

DOĞU BLOKU ÜLKELERİNİN PİYASA EKONOMİSİNE GEÇİŞİ¹



TRANSITION OF EASTERN BLOC COUNTRIES TO MARKET ECONOMY

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Öz

Geçiş ekonomileri, merkezi planlama ekonomik sistemden piyasa ekonomisine geçiş olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Piyasa ekonomisine geçiş ile birlikte ekonomik, sosyal, siyasi ve kültürel alanda birçok değişimler yaşanmıştır. Geçişten kaynaklanan son 30 yılda dünya ekonomisi ve coğrafi sınırlar önemli ölçüde değişmiştir. Siyasi alanda en önemli değişim 1991 yılı sonunda soğuk savaşın sona ermesidir. Ekonomik alanda ise eski sosyalist ülkelerin merkezi planlama ekonomik sistemden piyasa ekonomisine geçişleri olmuştur. Geçiş sürecinde kültürler arası etkileşim hız kazanmıştır. Geçiş ekonomisi terimi ile beraber ortaya yeni bir ekonomi dalının çıktığı kabul edilmektedir.

Bu çalışmada geçiş ekonomileri ve ülkeleri hakkında genel bilgiler verilmiştir. Planlı ekonomi dönemindeki sosyal ve ekonomik problemler ele alınmıştır. Planlı ekonomiden piyasa ekonomisine geçiş süreci ve reformlar aşamalı olarak açıklanmıştır. Çalışma sonucunda piyasa ekonomisine geçişin gerekliliği bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Planlı Ekonomi, Geçiş Ekonomileri, Piyasa Ekonomisi, Sosyalist Sistem

Jel Kodları: P20, S29, P00

Abstract

Transition economies are defined as the transition from central planning economy to market economy. With the transition to the market economy, many changes took place in the economic, social, political and cultural fields. Because of the transition, in the last 30 years, the world economy and geographical borders have changed significantly. The most important change in the political sphere is the end of the cold war at the end of 1991. In the economical area, it was the transition of the socialist countries from central planning economy to market economy. Intercultural interaction has accelerated in the transition process. With the term transition economics, a new branch of economy has been recognized.

In this study, general information about transition economies and their countries is given. Social and economic problems in the planned economy period are discussed. The process of transition from the planned economy to the market economy and the reforms are explained gradually. As a result of the study, the necessity of transition to market economy was discovered.

Keywords: Planned Economy, Transition Economies, Market Economy, Socialist System

Jel Codes: P20, S29, P00

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1.TRANSITION ECONOMIES

The transition economy as a concept; it is a technical and general name given to the economies of the country that is transitioning from a state controlled economy system (planned economy) to a free market economy. Countries with transition economies have moved to an environment where the free market determines prices instead of a central organization in the process of economic liberalization. The term transition economies, according to Tandırcıoğlu; “It is used to express the former socialist countries, which are trying to establish a system of market economy by abandoning central planning.” (Tandırcıoğlu, 2002: 202)

According to Sakınç; “One of the reasons for the name of transition economies to the countries involved in the former Soviet system is the effort to exclude these countries from politically underdeveloped or developing countries. Transition economies are associated with economic growth trends. The classical economic view that links the transition economies with economic growth, proposes in favor of liberalization in free trade, limited state interventions to markets and foreign capital inflows. (Sakınç, 2005: 13)

However, the transition to the market economy, although the transition in the first sense seems to be only in the economic field, brings about great changes in the social, political and cultural fields which have many areas of life. Briefly, the former Eastern Bloc and the societies of the USSR are changing the system and the logic.

In the literature, the economies of the countries entering the transition process from the central planned economy to the market economy are explained with the concept of “Transition Economies” (İşcan & Hatiboğlu, 2012:181). Firstly, the concept of transition economies began to take its place in the economic literature after 1980s. The concept transition refers to the the collapse of the socialist system and the change of the system with the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc countries. In other words, it is aimed to find solutions to the economic problems experienced by the countries which have recently gained independence. The concept of transition economies concerns more than 30 countries and approximately 35 percent of the world population.

Efforts to shift from the planned economic system to the market economy have begun in the countries that left the former Soviet Union, Eastern European countries, China and some Asian countries. Transition economy; at the same time, is perceived as a transition from socialism to capitalism when discussed system-oriented. At the end of the 20th century, it is possible to accept the emergence of a new economic term with the term transition economy. This new term supports the emergence of a new discipline. This discipline largely focuses on the transformation programs implemented by the governments of the former socialist countries. In the transition period, new opinions and debates have started on what kind of a path to follow in transition to the market economy.

During the transition period, discussions on how to make the reforms needed for the transition to the market economy have turned into various models. These models and discussions are about whether these reforms must be implemented as fast and sudden as in Poland (big bang) or as gradual as they are in China (gradualism). With the start of reforms in transition economies, many problems started to emerge(Jantsan, 2013: 38-39). The most important of these problems were the privatization techniques of state-controlled enterprises and facilities. These also included problems such as how long wages and prices would be released for and how the legal framework for the market mechanism would be created. It is possible to say that the “**Transitional Economics**” discipline, which offers economic, social and political solutions to these problems, has reached a very rich accumulation today³.

³www.ekodialog.com/Konular/gecis_ekonomisi.html

All the Eastern Bloc countries, especially the USSR, which gave importance to the heavy and defense industry for many years, did not give importance to the development of living standards and to increase the welfare level. In the socialist countries, difficult life conditions and increased country problems started to be experienced. Especially the policies of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness, transparency), which were implemented in the USSR in the 1980s, could not solve the social and economic problems accumulated. (Bulut, 2014: 9) Extreme differences began to occur in social and economic life standards in the Eastern Bloc countries and among the republics within the USSR. The transition to the free market economy has become obligatory for the countries involved in the socialist system. Also, the socialist system must be dissolved for the transition to the market economy. If the transition to the market economy had not been carried out, it would be inevitable that these countries would probably be among the third world countries in the course of time.

1.1. Problems in the Period of Planned Economy

The socialist system is a system that has been created in order to provide for the social welfare for all citizens, correcting the distribution of income which is unfair in the capitalist system and not exploiting the working class. The necessity of the system is that the working class rules the country and giving importance to social services in order to carry out socialism. It is also the supporting of the production of goods and services and all kinds of production sectors. One step ahead of such an approach is the full implementation of communism. The inability of communism to be implemented is due to the inability of the socialist system to reach the desired goal. The full implementation of communism depends on the strong working class in socialism. The central government and decision-making bodies have not been able to perform the required performance and change to the extent required to lose their privileges. In the communism that constitutes the top stage of the system, the state is completely eliminated. In this case, there will be no need for any institutions and organizations that will assume the income distribution. The bureaucracy, which does not want to accept such a situation and holds the power, has tried repressive and intimidating methods. The peak of exile and repression during the Stalin period is the most obvious example of this. Social groups have not shown their reaction and protest freely. Even the people who oppose and the protesters have been murdered as a whole (Işık, 2013: 108). The existence of such a situation caused the people to live in fear and to create clandestine animosities against the socialist system. Such approaches have begun to lay the foundations for the collapse of the system in the 1950s.

The foundations of the oppression and intimidation management policies implemented in the Soviet Union were laid during the period of Tsarist Russia. Socialism, in the Stalin period, was put into practice by the obedience and discipline. Those who do not obey and reject the system have been forced into exile in the Soviet Union in areas where life conditions are difficult (especially Siberia). Many of the republics of the former Soviet Union, including the October 26th week, commemorate 40 million citizens who have lost their lives in prisons or in exile on the basis of Stalin's orders⁴. This statement of the Russian intellectuals about the socialist system, which reflects the state and life of the people, is very significant; "Nobody is unemployed, but nobody works. No one works, but everyone is paid. Everyone is paid, but there is nothing to buy. There's nothing to buy, but everyone meets their needs. Everyone meets their needs, but everyone complains. Everyone complains, but when it's time to vote everyone says yes." (Işık, 2013: 108). It is possible to summarize the characteristics of the socialist system in this way. After the Great October Revolution, the people living in fear and accepting all the conditions of the system were negatively reflected in the economy and social life.

⁴<https://www.dunyabulteni.net/asya/40-milyon-stalin-kurbani-aniliyor-h313708.html>

The idea of profit margin of the enterprises and the individual segment in the Socialist system after 1960 did not fully replace the concept of profit maximization in the capitalist system. Therefore, there were a decline in the production of goods and services. While the entrepreneurs in the free market or capitalist system are pursuing profit, in the socialist system they are trying to establish society and social infrastructure. However, it should be understood that, since the production of goods and services is shaped by central planning and centralized management, the followers of the government have had the privileges. Due to the privileges, at the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Union, suddenly the rich class began to emerge. The existence of such a situation and the fact that the system based on equality made a negative impact on fair income distribution and welfare level once again undermined public trust in the system once again.

The lack of a private enterprise in the socialist system, lack of motivation to develop a competitive environment and a lack of motivation to increase labor productivity have led to a significant decline in production. The provision of work guarantee to everyone by the state and the lack of differences in salaries and wages have had a negative impact on labor force performance. The lack of wage differences, the difficulties of distinguishing between skilled and unskilled workers, and the situation that encourages “not working” has emerged. Workers, albeit indirectly, have deceived the state and the state has deceived the workers. According to Aktan, the existence of such a situation can be summarized as follows; “They seem to be paying us, we seem to be working.”(Aktan, 2000: 7) As a result, this situation led to overemployment in enterprises and establishments, to increase favoritism and to increase the hidden unemployment. In the contemporary CIS countries, people who lived this kind of life in the socialist period have been dreaming that the former Soviet Union is going to come again.

The years when the socialist system was fully implemented were between 1928 and 1953. The system's strong position in the world between these years had a great impact on the capitalist world. In the Soviet Union, the centralized planning economy system was fully implemented. The competition between the US and the USSR accelerated. The schedule of the economy; which is accepted as the operation of the system, in which there is no competition and profit, the means of production belong to the public, the labor supply and demand is determined by the state; was made by the state. The fact that prices of goods and services did not change over the years prepared the ground for the formation of hidden and insidious inflation types in the country⁵. As a result of the inflation that occurred, but not fully visible or reflected, it led to decreases in the quality of the production of goods and services. The hyperinflation after the USSR is the best example. As a result, it started to bring about some economic and social problems. According to Bağırzade, it is possible to summarize the main problems that emerged during the years when the Socialist economic system was implemented.

- The monopoly of the Communist Party in politics
- Existence of a closed and ultimately non-competitive economy
- Monopolistic condition in the industrial sector
- Low productivity in agricultural and industrial goods production
- The fact that plans do not reflect and distort the truth
- Financial imbalances and restrictions on the budget
- Suppressed inflation
- The fact that the principle of the rule of law is not reflected equally and fairly
- Famine in society and famine in consumer goods
- Poor quality of industrial and agricultural products(Bağırzade, 2011: 25).

⁵<https://eksisozluk.com/planli-ekonomi--104285>

Within 70 years, the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries could not solve many social and ethnic problems, especially in law and economy. The socialist system in its entirety resulted in the disintegration before it reached its 70th anniversary.

1.2. Strategies of Transition to the Market Economy

A theoretical framework or a strategic framework for the transition from the planned economic system to the market economic system was not developed. Neo classical economic policy did not have a policy proposal until 1989. The first study on this subject is the Washington Consensus written by John Williamson in 1989⁶. After a while, this consensus became a policy proposal for the development policy of Neo classical economic policy (Jantsan, 2013: 25). Transition strategies and how the liberation would affect the socialist countries could not be precisely determined. Transition countries do not have an effective economic theory that reflects how efficiency in resource allocation will be achieved. Transition strategy implementation results brought the economics of the transition countries to an unexpected shock. These shocks can be listed as follows; the fact that the prices were free brought about the production decreases. The economy of many countries, especially the Russian Federation, lost its strength consistently. Economic crisis and depression emerged (Jantsan, 2013: 26).

1.2.1. Shock Therapy for Transition to Market Economy

Although no strategy was created during the transition period, a number of economists and international organizations proposed a solution on this issue. With this approach, it was proposed to implement a rapid reform package called shock therapy or big bang for countries in transition (Ganmet, 2006: 27). The countries were opened to foreign trade with the reform which started to be implemented. The currency of the countries became interchangeable with other countries' currencies. Freedom to enter the market was introduced. Liberal policy was applied for the private sector and most importantly the transition to the market economy was accepted (IMF, 1996). It is possible to express the strategies of transition to market economy as follows.

Firstly; it is a free determination of prices in the market and the removal of foreign trade barriers to establish economic relations with the international market.

Secondly; it is ensuring the macroeconomic stability. The release of prices must be ensured through macroeconomic stability. Price liberalization leads to an excessive increase in demand. As a result, it causes hyperinflation. The inflation must be controlled. It has aimed to provide external balance by using tight fiscal and monetary policies to solve the inflation problem.

As the third; it is restructuring of the market and economy and privatization.

Fourthly; it is legal and institutional reforms and redefining the place of the state within the economic structure and the implementation of competitive policy. (IMF, 2000).

1.2.2. Progressive Approach In the Transition to Market Economy (Gradualism)

According to economists who advocate a gradual transition strategy, the transition to the market economy should be implemented gradually in order to prevent deterioration of the economy and to protect people as much as possible. They advocate that the transition must be implemented by extending over a period of time. It is impossible to make a fait accompli for some reforms, especially structural reforms. The advocates of the progressive transition strategy base their attitudes on the fact that each country has a different initial situation and that each country is not ready to pass by shock therapy to the free market economy (Ganmet, 2006: 26).

1.3. Stages of Transition to the Market Economy

⁶John Williamson, The Washington Consensus as Policy Prescription for Development, 2004

After the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc; the transition of the Eastern and Central Europe countries and the USSR to the market economy and their economic development took place in three stages. The first one of these stages was the collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia and the economic crisis and depression in the new republics. The second stage is the beginning of a period of stabilization in the economy through the implementation of transition reforms. The third stage is the period in which the growth in the economy began and the welfare level in social life started to develop.

At the first stage; all the former socialist countries faced crisis and crisis. The deterioration of the economic system resulted in the loss of markets and consequently, the closure of enterprises for production and the decrease in the welfare of the people. Poverty and unemployment rate grew, education and health services were disrupted and the social security system collapsed. Decreases in capital and labor productivity were observed and the use of technology in production decreased. In addition to the lack of adequateness in agricultural products, defense industry expenditures increased. The increase in the informal economy caused the deterioration of the standard of life and the decrease in consumption.

The second stage; it started in the second half of the 1990s. This stage is defined as the period when the reform programs started. At the first step, financial and monetary stability was ensured, privatization started, competitive system was established and the land reform in agriculture started. The most important of these was the efforts to present raw material resources to national and international markets.

The final stage; it was the increasing petrol and natural gas revenues, giving importance to regional development policies, developing infrastructure and combating corruption. In addition, it was the fight against informal economy, anti-poverty policies and integration policies towards European countries (Bağırzade, 2011: 26).

2. TRANSITION COUNTRIES

In the world, since the end of the 20th century; significant changes in the economy, politics, culture and social areas have begun. Geographically, country borders have changed significantly. The collapse of the Berlin Wall at the end of 1989, the unification of East Germany with West Germany, the disintegration of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 and the disintegration of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in 1993 and beyond are the most important changes. While these formations took a large part in the world's agenda, the process that would lead to permanent changes in the world economy and politics began.

It is seen that the new countries that emerged with the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc have a wide geographical area and population. The changes after the 1990s were not limited to the geography of the Soviet Union. The Central and Eastern European countries, which had to adopt the socialist system after World War II, and took the central planning economic system as a role model, started to implement radical changes in social and economic fields.

It has become possible to examine the countries entering transition economies process as transition countries. With the explanation of the concept of transition economies, it becomes clear which countries are within the scope of transition. Since transition economies are located in different regions and geographies, they are examined in different groups. Based on the grouping of the IMF, which countries are within the scope of transition and their classification by geographical location can be summarized as follows. According to the definition in general and broad terms, countries of transition economies are Eastern and Central European countries, Caucasus, Baltic countries, Central Asia and East Asian countries. More specifically and accepted classification is as follows.

a- Central and Eastern European Countries (CEE): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

b- Baltic countries: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

c- Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and former USSR countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, The Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

d- The countries of transition economies in Asia: The Republic of China, Cambodia, The Republic of Laos and Vietnam.

According to the World Bank report in 2002, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro were included in the transition countries. The Republic of Kosovo, which gained its independence in 2009, is the last country to be included in the group.

According to some international organizations, Mongolia and Iran are also included among the countries of transition economies. In Mongolia, the transition to a market economy is still continuing, albeit slowly. It is very difficult to say anything about the implementation of the market economy reforms of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Table 1. General Information About Transitional Countries

TRANSITION ECONOMICS						
Transition Countries	Capital	Area (Km2)	Population (Million)	Spent Time in Central Planning	Beginning Year of Transition	The Date of Transition to Market Economy
Countries in the European Union						
Bulgaria	Sophia	110.994	7,10	42	1991	March, 1991
Czech Republic	Prague	78.865	10,58	42	1991	February, 1991
Croatia	Zagreb	56.594	4,15	46	1990	October, 1993
Hungary	Budapest	93.030	9,78	42	1990	January, 1990
Poland	Warsaw	312.679	37,97	41	1990	March, 1990
Romania	Bucharest	238.397	19,64	42	1991	January, 1993
Slovakia	Bratislava	49.035	5,44	42	1991	January, 1991
Slovenia	Ljubljana	20.273	2,07	46	1990	February, 1992
Estonia	Tallinn	45.226	1,32	51	1992	January, 1995
Latvia	Riga	64.589	1,95	51	1992	June, 1992
Lithuanian	Vilnius	65.300	2,85	51	1992	June, 1992
Southeast European Countries						
Albania	Tyrrant	28.748	2,87	47	1991	August, 1992

Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sarajevo	51.197	3,07	47		
Montenegro	Podgorica	13.812	0,622	47		
Kosovo	Pristina	10.908	1,83	47		
Macedonia	Skopje	25.713	2,08	47	1990	January, 1994
Serbia	Belgrade	88.361	7,02	47		
Countries Separated from Soviet Union and CIS Countries						
Azerbaijan	Baku	86.600	9,86	70	1992	January, 1995
Belarus	Minsk	207.595	9,51	72	1992	November, 1994
Armenia	Yerevan	29.743	2,93	71	1992	December, 1994
Georgia	Tbilisi	69.700	3,72	70	1992	December, 1994
Kazakhstan	Nur - Sultan	2.725.000	18,04	71	1992	January, 1994
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	199.900	6,20	71	1992	May, 1993
Moldova	Chisinau	33.846	3,55	51	1992	December, 1993
Uzbekistan	Tashkent	447.400	32,39	71	1992	November, 1994
Russian Federation	Moscow	17.100.000	144,5	74	1992	April, 1995
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	143.100	8,92	71	1992	February, 1994
Turkmenistan	Ashgabat	491.210	5,76	71	1992
Ukraine	Kiev	603.628	44,83	74	1992	November, 1995
East Asian Countries						
Cambodia	Phnom Penh	181.035	16,01		1990	
China	Peking	9.597.000	1.386.000		1978	
Republic of Laos	Vientiane	236.800	6,86		1986	
Vietnamese	Hanoi	331.210	95,54		1986	

Source: IMF and Various Internet Sources.

After the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc, 11 former eastern bloc members completed the transition reform in a short time and became members of the European Union and NATO. The population of the European Union (excluding East Germany), with a population of approximately 500 million, is composed of citizens of the former eastern bloc.

East Asian countries (the People's Republic of China, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) have adopted social market economy rather than transition to a free market economy with transition reforms. Because these countries do not want to move away from the old social and economic traditions, but in the commercial context they want to integrate with the world.

In the process of transition to the market economy, the countries forming the former Soviet Union are examined in three groups.

The first group, the Baltic States; (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) did not really accept the socialist system even in the Soviet Union. In the period of Soviet Union, the Baltic Republics lived in the modern state experience and understanding because they were close to European culture. Due to its proximity to Northern European countries as a geographical location, they are immediately integrated into European culture and values.

Countries forming the second group; (Ukraine, Georgia and Turkmenistan) are countries which did not follow the same policy with CIS countries. On the one hand, these countries could not complete the transition reforms, and on the other hand, they are the countries that could not establish good relations with the Russian Federation, which is the most economically strong in the CIS.

The third group is the CIS countries. These countries which constitute the CIS are very rich in terms of proven underground resources. 25 percent of the world's underground resources are available in CIS countries. The transition reforms of the CIS countries have a positive effect on their macroeconomic structures. CIS countries are always in a skeptical approach to European countries as in the USSR period.

3. CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

The Soviet Union, established by the end of Tsarist Russia, followed expansionist policies in the Central Asian republics and the Caucasus region until the Eastern Bloc was formed. It attempted to increase the Russian population by giving importance to the population policies in the newly occupied regions. In a short time, personal properties were confiscated and expropriated by the state.

The production of goods and services in the economy through a centralized planning system arises from the fact that the answer to the needs of the public is rather than the idea of profit. Therefore, the economic crisis in the capitalist system has not been seen in the central planning system. The price of goods and services in the system is determined by Gosplan⁷. Due to the fact that all shopping and commercial transactions are carried out by the state, the prices of goods and services act as a unit of account. Due to the operation of the system, there is no bargaining for shopping.

Socialist system, against capitalism, was tried to be established, but it failed. The countries that formed many socialist bloc groups, especially the Russian Federation, were liberalized in the economic and social spheres with their transition reforms. In the socialist system that advocates equality and justice, there has never been equality and justice. As a result, there has never been an equality in functional and personal income distribution. For example, there was a 3,5 - fold income gap between Tajikistan and Estonia in the USSR period. The system, which attached great importance to heavy and defense industry, did not give enough importance to economic prosperity and human relations. The production of goods and services were planned by a central authority due to the fact that the state owned production factors. In the production of goods and services, quality and aesthetics are not given enough attention. (Bulut, 2014: 9).

⁷ The central coordinator of the Soviet planning process, the State Planning Committee. The Chairman of the Board of Directors is a member of the Council of Ministers.

Economic problems in central planning began to be felt after Stalin. By the end of the 1970s, the existence of economic problems was accepted in all Eastern Bloc countries. The failure of the policies implemented for the solution of the problems brought about the search for alternative systems. Eastern Bloc countries, which encountered many contradictions in the search for a new system, decided to move to the market economy at the end of 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In the first phase of the transition, during 1991 - 1997, economic crises occurred in all transition countries. Therefore, macroeconomic indicators were negative. After the 2000s; these states which economically, socially and politically strengthened; have begun to increase in terms of level of development.

As a result of the study, the following findings were obtained with the transition of Eastern Bloc countries to market economy.

- People's economic prosperity has increased.
- Some former socialist countries have become members of the European Union and NATO.
- Competitive environment has been formed in the production of quality goods and services.
- Intercultural interaction has occurred.
- Access to advanced technology has been facilitated.
- International capital flow has accelerated.

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