

THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE FLOWS' EVOLUTION IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

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international trade, evolution, development rhythm

The second characteristic feature is that the value volume of the international trade, in the second half of the 20th century, registered an extremely rapid dynamics, superior to the dynamics of all the other synthetic indicators of the world economy. The third characteristic feature of the value of international trade is the fact that, in the second half of the 20th century, the international trade outran the golden reserves and the centralized foreign bills of the non-socialist countries, as rhythm and absolute value volume.

The intervention of the products' flow by commercial policies do not follow a general tendency of removal of the obstacles or, on the contrary, their consolidation[3, p.22].

After the Second World War, the international and economical environment registered numerous and important changes because of the development of production forces, the industry having priority, in a lot of states of the world, even if this thing has not taken place equally.

The end of the 20th century is marked by a sensible return of the protectionist measures, especially in the trade that takes place between the three commercial powers: USA, Europe and Japan.

The industrial production is changing, as value and structure, according to the level of industrialization, the complexity and profoundness of the changes in the technical progress.

In comparison with the beginning of the 20th century, after the Second World War an enlargement tendency of the industrial area in economies have been notices.

After the Second World War, the contribution of industry to Gross Internal Product obtained by the developed countries has been on the second place, on the first one being the sector of services. This change did not mean a reduction of the importance of industry for the economies of those countries, these countries continuing to give attention to industrial development.

The increase of the processing industry and of the Gross Internal Product in the 90s for some countries in Asia was affected by the financial crisis, which began in 1997 in Asia.

The international prices have suffered frequent changes determined by the changes which occurred under the conditions of export as well as on the external markets. Moreover, according to the nature of the products and to the conditions of commercialization, the prices have been influenced by a series of other factors [1, p.480-481], in their evolution: technical, institutional, of market.

In the evolution of the physical structure of the world production important changes took place in the post-war period, in comparison with the ones at the beginning of the 20th century.

The main tendencies in the world production of the post-war period, can be put into evidence following the development of the main industrial products.

The resulting conclusions are the following:

- a bigger dynamics of the products in the processing industries, in comparison with those of the extractive industry (the preponderance of the processing industry branches as a consequence of the technical and scientific progress, worldwide).

- at the end of the 20th century, the dynamics slows down (the energetic crisis of the 70s and of the raw materials had an impulse in the developed countries for the utilization of the new energy forms, material forms and technologies).

As a consequence, new changes appear in the structure of the world production.

Changes in the geographical distribution of the world production intervened, generally, in the geographical areas which suffered less because of the demographical pressure, China being the only exception.

Some very developed countries from the economical point of view, as USA and the ones which are part of the European Union, have lessened weight of the total world population, as well as the weight of the world production. The countries from Eastern Europe, mostly members of the UE, have improved their position because of the decrease in the demographic development rhythms, too.

The divergences in the evolution of the Gross Internal Product have been determined, mainly, by the different average yearly rhythms registered in the most important geographical areas of the world.

As far as the distribution of the world income is concerned, the existent data of the year 1994 put into evidence the change of the ratio of forces on a world scale.

A short retrospective of the evolution in the value of the international commerce in the first half of the 20th century, from 33,1 billions of dollars in the USA in 1990 to 117,2 billions of dollars in 1920, and in 1940 only 41,6 billions of USA dollars – allows the noticing of a contrast between this evolution and the constant increase of the value volume of the international commerce in the second half of the 20th century.

The existing situation before the Second World War in the world trade, that is a bigger export in comparison with the import, will be change after this moment.

The development rhythm of the world import which overtakes the one of export after the 50s, is explained by the economical expansion which followed the post-war period.

As far as the analysis of the development rhythm of the world export on groups of states is concerned, during the same period of 50 years (1950-2000), it results that if, on the whole, the growth was of 88 times for the developed countries, the increase was of 98,1 times, for the less developed countries - 80,5 times, and for the socialist countries or former socialist countries was of 39,3 times, although in 1989 this was bigger approximately 55 times in comparison with 1950. The gap, as far as the increase rhythm is concerned, in favor of developed countries, has an explanation in the differential evolution of the price at manufactured products in comparison with the prices for basic products.

If the beginning of the 20th century, as far as the world trade is concerned, was strongly influenced by the evolution of some economies such as that of USA and Canada, France, England, and Germany, the end of the 20th century was marked by the appearance of the Euro area, and by the strong advance of Japan.

The differences between the material and technological resources of the states and their needs, either in quantity or in quality, or generated by a strong lack or only by the necessity of need completion, inclusively for some operations of import for re-export, puts the international trade in the situation of one of the most important economical sectors which contributes to the development of the countries.

If in the 21st century in the international exchanges of manufactured goods prevailed the textile products and those of basic metallurgy, and at the beginning of the 20th century, the chemical products, electric material and equipment, still, until the Second World War, the trade with goods was 60% made of raw materials (energetic, agricultural and mineral products) [4, p.13].

At the beginning of the 20th century, the states which influenced through their economical evolution and international trade development, were England, France, Germany, and USA.

In the period between the two World Wars, the factors that influenced the structure of the international trade were: the industrial development of the developed countries, the increasing of the unilateral specialization of colonies and dependent countries, as well as the over production crisis which took place during this period; by the increasing of industrial production, the weight of finite products has increased in the total of international trade. In the group of the finite products, the means of transport, the new products of the chemical and electro technical industry, the car industry, etc had an important weight.

Beginning with 1945, an extraordinary but not equally distributed development, was registered. The strong development of the rich countries (especially the two 'miracles', the Japanese one and the German one), come in contrast with the quasi stagnation of the not developed countries [2, p.98].

As a consequence of the fact that the world economy has reached deep changes in the second half of the 20th century, these changes have been reflected in the evolution of the physical structure of export and import.

The increase of the world trade, after the Second World War, (approximately 8% yearly), has been favored by the rules defined in the General Agreement for Taxes and Trade (GATT), and by the industrialization of the third world.

Before the First World War, Europe and especially England, USA, and Japan, dominated the international economic area.

A rapid incursion in the analyses of the geographical orientation of the world export, in the first half of the 20th century, shown the fact that in a proportion of 90%, the commercial relationships have taken place between the countries of Europe and between these and USA.

If in the period before the Second World War Europe has a weight of 52% in the world export, North America had approximately 30% of the world export; Asia whose weight decreased a lot at the end of the Second World War, in 1948 took part with 13,5% of the world export and only with 13,6% in 1945-1946; Latin America and Africa had a reduced weight in the world export (approximately 4-5%, that is 2-3%), and Australia and New Zealand only 3,2%.

After the Second World War, there was an improvement of the international commercial flows between the developed countries, a fact reflected in their weights in the world export: the weight of North America and Europe decreases in the world export (North America had 24,2% in 1953 and only 17,1% in 2000, and Europe approximately 45% in 2000) on the background of some countries' development from other areas: Japan's weight in the world export grows from 0,4% in 1948 to 3,5% in 1963 and to 7,7% in 2000, but the countries from South-East Asia (6 states from a region have a weight of 10,5% in 2000).

The different weights of different continents in the world export show the fact that in the international trade an unequal development have taken place. This unequal development is better put into evidence if the evolution of the main developed countries' participation (USA and Canada, West European countries and Japan), at the world export, is followed.

During the 80s until 2000 an expansion of service trade is taking place. The weight of the service exports in the total of world exports has increased from 17% to 30%.

The growing role of the services in the world trade shows an important increasing tendency of specialization in the international labor division, in which the developed countries have a dominant position.

The main features of the international trade in the 20th century can be synthesized in the following way:

- a) The first characteristic feature is the fact that *if in the first half of the 20th century the average rhythm of growth in the value of the international trade was 3,5%, in the second half of the 20th century the highest rhythm of value growth was registered (12%), with a climax period of 20,3% for the years 1971-1980, so that from 1950 to 2000 the value of the world export increased approximately 88 times, that is from 61 billions of dollars to 5338 billions of USA dollars. Here we have to notice concerning the differentiated growth of export for the manufactured products, with 168 times, and that of the agricultural products with 19 times. Significant is also the fact that, between 1950-2000), the physical volume of the sold products increased with 18,5 times, and the prices approximately 4,8 times.*
- b) The second characteristic feature is that *the value volume of the international trade, in the second half of the 20th century, registered an extremely rapid dynamics, superior to the dynamics of all the other synthetic indicators of the world economy (Gross Internal Product, industrial production, agricultural production).*
- c) The third characteristic feature of the value of international trade is the fact that, in the second half of the 20th century, *the international trade outran the golden reserves and the centralized foreign bills of the non-socialist countries, as rhythm and absolute value volume.*

The evolution of the world trade in the 20th century, can be synthesized as follows:

- the growth at a rapid pace of the world trade in the post-war period, in comparison with the pre-war and between-war period;
- the pace of growth of the world trade outran the pace of growth of the Gross Internal Product and of the world production in the post-war period;
- the growth of the physical volume of the world trade outruns the growth of prices;
- the development of the services world trade;
- the growth of the trade with manufactured products in the total world trade with material goods, and the detachment of the products with a high level of research;
- the increasing importance of the developed countries in the world trade.

Nowadays, the world trade is dominated by three main *regional blocks*: Europe, North America, Pacific-Asia.

The 80s were marked by the complete success of the regional commercial blocks; it was even believed that they would replace the multilateral commercial system. The factors which gave strength to these tendencies were:

- ❖ the products which are nowadays commercialized are more and more knowledge and technology intensive;
- ❖ the appearance of a new type of protectionism based on voluntary restrictions to export, the supervision of imports, technical rules, retaliation taxes, fiscal barriers, bureaucratic barriers, and so on, which are harder to follow and find;
- ❖ some changes which took place in the hierarchy of the great powers which dominate the world trade: on the basis of the hegemonic decline of the USA in the 70s, the role of nations increases, first of all that of Japan and Germany, and beginning with the 80s, states from Asia and South-East Latin America became important, too; the commercial policy of some of these countries (Japan), being 'expansionist' outside, and 'protectionist' inside,

contrary to the GATT spirit, has contributed to the weakening of the multilateral system's force.

However, the liberalization of trade causes distrust, and opposition even from industrialized countries which are able to face it.

The challenge of the 21st century is: how could globalization reduce inequalities and how could it protect economy for the following generations.

The general decrease of the economic activity (which began in the middle of 2000) has aggravated during 2001-2004. The increase of the world economy – which reaches 4,6% in 2000 – has diminished to 2,3% in 2003. This result would not be so unfavorable if it was compared with the one during the years when a decrease of the rhythm in the economic growth was registered: 1,9% in 1975, after the first oil shock, 1,1% in 1982, and 1,5% in 1991.

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