

THE IMPORTANCE OF EUROPEANIZATION IN POLAND'S DEVELOPMENT

PhD. Student Bogdan Lucian CUMPĂNAȘU*

Abstract. *After the end of the Cold War and the fall of the communist regimes, Europe faced essential changes, both in reshaping the European borders, as well as in the occurrence of new ideas in society. Ground from the inside by social inequality, lack of transparent and pluralist political systems and limited liberty, the European ex-communist countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) embraced voluntarily the democratic values of the European Union (EU), perceived among them as a guarantor of the fundamental human rights and a model of governance. In this regard, their main political goal became the adherence to EU and rallying to the European aquis, which represented a model for internal reforms.*

Even though the European policies assured the implementation of good governance in the post-communist countries, nowadays we are witnesses of a paradox: the communist reminiscences are mirrored in the political discourse of influential leaders which try to undermine the rule of law and democratic values, in order to gain more power of decision. The immediate threat to the EU is generated by the nationalist and anti-European discourses, as well as through the enhancement of the partnerships with the former communist allies, which risks to divide the EU.

In order to repel this dangerous trend it is important to demonstrate that the transition of these countries started under the direct influence of the EU's transformative power, which decisively contributed to their development and it is necessary to have a more consolidated EU, which can bring mutual benefits for the member states.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the Europeanization had an enormous positive effect on Poland and contributed to the democratization of the Polish state through economic growth, institutional progress, entrepreneurship consolidation and reduction of the social disparities.

Keywords: *Europeanization, Poland, European Union, economic growth, Presidency of the Council of the European Union.*

* National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest; e-mail cumpanasu_bogdan@yahoo.com

Introduction

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Central and Eastern Europe states went through a transition period, which was strongly influenced by the Europeanization process, respectively by adopting and implementing EU's norms and values. Therefore, the Europeanization process can be perceived as a European model of governance and an instrument of EU's foreign policy, which has the power to transform a country, in all its spheres, from economic to politic and from social to administrative level.

Frank Schimmelfennig, defined four mechanism of the Europeanization: *conditionality*, *socialization*, *externalization* and *imitation* [1]. *Conditionality* follows to disseminate the rules of EU governance, which are perceived as mandatory for the external actors of Union, in order to receive recompenses and avoid EU's sanctions. The mechanism of *socialization* comprises all EU efforts to disseminate European governance by persuading outside actors of the ideas and norms behind them [1]. The states being under an Europeanization process are adopting the EU's rules voluntarily, considering them legitimate and relevant. *Externalization* represents the direct influence of EU on the cost-benefit analysis of the partner states, which calculate whether implementing the European aquis would be more beneficial than rejecting it. *Imitation* demonstrates that EU is perceived by the partner states as an example of governance, and the countries that are not yet members of the Union copy EU's policies because these are perceived as solutions of the internal problems [1].

In extenso, the Europeanization cannot be fully accomplished without the democratization of the state. Therefore, democratization represents the political model promoted by EU, and the effects on Europeanization can be applied successfully only on a democratized society [2]. The characteristics of a democratized state refer to: secret balloting, free election, freedom of association, administrative responsibility, transparency and integrity in political finance and unrestricted access to information [2].

The Europeanization effects on Poland. From communist transition until holding the Presidency of the European Union Council

In 2001, with 3 years before Poland's EU ascension, Ionel Nicu Sava pointed that, after 10 years of transition, reforms and changes, in the Central and Eastern Europe appeared high regional differences [3].

Therefore, between Poland and Ukraine, two countries with highly similarities at the beginning of 90s, inclusive regarding their GDP value, was created a regional threshold. Nowadays, between these two countries occurs not only a geographic frontier, but a regional boundary as well, a division which did not exist at the beginning of the transition period [3]. Also, an important factor in the evolution of transition and in the further development of the country is the external influence [3] and in the case of Poland, this element was called Europeanization.

At 01st May 2004, Poland became a member of the EU, a moment which represented the outcome of a long process of reforms, implemented both at the administrative level but in the Polish society as well. These normative efforts were initiated with the *Autumn of Nation* [4], which led to major transformations on the scene of international relations and pointed a redefinition in Polish traditional external affairs, by switching to a Pro-western orientation. Formed in the autumn of 1989, by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, one of the leaders of the Solidarity movement, the first non-communist Government in the Iron Curtain had almost immediately initiated economical, political and cultural relations with Western Europe and United States of America [5].

Poland opened diplomatic relations with European Economic Community (EEC) in September 1988, and one year later, at 19 September 1989 signed a first economic and association agreement with the European structure. It is important to mention that, even though, the agreement between EEC and Poland was ratified later in 16 December 1991, there was no assurance in offering full membership for the ex-communist country, but instead the scope was to strengthen the institutional and lawful norms for a long term cooperation in various segments: economic, politic, social and cultural. The Polish application for EU membership was launched at 08 April 1994. Later, after a positive response from European Commission, Poland was invited, at 12-13 December 2003, to start the negotiations for a future enlargement. The EUs Accession Treaty was signed in 13 April 2003, and after the ratification procedures were finally complete, Poland became a member of EU at 01st May 2004, together with other 9 countries [5].

Poland implemented the marketization process, by reducing state subsidies and privatization, immediately after the fall of communism, being first of the Central and Eastern Europe country which applied the shock therapy. Even though, initially the reforms generated unemployment, high inflation and negative economic growth, *on official statistics, Poland*

was the first post-communist country to see GDP per capita pass its communist-era peak (in 1996) [6].

Since the ascension to EU, Poland faced almost 15 years, and poles get used with being part of European Union. Polish companies entered in competition with the firms from other EU member states, Polish students benefits from the European scholarships and workers from Poland are enjoying free of movement all over Europe. The fears that were circulated before Poland's EU ascension, like the loss of sovereignty and lands, or the disappearance of autochthonous agriculture, have proven to be unfounded. Instead, Poland made a big step by becoming a leader in economic growth and development and not only among former communist states, but in all EU. Certainly, there were some costs after the EU's adherence, but overall the benefits were higher and visible and the adjustment of internal reforms to the European expectations contributed decisively to the modernization and Europeanization of Poland [5].

Economic and financial aspects regarding Poland's adherence to EU

Poland started its bilateral relations with EU as a post-communist country and a state that was making its first steps to a systemic transformation, from a centrally planned economy to a free market. After a decade, Poland became a leading country in economic growth, the polish economic success being a major one after the EU's adherence: the GDP almost half increased (48,7%) and the purchasing power parity was 48,8% of the EU average, in 2016 reaching 66,9%. This economic growth eliminated disparities between Poland's regions and population categories [5].

Contrary with the initial prediction, the Polish membership to the common market did not consist in the disappearance of the inland entrepreneurship instead Polish companies took advantage of the free market advantages and quickly complied EU norms and standards. Therefore, after 10 years of membership, in 2014, almost one of three (32%) Polish companies have export activities, especially in the industrial, commercial, transportation or services sectors [5].

Also, the development of polish business had a positive effect on the evolution of service sector, both in Poland and EU. Many of Polish companies have offered services, which, in exchange lead to the Europeanization of the Poland's economy market, that became similar with the developed countries: service sector became the mainly employer and the agriculture became efficient. In 2014, 57,6% of the active

population was working in the service sector, 30,8% in industry and 11% in agriculture [5].

Political aspects of the Poland's EU full membership

When Poland obtained a full membership in EU, political opportunities appeared too: Polish authorities were now able to influence EU future, both internal and external policy and the institutional system [5].

One of the major political successes of Poland in EU was the launch of Eastern Partnership (EaP), along with Sweden at 7th May 2009. After two of Poland's foreign policy priorities in the transition period have occurred, respectively EU and NATO's membership, the former communist country turned attention to its Eastern vicinity. Therefore, the real interest of Poland in launching EaP was to increase the relevance of Eastern neighborhood among EU member states, similarly with the previous France's policy towards Mediterranean countries, some part of its former colonial empire [5]. Therefore, Poland followed to extend its influence and political and economical model to the ex-soviet countries (Belarus and Ukraine mainly, and Republic of Moldova and Caucasus states secondary), in order to strengthen cooperation and interlink with them. In conclusion, through EU, Poland became a regional power and a normative state in Eastern Europe [5].

But the most important hallmark of Poland in EU was represented by the Presidency of EU Council, held by the ex-communist country in the first half of 2011 (01st January – 30th June). Poland used this period in order to consolidate its position in EU, as a country with a pro-European orientation and able to offer solution to the risks which EU faces. Poland's Presidency was not an easy task, because the period coincided with: highly disagreements among member states, euro crisis, emergence of Arab spring and a general mistrust for the EU's enlargement. The main successes of Poland's Presidency included achieving an approval for the 2012 EU's budget, despite the economic crisis and the UK's opposition, finishing adherence negotiations with Croatia and signing the Association Agreement between EU and Ukraine [5]. Martin Schultz, president of the European Parliament (2012-2017) described this period as one of the best Presidency which EU has ever had [5] and the Jose Manuel Barroso, president of European Commission (2004-2014): *Poland proved that putting its heart and soul into its Presidency, demonstrating great European commitment, to address the challenges facing Europe and driving its priorities resolutely forward really pays off. And I think this is extremely important because sometimes in Europe there is in the European*

debate there is an idea to oppose national interest to European interest. And Poland has shown that probably the best way to defend the national interest is indeed to be Pro-European in the 21st century in Europe. Poland has, during its Presidency, put itself at the service of deeper European integration, a stable economy and also a stronger Euro – its future currency [7].

Poland used the Presidency period in order to promote EU's unity and the importance of European mechanism. Two German political analysts, Olaf Lang and Anna Quirin considered that preserving EU's unity and preventing the appearance of new or bigger discrepancy between Euro zone and non-euro states represented the most important success of Poland's Presidency [5].

The cost-benefit analysis of Poland's EU membership is highly positive, and the process of Europeanization was materialized through economic growth and the modernization of Poland in all spheres: institutional, political and social. Specialists appreciate that if Poland would not have chosen for EU's adherence, today its level of development would be similar with Ukraine's, whose GDP in 1990 was slightly higher than Poland's. Today, Poland's GDP is three times higher than Ukraine's [5].

The Europeanization paradox

At 25th October 2015, Poland's politics faced a major switch, by rethinking Poland's role in EU, moving away from the EU's values and norms and requesting more sovereignty from the European institutions. Therefore, after Poland's accomplished a long year path of European integration, the nationalist party Law and Justice (LJ) won the elections with a high percent, which permitted to obtain majority both in the Upper and Lower houses of the Parliament. In less than 2 years, the policies implemented by LJ transformed irreversible Poland, by weakening the rule of law, undermining the separation of powers and democratic institution [8]. Therefore, after a few months after elections, the party reformed the Constitutional Court, by violating Constitution and putting the judicial system under the political control and transformed the public broadcast into an instrument of propaganda [8].

The message of LJ not rejected Poland's membership in EU, but was against the German hegemony and repudiated the centralization of power in Brussels [8].

The refugee crisis and Poland's refuse to meet EU's mandatory refugee quota accentuated the anti-European discourse of the government party, which was characterizing the Union as a societal multicultural model that failed in Eastern and Central European countries. In the economy, LJ followed to nationalize the industry and finance sector. Moreover, LJ party criticized the EU's economic effects on the Polish one, which was perceived at Brussels as a German annex. Also, another sector where EU faced a categorical opposition by Poland was the environmental, due to the fact that Union was imposing restriction in the use of fossil fuels in energy sector. Having one of the biggest coal resources in Europe, Poland perceived this policy as a direct threat to its own economic and energetic interests [8].

The limitation of the EU's influence became visible in all levels of Polish society, for example the motto of Ministry of Foreign Affairs *Let's serve Poland in order to build Europe and understand the world* changed with a phrase used by the Polish army during World War II *Faithful to my country, Republic of Poland*. Another particularity of the foreign affairs promoted by LJ was cooling the relations with Germany and strengthening ties with Visegrad countries and Great Britain. Also, by having direct negotiations with UK, regarding BREXIT, Poland demonstrated that is capable to weaken EU's unity and power [8]. Moreover, Poland experienced tensions with Germany regarding the construction of North Stream II gas pipeline and in the 3 Seas Initiative, where Poland excluded its neighbor as a partner [8].

Eventually, the LJ policies in weakening the rule of law, determined EC to activate against Poland, in December 2017, article 7 of the Treaty of EU, a sanction that could lead to lose its vote in EU and restriction in communitarian founds [9].

Conclusions

In the years after the fall of communism until present, Poland became an important member state of the EU, contributing to its unity, especially during crisis period, a fact which reveals that the process of Europeanization brings mutual benefits.

Nowadays, Poland is characterized as a powerful state, a regional leader and a country with an important role in NATO and EU. In this regard, the aim of the paper has succeeded, because the article demonstrated that Poland's transition, under the direct influence of the Europeanization process, has contributed to the development of the country

and underlining its role in the architectural structure of European Union and North Atlantic collective security organization.

REFERENCES

- [1] Frank Schimmelfennig, *Europeanization beyond the member states*, Zeitschrift für Staats- und Europawissenschaften, Zurich, 2010;
- [2] Tina Freyburg, Tatiana Skripka, Anne Wetzel, *Democracy between the Lines? EU Promotion of Democratic Governance via Sector-specific Co-operation*, National Centre of Competence in Research, Zurich, 2007;
- [3] Ionel Nicu Sava, *10 years of transition in Eastern Europe* (in Romanian *10 ani de tranziție în Europa de Est*), The Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001;
- [4] <http://www.enrs.eu/en/articles/1434-inozemtsev-autumn-of-nations-25-years-after>;
- [5] Katarzyna Kolodziejczyk, *Poland in the European Union. Ten years of membership*, UNISCI Journal, Madrid, 2016;
- [6] John Dryzek, Leslie Holmes, *Post communist Democratization – Political discourses across 13 countries*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004;
- [7] Statement by President Barroso on the conclusion of the Polish Presidency, Strasbourg 14th December 2011, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-11-888_en.pdf;
- [8] Piotr Buras, *Europe and its discontents: Poland's collision course with the European Union*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2017;
- [9] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5367_en.html.