Balkans Globalization

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Abstract

The following definition is one frequently used about globalization: "Globalization represents the process through which geographical distance becomes a less important factor concerning the development and stability of socio-cultural, political and economical cross border relations". Globalization is considered to be a two way process: the world is integrating, is globalizing but in the same time it becomes more and more differentiated, it becomes regionalized.

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Globalization, as a matter of fact, the incipient germs of globalization without which globalization itself would not be possible as a not necessarily conscious social phenomenon, can be identified and taken into consideration from the very dawn of group development of the human condition. Awareness of property, as well as of the instinctual need for its continuous development, permanent diversifying of the general object of ownership and implicitly, of its value, the constant improvement of forms and procedures domination exercising by means of force and war, the impossibility of maintaining the ownership over the crucial discoveries for the development of human society, conjoined with the generosity of their unrestricted spreading are but a few elements that can be taken into consideration when discussing the germs of globalization. Because, we need to emphasize, globalization is an unavoidable and irreversible process transcending institutionalized human will, being capable to rush, slow down and specifically direct the process, with specific consequences accordingly.

Undoubtedly, globalization is one of the most complex phenomena that influenced the development of human society and that, as present persuasively proves it, definitely and decisively imprints all events in the sphere of human existence of the 21st century. The complexity of the phenomenon as such induces into the sphere of general understanding a package of causes meant to determine, preserve and of course develop it. Because, we already agreed upon, globalization is an unavoidable, continuous and irreversible process.

Globalization is perceived in two equally improper ways:

- as a new concept that re-empowers the continuity of general issues variables control methods;

- as a long waited for solution to blockages against the understanding of power access limitations in the international system.

According to the first version, globalization is acknowledged as a formula for non-historic world configuration preservation, while the second version is destined to make top down functions of the international system eternal. if they did not cover a statistically consistent area of preferences, the two ways of charging the globalism concept would be mere speculations. Academic environments are also connected to the orientation of these viewpoints. The usual meaning of the globalization concept aligns with either what the generic globalism state represents or with the universe of significances radiated by globalism (Beck, 2003).

In the case of the state of globalizing we are dealing with universal and non-historic issues, such as sub-development with its social pendant – poverty that no international regime managed provide fully operational solutions to. As for globalism, it expresses a stage of inter-dependencies evolution where an actor of international life plays a main role for managing the planet's resources (economic, cultural, military, scientific, political, etc.).

Overlapping globalization and globalism sends this concept into the category of those who have always accompanied the confrontation of humankind with itself: with what it is, with what is has, with what it can do and with how it manages to do it (Held, 1993). What could not be solved – it is known – was transferred by the individual to the supernatural and by the communities to the supranational. One must clearly outline the interval when states got used to push these issues especially to the international.

Globalism aims at the situation in the world constitution where there is just one superpower, the constituents of the international system, being, in various and subtle forms, dependent upon the decisions, interests, behaviour and evolutions of the superpower (Brzezinski, 2000). It is clear that this world configuration represents a power management formula in international relations, namely it refers to the idea of order (Nye, 2005).

The two clone concepts of globalization suggest, on one hand, that globalization is the tendency towards the universal dimension in the vision of the humankind about itself, while highlighting what it has in common or what affects it in general, and on the other hand, the fact that evolution naturally led to an asymmetry of power distribution on the planet, dependent on a center that manages power solitarily, providing the functionality of the international regime.

The global dimension highlights the problem and globalism provides the solution! Together, the two replacement concepts for globalization seem to offer the matrix according to whose landmarks international life coherence and consistency are insured in the formula of the new global order.

But under these circumstances, why are we talking about globalization?

Globalization emerges as a new formula of world organization with the purpose to solve in a different, non-conflicting manner resources allotment as well as development issues that could not be solved according to the principle of adversity. Therefore globalization is an ultimate political problem that presupposes the constitution of a global society that would manage global economy, as well as all the other compartments of global governing.

The analysis of globalization is in fact, the analysis of global society. Any other alignments are subordinated to the society alignment. Spectacular, technical aspects have a global relevance only in relation to the effects upon the global society (telecommunications, internet, etc.), and economic aspects highlight the social function of economy (overcoming the risk of offshore, economy among other things).

In the past decades, more and more globalization approach perspectives were consecrated. One of the most used definitions of globalization is the following: "Globalization stands for the process through which geographical distances turns into a less and less important factor for establishing and developing economic, politic and socio-cultural cross border relations. Relation and dependency networks acquire an increasing potential for becoming international and worldwide developed" (Bari, 2001).

Globalization is a two way process: the world is integrated and globalized but at the same time, it differentiates more and more, becoming regionalized. So we can say that "regionalization and globalization are two processes that are neither subordinated one to the other nor sub-summed, but they are in a concordant polarity relation" (Negut, 1999).

Surprisingly, one of the regions that globalization analytics aimed at to a lower extent is represented by Balkans; in the specialty literature we can find few clear answers to the question whether we can talk about "globalization" in the Balkans, and even if we implicitly assume that the answer were positive, we are left with few attempts to structure an image of what the globalization process in the Balkans actually meant.

We can start with discussing the most important theories that operated with a "global" perspective that also included the Balkans.

Essentially, there are two major theoretical attempts to explain the way that the Balkans region was affected by the globalization process. The first is the theory of the world system issued by Immanuel Wallerstein, and the second, is Victor Roudometof's most recent theory that sees globalization as the process of integration in the modern (Western) world, consequence of which a whole series of social, political and cultural elements were "exported" from the West to the Balkans and to the other areas that were included in this integration process. Roudometof also says that nationalism is one of the major features of globalization that was thus "exported" form the West to the East of Europe.

According to Wallerstein, starting with the sixteenth century and up to the present moment, humankind witnessed the development of a worldwide system that was produced by the transformation of the domination manner within state relations from political (and therefore military) domination into economic domination. In the modern age, capitalism provided the foundation for the growth and development of a world economy in constant expansion. Its constituents are the states from the *center* (that dominate world economy, develop and exploit the rest of the system), *semi-periphery* (countries that are related to in various ways to the center, yet are rather stagnating), *periphery* (countries that are exploited by the center and constitute the source of raw materials for it) and the *external area* (the countries that were not touched by the commercial relations developed by the center).

Balkans were incorporated in the in the periphery of the world system within the Ottoman Empire, where they were when the "integration" process began – between 1750 and 1820 – and they actually stayed in the area until the end of the last century. The last

conference of the Fernand Braudel Centre (of November 2nd – 3rd 2001) – the institution that issued the world system concept – talked about the world system restructuring processes that are currently taking place. Eastern Europe generally belongs to the semi-periphery together with (more or less) the whole Asia, Africa and South America. But since semi-peripheries generally are areas that give birth to great changes and innovating developments during the time when the system is transforming, then Eastern Europe (Balkans included, of course) is, according to the opinion of the Fernand Braudel Centre theorists, one of the least promising areas in this respect.

Of course, Wallerstein's theory that essentially is a neo-Marxist theory can be and it actually was criticized due to the much too obvious emphasizing of the economical factor in the explanation it states: world history was set in motion only (or especially) by the economic engine during the past five hundred years and the only reactions that matter when describing the position of a country of region in the world system are the commercial ones.

As consequence, analysis does not leave too much room for political or cultural structures that were involved in the process for rendering the Balkans to the "semi-periphery". Next, the *center*, that was always somewhere in the west, constantly is the only area with initiative. Therefore Wallerstein's analysis was rightfully accused of "Western-centrism", because it does not give credit to local initiative and action. The areas as such are inert and the local actor plays no part in a world system led by a Western center.

In one of his recent works, Victor Roudometof is making an attempt to highlight the "social origins of the ethnical conflict in the Balkans" (Roudometof, 2001). The surging of nationalism and the formation of nations into regions are related to the globalization process understood in a more general manner as a process of integration into the modern world. Roudometof essentially speaks of a degraded evolution of nationalism into region: Western "civic" nationalism exported into the Balkans acquired here an "ethnical" form. The author invokes the argument that in the Balkans, minorities were marginalized and forcefully assimilated.

However the question emerging by itself is since minorities were assimilated and de-structured, then who fought in the wars of the past decade, that were most of the times defined as "ethnical wars"? On the other hand we need to remember that in reality, due to delays in the formation of national states in the Balkans, the centralization process was much less aggressive towards minorities than in the Western world (such as for instance, in France or in the United Kingdom). One of the reasons why state aggressiveness towards minorities diminished is related to the fact that in the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, minority self-identity awareness had already structured, and reactions were much more firm and at the same time, various institutions and organizations capable to protect such communities from state actions had already started to appear on the international political stage.

Roudometof's book is called "Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy", however the connection between the first two terms and the third is unfortunately never clarified. The author describes the process of formation of the states form the area, a process following a modern Western model, but he does not take into consideration the local context as much as he ought to, since he does not explain the relation between

nationalism and the most important identity factor in the region, namely the religious factor. How did religious communities turn into ethnical and national communities and which were the consequences? A much deeper understanding of recent Balkans conflicts and rebellions depends upon the answers to these questions that can no longer be answered in a manner restricted to economical or exclusively political terms.

The term globalization was defined in various ways that all emphasized a somewhat all-encompassing process generated and supported by one of the following factors or by a combination of them: economy (financial and commercial relations), politics (an increasingly powerful inter-dependency in international relations), culture and communications (we find out about things that are very far away from us, both spatially and temporally and we are also influenced by them), surrounding environment (we are dealing with global risks that should be addressed using global measures).

But already in the beginning of the past decade, theorists started to draw attention upon the fact that the process is not univocal, but it implies opposite direction phenomena, they called "localization" or "particularization".

In his work "Globalization. Social Theory and Global Culture" Rolan Robertson states that the essential feature of globalization, in the end of the 20th century, seems to be the "particular being rendered universal and the universal being rendered particular". The universal and the particular are the two constituents of a global, cultural form that need to be seen and treated together, as two sides of the same coin.

The details regarding the way that the relation between globalization and localization works are also highlighted by Gheorghiţă Geană, according to whom "ethnicity" and "globalization" phenomena are not antagonist, as it is often presupposed, but on the contrary, they are "complementary process of the dynamic balance so necessary to the contemporary world". They are explained using two pairs of concepts, describing the realities or processes inherent and fundamental to the modern world: culture/civilization and individuation/communication. So, between ethnicity and globalization, there are relations similar to the ones between culture and civilization, since "ethnicity is especially based on the fact category belonging to culture, while globalization is assigned to fact category belonging to civilization".

Cesare Poppi, in his work entitled "The Limits of Globalization. Cases and Arguments", argues that "gl needs to be understood as the condition where localizing strategies become systematically connected to global interests" adding that "the tendency to emphasize «localization» and «difference», is the one becoming global, however «localization» and «difference» imply the very development of world dynamics of institutional communication and identification".

Localization and particularization are phenomena that should also be taken into consideration when we are discussing Balkans from a global perspective. Conflicts of the last decade of the 20th century can be understood, according to such an interpretation, as the back side of a globalization process that had affected the region during the last and a half century. The main reason why such phenomena of conflicting localization took place exactly at that time is related to what the theory of international relations is called "overlay": the normal conditions from an area are blocked, are stuck for a while by the domination of a superpower (or by the relations between two or more superpowers) and they reacquire their natural status and evolution once the "overlay" disappears. The Cold

War was exactly such an overlay situation and not only from the point of view of interstate political and military relations, but also from the perspective of internal developments, of cultural and identity definitions of various communities from the region.

Globalization. The world became, in the defining elements of its existence, as direct consequence of the development of inter-dependencies that affect each of us, a single social system. The global system turned into the environment inside which particular societies develop and evolve. Social, economic and political connections that go across state borders decisively condition the faith of their inhabitants. We could see that globalization is assigned a multitude of states, conditions and meanings. The important thing ultimately is the tendencies that globalization manifests at the level of social relations and in this respect globalization must be understood as a rearrangement of time and distance in social life.

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