Iraq, Yemen, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Palestine, Panama, Peru, Senegal, Serbia (Kosovo), USA, Tanzania, Uganda, Central African Republic, Chile and Ethiopia. Most of the objects are located in developing countries or countries with a high level of economic, social and political problems. The first objects were included in the List in 1978–1979, but the overwhelming majority of objects were included in the late 1990s – early 2000s, i.e. in the era of globalization, military conflicts in Libya, Iraq and Syria which caused an irreparable damage to the cultural heritage of these countries.

The inclusion of objects in the List requires measures to preserve World Heritage Sites using financial resources allocated according to the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. However, despite the collective efforts, the general development trend of this list can be unambiguously characterized as progressive growth. There are a number of examples of successful restoration works, which made it possible to exclude Bam and its cultural landscape in Iran, the fortress city Bakus with the Shirvanshahs palace and the maiden's tower in Azerbaijan, and a number of other objects from the List. But the lack of global efforts cannot change the general trend.

The global challenges and threats have prompted UNESCO to take decisive measures to protect World Heritage sites from damaging effects of globalization. In 2015, a number of significant events took place. Assisted by UNESCO, about 50 countries adopted the UN Security Council resolution prohibiting trade in cultural objects from Iraq and Syria. In order to promote the idea of the need for collective responsibility for the World Heritage and attract young people to its protection, UNESCO launched the #Unite4Heritage global initiative on social networks.

After photographs of the destruction of the Syrian Palmyra were published, Italy suggested the creation of a special department for the protection of cultural property in emergency situations – “blue helmets of culture”. The department was created in February 2016 within the agreement between UNESCO and Italy. Experts in the field of cultural heritage and Italian carabinieri specializing in the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property work there. In the same year, the United Arab Emirates and France supported by UNESCO held an international conference on the protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones in Abu Dhabi. The issues of countering the illicit trade in cultural property were discussed. (Foradori, 2017).

In 2017, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2347, which officially recognized the protection of cultural heritage as one of the main aspects of security. According to Irina Bokova, who headed UNESCO, this document became the basis for a “new vision”, a “new cultural landscape” and a “new global understanding” of the relationship between the world and heritage. In particular, the resolution contains a proposal to create an international fund and a network of “safe zones” to ensure the protection of threatened cultural heritage in conflict zones. The significance of the document is due to the fact that it considers all possible actions that jeopardize the cultural heritage during conflicts (UNSCR, 2017).

7. Conclusion

Global challenges and threats have dire consequences for man and the natural and cultural world heritage. Cultural and natural heritage is the most important factor in the sustainable development of society. Cultural and natural heritage has a positive effect on job growth, investment, development of cultural and ecological tourism, small business, etc. Cultural and natural heritage is important for the education of the young generation. The preservation of cultural and natural heritage contributes to the development of international cooperation.

Attention should be paid to the regulation of the problem at the international and national levels, taking into account new challenges and threats. Moreover, it is necessary to ensure the correlation of the national legislation with international experience and UNESCO acts. Special attention should be paid to the protection of monuments.

The cultural heritage is a reflection of brilliant achievements of many generations, artistic, material history of mankind, which stores unique information. Within the educational programs, it is necessary to develop courses, educational initiatives that popularize the cultural and natural heritage.

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