

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON INTERPERSONAL AND CROSS-COMMUNITARIAN COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Globalization contributes most to increasing speed, volume and number of participants to information transfer between people, as well as between communities. The process of globalization produces many benefits for mankind but also some unintended and undesired negative effects like economic crises, unemployment, poverty, pollution and even disrupting social cohesion and communities. Due to information era and globalization people and communities can communicate to each other almost without restrictions everywhere from anywhere, using personal computers, cell phones, iPads, iPhones and some other type of electronic devices. Everybody can benefit from globalization if well prepared. So, as any other economic process, globalization cannot have winners only. Free market could be the new and most important battlefield for future wars.

Keywords: globalization, information, communication process, international relations, social conflicts.

The communication had and, with high probability, will continue to have an important role in our lives. The unprecedented development of computer science and information technology has contributed in a decisive way to accelerate the process of globalization and it facilitated communication and mutual understanding of individuals and human communities. On the dawn of the information age, the phrase "global village" was in great vogue to explain the effects of globalization on relations between human communities and of their members. Although it has lost its significance and actuality, the term 'global village' began to be challenged by some political scientists and communication experts. They say we cannot talk of "global village" because communication facilities may be used only fully democratic states, while in countries with totalitarian regimes communication is limited by censorship and all sorts of barriers imposed by the political leaderships of the states with undemocratic regimes. Meanwhile, in the

"free world" you can talk and you can send words, data and images anywhere, from anywhere, features that allow you to connect in "real time" of a great number of people and communities.

Globalization was seen by Paul Virilio as the "end of geography" because the information and computer science have blurred the differences between "here and there," "near and far," "in and out" and the national borders cannot stop the flow of information.¹ The information travels at the speed of electromagnetic waves, i.e. the speed of light, making distance irrelevant and allowing real-time communication among people. On the other hand, meeting each other at the end of the telephone line, or in front of an electronic computer (an electronic tablet, a videophone, an iPod, an iPhone, etc.) is risky. Often parties that communicate do not have too many details in common about each other. They know their phone number, name (person, company, institution, etc.), postal address or e-mail (messenger, Facebook, etc.), namely insufficient data to fully trust each other. For mutual confidence takes time but ... "time costs"! In this context, many people plunge into quasi-unknown taking risks that might cost them wealth, freedom or even life.

1. MEDIATED COMMUNICATION - BETWEEN ADVANTAGE AND SERVITUDE

Communication is a true despot, says Paul Dobrescu, because to communicate is to live and to fight, communication is also "a weapon, perhaps the most powerful, of conditioning and mystifying the human being."² The language

is the principal place of social conflicts”, states Solomon Marcus³, from the interpersonal up to the cross-communitarian ones.

The cyberspace can be defined as the place where the spirit is released from the constraints of the physical body,⁴ but also the “crafty space” continuously monitored and where “people feel like prisons,”⁵ or as in the 1984 novel of George Orwell’s “Big Brother sees you ... the police was watching the population by air through the house windows. But really feared was the thought police ...”⁶ Apparently, we are free from constraint but willingly we obey to control and constant monitoring by cameras installed in public places and on public transport, and research satellites detection (Global Positioning System), by credit card and access codes - to workplaces, in banks, housing, networks and mobile internet etc. and we move being conducted on the new “highways” of communication - databases, electronic computer networks (Internet, Intranet) etc. In this context, the private space has become a luxury that is charged through internet and cable TV subscriptions, subscriptions to clubs and associations, the wages of security guards who protect us from intruders etc. We oscillate between total openness to communicate with our fellow men, and to others looking for an “oasis of privacy,” a place only for ourselves frightened or perhaps tired of the avalanche of information that overwhelms us daily and by the unwanted interference of the “electronic spies” who are watching us day and night in the most unexpected places.

The cyberspace unites, but also separates us. Some people subscribe to some networking, some to others, but there are plenty of people who do not have access to electricity, internet, television and radio and they are outside the streams of information.

Most of the information we receive is provided by mass media, that are selected by journalists and they are often “processed” by their interest (target),⁷ of the their competence and experience in the field in which they received at the information that we provide.

For a journalist familiar enough with the political-military, for example, President Barack Obama’s decision to withdraw 34,000 troops from Afghanistan⁸ could be a funny. For an

experienced political-military analyst, familiar with the area of confrontation in Central and South Asia, the process of reducing the number of the American contingent deployed in the country means the beginning of the transfer of responsibility for security from the Security Assistance Force for Afghanistan (International Assistance Force for Afghanistan - ISAF) to the Afghan authorities. President Obama tries to turn promises into action for the first term election campaign and the renewed campaign in the second term. Meanwhile, Washington’s chief strives to reduce the country’s huge budget deficit, reached at 100% of GDP and because of military spending in campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, estimated at over 3,000 billion USD.⁹

In general, linking individuals and communities is achieved through direct or indirect communication. Mediated communication is a form of indirect communication that risk the alteration of the message content, from negligence, accidentally or ill will.

Typically, the international environmental actors transmit messages that reflect their interests in the political, economic, financial, social, and military environment. The form and content of messages depends on many factors such as the presence or absence of contentious issues, relations of power between the two parties, regional and global international context, personality and experience of the political leaders of the parties and their advisers in the political-military international relations etc..

The distortion of the messages content by the media through misinformation, intoxication under-information, over-information or manipulation¹⁰ can lead to the generation of several crises. On the other hand, a poor management of the crisis increases suspicion and mistrust between the parties in conflict of interest and can contribute to the escalation of tension and crisis turning into violent confrontations with consequences difficult to predict.

At the outbreak of the Iraq War (2003) the media had an important contribution in the “orientation” of the U.S. public, but also from other states. Mass media in the U.S., particularly the print media, induced to the public opinion the idea of danger which Saddam Hussein poses to the American security and the world and

therefore he has to be stopped or removed. President George Bush Jr. gave a 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his sons¹¹ to leave Iraq, enabling the international community to peacefully disarm the country by the weapons of mass destruction. As expected, the Iraqi dictator refused to leave his country and the US-led international coalition used the military force to enforce disarmament regime in Baghdad by weapons of mass destruction. The media pressure, supported by officials as Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State for Defence Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz, through articles, lectures and interviews, substantially contributed to influence the Americans to support military intervention to stop the Iraqi programs to develop weapons of mass destruction.¹²

The recent fuss of the horse meat sold in the UK and other European countries as beef and "coming from Romania"¹³ is, in my opinion, a perverse message that "informs through misinformation." The actual content of the message might be "do not buy beef from Romania that might be a horse." It is difficult and perhaps too early to tell if there was a malicious intention here. However, demonizing Romanian citizens in the West is a process that continues, fueled by those attitudes of our fellow citizens who commit crimes or uncivilized behavior during the time traveling or working in other EU countries.

The connection between two actors in the international environment networked by the media puts them in competition, willingly or not, because to communicate through the media is to send the same message to everyone who wants to listen to radio or television or to read in newspapers and magazines. Globalization has relativized borders which no longer have the same meaning for electromagnetic waves and communications satellites that for land, sea or air vehicles.

Globalization has facilitated both classical communication through words and images - as well as the non-verbal. The traveling and the behavior of people belonging to cultural communities during the temporary (tourism, business, etc.) or permanent (residence, emigration, etc.) stay, in the space of other cultural communities are so many advantages of

mutual knowledge. Cultural differences can be accepted and the opening time necessary for understanding the other, or they can turn into irreducible antagonisms. Samuel Huntington wrote that ethnically speaking a man may be half Arab and half French, he may even possess the citizenship of two countries, but it will never be half Muslim and half Catholic.¹⁴ The media, which is a real "sounding" of the amplified transmission of interests, opinions and perceptions to the public can contribute to the formation of the current pros and cons of some members of that community which they can "paint" as difficult to integrate in a new community, religious fanatics, inclined to conduct violation of other communities (as the Serbs were described before the war in Kosovo in 1999) or conversely, eager for freedom and integration into the Euro-Atlantic community (as the Kosovo Albanians were described before and during the war in Kosovo)¹⁵ etc.

2. UNDESIRABLE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON COMMUNICATION

In a globalized world, the interdependencies deepen and expand, generating positive and negative effects that are unwanted and unplanned. The negative effects appear to be due to either rush to be taken and some insufficiently studied decisions are applied, mainly the medium and long term effects of them, whether from the voluntary acts which are assumed by greater risks than those that could be accepted.

Some authors have called globalization the "new world disorder" because the "Great Schism" (another phrase to define the Cold War) abolished the centers of power that mattered and it led to the perception that "things get out of control." Because of this space we live in is likened to "no man's land" (within anyone) where many disparate fields of forces coexist, acting erratically and which can trigger tensions and conflicts in places difficult to predict and master.¹⁶ If in the past they could rely on sovereign states, reflected, inter alia, in the control of the natural, economic, cultural and other resources, now most of the states have limited sovereignty

due to their integration into supranational organizations such as the UN, NATO, EU, OSCE, OECD, CIS etc. In a alarmist-pessimistic vision published by *Le Monde diplomatique*, the economic integration is blamed because it transformed the states into security services managing the business of the mega and transnational multinationals.¹⁷

The unintended negative effects of globalization have generated fear, mistrust, suspicion, apprehension and even a manifested or subversive to the process opposition.

The citizens of underdeveloped and developing countries which are not totally connected to globalization, are living under direct or veiled threats of experts in Western countries who declare unequivocally: "Globalization is not a process that everyone will come out victorious."¹⁸

This perspective differs substantially to what the promoters of the process declared several decades ago, exposing primarily (sometimes exclusively) the beneficial effects of globalization: accelerating progress, increased productivity and living standards, expanding knowledge in all areas and finding solutions to most problems of the mankind etc. These benefits were and are true, but they were accompanied by "side effects" (a euphemism meant to mitigate the hardness of the truth about the negative effects of globalization) which produced dysfunctions. The development of science and technology, particularly in the West, increased the economic gap between the countries in the region and the world as the developed countries did not agree to transfer technology and "know-how" to underdeveloped and developing countries. As a consequence: the bankruptcy of many companies in the respective countries, rising unemployment, increasing poverty, the transfer of polluting industries to underdeveloped countries or developing countries,¹⁹ reducing the living standards of the populations of these countries, encouraging emigration, especially elites, proliferation of the terrorist, extremist organizations and of organized crime, etc. Many underdeveloped countries have become almost exclusively supplying raw materials and markets for the products of developed countries, the (black, gray) economy is increasing and organized

crime leaders were able to influence the political leadership or even to seize the leadership of several states (failed, with ineffective governance, "bandit states" etc.) or to require at the leadership of these states people who can influence and control them.²⁰

The proponents of the dependency theory argue that globalization is actually a smokescreen to disguise actions of world domination by powerful states that are trying to establish a new form of neo-colonialism by stimulating the poor and the rich countries' dependency.²¹

Given the chasm that separates the rich from the poor deepens and broadens the signal that we perceive poor countries is that their wealth is monopolized by the rich. Some experts say that globalization is a zero sum game²² ("zero-sum game" which in this case translates to: what the rich countries lose, the poor countries gain.).

The amplification of knowledge, goods, values and people circulation was accompanied by undesirable phenomenon of violence "export" (terrorism, extremism) and of the existing dysfunctions in some states. The immigrants who belong to religious communities whose precepts states non recognizing the secular authorities became true "self-governing islands" within the adoption for these states, because the sovereignty of those states is contested.

The benefits of globalization can be both used for noble and progressive as well as the benefit of terrorist, extremist or organized crime organizations.

The economic integration has been a solution that allowed the expansion of markets, standardization, growth and wealth of the Member States but also ceding of their rights regarding their sovereignty. Relative weakness of the states was and is promptly exploiting terrorist organizations, extremist, racist and organized crime groups. Perpetrators of criminal actions and of some illicit activities may easier lose trail in an area where borders have become more symbolic.

The economic and political integration has negative effects on community cohesion. The ethnic and cultural mosaic resulted from integration has a negative impact on fewer communities at risk of losing their identity. Quite many authors appreciate that the accelerated

development of the economy has had negative effects on people, who under the pressure of increasingly sophisticated and latest technology have adjusting troubles because our natural barriers seem to have been overtaken by technology.²³

Scientists blame the unprecedented proliferation of the questionable “cultural products” – violent movies, horror movies, films and performances that promote an unhealthy lifestyle (alcohol and drugs), “art standard”, “counterfeit art” etc. Scientists and politicians from the states that reject globalization considers that the exact name of the process should be “Americanization” or “Westernization” because globalization is a form of imposing the Western domination, led by the U.S., to the world.

Nicolae Rotaru believes that globalization has blurred the differences between war and peace, and between the civil and military fields. He argues his view by referring to the reality of today where information can make the difference between victory and defeat, the slogan being the battle cry (slogan in Celtic means battle cry) of new warriors, and the market, the new “battlefield”²⁴ of the war led by smart weapons.²⁵

Doina Tudor believes that globalization is an attack on small nations to self-consciousness, which will lead to the “implosion of cultures” by: inoculating the doubt on the values of the national culture, denial of indigenous cultural values, imposing a national complex of cultural inferiority, denigrating some personalities and some national cultural values, promoting the general distrust and the lack of respect for the fundamental national institutions, exacerbating regional and global values at the expense of the national ones²⁶ etc..

According to Ezra Alhasid, globalization was performed for the first time since Paleolithic because then the same culture, the same economy, the same technology, the same lifestyle, one type of social order and a single religion on the entire globe existed²⁷ As long as some people also transmit this kind of messages we should not wonder why there is this fear that globalization is in fact, homogenizing and standardizing following the model and according to the Western pattern, euphemistically called “harmonizing the tastes.”²⁸ The Western experts believe that the

anti-Americanism and anti-Occidentalism are a result of some misperceptions about the culture of this part of the world, but also of some annoying messages maliciously launched by interest groups from the underdeveloped and developing countries so as to divert the populations’ attention from those countries from the real, economic and social problems they are facing.²⁹

3. BENEFITS OF GLOBALIZATION IN COMMUNICATION

In the rational world, the social structures are mainly based on communication – words, gestures, stances, techniques – Nicolae Rotaru sustains.³⁰

According to C. Teleşpan, communication can be not only a driver of confrontations, but also of settling them by a constructive approach.³¹

The miracle of Franco-German rapprochement was achieved by communication (diplomacy, political commitments, negotiation), patience, strengthening the economic ties, the use of incentives, rather than small steps confrontation and tempering ambitions. Both gave up the vanity to offer the world not power, but the transcendence of power, namely subjecting the relations between the states to the international laws.³² In the context of globalization and integration, the relations between states should not longer rely on force but on the rejection of force, and the “self-imposed rules of conduct” in which the rules of states management, promoted by Machiavelli to be replaced by “moral conscience.”³³

Whatever the pros and cons of globalization, the intensive, dominating, even devouring communication is an undeniable reality. “I communicate, therefore I am”³⁴ seems that tends to replace the dictum “cogito ergo sum” (I think therefore I am).

Today we communicate more and more through *e-mails*, we shop at *e-mags*, perfect business through *e-banks*, we read many *e-books* and we even learn at distance through *e-learning!* So distances and national borders and cultures do not have the same relevance as a few decades ago. The interpersonal and cross-communitarian

contacts are facilitated by the inter-satellite communication and the Internet, this real Walhalla of cybernetics.³⁵ Unfortunately, media have a dual role: they can inform and misinform the same expert in communication and psychological operations. He defines television as a "misinformation paradise" in a world where cybernetics is a true Olympus and the Internet the "alinee plains" of misinformation.³⁶

4. CONCLUSIONS

In a globalized world, the interdependencies are so large that any dysfunction of its segment has repercussions on the entire system of international relations. The economic and financial crisis in the recent years is one of the most eloquent examples.

We are the beneficiaries of the technical and scientific discoveries that led to spectacular progress of economies amid unprecedented multiplication of interpersonal and cross-communitarian communication.

At the same time, due to their contradictory nature, communication and information have brought to the fore the clash of civilizations, which seems to be the main field of the future international confrontation. It depends on each of us if this confrontation would be violent or constructive.

Much has been written and will certainly be written enough studies, articles, lectures and scientific papers on globalization. However, I do not think we can say that we know everything about this truly global process. The known benefits, but mostly the negative side effects of the process should lead us to reflection. We need to be more cautious and more receptive to messages of state and non-state actors who oppose openly or subversive to globalization process. In the era of computer and communication the "dialogue of the deaf" has no meaning to exist. We must learn the lessons of history if we want to have a better world. People and communities no longer have to split into winners and losers. It is time for the international relations of "zero sum game" ("zero-sum game") type to replace the ones where all the participants are winners ("win-win game").

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