GLOBALIZATION PERSPECTIVES IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA

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Abstract
The Romanian Revolution from 1089 radically changed the Romanian society profile. After this benchmark point, Romania enters a new historical stage called transition, a period marked by the phenomenon of globalization. This paper circumvents the problem of globalization in post-communist Romania. The purpose of this paper is to describe the context the globalization evolved in Romania but also to synthesize a record of economical, social and cultural effects of globalization. The effects of globalization reflect on communication networks and channels, production processes, labor market, monetary market and social patterns. Globalization can generate economical growth but also can lead to poverty. A collective cultural shock followed the beginnings of globalization and this phenomenon is characterized by four elements: (a) integration, (b) assimilation, (c) separation and (d) marginalization. Collective cultural shock was more powerful in Romania after the integration in European Union. Other important aspects are the connection between globalization and cultural identity but also the cultural changes occurred in Romania after 2007.

Keywords: globalization, post-communism, transition, collective cultural shock, cultural identity

JEL classification: F60, F64

1. Introduction
The fail of the communist system opens a new historical evolution perspective after a recumbent, exhausting, uncertain waiting period marked by the terror of threats and poverty. The social groups from communist period create a new ideological and political profile in the context of a new historical perspective.

The brutality of Revolution produced a total breach from the communist ideological perspective. The Revolution allowed the people’ emancipation and their emotional relieving; from political point of view, this trend was expressed as a desire to replace the totalitarian, oppressive and abusive style with a democratic governance that allowed Romanian people to be involved in the process of taking decisions for the society. But the first months after the revolution brought ambiguity, repugnance, aggression and insecurity in political life. In this period, the collective conscious was shaken by the shock generated by the gap between the expectations produced by the Revolution and the reality, the political system beeing the main factor influencing the fails of the transition from a collective perspective [28].

The moment of the Revolution finds Romanian people isolated from the Occident, from their own past, their own history and out of their own present's depth. The psychologists and sociologists’ studies [14]- [18] highlight the fact that communist indoctrination for almost half century marked [4] and imprinted certain features to Romanian society during transition process [29]. After December 1989, the general impression is one of an empty memory society returned from exile, with no heroes, victims or guilty persons [25]. Romanians don’t have the apperence of carrying a collective trauma, which leads to the impression that totalitarianism regime was the result of some personal acts clusters, patterns and institutionalization. The responsibility doesn’t belong to the „communist party”, „communist regime” or „communist system” but to the people who contribute
to starting and consolidating the system and developing the party [1]. Most of the Romanians consider themselves a common people with a common country, a history and a tradition.

Along with the 1989 Revolution, Romania enters a new historical stage, called transition phase, post-revolution period or post-communism.

The term of „transition”, as it is presented and used in sociology, means moving from one social system’s organization type to another one and has a large meaning. We can talk about transition when we discuss about great changes occurred in Romanian society [29]. Through history, the humanity experienced a great number of transition periods. Sometimes, this concept was associated with the one of „revolution”. Transition is not a new concept in world history. Only the attempt of post-communist countries to imbide structures and institutions already existing in Occident is new; the model of transforming a socialist society into a capitalist society is also new.

The term of „transition” is preferred to the term “change”, which induces stress to old members of nomenclature. This change should have a structural character, should be a breaking from an old system while „transition” might induce the idea of continuity, transformation of some structures by maintaining the old ones in new conditions, including the idea of recycle social actors [17].

After the Revolution, making social, economical and political transformations, the Romanian society aspired to an occidental society, wanting in a certain manner to abate and to continue the evolution of inter-war society. In transition stage till the moment of European Union bond, Romania experienced great changes marked by other transitions to democracy of neighbor countries, by market economy and also by the influence of international policy, namely the external political and economical context [14].

The post-communist transition period in Romania is marked by the phenomenon of globalization.

This paper circumvents the problem of globalization in post-communist Romania.

The purpose of the paper is to present the context of globalization development in Romania after 1989 and also some economical, social and cultural effects of this phenomenon.

2. Globalization concept

As a concept, globalization refers to “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” [22]. The definition offered by the Dictionary of Social Sciences characterized globalization as “a catch-all term for the expansion of diverse forms of economic, political, and cultural activity beyond national borders” [20].

Schirato and Webb (2003, p. 200) define globalization as “a set of texts, ideas, goals, values, narratives, dispositions and prohibitions, a veritable template for ordering and evaluating activities”. Langhorne (2001, p. 2) prefers an approach which focuses on technological part of the globalization: “the latest stage in a long accumulation of technological advance”.

The sociologist, economists, politicians or anthropologists consider globalization a great importance phenomenon. The theoretical and empirical researches made by this time on this theme are organized by five main questions: Is it really happening? Does it produce convergence? Does it undermine the authority of nation-states? Is it different from modernity? Is a global culture in the making [9]?

Vujakovic (2010) measures the level of globalization using New Globalization Index (NGI) that contains 21 variables. In a 70 countries top, the New Globalization Index (NGI) computed for 2005 for Romania was 15.16, a value that brings our country on 64 places. The first place is occupied by Ireland with a score of 66.45. If we consider KOF Index of Globalization [9], Romania is placed on 37 position. This New Globalization Index (NGI) was calculated for the period between 1995 and 2005 (see figure 1). We notice that Romania is on the same position during time.
Figure no. 1. Globalization – Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey [27].

3. Economical effects of globalization

From economical point of view, globalization “encompasses declining barriers to trade, migration, capital flows, foreign direct investment and technological transfers” [21].

Globalization brought a lot of changes in certain fields, for communication networks and channels, productions processes, labor market or monetary market and even transformations upon social patterns [13]. Also it encourages a great involvement of foreign and regional governmental agencies [23].

Mutascu and Fleischer (2001) investigated the relation between globalization and economical growth, their amplitude and vectorial direction for Romania, during 1972 and 2006. They used unrestricted vector autoregressive model (VAR). “The results show that if countries tend to maximize the economic growth, they must globalize more” but also “the acceleration in the level of economic growth can inhibit the opening for globalization.” [15]

O'Rourke (2001) analyzes the relation between globalization and inequality, both inside a certain country and between countries. Globalization might generate economical growth but also it can cause poverty. So the impact of globalization upon different groups of countries is different. While some countries benefit from the advantages offered by this trend, others registered more costs than received benefits [26]. Stiglitz (2004) investigates the reasons for globalization might affect global economical growth when it is not properly managed.

4. Social and cultural effects of globalization

Cultural globalization is centered upon the impact of growing volume of cultural products changes (assets that communicate ideas, attributes, life styles and that contribute to building an identity and influence cultural habits), upon a greater power and visibility of cultural industries, upon the consequences on national identity. As a result, the aggregate effect of cultural globalization processes is known as “deterritorialization”, meaning the loss of natural relations of the culture with social and geographical territories [20].

A lot of specialists discuss about the globalization dilemma, that occurs when a local culture confronts with the need to merge with globalization trend and, in the same time, wants to protect its own identity and traditions. The identity and the traditions conflict with globalization process and some changes are needed [11].

After the change of one regime in a country, the culture is no longer actual, old things are no longer useful but nothing new appeared to replace them [8].

Romania, as others Central and Eastern Europe countries, suffered a collective cultural shock after the fail of communist regime. In the paper of Fink and Holden, “Collective culture shock: contrastive reactions to radical systemic change”, the authors describe the changes made in Central and Eastern Europe along with the
new regime. These specialists explain collective culture shock as being “…precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our

familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” [8]. From this perspective, collective culture shock has four components:

(a) Integration - the process whereby the resources of interacted institutions are voluntarily combined and a new common culture is developed; the old rules are no longer available and time is necessary in order to adopt and implement new rules and to adjust a specific behavior to a national level.

(b) Assimilation - the process whereby an institution completely adjusts to the rules and organization manner of another institution.

(c) Separation - the process whereby a clear difference is made between the institutions.

(d) Marginalization - the process whereby care the totalitarian regime assumes the power of a state.

All four processes lead to radical changes of the system that generates chaos and distraction among population. Even if Fink and Holden’ study (2002) doesn’t include the particular case of Romania, we consider that its results can be applied to our country.

An instrument that strongly contributes to globalization, both in economical and cultural manner is the Internet. Using Internet, local cultures begun to face the challenge of create a balance between immersing in virtual world, risking losing their identity and rejecting this tool, meaning shutting away from the rest of the world [11].

The access to international mass media channels also contribute to the evolution of globalization in Romania. Hoang and Liao (2002) highlight the expansion of human rights as a positive effect of globalization process. A negative consequence of this phenomenon is the loss of cultural identity. Small countries must play the games made by stronger countries [10]. Cultural identity is strongly connected with social concepts as religion or family and offer answers for questions as: Who are we? Where are we going? What do we have? Cultural identity and globalization are two interconnected elements. On one hand, globalization is a source of transformation, a source of human capital development and information diffusion. On the other hand, it is perceived as a threat of social and cultural environment in the context of identity [16].

Castells considers that “our world and our lives are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization and identity”[3].

Globalization creates a global culture that includes local identity of one country; a homogenous culture that involves national values and traditions can be building. This phenomenon is a real threat for more retrograde states because it can affect local cultural identity [16].

We cannot discuss about globalization and local culture in Romania without reminding about the theme of the integration in European Union. Bibu and Brancu (2008) mention that each European Union’s enlargement represents a collective cultural shock for its citizens. Important cultural changes occurred in Romania after 2007. In order to maintain a balance between European Union states, the specialists consider important the intercultural dialogue among Europeans and the allowance of cultural diversity in Europe [2].

Ján Figeľ (2006), Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture, and Multilingualism, in his speech for Georgetown University Washington’ students, affirms that he prefers the word “interdependence” instead of “globalization” and focuses on the importance of conserving local cultures in European Union: “We regard our wealth of cultures, languages and traditions as a precious gift from the past to be cherished and preserved. We regard the Union’s increasing diversity as an asset, not as a threat or a problem. The fundamental challenge of our process of integration is in fact how to preserve distinct cultural identities while developing a multicultural society”[7].

5. Conclusions

An objective analysis of globalization process reveals the fact that developed countries might have more economical benefits then developing countries. These differences are more obvious for Romania, a country that has also problems caused by the delayed start in globalization race. Post-communist period and slow changes from this time, the heritage of state control in economy brought Romania among the last countries that benefit from work, transport, communication and information productivity revolution. Although old planned economy
suffered from globalist jolts, post-communist Romania seems more surprised by globalization wave than prepared to handle the situation in a mature and clear manner.

After almost 24 years from Revolution, the modernity seems to gain more and more in Romania. The new stages of global society development don’t catch us offhand, isolated and with no experience anymore. In another word, we are on the right track.

Globalization has positive effect on Romania. In the context of more favorable internal legislative and fiscal conditions, Romania can become more appealing in order to attract foreign investments so necessary for our country development. It is a country with a huge potential, especially in touristic industry, oil-well industry, iron industry and agriculture. Globalization can accelerate free capital movement in the context of high qualified but cheap labor. Raluca Florentina Creţu considers that the effects of globalization might allow Romania to “accelerate technological transfer, to stimulate capital absorption, to reduce corruption, depression and bureaucracy, to reduce poverty level” [5]. Globalization also presents some economical, social and demographic risks [13]. An open economy is an economy that face more quickly and more powerful external shocks. The globalization phenomenon divides the world in winners and losers.

6. References