

THE FRANCOPHONE AREA IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract:

In this work there is underlined how the Francophone area has developed from historical and political points of view, with an economic and geographic extension at the global level. Its economical growth was imposed by local and global politics, as well as a general economic evolution in terms of progress or gaps. The francophone area has influenced the global society in many ways and directly contributed to "the phenomenon of Europeanizing" consolidation.

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The Francophone area's complexity, considered to be one of the main pieces of the world's progress and civilization, is determined by the role played over the times by the central nucleus which generated its constitution and consolidation, mainly in France. By investigating the situation from the present perspective, in which the Anglo-Saxon values spread in the collective mental of the most people, we may assert with amazement that France still manages to impose, although it has remained one of the last "Anglicized" and "Americanized" countries (Djuvara, 2006, p.109). The causes of this resistance are probable linked to existence of its own identity, given by the culture and civilization authenticity, although the economical factor was the one which has determined that, at the time of its historical exams, the Francophone area would not reach the greatness and the influence of the Anglophone ones.

For a correct understanding of France's hegemonic role, we must introduce a short progressive look of its creation and growth step by step. So, we may appreciate that France is a country which, just from the XVIth century has been affirmed by its double vocation, respectively the continental and the maritime ones, defined by its participation to the rivalry for the first top in Europe. Then, the XVIIth and the XVIIIth centuries period is marked by the extension of the colonial and maritime dominance, after which a big part of Northern America became French: Canada of the "New France", conquered from the XVIth century (Quebec, founded in 1687); Louisiana during Ludovic the XIVth, who named it; the land which linked the Mexico Golf to the Canadian lands on the two banks of Mississippi river: The Antiles, Haiti, Guadalupe, Martinique (Boia, 2012, p.p. 25-26). Although it followed a politics of territorial conquests like in England, at the scale of times, the maritime France lost the battle against the continental France. Obviously, in that epoch the European stakes proved to be more important than the international ones. So, although it concentrated on European hegemony politics, again justified by the transformations brought by the Revolution from 1789, no other European power (England, Germany, Prussia) was influenced by the French supremacy (le Breton, 2006, p. 64).

Then, the XIXth century was also marked by the territorial conquests to sustain and consolidate its power of influence. So, in 1800 it succeeded in recovering a part from Louisiana, which had been yielded to Spain in 1763. Immediately the official booming of the Napoleon's Empire was following (1804, May 18th), with his proclamation as a hereditary

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Emperor of France. It was surrounded by its national frontiers (the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees) besides the annexed lands of Piedmont, Parma, Toscana, Papal States and, after 1810, Holland. They were bordered on a semicircle of independent satellite states led by Bonaparte family's relations and which formed a buffer zone for the purposes of preventing the French Empire borders from the eventual attacks; assuring in the meantime nearly a third part of the total army's effectives, such as an auxiliary army. Their geographical division was made on two fronts: the Occidental European ones, constituted of Switzerland, the Spanish and the Italian Kingdoms, the German Confederation of Rhine; and the Eastern Europe ones with the Great Duchy of Warsaw, consisted of the conquered Polish lands, as a barrier against the Russian expansion in Central Europe. We must also mention that in all these lands there were developing the most important national institutions: the Concordat and the Civil/ Napoleon Code, by which there were united in only one system all the Empire's countries, the Empire's University, the proceedings of civil and penal courts, the fiscal system, the obligativity of the military service, the school-leaving examination (Stiles, 1993, p.p. 119-120).

After "Napoleon's epoch", a new one was following, characterized by colonial conquests, which debuted by Alger's enclosing in 1830. It was continued by the Colonial Empire's extension in the Dark Africa, by the Senegal and Cochinchina's conquest in the Extreme Orient (considered a main position for the next Indochina conquest). In the meantime, the period between 1880 and 1891 is characterized by the assimilation of the next lands: Tunisia (1881), Indochina (1882-1885), Occidental Africa, Congo and Ciad (1880-1900), Madagascar (1895) at which we may add Maroc (1906-1912). According with Boia (2012, p. 85), all these successes may be explained by the unexpected extension of Africa to the Francophone area, all added to the result of Bismarck's policy of the consolidation of "power balance" in the world, with the purpose that Africa should belong to the French people and Europe to the Germans.

When reanalyzing the European continent, we must not neglect the alliance with England dating back from Napoleon the IIIrd period, when the "nationalities" principle became the main instrument used in diminishing the empires strength and influences (Russia, Austria), France being itself drawn into political European policy consolidation. Beginning with the second half of the XIXth century, France was deserting into the fight for the first place in Europe (le Breton, 2006, p.p. 359-360); first of all, following the state that the new coalition "the Saint Alliance" imposed and next, because, being conquered by Prussia in 1870, it diminished its ambitions, being interested in winning an important high-position, but not the very first one.

The beginning of the XXth century period, obviously after the Second World War, was characterized by the climax of the Colonial Empire, France receiving also Syria and Lebanon (taken from the former Ottoman Empire). It was the start for a new epoch when Europe destiny had been being influenced by other powers (US and the Soviet Russia). France was the first country which considered that situation brought to the beginning of adaptation to a global world. Between 1939 and 1962, colonial wars were succeeding, being accompanied by France's loss of prestige, to which there were added the real losses (Indochina, Algeria). It became more and more obvious that the loss of colonies meant in fact damage, especially in the economic field.

Then, the second half of the XXth century was characterized by the appearance of a polarized world to the two rival powers (US and USSR), the other "small powers" (France, Great Britain, Germany) having to unify the forces by approaching and cooperation (Boia, 2012, p. 85). That period was also known for the construction's epoch of the United Europe, France being the country which understood that only in such a context could avoid the situation of becoming US or USSR satellite. So, it was materializing the initiative of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, considered to be "Europe's parents" in creating the CECO (1951) and Common Market (1957).

In the meantime, Charles de Gaulle's period (1959-1969) was known by a turning point, characterized by the relationship intensification among the states, looking for a joining of relationships with the small countries as well as big powers. It may be also considered a reconstruction period of the Colonial Empire, by a free nation association, its members signing bilateral agreements with France. It must also be pointed out that a few countries, choosing a strategy of an independent development, preferred to close the agreements with France. It is quite relevant the situation of Algeria which, in fact, detached from its colonial past, choosing the group of the Arabian countries and of the third world (Boia, 2012, p.p. 144-145).

Another change of political strategy was produced in 1966 when Charles de Gaulle removed France from NATO, and the American armies had to leave the French territory (Boia, 2012, p. 148). This movement meant in fact an attitude of hostility to USA, but it was not exactly anti-American and rather against its hegemony traditions, France being against any other hegemony. It was an epoch in which de Gaulle wanted "Europe of the countries", in which every nation to be free and independent. It's following then a period of European France's visibility consolidation, started by leadership taken over by Valery Giscard d'Estaing of the commission charged with the issuing of European Constitution, as an important step in creating a United Europe, France being one of the founder countries of European Union. By regarding the know-how of the European building, we may talk about the existence of two schools of thinking (le Breton, 2006, p.p. 366-367):

- a) The "Gaullist" School, which considered to have as a priority the agreement among the European countries concerning the vocation of united Europe;
- b) The Robert Schuman school, which appreciated this agreement as ephemeral if it has not been supported in institutions with precise rules.

Regarding the situation at the scale of the time, it seems that the institutions are those which proved the validity, trying to avoid the affinities and rivalities depending on their interests, but also to contribute to the adoption of several commercial, agricultural and regional politics. Just after the Euro zone constitution, the European continent has not yet an own political existence which may help it to be a real partner for Russia, US or China.

All these dynamics of the influence forced by the hegemonic positions consolidation must be analyzed in correlation with the progressive aspects of the economical politics (theoretically sustained by famous economists who created some referential economical doctrines for the history of economic thought at the universality level).

So, Colbert is relevant as a representative exponent of mercantilism, those who seemed to be a little interested inland tradings. In his opinion, they had a little contribution to the national wealth growing, for which reason he sustained the necessity of the export development for attracting a lot of gold in the country. The main beneficiary of those cash reserves have been the king's budget, the gained money being spent on prestigious objectives, like Versailles, but also for the war support. The accumulated wealth was designated also for colonization of France to which it may be also added the implementation of the naval buildings programs which had as a result a French fleet of big dimensions. This greatness ambitious made France always be in financial crisis, because the spendings always outrun the accumulation possibilities.

The second doctrine, which was born and developed in France is the physiocratic one, which was conceived by Francois Turgot Quesnay in his "Tableau Economique" (1758), who was also the financial inspector during the XVith Ludovic's reign (Oppenheim, 1992, p.p. 30-31). The device of this way of thinking was referring to the necessity of subordinating the economic acts and actions to the natural laws. This vision adaptation was linked, first of all, by the fact that agriculture was the dominant branch in economy, so that, the earth, and not the gold, began to be considered the veritable wealth of the country. In this context, it was also pleading for the introduction of a whole tax above the lands, with the intention that the rich

owners should pay more than the peasants. On the other hand, the industry and the commerce, considered to be dependent on agriculture, were sustained in their development by laws designed to diminish the governmental regulations and the guilds' control.

As Stiles (1993, p. 64) said, the Napoleon epoch is also bringing the Continental Blockade as an implementation instrument of economic fight against England, but also with a role of commercial protection for France in her relationships with other countries referring to the markets consolidation from the satellite and annexed countries. By studying the situation at the scale of time, we may appreciate that the above mentioned economical strategy had a ruin effect over the agricultural communities from the satellites states, by the fact that France was producing enough food for its own needs and all these states were anyway interdicted to export the excess of their food products in other countries. This state ended in a dramatic price decreasing of the alimentary goods and implicitly the level of living of those who weren't capable of paying the new artificial prices of goods imported from France.

The first part of the XIXth century marked for France the beginning of the industrial revolution with influence over the autochthonous development of several branches, such as: the cotton's industry (in Paris, the number of cotton spinning mills grew from 5 to 58 in 80 years) or the chemical industry (artificial colors, artificial materials, soap manufactories). With all of these notable progresses, France was still situated much under the level of the industrial revolution from England.

Based on data from British Universal Encyclopedia (2010, p. 140), we may appreciate that the results from the material productions were accompanied by measures of financial consolidation, situation confirmed by the constitution, in 1800, of National Bank, for restoring the trust in the French banking system after the turbulences from the revolution times, Napoleon being one of the founders.

After the first decade of that century, France was confronted with an economic decline generated first of all by the high costs of the Napoleonian Wars, the speculation with contraband products introduced by avoiding the Continental Blockade, the distrust in the national coin, the banking bankruptcy. By a suitable consolidation effort, France manages to overtake these troubles so that, at the beginning of XXth century, it became the second financial power of the world after Great Britain and the French franc was appreciated too as one of the most powerful coins from the world (Stiles, 1993, p.p. 112-113). We must also notice that the situation was favorized by the French people's inclination for saving by comparing with the investors' situation one. At this tendency we may also add that the economic expansion culminated with the foreign trade's tripling situation which scores a turning point to an industrial and financial civilization and the third position in the economic world hierarchy. Unfortunately, it was for a short time period, because after the First World War it had to borrow again and the franc was falling down, opening the premise of a galloping inflation. The phenomenon was continuing for several years, 1926 being marked by Poincare's reform, which devaluated the franc at a fifth of its value before the war (Boia, 2012, p. 105).

The economy decreasing was also continuing after the Second World War, France hardly succeeded at recovering the development differences and to enter the industrialized countries sphere because it was a country with solid agrarian traditions. In this time the world development was in an early stage, being prevailed by the small factories; and the competition spirit was broken by the state's intervention and by the customs protection. However, it was the beginning time to concentrate on the internal market's consolidation by the consumers' mass development, but also upon the extern ones, by intensifying the contacts with the developed countries.

Then, the period of Charles de Gaulle was characterized by the consumer society's ascension and of its values, the people being more interested in their own problems than in the glory of France. At the international economy's level there was an outlining of the

necessity of changing the monetary system basis, and France required the returning to the gold-standard considered to be the guarantee of the economic stability, but with the intention of eliminating the dependence on the dollar.

The last three decades of the XXth century were starting with an economical boom period, France being already a country with a consolidated industry, in which the number of occupied people in industrial branch increased four times as comparison with the agriculture one.

After 2000, like the other countries situated on top of the economical world hierarchy (the 4th position) France entered the post-industrial epoch, concentrating on the accelerate development of services. This tendency has been continued by the fact that nowadays it is situated on the 4th place at the world export services, in which the transports and the tourism are dominant. With its overall adaptation strength to the contemporary economical transformations, France continues to capitalize in an efficient way its traditional branch, the agriculture; as we have already mentioned, France was being situated on the second place in the world at manufacturing agriculture products.

Above all these tendencies we must mention the situation that, obviously for a country like France, the economical evolution is dependent on the way in which the common people are valorizing their own life. It seems that the French people are regarding the economic development as a means of material and spiritual needs satisfaction. This mentality is obviously reflected in the average life expectancy, France being the country with the most centenarians from Europe.

Coming back to its hegemonic power, on whose dependence we may imagine the destiny of the Francophone space, we may assume that, although the economic and influential power of France was not reduced, others countries (US, Germany, UK) had an accelerated rhythm; for which reason it was noticed a certain variance or lose of speed. This difference of rhythm is in fact the consequence of the globalization process, a phenomenon which is acting as a living organism, subject to a continuous transformation, which culminates with the appearance of any new power relationships. The complexity of these tendencies is connected to the fact that they are reflected and influenced by the multiple geographies, than by global and single ones. So, we may talk about the appearance of some new enclaves of “economic geographies”, as Jones (2011, p. 138) mentioned, too. In these new kinds of enclaves the local and the global economies are mixing touching each other in all aspects.

From what we have mentioned, it is obvious that the historical vocation of France by creating a Francophone area is influenced by its colonial politics, which reached a global dimension, adding to it a veritable symbolic capital. It seems that the diversity situated in a full ascension process in all Europe is a main feature of French culture, reflected first of all by the heterogeneous structure of the autochthonous people. So, nearly 10% of population is represented by the Islamic people, to which we may add many other communities of different ethnical and religious origins (Black Africa, Eastern Europe, and Extreme Orient). All of these are still having an inferior economical and social condition compared to the average level and are representing sources of latent conflicts with periodical outbreakings (for example, the revolts from 2005).

In the meantime, we must mention that the specific cultural refinement offers France an elitist aura which can unfortunately conquer only a minority of the earth’s population from which results the limits of its spreading and globalization, by comparing it with the characteristics of American mass culture. So, from all the characteristics which are defining its individuality, but also its attraction force, we must mention the followings: it is a veritable centre of jazz in Europe; it is the second diplomatic network after US; the embassies of France are the most sumptuous and representative in all the world’s capitals; it is continuing to product representative devises (Vasilescu, 2012).

By regarding the tendencies at the global scale, France is a basic and vital component of European continent, which is holding the supremacy in economical, technical, scientific and cultural fields. The last four centuries are the proof of the fact that the economic progress from this Francophone area has overshadowed the civilization from the other continents. The last mentioned ones suggested progress only for the reason that they have borrowed from their winners so that “the phenomenon of Europeanizing” (as le Breton, 2006 named it) is more and more pregnant while the American way of living is imposing everywhere, in Europe inclusively.

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