

From National Independence to International Integration: Europe and Romania

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Abstract

In the process of globalization, some countries and their inhabitants do progress and prosper while others are left further behind. And here is where national governments still have an important role to play because they can enact policies that no corporation can. Thus, governments should keep a balance between international interests, local businesses, and the general population. There is a strong link between political decisions and economic activities. In order to prosper, a country needs honest and competent political leaders and good economic specialists. And they must act together keeping in mind the national interests of the country and the needs of the people. The case of Romania is complex and a true analysis of the transition from a command economy to a market economy is beyond the scope of this paper. The situation could only improve if people elect honest political leaders who in turn appoint competent specialists to rebuild the economy. Only then could Romania aspire to a dignified place in the New World Order brought about by the process of globalization.

Keywords: Globalization; Transition; National interest; New World Order

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The aspiration of the Romanians for a very long time was to unite under their own independent nation-state. That was achieved in 1918 at the end of the First World War and it was followed by a period of nation building and social progress. Political leadership was central in the life of the new country and economic activities followed national interests. The Second World War changed the situation. The country was mutilated territorially and was occupied by Russia, which imposed a government of godless communists. The formerly Western educated elite and the middle class of Romania were replaced with a largely opportunistic group of individuals. Most of those who joined the communists lived in hypocrisy, paid only lip service to ideology, and helped themselves to the detriment of the

nation. Then, communism was kidnapped by Ceausescu, who promoted a strident but empty nationalism and imposed himself on top of a dictatorial pyramid.

During 45 years of communism, and especially under Ceausescu, Romania built a strong industrial base. However, led by a semi-literate individual who would not listen to specialists, the new industries were largely uncompetitive. And to make matters worse, during the second part of the 20th Century, the world changed drastically. It was the beginning of the process of globalization. Huge international companies started to buy smaller ones, merged into even bigger corporations, created local affiliates in other countries, and began to grab great shares of the global business. Concomitantly, servicing activities, marketing and feasibility studies became crucial in the new global economy. As a result, business decisions began to trample political decisions. Then, the 21st Century brought about another change: Trans-National Corporations (TNCs) started to dislodge national authorities. This trend led to new economic blocs, eroded the power of national governments, and forced average people to adjust to new realities. For Romania, the transition has been painful and is continuing.

The 20th Century changed the political and economic map of Europe radically. It began in the 1950s with the European Economic Community and gradually it led to the present-day European Union. During this transition, the traditional nation-states lost their pivotal importance and the EU became the dominant power of the continent. From an economic point of view, the change should have been beneficial to all member countries, but in the case of Eastern Europe the results have been a mixed bag at best. Currently, Trans-National Corporations are at the base of the new global economy, but they are in a difficult relationship with the national governments. The two of them sometimes cooperate; other times compete, and occasionally collide. For a better understanding it should be recalled that nations are created historically in a natural way from the ground up. They are located on a given territory, have governments that in principle are elected democratically, and have an inner balance of power between the executive, legislative and judiciary. By contrast, TNCs are created from above without any popular consent, have no inner balance of power, and have no national or local loyalties. They only exist for profits. And if they deem it necessary they move to other countries with no regard for local consequences.

In spite of all these negative traits, international corporations do bring about certain advantages, such as increase world trade and new technologies. Nevertheless, in the process of globalization, some countries and their inhabitants do progress and prosper while others are left further behind. And here is where national governments still have an important role to play because they can enact policies that no corporation can. Thus, governments should keep a balance between international interests, local businesses, and the general population. In a sentence, governments should always have in mind the welfare of the nation which they represent. Has the Romanian government done that over the last decades? Why is the population better off in such countries as Poland and Hungary, countries that started from similar regimes and are less endowed with resources than Romania?

It should be stressed that economy means the production, exchange, and consumption of goods and services. Yet, there is no economic development without political backing, and politics mean the rules by which a society is governed. There is a strong link between political decisions and economic activities. In order to prosper, a country needs honest and competent political leaders and good economic specialists. And they must act together keeping in mind the national interests of the country and the needs of the people.

The case of Romania is complex and a true analysis of the transition from a command economy to a market economy is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the results of the transition are readily visible: They are ruined old industries, inefficient new agriculture, high unemployment, inadequate services and a disoriented population. From a social point of view, the situation is even worse. It is true that there is freedom and democracy today, but they do not help old people live any better and do not keep the youth of the country at home. On the contrary, over three million Romanians have left the country to find employment abroad. It is also true that a good part of the old communist economy was uncompetitive, but some industrial establishments were profitable and should have survived the transition. That would have provided employment for today's young generation of Romanians. What happened?

Members of the former nomenclature have ripped off the old economy for their own interests and have become the multi-millionaires of today. Their ill-gotten wealth and their ostentatious behavior are an insult to most people and an offense to everyone's common sense. While this new class of *nouveau rich* and their offsprings are promoted to leading positions, too often competent people are marginalized. Has the process of globalization been good or bad for Romania? It has been good for a few and bad for many! And the situation could only improve if people elect honest political leaders who in turn appoint competent specialists to rebuild the economy. Only then could Romania aspire to a dignified place in the New World Order brought about by the process of globalization.

Nicholas Dima, Visiting Professor, Romanian-American University, 1 January 2017

(This article is inspired in part from Dr. Dima's book, A Brief Study of Globalization, Exlibris: U.S., 2013; Dr. Dima offers courses on Globalization at RAU)

Editor's Note: *Great honor and pleasure to introduce Professor Nicholas DIMA*

Dr. Nicholas Dima is a strong advocate of freedom of learning, of education, of seeking knowledge – as the foundation for a better generation today and for a better society tomorrow – in his capacities as a professor, a writer and a “Voice of America” journalist. His American professional career (he received a doctoral degree from Columbia University in New York) includes working 20 years for Voice of America (VOA) in Washington, and teaching college, university and US Military schools for another ten years. Among his most rewarding achievements were meeting Kings, Presidents, and Prime ministers as a VOA reporter and editor, teaching American officers up to the rank of full colonel (for example,

Professor and Director for European Studies at the US Army, J.F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, NC., 1985-1988), teaching in the US and Africa, and promoting democracy, education, and human values world-wide.

On June 27, 2016, Professor Nicholas Dima posted an article entitled “America, Globalization and Brexit” on the website (<http://sfppr.org/2016/06/america-globalization-and-brexite/>) of the Selous Foundation for Public Policy Research, a conservative Washington DC-based think tank founded in 1985 during the height of the President Ronald Reagan years, whose mission is to formulate and promote public policies based on the American values and benefits derived from the Founding Fathers and the Constitution, including limited government, individual liberty, freedom, opportunity, economic prosperity and the primacy of national sovereignty.

In August 2016, he has reviewed Robert D. Kaplan’s new book entitled “In Europe’s Shadow: Two Cold Wars and a Thirty Year Journey Through Romania and Beyond” (Random House, New York 2016), which focuses on Romania, but reflects the author’s wide knowledge of the entire area of East-Central Europe. According to the review posted on the above mentioned website of the Selous Foundation for Public Policy Research (<http://sfppr.org/2016/08/leaving-something-to-history-2/>), Robert D. Kaplan (who is fascinated by the uniqueness, culturally, historically and ethnically, of Romania – a key country to understanding Southeastern Europe) takes up historical questions, old and new challenges, socio-political and philosophical issues, as well as contemporary worries, politics and geopolitics. The author notices that for Romania geography was a nightmare and history was a tragedy (he consulted, among others, George Cristian Maior, former Director of Romanian Domestic Intelligence and currently Ambassador to Washington). The reviewer Nicholas Dima captured the reader’s attention with his opening sentence (“Leaving Something to History”), gave the essential information about this challenging book, determining the author’s main ideas and how they are developed, offering the reader some understanding of the author’s thoughts, supporting this documented work’s evaluation with evidence from the text, and proving that he knows not only the work under review, but also the author. He also proved the understanding of the author’s purpose, established the book’s authority and made a final judgement regarding this book.

Recently, on March 1, 2017, Professor Nicholas Dima has reviewed Peter H. Wilson’s new book entitled “Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire” (Belknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 2016 HC), an encyclopedic study covering over one thousand years of Western European Christianity, roughly from 800 to 1806. While perusing or scanning the book looking primarily for relevance to our century, the reviewer Nicholas Dima asked himself: “What lessons can Europe learn from the experience of its Western ‘imperial’ past?” Professor Nicholas Dima also added, among other aspects, that: “It is worth recalling that in 1787, when theoretically the Empire still existed, James Madison, the future American President, wanted to get inspiration from the Empire’s experience for the organization of the United States”... “Apparently, human nature has not changed much! Yet, can the EU draw from past experience and avoid those old traps one thousand years later?” (<http://sfppr.org/2017/03/europes-never-ending-struggle/>).



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Professor of International Relations



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RAU Visiting Professor Nicholas DIMA

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