

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE POST-SOVIET COUNTRIES IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

Živilė Kėrytė

Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

Abstract

The concept of globalization is very broad and it involves and influences the whole society. This paper reveals the relationship between the discourse of globalization and the sphere of politics. Globalization is changing the whole structure of society. Politics is no more that centre-orientated, and is shifting to new forms of structure. The emergence of civil society becomes as a very important component in the society's political sphere. But realization of civil society raises many problems for specific countries in Eastern Europe. How globalization can explicate the process of civil society formation in these countries? This question is also discussed in the paper. The shift in the political sphere has been influenced upon growing number of non-governmental organizations (NGO).

The aim of this paper is to reveal the influence of globalization on the sphere of political life and its impact on formation of civil society.

The analysis reveals that globalization process is not something you can construct as it depends upon each country with different social, economical and political patterns. Globalization changes the inner quality of the social and political life itself. Transformation of the structure of society unbound the politics. This has contributed in providing more abilities to participate in the ruling of state.

Keywords: *globalization, civil society, political life, non-governmental organization (NGO), post-soviet countries, Europe*

Introduction

Globalization makes all the world to be interconnected together in all aspects of contemporary society (Held et al., 1999). A lot of social processes are taking place inside and

outside states national boundaries. The conception of society shifts depending on globalization discourse. Beck (2000) states that globalization means the increasing number of social processes that are indifferent to national boundaries. As it was mentioned above, the state of society is changing; together it has influence on relationship between nation-state and society. All these changes prompt the debate on the position of state of politics in the society. Beck (2000) argues that societies are entering a new condition of modernity. This transition from first age modernity to second age modernity reflects many changes in the contemporary society. Politics is into transformation phase. Nation-state is no longer the only and the main power institution. The power is distributed to other institutions: international organizations (NATO, UNESCO, and EU), different NGOs, and other domestic state institutions. Social transformation has restructured national institutions and re-arranged international linkages. Changed relations develop new political practices that affect the formation of civil society. Transnational NGOs emerge as key actors in the process of forming successful civil society. What is the relationship between growing number of transnational organizations and the prosperity of civil society?

This paper chose to discuss globalization discourse and its impact on civil society formation in Eastern and Central Europe countries. These countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Belarus, Romania, Hungary and etc.) experienced different history with separate social, economical and political patterns. The “global” takes the important role in the formation of civil societies of post-soviet countries. The “global” is a new category that demand to think about new power organizing forms. As Corry (2006, p. 304) states, “International relations (global networks) are increasingly spoken of in terms of world politics, and while nobody imagines that the state has already withered away, the question for some commentators is now not whether it is being transformed but how”.

The aim of this paper is to reveal the influence of globalization on the sphere of political life and its impact on formation of civil society.

This paper consists of four parts. The first part overviews globalization discourse, including such problems as the meaning of “global”, the emergence of new social categories, new “borders”, the diminish of the nation-state power. The second part compares formation of civil society in Western and Eastern countries. The third section of this article reveals relationship between transnationalism and civil society (domestic integration). In the fourth part presents the author’s view, how the formation of civic society in the globalization context is understandable. The paper

offers the main trends, which characterizes the civil society of Eastern and Central Europe countries.

The discourse of globalization

Globalization is a term which becomes more and more central to the social sciences. In order to understand the global processes and structures that have altered the nature of politics, some concepts need to be clarified. Three schools of thought were developed in order to understand and explain the social phenomenon of globalization. These three schools are as follows: the hyperglobalizers, the skeptics, and the transformationalists (Held et al., 1999). These schools develop different approaches for analyzing the society; however, this paper presents only those related to the change of political sphere in the society. The hyperglobalists talk about the demise of nation-state, which cannot control its own citizens (Held et al., 1999). Further they claim that the sovereignty and autonomy of the state will erode in time. The skeptics say that really “nothing much has changed” (Held et al., 1999). For them globalization is a myth and world is only perfectly integrated global market. “The transformationalists assert that a new ‘sovereignty regime’ is displacing traditional conceptions of statehood as an absolute, indivisible, territorially exclusive and zero-sum form of public power “ (Held from Held et al., 1999). The human becomes important in decision making, because the power is diffused. Globalization changes the inner quality of the social and political life itself. Today the sovereignty is understood “less as a territorially defined barrier than a bargaining resource for a politics characterized by complex transnational networks” (Keohane from Held et al., 1999).

The concept of globalization over the last decade was discussed by many scholars of social sciences. Thus the globalization debate of its forever multiplying points of difference demands to unpack the terms of the conceptual consensus and to look “on the constitution of the ‘global’ as a common point of reference and an object of inquiry” (Bartelson, 2000, p. 181). The author makes three distinct concepts of globalization and how they have extended within different theoretical context. The first and most common sense of globalization is that of globalization as a transfer or exchange of things between constituted units (for example political, economic or cultural units). Globalization as transference implies that the system and the units remain identical with themselves throughout the globalizing process. The system doesn’t change, units boundaries exist. This understanding of globalization is more abstract, because it doesn’t provide the possibility understand the process of globalization as a social fact. On the second concept frames the process of

globalization is perceived as transformation that occurs at the systems level, and it affects not only the system but identity of the units as well. At this level Bartelson (2000) notices that globalization might be considered as a social fact, which takes place in a global totality, it presupposes that we can conceptualize the world as something more than the sum of its constituent parts. But still the first and the second concepts of globalization preserve the distinction between unit and system. The third concept of globalization removes this distinction. Everything what takes place beyond this world can only be rendered transparent. It is understandable, “globalization implies the transcendence of those distinctions that together condition unit, system and dimension identity” (Bartelson, 2000, p. 189). Globalization is not something we can construct; affect from outside or inside, globalization is driven forward by a dynamic of its own.

The concept of globalization is today less an ideological weapon, than itself a vehicle for conceptual transformation and movement (Bartelson, 2000). It has to be admitted that globalization changed the world, how it is conceived and defined. Globalization transforms everything it touches. Conceptions of notions such as state, power, nation, sovereignty and society became problematic and controversial analyzing them from various globalizations’ discourses.

The understanding of the concept of globalization has been changing time from time in the history. And now scholars are talking about particular studies, autonomous field, where various set of discourses, will be discussed and analyzed from the perspective of globalization. Globalization is a dynamic process that affects and is affected by distinct social dimensions and processes every moment in the social world. Though the awareness that globalization is a powerful process that destabilizes the entire sociopolitical context expands, the goal to grasp globalization and its boundaries remains still tricky. Therborn (2000) suggests the other way to reveal the concept of globalization. He states that globalization as a concept of social theory and analysis should meet three criteria: it should have precise meaning, be usable in empirical investigations and the third criterion means that the concept should be abstract, not containing any a priory statements of concrete content. Regarding those criterions globalization is defined as referring to “tendencies to a world-wide reach, impact, or connectedness of social phenomena or to a world-encompassing awareness among social actors (Therborn, 2000, p. 154).

Three phases distinguished by Beck gives the clarity how the code word ‘globalization’ has been used in the social sciences: first, denial, second, conceptual refinement and empirical research, and, third, epistemological shift (Beck from Rantanen, 2005). The first reaction of existing reality

was to deny the globalization (primarily it was economic) and to declare that nothing under ‘globalization’ on the social scientific agenda was historically new. The second phase begins when social scientists in the most diverse disciplines starts to subject the phenomena of globalization to conceptual analysis. The third phase is recognized when humans are facing with the blurred social categories. Distinction between internal and external, national and international, local and global loses their sharp contours. These circumstances are defined as an epistemological turn, when premises and boundaries that define social categories disintegrate (Beck from Rantanen, 2005).

Despite the diversity of explanations what does globalization means, the nature of the “global” still remains complex and requires for response. Urry (2003) suggest that the “global” has to be analyzed as a sort of system and how the systemic properties of the global interact with the properties of the other entities such as those of “society”. The social science of globalization had taken the global system for granted and then shown how localities, regions, nation-states, environments and cultures are transformed in linear fashion by this all-powerful ‘globalization’ (Urry, 2003). On the contrary, Urry (2003) affirms that complexity would see such a system as diverse, historical, fractured and uncertain. Urry (2003) uses ideas from the “new physic” in order to explain and define the concept of ‘complexity’. The nature of ‘new physics’ says that “contemporary science no longer sees anything ‘as static, fixed and given’. The observer changes that which is observed, apparent hard-and-fast entities are always comprised of rapid movement, and there is no structure that is separate from process” (Rifkin from Urry, 2003, p. 7). In some sense Urry’s (2003) conception is related with Bartelson’s (2000) concept of globalization as transcendence. When globalization is defined in terms of transcendence, it means that it brings change not only to units and system but also to the conditions of existence of objects of inquiry and the fields where they are situated (Bartelson, 2000). Globalization becomes very dynamic whereas ‘despatializes’ and ‘detemporalizes’ human practices as well as the conditions of human knowledge (Bartelson, 2000).

Globalization and politics

Relationship between two concepts ‘globalization’ and ‘politics’ is very intensive and ambivalent. On one hand one might think that everything is changing for the better. Humans live a better life, they have better living conditions than it was earlier; various international and transnational organizations beyond national boundaries seek to defend human rights, formal and informal institutions rights, and economical, political organizations rights. On the other hand

humans encounter many problems living in a globalized world. Power is diffused but we still do not feel free. People experience various conflicts and risky situations in their daily life. People don't know whom they can trust.

The new concept 'global politics' is emerging as a useful tool to capture the stretching of political relations across space and time, the extension of political power and political activity across the boundaries of the modern nation-state (Held et al., 1999). The concept of global politics avoids the distribution of politics to local or international, domestic or foreign. Decisions or actions made in one part of the world can rapidly get response in other parts of the world. All actions and decisions are linked through the rapid communication technologies and meet in a global arena. Although all institutions that have power and decision right meet in global arena, nation-state still remains powerful actor. Tarrow (2001) claims that states remain dominant in most areas of policy, for example in maintaining domestic security. States still control their borders and exercise legal authority within them.

The active participation of transnational, international and NGO's take the significant place in a public, community and people lives. Each problem the human confronts with can be effectively settled when reciprocal cooperation between formal (state, politics) and informal (transnational, international and NGO's) institutions exist.

The first modernity & the second modernity

Within the relationship between globalization and society, the shifting status of society and its parts need to be discussed. Beck (2000) distinguishes two stages of modernity: first age of modernity and the second age of modernity. When Beck (2000) explains his theory and paradigm shift, he distances himself from the theoretical schemes of postmodernism. Postmodernists emphasize the end of modernity, but Beck (2000) confirms that modernity is only beginning with the development of the new social sciences categories. The internal quality of the 'social' is changing, what constitutes 'society' and 'politics' becomes in itself questionable, because the principles of territoriality, collectivity and frontier are becoming questioned (Beck, 2000). The categories framing world society – the distinction between developed and underdeveloped countries – are collapsing (Beck, 2000). This author emphasizes that there is not one modernity; there are a lot of modernities. Western and non-Western countries perceive globalization in their own way. In the first age of modernity the non-Western were defined by their otherness or 'premodern' character. In the second age of modernity everyone has to locate oneself in the same global space

and is confronted with similar challenges (Beck, 2000).

In the second age of modernity the relationship between politics and society must be redefined. Politics tied to the nation-state boundaries loses its significance. Territorially bounded politics can no longer remain the most important in the contemporary society. Beck (2000) supposes that strong community ties among citizens, solidarity with strangers and development, restructurization of national institutions can make civil society motivated, elaborated and successful. Hajer (2003) accepts the idea of Beck (2000) and affirms that context of policy making is changing; solutions of problems cannot be found only within the boundaries of sovereign polities. Power is dispersed to different institutions that act on the national, international or transnational levels. Governments are sharing power with businesses, with international organizations, and with a multitude of citizens groups (Mathews, 2004). The weakening of the state here goes hand in hand with the international growth of civil society, the emergence of new citizen-actors and new forms of mobilization (Hajer, 2003). However, Beck (2000) raises a question – how can decisions, which are at once post-national and collectively binding, be made? The answer is socialization of shared risks. Risks presuppose decisions, definitions and permit individualization. Risk creates a shared space for values, responsibilities and action that transcends national boundaries. According to Beck (2000), the accepted definition of threat thus creates and binds – across national boundaries – cultural values. It promotes solidarity among citizens inside and outside boundaries. Risk regime also implies a hidden, community building aspect and force (Elkin from Beck, 2000).

Beck (1992) distinguishes the transformation of politics in the perspective of the second age of modernity (reflexive modernity) into two respects. In discussion Beck (1992) uses Habermas's phrase 'new obscurity', which hides these two respects. The first one states that centralized political system is experiencing the loss of power in the course of enforcement and utilization of civil rights in the sense of new political culture; the second emphasizes the changes in the social structure that implies the transition from non-politics to sub-politics. Beck (1992) uses the term 'sub-politics' to refer to forms of politics outside and beyond the representative institutions of the political system of nation-states. It becomes clear that finding political solutions is contingent; there is neither a single nor the 'best' solution, instead there are always several solutions available. The process of decision-making in politics field must be understood as a process of collective action (Crozier and Friedberg from Beck, 1992). These two perspectives mentioned above uncover the process of 'unbinding the politics'. Beck (1992) relates it with process of political modernization in

a sense it disempowers and unbinds politics and politicizes society.

The formation of civil society

In order to explain how globalization is influencing the society, especially the sphere of politics, the civil society formation process must be presented. There is the divergent academic discussion in the East and the West about the meaning of civil society. Narozhna (2004) maintains that the Western type of civil society is the product of a relative lengthy and unique social evolution in the West. Societies in Eastern Europe have distinct cultural, socio-economic and political characteristics. Society must be developed and elaborated from the inside, not from the outside. Of course, it can be induced by foreign assistance policies but only if they are sensitive to the cultural life and historical experience shared by members of the target society (Narozhna, 2004). Most Western and Eastern academic conceptualizations of civil society overlap in the approach that a viable civil society is represented not simply by a network of organizational forms, but also by a certain type of interaction within and among them built on trust and tolerance (Narozhna, 2004). It's a system of cultural norms and values that are diffused in a network. Kaldor (2003) defines civil society as the medium through which one or many social contracts between individuals, both women and men, and the political and economic centres of power are negotiated and reproduced. However, Narozhna (2004) emphasizes that the notion of civil society throughout Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union is closely intertwined with nationalism. The concept of 'nation' has become a necessary component of the conceptualization of civil society, because of the regime of Soviet Union. The collapse of Soviet Union from this perspective symbolized the rejection of Soviet supra-nationalism (Bunce from Narozhna, 2004). Looking from this perspective the rebuilding of civil society in post-soviet countries is only possible through the revival of national identity. By contrast, the West thinks that involving a national ingredient to the conceptualization of civil society is not necessarily or compulsory. Like Robert Putnam, for example, believe that civil society can flourish at the local or regional level without implicating national sentiments at all (Narozhna, 2004).

Unfortunately, when Western donors were rushing to democratize the former socialist world, they have overlooked the very important detail, the significance of the concept of nation. By the mid-1990s, the idea that NGOs equal civil society was deeply rooted in the minds of Western donors; civil society was understood as a set of diverse NGOs. This explains the NGO boom in countries of Eastern and Central Europe. In 1994-95, 30,000 NGOs were registered in Czech

Republic and 43,000 in Hungary (Narozhna, 2004). In Lithuania the development of NGO was intensified after 1991. Exactly, the majority of NGOs were established in that period (soon after renewal of Lithuanian independence) (NGO information and support center, 2007). Despite the failure to democratize as soon as possible and to establish the civil societies in former Soviet countries, Western experts still believed they were the only ones equipped with the knowledge and experience of civil society without considering the need to expand the model of civil society in accordance with indigenous needs and capabilities. What is needed to build viable civil societies in the post-socialist world must separate them from the implicit identification with Western-type plural society (Narozhna, 2004). It implies that most post-socialist societies lack well-entrenched independent institutions counterbalance the state. And there are constraints, beliefs and predispositions inherent in the very nature of the social order (distinctive social reality of each country), and it must be respected.

But we cannot forget that in contemporary society of the moment the new term “global civil society” is taking its place. As civil society is no longer confined to the borders of territorial state, it changes its reality and is understood in relation with the global context. A new form of politics, which we call civil society, is both an outcome and an agent of global interconnectedness (Kaldor, 2003). Kaldor (2003) supports Narozhna’s (2004) notion and claims that global civil society is not only NGOs, but a process through which social contracts are negotiated at global, national and local levels, including all the various mechanisms through which individuals voices can be heard.

Transnationalism and domestic integration/civil society

Globalization reflects the changes that give a new shape and structure to contemporary society. Most social scientists agree that ‘transnationalism’ broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states (Vertovec, 1999). Strict division between nation-state and international borders becomes meaningless. Globalization promotes the creation of the transnational social spaces. Transnationalism describes a condition in which, despite long distances and presence of national borders, relationships have been globally intensified and take place in an arena of activity (Hannerz and Castells from Vertovec, 1999).

The transformation of society structure and the development of transnational ties can be clarified as a process of dichotomy. The transformation of social structure allowed to decrease the center-oriented government power and to unbind the sphere of politics. The unbinding of politics

expanded the flows of transnational ties. From other side increasingly developing and widely diffused transnational ties are transforming and changing the society itself. Civil society provides a legitimizing platform for discordant and radical demands (Kaldor, 2003). Strict territory borders are vanishing; civil society including NGO activities is more affective and significant.

Roudometof (2005) states that transnationalism emerged in the 1990s as a new concept aiming to describe immigrant cohorts (in North America and Western Europe) that tries to integrate into labour force and industrial society. But over the last decade the concept has been extended and applied to defining, for example, activism across borders, religious and social movements. Roudometof (2005) uses Beck's concept "internal globalization" in order to define the notion of transnationalism. Beck uses this concept to highlight the reality of micro-globalization (Knorr and Cetina from Roudometof, 2005). Globalization affects not only macro-structures (economic, politics, society), but also it affects everyday life of social actors at the micro level. Accordingly to this, transnationalism should be understood as the emerging reality of social life.

Stark et al. (2005) uncover the relationship between two twinned processes. At the same time East Central Europe's fragile civic organizations are sinking their roots into the domestic society, they are also building transnational ties to actors outside the country. Researchers want to find the answer to question "Can global connectedness co-exist with local rootedness?" (Stark et al., 2005). These authors found out that civic associations with transnational ties are more likely to have deep roots in domestic societies than others without such ties. Civic organizations with transnational ties are more likely to be participatory and embedded in networks of local civic organizations. In considering the interaction between transnationalism and domestic integration authors emphasize the importance of formation of civil society. Strong and integrated civil society is a key of successful social, economical and political inclusion. Integration is about connectivity whether is in the connections between organizations and their actively participating citizens (rootedness) or in the network ties among civic organizations within the sector (Stark et al., 2005).

Towards understanding the formation of civil society in the globalization context

In this section four units which put together make a structured model of the civil society formation in the globalization context are distinguished. Eastern and Central Europe countries with different from Western countries social, economical and political patterns experienced their own history of civil society formation. The meaning of such categories as society, power, citizen,

relations and state-nation has to be revised.

Global networks – their meaning and importance

The meaning and function of the concept of globalization has a significant implication on understanding the political practices in the society. Globalization and its impact on civil society uncover a challenge to the nation-state system because it “represents an ongoing project of civil society to reconstruct, re-imagine, or re-map world politics” (Lipschutz, 1992, p. 391). As civil society doesn’t exist outside democratic setting, we see that society with new organization forms reconfigured the concept of state as well. The discourse of globalization in Eastern and Central Europe is a new phenomenon together with the rebirth of the concept of civil society in a global form.

Actively participating citizens in a global context

Corry (2006) states that rather than defining civil society to begin with and then evaluating it, the interesting question is how actors themselves fashion it and how it functions—in this case how it might be reconfiguring the idea of global politics. A lot of NGOs are emerging in post-soviet countries with the idea and goal to change the society. There are national and international NGOs established. NGO’s have to be build considering the socialist legacies, traditional beliefs and social images shared by the members of post-socialist societies (Narozhna, 2004). All these constitute an organized social activity and the social life.

NGOs as actors of social change

Globalization changes the inner quality of the social and political life itself. Today we talk about new political practices and new forms of organizations. A new form of political practice, called civil society, is an outcome of global interconnectedness. NGOs are the outcome of the formation of civil society. But as it was mentioned above the text, NGOs doesn’t constitute the civil society. NGOs are as actors of social change in the society. They reflect the messages, the categories from inner life, in what people believe and whom they trust. What is happening outside the world has an influence on individuals who interprets it inside their understanding and in turn takes an action to change the outside world.

Re-configuration of domestic institutions

The exclusion of this part was made in order to emphasize that domestic institutions in a global arena has to adjust the new conditions and new thinking, which tells that power is diffused now and decisions and actions have to be made together. Civil society in a global context “tends to see itself in terms of being in opposition to power in many forms – rather than just state power – diversity is a concomitant feature of the term“ (Corry, 2006, p. 317).

Conclusions

Globalization transforms the whole society and its changes affect us in any area of the globe we are living. The structure of society, including sphere of politics, is changing and shifting. New forms of civil participation are emerging as an alternative of state government ruling. The emergence of civil society becomes a very important component in the society.

Transformation of the structure of society has unbound the politics. This has contributed in providing more abilities to participate in the ruling of state. Although Tarrow (2001) claims that states remain dominant in most areas of policy, they still control their borders and exercise legal authority within them, but the diffusion of power between state and non-state actors allow all of them to participate in the process of decision- making.

The formation of civil society in post-soviet countries in Europe proceeds not so fast as Western countries expected. But some inadequate actions from Western countries prevented the successful realization of this process. Society must be developed and elaborated from the inside, not from the outside. Of course, it can be induced by foreign assistance policies but only if they are sensitive to the cultural life and historical experience shared by members of the target society (Narozhna, 2004). What is happening outside the world has an influence on individuals who interprets it inside their understanding and in turn takes an action to change the outside world. Actively participating citizens constitute the foundation of social life. The social activity of the society member’s constraint of that they think and do. That’s why any development model of civil society formation cannot be established or transferred without understanding of the cultural context.

Research in Hungary revealed that civic associations with transnational ties are more likely to have deep roots in domestic societies than others without such ties. Civic organizations with transnational ties are more likely to be participatory and embedded in networks of local civic organizations. Looking from this point the relationship between flows of transnational ties and prospering of civil society is viable. But to understand how this works we need further empirical

research in post-Soviet countries.

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