DISCUSSING THE END OF GLOBALISM IN TERMS OF DISCOURSE

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Abstract: Whether globalization as a phenomenon and process, or as ideology, has come to an end or not is a matter of debate among researchers for quite some time now. Although globalization was initially conceived with the certainty that it cannot but be successful, we are now faced with the reality in which nation states still function as nation states, international trade has not brought along the expected wealth and there are still many dictatorships that continue to exist in spite of democracy being preached on every corner. What we are interested in is to discuss how and whether the discourse of globalization is still used or not in order to legitimate political and social actions and decisions. The present study attempts to initiate a discussion on the ways in which the discourse of globalization still plays a part in the development of major political, economic, social and cultural events.

Keywords: globalization, discourse, critical discourse analysis, ideology

Without necessarily trying to make a clear cut distinction by analysing the difference between the two terms – 'globalism' and 'globalization' –, we find it however useful to explain how and in relation to what we choose to use the respective terms. 'Globalization' is a well-known term that has been widely used by everyone around the world for the past few decades. We know how to define it as a phenomenon, as an ideology, as a movement or trend, as economic startegy, etc. Less used however, the term 'globalism' comes in close connection to the term 'globalization' and, in an attempt to define it, we shall make a reference to the way Manfred Steger chooses to define it, as we have also mentioned in a previous paper[1].

> Globalization involves both the macrostructures of community and the microstructures of personhood. It extends deep into the core of the self and its dispositions, facilitating the creation of new identities nurtured by the intensifying relations between the individual and the globe. […]

[1] Ioana Raicu, 'The Discourse of Globalization in Politics – Creating Intercultural Dialogue or Repositioning Cultural Identities?', Poceedings of the International Scientific Conference *Globalization, Intercultural Dialogue and National Identity*, 29-30 May 2014, Tîrgu Mureș, Romania

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> The ideologies dominating the world today are no longer exclusively articulations of the national imaginary but reconfigured ideational systems that constitute potent translations of the dawning global imaginary. (Steger 2008: 12)

In fact, Steger uses the term 'globalism' to refer to three ideological translators of what he calls the global imaginary, and they are: “market globalism”, “justice globalism” and “jihadist globalism”. The “market globalism” is, in his view, the ideology that emerged in the 1990s drawing on the virtues of 'globally integrating markets; the “justice globalism” ideology emerges at the end of the Nineties as a challenging alternative translation of the rising global imaginary coming from the part of the political left, while the “jihadist globalism” is, in his view, the right-wing challenge to market globalism. Now, the reason we have mentioned these denominations used by Steger to characterize his rise of the global imaginary is precisely to reach this last one which we consider to be somewhat of a 'wild' choice from the part of the author, but, nevertheless, one that could be accounted for from a certain perspective. What he has in mind when he thinks of “jihadist globalism” is a representation of 'a potent globalism of worldwide appeal' epitomized by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and which generated the imperial globalism. (Steger 2008: 13) He also explains that his choice for the word 'globalism' on the level of ideology comes out of the 'difficulty of expressing the articulations of the global imaginary in familiar terms.', and he hopes that “globalism” (along with similarly emergent terms like, for instance, “nationalism”) will eventually be known by 'terms referring to the various ideological articulations of the global imaginary.'

Now, agreeing that 'globalism' as a term is another way of referring to 'globalization' with what we would probably call a more nuanced characteristic of its more specific use, we shall choose to use hereafter the term of 'globalization' when we refer to the process in broad terms and to use the term of 'globalism' when we refer to more specific interpretations of 'global' actions and events.

Whether globalization as a phenomenon and process, or as ideology, has come to an end or not is a matter of debate among researchers for quite some time now. Although globalization was initially conceived with the certainty that it cannot but be successful, we are now faced with

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the reality in which nation states still function as nation states, international trade has not brought along the expected wealth and there are still many dictatorships that continue to exist in spite of democracy being preached on every corner. If we were to agree with John Ralston Saul[2] that globalization was 'an experiment that attempted simultaneously to reshape economic, political and social landscapes' and that the results are questionable, to say the least, then we would have to accept that it did not really do its job, the one it set itself up at the beginning. Saul argues that, while it emerged from nowhere and advocated positive directions on all fronts and was converted to policy and law with the force of declared inevitability, after three decades we can see the results that include remarkable successes on the one hand, disturbing failures on the other and even a 'collection of … running sores'. 'In other words, the outcome has had nothing to do with truth and inevitability and a great deal to do with an experimental economic theory presented as Darwinian fact.' (Saul, 2009: 3)

The fact that globalization has to come to an end is not something that can be questioned, according to Saul. What he wonders is 'which parts of the Globalist belief system will disappear and which will stay'. 'If everything went it would be dangerous. The last thing we need is rampant nineteenth-century nationalism combined with old-fashioned protectionism as an international principle.' (Saul, 2009: 5) Saul speaks of a 'rise' of globalization (1971-1990), with a 'vacuum' from where it all started, with 'romantic enthusiasm' and 'gathering force'; he then speaks of a 'plateau' (1990-1997), meaning a period of success, a true ideology of progress; and finally he speaks of a 'fall' (1997-2001) that came together with a 'negative equilibrium', a 'chronology of decline' and the 'end of belief'. According to him, the events of September 11 mark 'a radical reassertion of both nation-state power and the pre-eminence of politics and violence over economics. The economic prism would become a sideshow.' (Saul, 2009: 169) Apart from the 9/11 attacks, he mentions other details of the year 2001 that were suggestive of the direction the world was taking: the Stockholm Convention (May) against persistent organic pollutants (centering on public good, not mere economics), the G8 meeting in Genoa (July) held some place isolated to keep the leaders away from demonstrators, Joseph Stiglitz, an intelectual dissident is awarded the Nobel Prize which had previously belonged to disciples of the Globalist

[2] John Ralston Saul, *The Collapse of Globalism*, Atlantic Books, London, 2009

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school, Argentina collapses in December as a result of debt and corruption. 'Globalism could be said to have ended with a bang in Latin America. A few days later, as if to provide a further comic footnote to the era, Enron filed for bankrupcy and the year came to a close. It was the biggest financial failure of this sort in U.S. History. It marked yet another one of those eternal definitive ends of applied economics as alchemy.' (Saul, 2009: 170)

Now, what about discourse? Do people continue to use the discourse of globalization in spite of numerous talks and debates on the end of globalization as a phenomenon, as an ideology? According to Saul, the phenomenon continues to exist in certain situations precisely because some of its advocates continue to use the specific language: "Language that was once enthusiastically received by the public is increasingly treated as the equivalent of elevator music, then as an actively annoying noise, and finally as inadvertent comedy. When the voice of power is heard by the public with irony, skepticism and, at last, as if from a farce, our willingness to suspend our disbelief has seeped fully away. The ideology may go on for a time because its advocates hold so many of the mechanisms of power. But this is simply power." (Saul, 2009: 172) What Saul argues is that if globalization as an ideology continues to play a part in certain events, circumstances and situations, it is because the people who have contributed to its development are still in power in certain corners of the world and certain key-positions.

At a certain point we might have to agree that globalization has come to an end, just as Saul argues. We might have to face the fact that the idea of one big community, one big market, open borders, free communication have not managed to fulfill the ultimate goal: a more prosperous economy on a global level, a better life for people in all countries that are part of this big community. However, while the process itself might have failed to fulfill its stated goals or not, its consequences and effects are still visible, still there, and will probably be for many years to come. People go to supermarkets and stores to buy products from all corners of the world, but fail to see in what way this is helping the economy of their own country. Local producers are faced with the problem of no longer being able to sell or display their own products on grounds of cheaper products coming from other countries. Paradoxically enough, after a period in which there was an explosion of products being imported from all over the world and filling all shelves in all supermarkets and stores thus making it very difficult for people to choose since there were

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so many to choose from (but they were happy they had a large spectrum to choose from), we are now in a period in which people are constantly looking for local products, are nostalgic and are now convinced that those local products were in fact the best and they have now embarked upon a quest for the quality of the good old taste of local tomatoes, of the traditional cheese and bread, of the locally manufactured leather shoes that were once so great. We witness a return to 'nationalism' from a certain point of view, from a certain perspective. People want their countries back, French people no longer want Romanians in their country, Romanians no longer want Turkish vegetables in their markets. Nevertheless, '*McDonaldization*' has affectd every country, whether it was a local choice or not. It appears that globalization was misperceived from the very beginning or that people had different expectations.

However, regardless of the way global economy and local economies have intercrossed and produced effects on a local level that are now contested by some or praised by others, the discourse of globalization has, in a way, had an independent and isolated development and is in itself a process. When it comes to discourse, the effects of globalization are more than evident and visible. All media, all sources and networks of communication, access to information which is now as easy as picking an apple from a tree, all that has led to some sort of universal language. We sometimes feel that people speak the same language all over the world. The reason is very simple: we truly are interconnected. In the constantly globalizing world of the last decades, people in countries all over the world speak the language of 'online' communication, everyone 'sends emails', everyone knows what a 'CEO' is, everyone reads *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue* or *Harper's Bazaar*, words like 'cool', 'trend', 'fashion', 'gadget', 'live', etc. are part of the vocabulary of almost all countries. Not to mention that since Facebook, everyone 'likes' or 'shares' something.

Taking this a step further, we get to speak of interdiscursitvity. The increased *interdiscursivity* of the phenomenon as it expands makes it possible for participants in one field to bring in terms from another field. (Fairclough 1992), and as conflict over the definition and construction of social realities steps in, the extent of interdiscursivity and the struggle over the construction of reality are connected: greater interdiscursivity allows agents to challenge existing understandings. (Fairclough 1995) What this diffusion of the discourse of globalization across

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discursive fields does is to generate more points of view and also allow problems in these discursive fields to attach themselves to "globalization" as a sensemaking term. (Fiss and Hirsch 2005).

The discussion on the discourse of globalization is obviously much broader and much debated upon. When we talk of the discourse of globalization, we talk of all fields, of the media, political, economic, social discourses, etc. The debates are huge and they have been going on for quite some time now. We merely wanted this paper to come as a sort of an answer to whether, while admitting we can now speak of an end of globalization as a process, we can also speak of an end of the discourse of globalization or not. I believe it cannot be argued againts the fact that once a type of discourse is initiated, we can no longer speak of its end. Language and discourse have always been subject to change and have never been in danger of extinction. On the contrary. They have always been subject to development and progression. It is the same with the discourse of globalization. Take, for instance, the discourse of communism. It is accepted as a fact that it no longer exists as a political movement in Romania, for instance, but its discourse is now part of the national vocabulary. Words like 'comrade' ('tovarăş'), co-operative ('cooperativă'), are still part of the national vocabulary, even if they are sometimes used in their pejorative sense. The same happens with any kind of discourse, and the one on globalization makes no exception. Words like 'marketisation', 'privatisation', 'open market', 'network', 'networking', 'sharing', etc., will continue to be part of the 'global' vocabulary since they are now independent and isolated from the process itself, even though, in some cases, the process itself gave birth to certain words. That does not, however, mean that those words die along with the death of the process.

Moreover, such a process comes along with great social changes. Social changes are very much interconected with discourse. Fairclough talks of a dialectical relationship between discourse and social change. Discourse leads to social change while social change leads to discourse. I would take it a step further and speak of a dialectical relationship between discourse and any kind of social, political, economic movement, such as, for instance, globalization. And, if we agree on that, we cannot but agree that we cannot speak of the end of any kind of discourse. The discourse of globalization is closely connected with the process itself but, at the same time, it is a process in iself to which we cannot deny the power of subsisting. Time will prove us either

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right or wrong.

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