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Cultural security of Russia and tasks of professional education

Abstract: The article explores the concept of "cultural security", demonstrating that contemporary Russian society faces significant threats to its cultural heritage. It highlights that achieving cultural sovereignty is a central objective of cultural security. Key indicators of cultural sovereignty include the presence of nationally established traditional artisanal practices. Additionally, the paper stresses the vital role played by professional education in ensuring cultural security, noting that it goes beyond simply training highly qualified specialists; it also fosters well-educated patriots.

Keywords: culture, cultural security, national security, cultural sovereignty, traditional art crafts, professional education.

The existence and development of traditional art crafts in Russia can be regarded as one of the indicators of the country's cultural autonomy and its sovereignty in the sphere of culture. The Russian university of traditional art crafts (RUTAC) stands out globally as the sole university specializing in training artists across 23 different types of traditional art crafts. Beyond merely nurturing artists capable of producing masterpieces, RUTAC assumes a pivotal role in safeguarding Russia's cultural security. As an essential component of any nation's overall security framework, cultural security rests upon traditional national values.

Over the past few decades, particularly under conditions of globalization, issues concerning the preservation, development and dissemination of traditional cultural values have gained immense significance. In his decree dated November 9, 2022, president of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin provided the following definition: «Traditional values include life, human dignity, rights and freedoms, patriotism, civic responsibility, service to one's country and accountability for its destiny, high moral ideals, strong family ties, creative labor, prioritization of spiritual over material wealth, humanitarianism, compassion, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and respect, historical memory, intergenerational continuity and unity among the peoples of Russia» [9]. As we see, all the values listed in the decree can fully be regarded as universal human values. However, it is precisely these values that are threatened today. The global information space formed at the beginning of the 21st century has become a conduit for Western individualistic pseudo-liberal values, which are far removed from both traditional Russian values and reject even those Western Christian democratic principles that created Western civilization itself. And while modern Western values continue to erode the national cultures of many countries around the world with success.

It is no coincidence that the fall of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the USSR were linked by renowned American social philosopher and political figure Joseph Nye (1937–2025) directly to the cultural attractiveness of the West, which is a very important component of Western "soft power". By the 1980s, ruling socialist governments had little left to counterbalance Western mass culture. In 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, the expression emerged that "Mickey Mouse defeated Karl Marx"! Joseph Nye was supported in this view by such a statesman-patriarch as Henry Kissinger (1923–2023), who himself once held the position of national security advisor to the U.S. president. In his book published in 2001, he noted that despite the primitiveness of many forms of American culture, the United States dominates the world through phenomena of a cultural order [5, p. 42]. Even minor attempts to protect their own culture from American domination provoked nervous reactions from the U.S. government. Meanwhile, protection of cultural sovereignty as a policy is recognized by international law. For instance, UNESCO adopted a document back in 2005 affirming the legitimacy of internal legal measures aimed at protecting local producers, cultural activities, goods and services. Notably, 148 countries voted 'in favor' (an absolute majority). Only two countries – USA and Israel – voted against, while four abstained. In other words, an overwhelming majority of nations expressed readiness to defend their national culture. Significantly, even several Western countries like France, Italy and Britain voiced concerns about American cultural expansion and took steps to safeguard their national culture. Specifically, laws were enacted in France to protect the French language from foreign borrowings. These efforts involved not just linguists but also politicians. Many countries introduced certain norms and quotas to shield their national cinema and music industries. Even in the USA, president Donald Trump decided to protect Hollywood from foreign influence by announcing plans to impose hundred percent tariffs on film products from overseas countries.

History provides numerous examples where invasion by another culture proved more significant than economic or even direct military pressure on a country's security. Therefore, discussing national security requires taking into account cultural safety as well. Until mid-twentieth century, national security was equated solely with state defense against external military threats and internal unrest. Nowadays, however, historical experience shows that culture can become an extremely effective tool of influence, especially since cultural contradictions within society generate internal conflicts and social upheavals. According to A.P. Romanova and O.V. Marmilova, the concept of national security now encompasses cultural and informational spheres as well. [7]

How should the term "cultural security" be defined? Here is what N.V. Uzlova writes: "The complexity of defining the term 'cultural security' lies in its core element – the word 'culture'. This term itself has a complex, dual nature: one aspect being something constant, requiring preservation, protection and reproduction, serving as the foundation of ethnic culture and identity, whereas the second aspect constantly evolves, changes and expands, performing adaptive functions. On a legislative and legal level, this category does not exist independently as a distinct type of security, thus having full right to exist" [10].

One successful definition of the term "cultural security" could be considered the formulation by A.L. Marshak: "Cultural security... reflects sociocultural capabilities of society aimed at overcoming all kinds of dangers (risks, threats, challenges) and creating favorable conditions for societal cultural life" [6]. Despite some deliberate simplification (after all, risks, threats and challenges are overly broad concepts), this definition may be deemed logical and serves as a basis for the author of the article.

What exactly ensures a country's cultural security? At all times, the educational system has been paramount. Note that neither Chinese red guards nor East European vandals toppling Soviet monuments represent "ignorant masses". All these rioters were literate, their leaders typically educated. The idea stemming from Enlightenment philosophers that literacy alone would eliminate social vices did not pass the test of history. Today, illiteracy persists globally, yet internet users now outnumber those able to read. The main threat to culture comes not from illiterate "dark masses", but rather from specially trained individuals. The question arises: who educates these people and how do they shape their consciousness.

A state possessing genuine sovereignty, including complete sovereignty in the realm of culture, is capable of securing cultural safety. As mentioned above, even countries like France, which culturally dominated the world for centuries until the late twentieth century, cannot currently be considered entirely sovereign in terms of culture. Cinema, painting, theater, music and philosophy – all areas in which France excelled just a few decades ago – have largely faded away. Perhaps French culture will regain its former influence, but today France lacks cultural sovereignty. Conversely, South Korea – a politically dependent ally of the United States – not only managed to preserve its culture but has implemented large-scale cultural expansion worldwide. K-pop and dramas have become symbols of South Korea alongside its automobiles and electronics.

By what criteria can a country truly be identified as possessing cultural sovereignty? Naturally, there are no mathematical formulas for determining cultural sovereignty. Nor can cultural sovereignty be measured by the number of films, novels and pop songs produced per capita. Nevertheless, a country with traditional art crafts that exist and evolve can be seen as possessing cultural sovereignty. The presence of traditional art crafts indicates that the country and its people have their own culture independent of contemporary Western centers. This already signifies the country's cultural self-sufficiency.

The concept of "cultural sovereignty" was first introduced in 2015 in the pages of an important state document, namely the "National security strategy of Russia". In this document, cultural sovereignty occupies an entire paragraph numbered 82. It states: "Strengthening national security in the area of culture involves recognizing the primary importance of culture in preserving and enhancing traditional Russian spiritual-moral and cultural values, strengthening the unity of the multiethnic people of the Russian Federation; ensuring the cultural sovereignty of the Russian Federation by implementing measures to protect Russian society from external ideological-value expansion and destructive information-psychological impact, exercising control in the information sphere, preventing the spread of extremist

content, propaganda of violence, racial, religious and interethnic intolerance; establishing a system of spiritual-national and patriotic education of citizens, introducing principles of spiritual-moral development into the education system, youth and national policies, expanding cultural-enlightening activities" [8].

Furthermore, the document emphasizes improving the material-technical base of cultural organizations. Creating conditions for organizing leisure time, stimulating creative development, and providing arts education for citizens is acknowledged as necessary. Strengthening state oversight of cultural heritage sites is also highlighted as crucial. Additionally, the document acknowledges the need to improve systems for training specialists in the fields of history and culture [9].

As president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, stated, "We all understand the enormous role played by culture in the development of Russia, in strengthening its authority and influence in the world, and indeed in maintaining the integrity of our state and national sovereignty. Because if there's no culture, then it's unclear what sovereignty really means and therefore it's unclear what we're fighting for" [3].

The emergence of the concept of "cultural sovereignty" caused some confusion among certain figures in the cultural community, who argued that because culture is universal, it has no boundaries and therefore cannot possess sovereignty. Consequently, they concluded that speaking of any form of cultural sovereignty is impossible. To this argument, Russian filmmaker Karen Shakhnazarov responded: "Some might say that there is no such thing as cultural sovereignty, that culture is universal. I would respond that although culture knows no borders, it certainly has roots. The real issue here is whether future generations, raised without cultural sovereignty or in different cultural traditions, will want to maintain the political sovereignty of their country. This is a critical question facing modern-day Russia" [4].

Throughout history, there are countless examples of civilizations that failed to preserve and develop their cultural legacy, ultimately disappearing from the face of the Earth, becoming ethnographic material for other nations. Renowned German philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) coined the term "fellahdom" to describe populations of previous countries and civilizations, similar to Egyptian peasants, who completely lost their language, culture and identity, much like ancient Egyptians. Over thousands of years, Egypt was conquered more than forty times by various invaders but almost never underwent colonization by foreign settlers. Thus, most modern Egyptians are direct descendants of pyramid builders. However, Egyptians themselves abandoned their ancient cultural heritage, destroying ancient temples. After Arab conquest, Egyptians definitively severed all connections to the achievements of their ancestors. According to Spengler, fellahdom represents the final stage of any people's existence. Fellahs live without history and nearly devoid of culture, akin to primitive societies. "Fellahdom" poses a threat to many nations and whole civilizations that abandon their age-old traditions and cultural legacies.

German researcher and writer of Russian origin H. Handus offered her interpretation of the term "cultural sovereignty": "Cultural sovereignty refers to the aggregate of socio-cultural factors enabling a people and a state to establish their

identity, avoid socio-psychological and cultural dependence on external influences, remain protected from harmful ideological-informational impacts, retain historical memory and adhere to traditional Russian spiritual-moral values" [11]. V.D. Gavrilova adds to the definition of cultural sovereignty: "The essence of cultural sovereignty lies in the fact that it is a cultural code of a community built on a specific value foundation, manifesting itself in a distinctive cultural identity of individuals and social groups" [2].

As we observe, the fundamental difference between the concepts of "cultural security" and "cultural sovereignty" lies in the fact that cultural sovereignty belongs to a state that already possesses a developed rich national culture and is capable of defending it. Russia fully falls into this category, so both definitions can be considered synonymous regarding our country. With regard to several other countries in the world, this assertion cannot be made. Hence, we can conclude that the notion of "cultural security" is broader than "cultural sovereignty". Attaining cultural sovereignty is the goal of cultural security.

In today's world, intentional destruction of cultural assets has become commonplace. One can recall NATO aircraft bombing Serbian historic landmarks, including ancient monasteries and churches dating back millennia in Kosovo during the Yugoslav bombardments in 1999. Similarly, Islamic radicals in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria destroyed numerous historical and cultural monuments of their respective countries. Former director-general of UNESCO Irina Bokova (Bulgaria), who served from 2009 to 2017, pointed out that deliberately destroying a country's cultural heritage, without any legitimate military necessity, became a new special form of warfare. Such destruction cannot be classified as collateral damage suffered by one side in conflict. Instead, according to Bokova, it amounts to "erasing identities and cultural markers" [1].

NATO countries specifically targeted monuments of Serbian material culture during the Yugoslav bombings, ostensibly to justify their intervention on behalf of Albanian immigrants in Kosovo. Similar massive destructions occur in countries proclaiming themselves "civilized".

Since Russia possesses cultural sovereignty, historical and cultural monuments are protected by the state.

What dangers is cultural security called upon to address in contemporary Russia? According to A.L. Marshak, the most significant threats and risks include crises and erosion of traditional Russian norms and values; unchecked proliferation of low-quality samples of Western popular culture; deterioration of the condition of cultural heritage objects in the country; and finally, lack of clearly articulated cultural policy in Russia [6]. Rewriting of history, which began in the late 1980s, can also be added to this list.

Returning from these global questions to the problems of educating future artists of traditional applied arts, particular emphasis must be placed on academic disciplines that directly affect the formation of students' personalities. It is the moral dimension that distinguishes a true artist. Humanities subjects such as "History of Russia", "Fundamentals of Russian statehood", "Philosophy", "Religious studies", as well as "History and philosophy of science and art" (for graduate students) are

perceived positively by the vast majority of students at RUTAC. Those who choose to dedicate their lives to traditional Russian folk arts show great interest in studying the problems of Russian history.

What conclusions can be drawn from the experience of teaching humanities courses at RUTAC? How can we ensure that students not only acquire a set of knowledge, skills and abilities but are also prepared to contribute to the country's cultural security through their creativity? We outline three conclusions.

Not avoiding difficult questions. Both in Soviet times and later periods, historians often simply avoided mentioning certain historical facts if they were "inconvenient". For example, in the Soviet textbook on history for grade 10, the Winter War of 1939–40 received literally just a few lines. There was also very little written about Polish uprisings against Russia in the 19th century, and what was included lacked detail. At the same time, by selectively narrating some complicated aspects of Russian history, Western actors succeeded in implanting a series of their narratives (i.e., interpreted worldview frameworks) into the minds of residents of the former USSR. Therefore, presenting domestic history comprehensively is already a way to protect Russia's cultural sovereignty.

Avoiding the aura of forbidden fruit. What seems simplest in matters of cultural security might appear to be a straightforward ban on "incorrect" Western cultural products. However, historical experience from the last century demonstrates that this approach is not only technically impractical but unintentionally undermines a country's cultural sovereignty by generating interest precisely in banned Western artworks. As the saying goes, forbidden fruits taste sweeter. Under such circumstances, the best defense for domestic culture would involve the introduction of quota systems and regulations, as practiced in most countries worldwide.

Regarding RUTAC, since 2014, the university has hosted a film club where feature films from both domestic and international cinematography are screened, followed by mandatory discussions and expert opinions from faculty members.

Leverage modern communication technologies. Teaching humanities continues to rely heavily on oral presentations. However, thanks to diverse technical tools used during classes, a unique informational-educational environment has emerged. Students are no longer passive listeners; instead, they actively participate in learning processes, while teachers guide them through the sea of available information. This task places considerable responsibility on educators, given that students now obtain the bulk of their knowledge online, frequently sourcing it from dubious sources. Moreover, student-acquired knowledge tends to be superficial, lacking foundational depth and sometimes outright false. Establishing the truthfulness of facts, developing critical thinking skills and cultivating the ability to verify information also serve as components of safeguarding Russia's cultural security.

The history of RUTAC illustrates that the greatest contribution of traditional craft artists to ensuring Russia's cultural security remains the creation of artistic masterpieces that captivate and inspire the world.

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