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THE REBIRTH OF ECONOMIC NATIONALISM - FROM NEO-PROTECTIONISM TO THE NEW WORLD GEO-ECONOMY

Abstract:

The current slowdown in international trade, apparently linked only to the pandemic crisis, actually has its roots in the long economic and financial crisis that began in 2007, which has stimulated economic nationalism and the adoption of neo-protectionist policies for more than ten years. Even if the prevailing narrative, also in the academic field, continues to be that of “globalization”, those policies, implemented by large areas and major world powers, have caused a long phase of “de-globalization”, characterized by the renewed use of the modern border to enclose economies. Productive and trading blocs and major powers have tried with the closure to make political and economic spaces (separated by the timid rebirth of globalization at the end of the bipolar period) coincide again. This has had serious consequences for developing regions and “emerging countries”, which have seen their political and economic stagnation worsen, with new dangers for global stability. The contemporary geo-economy is now facing closed and counterbalanced “super-regions”, which are regionalizing and redesigning the overall geo-economic balance of the planet.

Key-words: protectionism, development geography, international trade.

The current global pandemic crisis is producing an abrupt and probably very long braking effect on international trade. However, it would be wrong to consider it the exclusive or most important cause of global trade stagnation. In fact, the ground had already been prepared by the economic-financial crisis of 2007-2008 and, in particular, by the choices of economic nationalism, of the neo-protectionist type, which made a precise political use of the modern linear border for more than ten years. Even though globalization and the theory related to it are still at the core of the handbooks of economic geography

(though no longer in those of development geography¹), it is becoming increasingly difficult to talk about economic globalization because it is currently hampered by severe political factors. Globalization means mainly the overcoming of political barriers, borders, and the opening to the global free trade market. It means the introduction of reduced protective tariffs and exclusionary trading blocs and it is, at the same time, a political and an economic phenomenon. On the contrary, the Geo-economics is increasingly showing the emergence of regionalization of economies, markets and their fencing within the modern borders of the major powers and the great political-geographical blocs (in tension with each other), which had already begun before 2010. In the contemporary world, there is an evident tendency of building new boundaries as fortified barriers. It represents a dramatic historical shift. The revival of borders (Graziano, 2017, p. 15) and economic nationalism (Gilpin, 1987), has led to increasing neo-protectionist restrictive policies (neo-mercantilist, “neo-Colbertist”), adopted by large regions and major powers as “trade defense mechanisms”. Recessions bring closures, a resurgence of bordering and always give rise to increased pressures for protection. This trend is leading the world toward a closed trading system, less multilateral and global than in the 1990s. It was the large areas, the major powers that used and revitalized the border closures. In fact, small entities cannot introduce such measures, as the small internal market would exponentially increase the costs of autarchy, making them unsustainable. The neo-protectionism of large areas has aimed at protecting "internal" economies from international competition, leading to "economic super-regions", closed states and productive-commercial blocs and aiming to reconcile political and economic spaces, disconnected from the (timid) globalization phenomena of the 1990s, not even comparable to the historical globalization of Europe. Also, supranational bodies are needed to regain political control over the economic sphere. These large areas, politically fenced in by increasingly rigid borders, have in fact only revitalized the old myth of the *geschlossene Handelsstaat* (*The closed trade state*), theorized by Johann G. Fichte², based on the border used to enclose one's own economy within economic and trade barriers and make the economic and political space coincide. Larger economies and markets, which are also within free trade areas, will lose much less from some protectionist practices against foreign imports than smaller economies and markets. Over the last ten years, protectionism has seen an exponential increase worldwide, but this is not new in history. In fact, it has been dominant in the history of international trade, although the economic theory has almost unanimously defined protectionism as "anti-economic" in the

¹ See e.g. Todaro, Smith, 2012; Potter, Binns, et al., 2018.

² Fichte J. G., *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat. Ein philosophischer Entwurf als Anhang zur Rechtslehre und Probe einer künftig zu liefernden Politik*, Cotta, Tübingen 1800.

long run. However, in the last twelve years, the revival of “economic nationalism” and trade barriers has been macroscopic. State blocs and major powers have imposed barriers to trade, causing serious consequences especially for developing areas and "emerging countries": neo-protectionism is, in fact, a cause of their political and economic stagnation. It is a brake on their exports; it paralyzes the movement of capital, labor, and know-how, stimulates emigration, brain drain and prevents billions of people from transborder cooperation³ and the access to the international division of labor. As it is well known from economic theory, protectionism is the (anti)economic side of the use of the modern border and causes stagnation and underdevelopment. What is worse, history shows that the forms of protectionism tend to change during crises and that such protectionism prevails well after national economies have recovered (Irwin, 2011).

The revival of protectionism in large areas and world powers

Neo-protectionism is characterized, much more than in the past, by non-trade interventions, e.g. subsidies to the domestic economy, restriction of access to natural resources, health measures, restrictions on capital movements, etc. (Enderwick, 2011, p. 328). However, from 2008 to 2018, the US also introduced 1066 "classical" tariff measures. But those measures coexist with the conventional tariff escalation and quota restrictions on imports. By the end of 2008, 52 countries had already introduced 87 trade discrimination measures, compared to three in favor of trade. As a result of the intercontinental expansion of the economic-financial crisis - carried by the currency - the same has been done by India, Russia, Argentina, Brazil, the G7 countries (with the recent introduction, by the stronger economies, of 350 new duties), Australia, the BRICS countries, Germany and Great Britain. (Evenett, Fritz, 2015, pp. 22-23; Idem, 2016; Graziano, 2017, p. 18). France has adopted protections for the car; Great Britain - crying out: "British Workers for British Jobs!" - protections for employment and against foreign labor; the USA, after the prospect of the country's exit from the WTO and NAFTA, has forced companies (with increased costs and induced inflation) to buy US iron and steel and only local products for infrastructure works (Torsoli, 2009). In 2016 they imposed a 265% duty on Chinese steel. The EU has high customs duties on Russian and Chinese steel of up to 35%. In 2018, heavy EU duties on imports of steel from Turkey were added. Since 2008, Italy has adopted 267 protectionist measures against 68 partial liberalization measures. In December 2015, the Union, having taken note of the failure of the Doha Round (negotiations initiated since 2001 by the WTO

³ Borders and barriers entail costs and a negative impact on economies. They can penalize or hinder exchanges, distort the direction and intensity of flows, etc. (frontier, filtering and polarizing effects) (Ratti, 1991).

on the general reduction of duties), moved to bilateral agreements with 31 countries. Between January and August 2016, the G20 countries adopted 340 discriminatory measures: more than four times as many as in 2009, when, in the autumn, 17 G20 countries that had set themselves rules to prevent recourse to protectionist measures - given that the lesson of the economic policies adopted following the Great Depression, in the tragic interwar period, had already shown that protectionism was a source of worsening of the economic cycle - imposed various restrictive measures on imports (Graziano, 2017, p. 17). Since that year, some 4000 barriers to international trade, both tariff and non-tariff, have been introduced (e.g. financial incentives, which distort foreign direct investment). In 2016, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), promoted by the United States, was declared "finished" by German and French government officials (Graziano, 2017, p. 17), supported by the public. The same happened at CETA (EU-Canada agreement).⁴ In April of the same year, Eurosceptic movements led to the failure of the EU-Ukraine Association Treaty. Both the treaty with Canada and Ukraine came to a standstill because of the resistance of farmers, who had been able to form a compact pressure group with access to national and supranational powers since the Cold War in Western Europe. In this macro-area, the agricultural protectionism of the EEC then turned into the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The protectionist measures adopted by states and large economic and trade areas in the two-year period 2018-19 alone had already doubled compared to 2014. Moreover, while some trade liberalization laws introduced since 2009 have been temporary, the protectionist ones have become permanent and cumulative. Increasingly consistent and widespread trade barriers have produced autarchic policies, up to the paralysis of world trade, with the greatest damage concentrated in developing countries and the formation of areas closed by precise modern linear political boundaries.

The consequences of protectionism and economic nationalism

International trade was the driving force behind world economic growth during the GATT liberalization period (1947-70s). The volume of world trade had already increased 20 times before the end of the Cold War and tariffs in industrialized countries had fallen from 40% to less than 5%, stimulating trade, almost everywhere growing faster than GDP.

History and economic theory have shown that only countries that are open to international trade and the international flow of goods and services can

⁴ Hostility to TTIP has also spread to CETA. However, while the first clashed with EU health and environmental legislation, the second was a treaty of new type, which aimed to break down barriers, harmonizing and recognizing the environmental and health standards of different countries. The economic crisis, however, has generated the fear and uncertainty that drove thousands of people to take to the streets against these treaties.

trigger more or less prolonged growth processes. These results are derived both from the reduction in prices due to higher productivity and from the trend towards lowering tariff barriers. From Charles Davenant's theory (1656-1714) to David Ricardo's Comparative Advantages theory (1817), to Heckscher-Ohlin's model of variable factors of production and their influence on comparative advantage, to Douglas Irwin's discoveries (Irwin, 2002, 2011),

The theoretical assumptions of protectionism (the commercial relationship between two countries is not advantageous for both, but "zero-sum"), have, after all, been overturned, while the benefits of free trade for economic development, due to specialization and division of labor, have acquired ever greater clarity. In fact, in conditions of free trade, the countries have the advantage of specializing in productions in which they enjoy a comparative advantage (and greater productivity of the work, with lower costs) with respect to the other goods, imported, with savings that can be dedicated to other sectors. The result is an international division of labor from which everyone benefits. In economic theory, the following also appear as advantages of trade: 1) the pro-competitive effect: competition reduces prices and, when markets are not perfectly competitive, erodes the rents obtained by national dominant companies; 2) the increase in the variety of goods for consumers: an advantage inversely proportional to the size of the economies; the narrower economies will have greater benefits; 3) access to more efficient technologies and inputs than national ones; 4) industrial restructuring stimulated by opening up to international markets: the market is creamed off by the less efficient firms and only the more productive ones remain in business, resulting in an increase in the average productivity of the sectors.

Stimulating industry and using work in the most efficient (economic) way increases production and spreads the welfare. The virtuous effects of free trade today are even more evident thanks to 1) the greater exploitation of economies of scale; 2) product differentiation; 3) the increase in the efficiency of companies, driven by competition, stimulates them not to delay and to seek efficiency in the use of resources, which increases productivity; 4) the acquisition of know-how without costs; 5) the greater marginal efficiency of capital, which leads to more productive investments, thanks to integration in world markets (Bhagwati, 2006, p. 28). On the contrary, protectionism raises the domestic price compared to the prevailing market price level, increased by the tariff: imports become more expensive than local production, domestic producers increase production to replace part of the imports that are no longer made (due to the increased price), but the increase in domestic prices will weigh on the budget of all operators using that good. It is not only foreign producers who will pay (Forni, 2019, p. 86). In addition, among the consequences not seen in the short term, in which only certain categories of producers (and workers) will benefit, will end up with lower quality (no longer sanctioned by the market),

the development of obsolete technologies, lower consumption of that commodity (decline in demand) and the floating of subsidized companies that would be at a loss, thus taking resources away from healthy companies. The State will be able to gain tax revenue from the imposition of the duty, but the negative distortions caused by protectionism (less consumption and therefore less domestic production) outweigh the tax advantages. This will result in a loss of efficiency in the economy, destruction of efficient capital, not to mention the increased weight of lobbies that access to political representation to defend their interests through duties or subsidies since protectionism only benefits certain protected categories, which enjoy the benefits of coercion. Protectionism increases costs, reduces the productive potential of a population and its standard of living (forced to pay higher prices for foreign and local goods, which would not be higher in open markets), protects less capital intensive industries, with a negative effect on the crucial formation of capital, in a general uneconomic and wasteful process of scarce resources. Protection reduces the flexibility of the economy and the productivity of capital and labor. It also expels workers from industries that had a comparative advantage, attracting them to enterprises subsidized by tariffs or non-tariff barriers (NTBs), stimulating job creation in less efficient industries, diverting production from places where it could yield more per unit of capital and labor and leading to lower wages. Import restrictions, 'anti-dumping' measures, regulations, reduced tax and credit rates for domestic exporting producers, quotas on goods sold on non-producing state markets to keep the price high, all involve a subsidy to domestic producers which will be paid by consumers through taxation. Thus the protection transfers wealth from consumers to national producers who are not competitive on the world market, encouraging less efficient local production, but also reducing the overall level of consumption, with serious long-term effects. Imposing protectionist policies is tantamount to demanding that consumers and the general prosperity resulting from trade (but also from lowering the cost of transport, in the process of globalization) be damaged and nullified, to give a special and permanent privilege to less efficient producer groups, generating monopoly prices at the expense of competitors, consumers and potential beneficiaries of international trade.

If the duty were abolished, the same product would be cheaper and resources equivalent to the duty would remain to buy other goods. Moreover, the reduction in imports of foreign goods, stimulated, as in the US case, by the aim of protecting domestic production, raising wages and containing the trade deficit, hardly ever succeeds in reducing the latter, because it has a substitution effect and goods no longer imported from one country are imported by others. Protectionism also harms protected industries in the long term, because it removes them from international competition and discourages innovation. It is no coincidence that the protected sectors are also the least efficient (from the

US steel industry to agriculture in Japan and the EU, etc.). The argument of the "infant industry" in favor of protectionism (also used by A. Hamilton and J. S. Mill) is apparently the most powerful. In reality, its fallacy is detectable. Domestic consumers are always forced to pay the protective duty, and even if there is a temporary increase in the workforce in the protected sector, in the long run, there will be no real benefits either for industry or for employment in general, because the domestic consumer will have less to spend the equivalent of the duty and in this way, for wanting a new industry to be born, it was necessary to damage the others: the new economic activity will be visible and immediate, but the loss of jobs in the damaged industries, temporarily invisible. The visible advantages do not balance the losses (the workers left unemployed in other companies, the more expensive price of that product for consumers, the diversion of labor and capital - the productivity of which will be reduced - from activities carried out better, the reduction in purchasing power and real wages, the arbitrary orientation of consumption, etc.) and overall there will be a reduction in the level of wealth and an overall loss for the protected country, corresponding to the mortification of international trade. For a critique of that theory, see Sumner (1888, chapter IV). On the use of the theory in reference to developing countries, cf. Bhagwati (2006, pp. 16-17). In any case, this protection nowadays is rare. Neo-protectionism produces much more striking effects in the case of the fencing of supranational entities and large states that have already passed the stage of the infant industry. Only some countries of the global South adopt protectionist policies "of the infant industry", to defend themselves from competition from other developing countries. These include India, which has seen its economy increasingly integrated into world markets. In general, however, these countries call for trade, not aid, and access to world free trade, for which they want international protection (Enderwick, 2011, p. 334). Unlike in the past, it is the countries of the "First World" that fear international trade today. The parties have reversed themselves (Bhagwati, 2005, p. 13).

What is more important for this analysis, however, is that international social cooperation through trade and the international division of labor on a global scale tend to stall. Protectionism hampers growth rates, reduces the flexibility of economies and the productivity of capital and labor, neutralizes the advantages of lowering transport costs (in time and space: a consequence of globalization), but above all prevents developing countries and areas from exporting their products. The trade blocks in large areas also have destructive effects on the world trade system. If they adopt free trade internally, they arrest it at the borders of their closed areas⁵, defended by a bellicose language⁶ that

⁵ This is the case with the EU's CAP, the US, NAFTA, etc. The theorists of these large free trade areas, closed to the outside world by parasitizing the borders of the states that make up them (Violante, Vitale, 2010), fail to explain why the economic advantages "internal" to the

stimulates a constant danger of retaliation. It is certainly no coincidence that the protectionist phase peaks of the last hundred years have coincided with the darkest periods in world history.

Neo-protectionism, economic nationalism, new world geo-economy

Neo-protectionism and economic nationalism inherited from the long slowdown in globalization over the last decade tend to form closed regional blocs. The first consequences in the international arena are those on the development of Eastern Europe and the global South. In fact, if neo-protectionism invests in the textile, iron and steel sectors (included in the "national champions" and in the "strategic sectors"), services and the tertiary sector, it is the agricultural sector that most affects developing countries and areas (where more than 90% of the population depends on agriculture) for its consequences on development.

That brake on trade - by reversing the three central principles that organize the markets (non-restriction of competition, absence of entry barriers and absence of subsidies) - causes in those countries the hindrance to the production of agricultural surplus, as well as to the formation and circulation of capital (paralyzing productivity), inducing a chronic shortage of consumer goods, particularly serious especially for the urban population and becoming a cause of underdevelopment.

The consequences are worse if countries are relatively small, open, or specialized in sectors facing high international competition. Countries in fact expelled from international trade, which could become efficient producers in sectors with comparative advantage (for instance, Egyptian, Middle Eastern or Ukrainian agriculture) and feed all the "First World" at advantageous prices, together with the "Second World" and a large part of the global South, are instead forced to import food, worsening their balance of payments. The reduction of international competition causes an inefficient allocation of resources (protectionism, in fact, alters the productive structure and reduces the internal productivity of both the countries that adopt it and those that suffer

states and/or large areas should extend only to their borders and not beyond, with the opening to world trade (and competition). They should argue, for consistency, that protectionist closures should also be adopted within those areas and states if those measures are understood as economically advantageous. The reason, of course, lies in the political principle of exclusivity (Novikov 1890, part X) and the fact that modern political borders have no economic significance (ibid., volume 2, part III) (George, 1905). On the problem of EU borders, see Todaro, Smith, 2012; Filippova, 2016; Krok, Smetkowski 2006; Vitale (2011; 2016) and Violante, Vitale (2010).

⁶ Even without going back to Benjamin Constant's theory of peace through trade, taken up by Frédéric Bastiat (and symmetrically to the link between protectionism and war), it is easy to find polemogenous elements in the language that derives from these policies.

from it and that previously traded in it) since the virtues of competition (reducing prices, increasing production and producing the most requested goods) are de-potentialized. Agricultural protectionism also inhibits capital investment in poor countries (Bhagwati 2005, p. 87), paralyzing exports, and development. Unable to increase and export their production, those countries will thus end up in the poverty trap, which foreign aid is unable to buffer (Gwartney, Lawson, Easterly, 2006). Stopping exports means halting the development of economies, potential growth in employment and wages, and condemning people, families, and peoples to poverty. The overall calculation of the damage caused by agricultural protectionism is very complex, including long-term, direct and indirect damage, as well as political consequences in terms of stagnation and weakening of reform efforts. In the case of Eastern Europe and in particular Ukraine, the consequences of US agricultural protectionism and the CAP (which receives 48% of the EU budget in the form of subsidies, while only 2% of EU GDP comes from agriculture) have long been reported internationally. The WTO has been ineffective in controlling the use of large-scale subsidies in agriculture (Potter, Binns et al., 2018, p. 348).⁷ EU agricultural policy has had serious effects on agriculture in a (potentially) very fertile area, such as the 32 million Ukrainian hectares of Black Lands (чернозём), long denied by EU institutions but described by many observers.⁸ When Ukraine started to increase its grain exports to the EU, creeping protectionism emerged that imposed quotas and standards that surreptitiously introduced export barriers, adding in their external effects to the already decades-old EU production subsidies and import quotas. The European Commission has rushed to take measures to stop or restrict Ukrainian access to the EU market (Lepesant, 2005, p. 140).⁹ The neo-protectionist non-tariff barriers have led to a

⁷ It is not surprising that politicians, involved in endless "rounds" but without political support at home, end up opting for cheaper (political), faster and more populist alternatives, such as bilateralism, regionalism and protectionism (Narlikar 2011, p. 724).

⁸ Roman Shpek, Ukrainian Head of Mission to the EU, had already pointed out in the early 2000s that the CAP had contributed to the economic and political stagnation of a country like Ukraine, potentially very rich in agricultural resources (Lepesant, 2005, p. 140), but unable to intensively cultivate its fertile Black Lands (from which the Tsarist Empire drew food that it exported to Canada, the United States and Western Europe) and to attract capital. 1/5 of Ukraine's land remains in state hands. Mrinska (2006).

⁹ The Ukraine-EU Association Agreement (September 2014) also included a Free Trade Area (DCFTA), but the EU unilaterally adopted restrictive trade selections. Ukrainian exports to the EU will fall by 23% in 2015. Subsequently, Ukrainian agricultural exports to the EU, which imposed minimum import quotas on 36 Ukrainian export products, met a paralysis (Aslund 2016, pp. 11-12, online article).

mixture of price controls, duties and cross-subsidies¹⁰ which have led to higher prices for EU-community consumers for agricultural products than they would have been under a free trade regime (i.e. they bear higher prices than they would pay without protection)¹¹ and concentrated benefits in the hands of a few, with widespread expenditure and costs, shared between millions of consumers and taxpayers. To this was added the "distorting effect" of the incentive to rent-seeking, to seek agricultural subsidies that shift resources from other productive sectors, replacing trade and the market with the political process and producing a chronic oversupply over demand. While duties, non-tariff barriers, and subsidies provide certainty to some producers, they create distortions in world agricultural markets, introducing politically supported prices and inducing negative impacts in many parts of the globe, expelling from the market (also due to deteriorating terms of trade) products imported from the Second World and the Global South, which are potentially cheaper (Todaro, Smith, 2012, p. 566) - since they cannot compete on equal terms in European markets - creating imbalances in the protected agriculture sector and difficulties in exporting agricultural products due to artificially high prices. This is also reflected in the difficulty of importing necessary goods (Potter, Binns, et al., 2018, p. 395) into the Second World and Global South. It is these destructive consequences that can be avoided by reducing protectionist barriers to exports from developing countries and breaking down the subsidized disposal of agricultural surpluses on regional and world markets (Oxfam, 1993). US and EU subsidies to cotton production mean billions of dollars in losses for developing countries (Enderwick, 2011, p. 328) and costs to West and Central Africa for more than 20 million people who depend on cotton production and are on the verge of malnutrition, forcing them to switch from traditional cotton to cereals production. The trade policies of "high income" countries subsidize their farmers annually with about 360 billion Euros. These subsidies are devastating for producers in "low-income" countries (Greenlaw, Taylor, 2016, p. 782)¹² Their abolition would benefit African producers by up to 5.7% (Idem, p. 328). The marginalized countries of Eastern Europe and the global South have long called for greater openness of world agricultural markets. The tariffs imposed in 2010 by developed countries and China were already twice as high as those

¹⁰ The CAP has provided more and more direct subsidies to producers, while the request has been made, even in the global South, to "decouple" subsidies from production (Srinivasan, 2003, pp. 10-12), also made by the Fischler proposal.

¹¹ If the price is above the equilibrium level, higher than international prices, it means that the EU consumer will have to pay higher prices for the food he consumes (Disney, 2003, pp. 23-25).

¹² According to the UN, EU protectionism, which has resulted in tariffs of 150% on sugar, 250% on meat, 160% on butter, has deprived developing countries of about 700 billion dollars in exports each year since 2000 (Evenett S. J., ed., 2014).

imposed on trade with other developed countries. Non-tariff barriers are comparatively even heavier and have exploded with US and EU fears about the increased influence of developing countries in the WTO.

The damage caused by protectionism to the countries of Eastern Europe outside the EU and the Global South - especially those less developed, smaller, open or specialized in sectors that face high international competition - is devastating, due to the combination of agricultural subsidies granted by large areas and stronger countries, duties, non-tariff barriers, quotas and limits on the import of goods. In fact, protectionism lowers the price received by developed countries for their exports; it reduces the quantities exported and their foreign trade. The result is the decrease in international trade, the destruction of mutually beneficial trade networks, the brake on access to international markets and the reproduction of poverty cycles (low economic development → low wages → low savings → low investment → low development) and poverty traps (low level of education and health care → low level of human capital → low productivity → low wages → low level of education, etc.), which can be hampered by international trade. Protectionism condemns them to poverty (but also, in some cases in the global South, to death by starvation)¹³ and instability typical of political and economic stagnation, because preventing them from selling what they could produce makes it impossible for them to produce it, with consequent underdevelopment, unemployment, and migration. It should be noted that, on the contrary, the few free trade treaties signed by some South American countries in the last ten years with the large areas of the planet, have increased foreign trade and investment, agricultural productivity, technological progress, productive differentiation, reducing transaction costs and increasing trade in that continent. Increased prosperity has allowed more extensive and sustainable social policies, increased productive employment, and decreased poverty (as in the case of Chile, Colombia, Peru, etc.). If Africa could increase its share of world trade by just 1%, it would earn an additional €70 billion a year, enough to lift 128 million people out of extreme poverty. In addition to causing serious consequences for developing countries, economic nationalism stimulates a regionalization of world markets and the formation of closed areas that can easily conflict with each other.

Some final considerations

The stagnation of international trade, which preceded the contemporary pandemic crisis, has at its roots the global ballast of neo-protectionism and

¹³ According to some calculations by the think tank *Centre for the New Europe* (based in Brussels), at the time of the WTO summit in Cancun (September 2003), protectionism against the global South cost the lives of 6600 people per day (275 people per hour) (Disney, 2003).

economic nationalism. This stagnation can hardly be alleviated, precisely because of those roots, which continue to bear fruit by tightening the borders, producing economic policies aimed at renationalizing the economy, reorganizing entire supply chains to support national interests, to the detriment of profit and competition. The pandemic crisis also harms the weakest, who are inclined to call further for the strengthening of nationalism. However, it fails to resolve the problems that states have long encountered in meeting the needs of their citizens. In other words, as many observers have noted, we are now living in a phase of global economic integration crisis and "de-globalization". This phenomenon is a development that has emerged as an unplanned consequence of increased competition and new technologies (Solberg Søilen 2002, p. 100). The benefits of international trade that have enabled developing countries to emerge partly from the spiral of underdevelopment, reducing extreme poverty, are in danger of being nullified. World agriculture is regulated by the major closed areas (especially the USA). Despite official proclamations, the most industrialized countries continue to use agricultural protectionism with barriers to imports of agricultural goods - contrary to the founding principles of the WTO - from developing countries. The tariff and non-tariff barriers, applied by the major powers and large closed areas of the planet to the poorest countries and continents, are higher than those imposed on other related countries. By subsidizing their own farmers, the major areas and powers are denying to Africans today the best chance they have of competitive advantage, in agricultural production. We do not see the consequences of our export subsidies for farmers in the "Second World" and in the Global South: how they are forced to leave their land and try to make a living as street sellers in the capital, how their families are ruined, how the elders back in the village are forgotten (Solberg Søilen 2002, p. 72-73).

The geo-economic result of these processes is the regionalization of markets and economies. However, this was already present in the years of the economic crisis, since the spread of protectionism was also a consequence of continuous international retaliation. The attempt to backtrack, because of the evident series of consequences of these policies (fall in demand, lower production volumes and higher prices, the slowdown in the global economic conjuncture, underdevelopment, border effects, etc.) has been very limited and is now unable to reverse the general trend, exacerbated today by the pandemic crisis: the likely fallout will continue for decades.

From the theory of transborder cooperation, it is well known that the effects of borders are: 1) frontier effects (stopping/penalizing movements of entities); 2) filtering effects (distorting direction and intensity of flows); 3) polarizing effects (referring to the reduction of contacts between different political-institutional systems) (Ratti 1991). See also Newman (2003). Moreover, the fact that borders have become topical again (Foucher, 2016) does not mean

that they correspond to what current events would need. Isolationism and autarchy are increasingly counterproductive today (Graziano 2017, p. 9, 16). American companies and in general the entire economy of the country feel the effects of protectionism. China has reduced customs tariffs imposed on 859 imported products since January 2020, in order to boost imports and domestic demand, held back by the tariff war with the US, which has reduced the purchasing power of citizens. Beijing has canceled duties with countries with which it now has free trade agreements. On 1 July 2019, the EU and Mercosur signed - after twenty years of negotiations hampered by Latin American populists and, despite French and Italian resistance, due to fear of agricultural competition - a free trade treaty. Neo-protectionism has encountered some obstacles.

The damage to trans-territorial networks and multi-dimensional "reticular" spaces - formed with the end of the cold bipolar confrontation period - with the reconstitution of a mosaic of internal markets in mutual tension, could be very serious. Without the division of labor and exchanges based on that division, the whole planet is destined to suffer hunger. Neo-protectionism is destructive because it imposes coercive constraints on trade, holding it back and preventing growth in developing countries, which need access to the markets of the developed world. Economic nationalism thus entails both the marginalization of the Second World and the global South - with all the dangers for global stability (Liikanen, Scott, Sotkasiira, 2016) that this entails - and an overall redesign of the geo-economic balances of the planet.

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Odrodzenie ekonomicznego nacjonalizmu – od neoprotekcjonizmu do nowego modelu geoeconomicznego świata

Obecne spowolnienie w handlu międzynarodowym, pozornie tylko związane z kryzysem pandemicznym, w rzeczywistości ma swoje korzenie w długim kryzysie gospodarczym i finansowym, który rozpoczął się już w 2007 r. Kryzys ten od kilkunastu lat przyczynia się do stymulowania nacjonalizmu gospodarczego i przyjmowania przez poszczególne państwa polityki neoprotekcjonistycznej. Nawet jeśli w debacie publicznej, również na polu akademickim, nadal dominuje tematyka „globalizacji”, główne mocarstwa światowe oraz regionalne organizacje gospodarcze poprzez wdrażanie polityki neoprotekcjonistycznej, doprowadziły do długotrwałej fazy „deglobalizacji”. Charakteryzuje się ona tendencją do wykorzystania granic politycznych w celu zamknięcia gospodarek. Regionalne bloki handlowe oraz główne mocarstwa próbowały w ten sposób odwrócić tendencję globalizacyjną, jaką miała miejsce w okresie u schyłku okresu gospodarki dwubiegunowej. Miało to poważne konsekwencje dla regionów rozwijających się i „gospodarek wschodzących”, w których stagnacja polityczna i gospodarcza pogłębiła się, rodząc nowe zagrożenia dla globalnej stabilności. We współczesnej geografii rozwoju głównymi podmiotami stały się obecnie względnie zamknięte i zrównoważone „superregiony”, których pojawienie się oznacza przeprojektowanie ogólnej równowagi geoeconomicznego świata.

Słowa kluczowe: protekcjonizm, geografia rozwoju, handel międzynarodowy.