Lorenzo GASCON*

TOO MANY CLOUDLY SCENARIOS AND FEW STATEMEN

Abstract: EU is facing major internal and external challenges such as Euro future, Brexit, Russia or China. EU is suffering the consequences of the economic crisis started in 2008. The traditional political organisations and elites are discredited. There is a lack of leadership. The consequence is the degradation of liberal democracy. Populism and even fascism are growing all around EU countries. We venerate the culture of money and technology. The solution has to be searched in two ways. First, developing respected political and intellectual elites that won't be afraid to fight populist movements. Secondly, promoting wide range education (science, literature, history, philosophy...) that will enhance dialogue and respect, key elements of a healthy democracy.

Key words: *Europe, democracy, populism, fascism, elite*

We are in Europe and for the Europeans this is the priority. The war in this continent in its three stages from the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 to the Second World War of 1939 has taught us to benefit with an experience and some institutions that give us a collective security. We must protect it. The Middle East chaos or the potential instability of East Asia are a token of the advantages of the incipient political and economic union that we enjoy despite all the so far imperfections.

But the problems that surround us are multiple and of great entity and require answers to be successful such as the future of the European Union, the chaos produced by the Brexit and its unpredictable consequences and the question mark about the future of the Euro.

The Chinese elite established upon a sound meritocracy have marked 2049, the one hundredth anniversary of the PCR as the year of the recognition as

* Real Academia de Ciencias Economicas y Financieras, Barcelona, Spain
World Academy of Art & Science

world's leading power. In the meantime, Europe must define the relation of its member states with China. Keep in mind, that China is already the leading foreigner investor of the Union.

We must back the development of the North Africa Equator and work to restore order in the Middle East. That is a priority for long term migration policy and to stop the dangerous populist movements.

Despite a quite peculiar behaviour of the current President, the USA, most probably, will not embrace isolationism. Globalization and the technological innovation at world level are irreversible. The institutional USA structure is endowed to smooth and to stop, if necessary, the presidential extravagances and to stand in the necessary interdependence. But the abrupt mood of Washington is a continuous way of headaches for Europe. The lack of interest of Trump for Europe is clear.

A new front: the liberal vis the illiberal democracies.

The big challenge is how to keep out the paralyzing pessimism and to reactivate the right way of living together looking for the means to adjust ourselves to the changing times.

It is obvious that EU shows signals of exhaustion. The background is the economic and financial crisis started in 2008. Specifically, the irruption of populisms and the Brexit and the lack of leadership pour Europe towards a new transition that if it is not properly managed can destroy it.

The former Italian minister Enrico Letta in a newsletter entitled "the third act of European history" warns about the increase of the Eurosceptic political organisations.

Werner Müller, Professor of Politics at Princeton University advocate that the big political organisations in Europe must lose fear about the new autocratic groups. They must protect the liberal democracy.

Despite the crisis the Euro has survived. Jeronim Zettelmeyer from "Peterson Institute for International Economy" see it as a brake to the inflation.

It has been key the quickness and the courage of Draghi taking decisions. It has allowed to sort the crisis of the last ten years. Just look at the turbulences where we went into when despite the risks planning over the economy, the ECB decided to path towards a, let's say, normalization and to put an end to the massive buying of public debt to avoid the feared deflation. And, moreover, in Autumn to start increasing the interest rates. Suddenly, few weeks ago, in March due to the symptoms of a possible new crisis, the ECB stopped both decisions. And let's remind that since the Roman Empire never had existed a single currency without a political union.

Michael Aghietta and Nicolas Leron, emeritus Professor of Paris-Nanterre University and researcher associated to the political research centre

CEVIPOL-Sciences Po, insist that one option to cohesionate EU should be to implement a budget provided with fiscal resources under the authority of the European Parliament.

What is the origin of the populist wave that is invading us? We live in a new Holy Trinity of money, science and technology that has controlled our society.

We are forgetting the wish of the "Never again" referred to the three wars that devastated Europe since 1870.

Camus, in 1947, in his book "La Peste" warned us that fascism is a phenomenon that will never disappear. Because it is the hidden face of democracy. When democracy degenerates down to mass democracy, the demagogues, the stupidity, the propaganda, the vulgarity and the lowest human instincts dominate and give birth to a bastard son, the Fascism. Their characteristics are always the same, the resentment policy, the incitement towards hate, fear, violence, need of scapegoats and hate to democratic spirit.

A true democracy should cultivate the European humanistic tradition that shows that the search of freedom and coexistence require to live in the truth, make justice, create beauty and have compassion.

Cicero summarised in few words "the cultivation of the soul is the wisdom search".

Today, we are living in a culture of money, its quantitative idolatry and the blind faith in science and technology. Only a huge economic crisis will liberate all those dark instincts that follow fascism and populism.

Can we stop it? We can. But it requires a fight against this age for a tomorrow human world.

The great problem of democracy is the tendency to tyrannise through the majority opinion.

Like a phantom, opposite to the one that Marx and Engels announced in 1848, a populist and conservative movement goes around Europe. Opposition to cosmopolitanism, defence of the nation and tradition, resistance to moral changes proposed by the left and almost always accepted by centre-right, protectionism against free market and strong resistance to immigration.

By the way, the demographic problem due to low birth rate brings consequently the immigration growth.

How can the liberal democracy resist the undertake of populism?

The hegemony of illustrated liberal thinking, underlying freedom, universal citizenship, solidarity between cultures and the idea of progress, has gone altogether with the lack of vision in front of populism.

Elites have been questioned during the last economic crisis. Where arguments don't reach, appears the insult and the soaring of radicalism.

I believe that we need two ways of action:

— First, the presence and action of political and intellectual elites able to explain the conservative thought as a legitim one, without radicalism.

— Secondly, the acceptance that the conditions for a liberal democracy are dialogue, and respect and recognition of all kind of life that doesn't attempt against it.

To live together with populism is to be aware that our liberal democracies were designed as what the classics call mixed regimes. It means that we have in place a system with democratic and aristocratic elements. That is, the combination of a nation able to evaluate and an elite responsible for leading.

This was the best option to limit the risks of the management from tyranny of the majority or the potential corruption linked to all power proximity.

It should be defended that conservatism lives together legitimately with the progressive ideals and to demand the presence of an elite well prepared that leads a responsible dialogue and far away from the risks of a radicalisation of the majority.

We have to support a scientific, literary, historical, philosophical education that promotes the capability to discuss with moderation and responsibility, enabling a balance between hope and reality.

Populisms are the consequence that traditional political parties don't answer people's expectations.

Situation in Europe gets worst due to Germany leadership wear and the lack of capacity of France to take it. Meantime, Europe faces a bunch of external issues.

USA of Trump refuse to solve the big international challenges and pursue their own benefit.

Russia of Putin deeps in the power of cyber-war and China focalises investing on its strategic industries but doesn't give the same investment opportunities to European companies.

But we miss real and sound statemen with future insight. What is immediate wastes both time and serenity.

Far away are the time of elite statemen. Schuman, Monnet, De Gasperi, Adenauer, Erhardt, De Gaulle, Jacques Delors, Mitterand, Helmut Kohl...

Whenever there is long range vision, the problems are easier to face and to solve.

Rousseau at the beginning of "Le contrat social" said that "Should I be a Prince or a Legislator, I would not waste my time thinking and saying what has to be done. I would do it".