The Populist Revolt against Globalisation

'We have entered an age of fear. Insecurity is once again an active ingredient of political life in Western democracies. Insecurity born of terrorism, but also, and more insidiously, fear of the uncontrollable speed of change, fear of the loss of employment, fear of losing ground to others in an increasingly unequal distribution of resources, fear of losing control of the circumstances and routines of our daily life. And, perhaps above all, fear that it is not just we who can no longer shape our lives but that those in authority have also lost control, to forces beyond their reach'

Tony Judt

Abstract: A tormented wave of anti-establishment populism is haunting Europe. Populist parties have managed to enter the political centre stage. This is partly the result of the breakthrough of former extreme-right or far right parties to the 'regular right' part of the political spectrum and of the drift to the right in the European political discourse concerning issues of immigration, Islam and the concept of the multicultural society after nine-eleven*. In Europe, populism not only comes from the right, but from the anti-liberal protectionist left wing as well. In this essay, it will be argued that in Europe the populist wave points to a deeper rooted crisis of trust and representation in the political and societal system at large.*

Keywords: populism, globalisation, Europe, far-right.

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The biggest challenge for European society now seems to be a populist revolt against the established institutions, populism from the right or even extreme right, and populism from the left. The position I take in this essay on populism is a 'Blairite' one: *tough on populism and tough on the causes of populism.*

Western Europe is in the grip of a political identity crisis. The disrupting effects of globalisation and lifestyle individualisation, the permanent retrenchment of the welfare states and the development of a 'media audience democracy' are accompanied by fundamental changes in the political party system: the triumph of the floating voter, i.e. the unprecedented rise of electoral volatility, and the spectacular jump in the political arena of neo-populist entrepreneurial movements.

The traditional mass parties that have ruled the region at least since the end of the Second World War have lost members, voters, élan, and a monopoly on ideas. Because they are the pillars of both the party-oriented parliamentary system and the welfare state, their slow but steady

decline affects European societies as a whole. Due to changes in labour, family and cultural life styles, the Christian Democratic (conservative) and Social Democratic pillars of civil society are eroding away, leaving behind 'people's parties' with shrinking numbers of people. This erosion of political representation eats away at the foundations of the European welfare states and European party democracies.

The second ingredient of the European crisis is what might be called the paradox of Europe's Holocaust trauma. Europeans still seem unable to cope with the question of ethnic diversity. Intellectual discourse has for too long been characterised by a species of political correctness that praises multiculturalism and 'The Foreigner' as enriching for society while turning a blind eye to the *de facto* segregation and marginalisation of many new immigrants and the stress they place on the welfare system in many nations. Also the potential cultural conflict between Europe's liberal-permissive societies and orthodox Islam was denied. The established democratic parties reacted to the rise of extreme right, racist parties with a *cordon sanitaire*, but made the mistake of also putting a 'cordon sanitaire' around the issues these parties campaign on, i.e. the shadow sides of mass migration: problems of integration and segregation; high unemployment and crime rates; 'multicultural discontent', especially within the constituencies of the people's parties: 'feeling a stranger in one's own country'. These problems did much to provoke a populist-xenophobic backlash. Here, Europe is facing two dilemmas: 1. how to maintain its 'communitarian' welfare states under conditions of permanent immigration?; 2. to what extent will the integration patterns in Europe be determined by multiculturalism or integrationalism?

A third ingredient of the crisis is widespread unease over the process of European integration. What could be a proud achievement of cosmopolitan cooperation between rival nation states has become, instead, a cause of increasing insecurity and national alienation. This discontent with the European Union propelled considerably by the impact of the Big Bang-enlargement – the arrival of a many new East-Central European member states to the EU and the contested negotiations for a Turkish membership –, and by the effects of the neoliberal and technocratic make-up of EU-negative integration: the rise of a Brussels 'market state'.

The fourth component of the European malaise is the fact that much of the discontent was channelled through the rise of right-wing or even extremist-radical right populist movements. And in Europe, unlike the American historical tradition, populism is more or less associated with fascism and Nazism, the pathologies of the 'voice of the masses'. This in itself adds up to a sense of crisis: the opening up of the scars of the 20th century.

The representation problem of the traditional political party system; the discontent with ill-managed mass migration; the growing unease with the European integration process (not a shield against globalisation, but instead the transmitter and 'visible face' of globalisation): these all fuel the political and electoral potential of (right wing) populist movements, which exploit feelings of anxiety, fear and discontent while constructing a narrative of social and moral decline.

Populism can be defined as a particular style of politics, referring to 'the people' as a false homogeneous entity against a 'corrupt elite', and in this sense the neo-populist citizen's revolt in Europe must be understood. This revolt is rooted in the perception that people feel 'betrayed' by the ruling elites. They feel, as transnational public opinion research is revealing, not represented in, but victimised by, the great transformation of our contemporary societies, in particular by the processes of globalisation/Europeanisation, post-industrialisation and multi-

culturalisation. Populism can be read as a fever warning which signals that problems of trans-formation are not being dealt with effectively, or points to the malfunctioning of the linkages between citizens and governing elites.

The new right-wing populism that emerged in the last decade of the last century can be called populist because they claim to represent 'the people' and to be mobilising them against a domineering establishment. And they can be classified as right-wing populist because they claim to be defending and shielding national, cultural or ethnic identity against 'outsiders' or external influences.

In this sense there are connections to xenophobic, racist or far-right parties and political ideas. Some of the parties indeed have their origin in extreme-right quarters or did house neo-nazi or fascist party activists (the Haider Party in Austria, the 'Vlaams Belang' party in Flan-ders, the Sweden Democrats). Most of these parties however tried to transform themselves (sometimes just to cover up) into democratic 'normality'. Other parties, however, cannot be associated with 'black European history'. Examples are the Pim Fortuyn party in the Nether-lands – which has been called 'postmodern populist', because of his *bricolage* of right-wing and left-wing ideas –, the Danish People's party of Pia Kjaersgeld or the Dutch *'Partij voor de Vrijheid'* van Geert Wilders, which is ruthlessly islamophobic, but 'clean' with respect to nazi-connections. One could call this kind of new populism, a 'third way of the right', a middle road between the democratic and the undemocratic right, between traditional conservatism on the one hand and the antidemocratic extreme right of the past on the other.

In Europe, for a long time it was common to identify populism with the radical right par-ties of the 1980s and 1990s. But one of the actual problems is that the new anti-globalisation populism is no longer restricted to the relatively small 'home constituencies'' of the far right parties. The populist discontent with established politics and with the perceived disrupting im-pact of internationalisation (global neo-liberalism, mass migration, the undermining of nation-al democracy) is expanding to great parts of the electorate, threatening to turn over the post-war political systems in various countries. In countries such as Flanders or the Netherlands, anti-establishment populist parties, which are successful just because they cannot be labelled radical right in the traditional sense – respectively, the Flemish-nationalist NVA of Bart de Wever and the PVV of Geert Wilders – have become serious political players. Populism is not a marginal or protest phenomenon, it is striking at the heart of the post-war political order.

This essay therefore focuses on the widening gap between the political and policy elites and large parts of the population in continental European welfare states. There is a massive level of unease in many western countries, trust in institutions and politics is at a record low and there are crises in voter confidence and political representation. The ever-growing pan-Euro-pean presence of right-wing and left-wing populist movements, which often appear following contested reforms of the post-war welfare state settlements, remains an alarming and grimy re-minder of the general unease in the population and the crisis of confidence which besets the established political scene.

This crisis of trust and representation that hurts the post-war 'system parties', such as so-cial-democratic and Christian-democratic mass, most is not restricted to the economic dimen-sion of the process of *technoglobalisation*.[1] The disruptive cultural dimension of globalisation seems, especially in Western Europe, to have even more impact. Fareed Zakaria is pointing to this: 'Immigration is the final frontier of globalization. It is the most intrusive and disruptive because as a result of it, people are dealing not with objects or abstractions; instead, they come

face-to-face with other human beings, one who look, sound and feel different. And this can give rise to fear, racism, and xenophobia. But not all the reaction is noxious. It must be recognised that the pace of change can move too fast for society to digest. The ideas of disruption and creative destruction have been celebrated so much that it is easy to forget that they look very different to the people being disrupted'[2].

Both the economic and cultural dimension of globalisation put the system parties under pressure. This malaise goes further than the parties themselves. The alliances on which social-democracy historically was built – workers, the intellectual and professional middle class, trade union and social movements – has been torn apart or disentangled. The post-war people's parties have become more and more depopulated: mass parties without masses.[3] As Harold James is pointing out, this can be explained by the interplay of globalisation and technological disruption which lead to mass downward socio-economic mobility, expanding inequalities and the return of the forgotten class from European social history: the déclassé[4].

As a consequence of all this, we see the manifestation of a populist momentum, all over the western world. Populism is an alarm signal. Caused by an abrupt modernization process and rapid transformation of social structures. By failing management of change & insecurity. By the disconnection of political system and citizens, a clash between elites and non-elites. By an explosion of (perceived) social inequalities and fear for *social déclassement* by 'the squeezed middle'[5].

Core elements of populism can be traced back to four characteristics: 1. populists emphasize the central position of the pure people; 2. They criticize the (corrupt) elite; 3. They perceive the people as a homogeneous entity; 4. They proclaim a serious crisis[6].

This comes together in the often used definition of populism by the Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde:

> 'Populism is a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* (general will) of the people'[7].

The key question is why this populist momentum is taking place? Why now, why all over the western world? Why and since when exactly are former widely supported parties been conceived as 'the corrupt elite' which is betraying the (ordinary) people? What went wrong with established politics? What went wrong with social-democratic politics, once the natural representation of the (ordinary) people?

Revolt of 'The Left Behind'

The comparative political scientist Steven Wolinetz analysed the electoral results for European social-democratic parties in the period 1950-2015. In the percentages clearly a downward turn can be observed. On average, one could argue on basis of these numbers that social-democratic parties are on the downgrade from 30% to 40% share of the vote results in the last decades to 10% to 20% share of the vote results in the last years[8]. This applies especially to Austria, the Netherlands, Germany, Flanders and the Scandinavian countries. Here we can both see electoral decline and declining participation in governments.

Share of the vote scores of 10% or 20% do severely hurt the self-image and self-identity of social democracy. Post-war social democracy deliberately defined itself as a broad people's

party, home for all. Joining together and connecting high and low educated, province and big city, academics and middle groups, around a program for the welfare state and public provisions. Parties that do not match the 30% electoral hurdle, in fact have dropped below the quantitative norm that German political scientists use to define genuine *Volksparteien* or people's parties. Quantity is threatening quality[9].

The pan-European rise of right-wing populism has had far-reaching consequences. First of all, the political and public agenda has shifted from a socio-economic perspective to a cultural perspective. Right-wing populism is '*culturalising*' (mostly 'Islamising') all political issues, and is characterised by a nativist focus on 'own people first'.

Secondly, the rise of right-wing populism is increasing the chance for right-wing or conservative governments. The sum of centre-right and right-wing populism is in theory diminishing left-wing government-opportunities and participations. Unless there is a case of a 'cordon sanitaire'. In this situation Grand Coalition of political left and right antipodes have to be formed, to let right-wing populism out, but this by definition undermines the left/right divide and 'confirms' the populist view that established politics is forming a *There is No Alternative*-cartel.

In the analysis of the success of Front National (FN), the concept of 'La France périphérique' came to the surface. FN is strong in those regions and cities which feel excluded from the mainstream of the modernising, globalising society. In those regions people tend to see themselves treated as second-class-citizens, with an uncertain future, without social security and cultural continuity. The concept of peripheral France has been developed by the French geographer Christophe Guilluy in his essay *La France périphérique: Comment on a sacrifié les classes populaires* (2014)[10]. In other words: How the ordinary people in the province has been sacrificed to modern progress.

And although voting for nasty, xenophobic, or even racist and extreme-right parties never should be justified or explained away by sociological or cultural-psychological determinism – 'angry, marginalised people' have always different moral options and freedom of manoeuver; and also a lot of non-angry, non-marginalised people vote for right-wing populism –, we here nevertheless touch upon the failure of the people's parties, especially the social-democratic parties and the causes for the pan-European populist revolt. We encounter a story of social orphanage, feeling left behind, not being accompanied and protected in the new modernity of the global era

The English political theoretician and former Labour politician David Marquand argued along the same lines. Marquand suggested that:

'The rise of the populist radical right is an epiphenomenon of a profound crisis of the social-democratic left. Right-wing populism is successful with voter groups which feel left behind by globalisation, by Europeanisation, by technological change, by the gales of creative destruction which have swept through the global economy, by the associated decay of settled communities and ways of life, by the rise of the super-rich and growth of inequality, and, not least, by the professionalization and remoteness of mainstream politics'[11].

Robert Reich, former US Labor Minister under Clinton, recently analysed how Democrats lost their working class base[12].

'The Democratic party once represented the working class. But over the last three decades the party has been taken over by Washington-based fundraisers, bundlers, analysts, and pollsters who have focused instead on raising campaign money from corporate and Wall Street executives and

getting votes from upper middle-class households in "swing" suburbs. Democrats have (…) failed to reverse the decline in working-class wages and economic security. Both Bill Clinton and Barack Obama ardently pushed for free trade agreements without providing millions of blue-collar workers who thereby lost their jobs means of getting new ones that paid at least as well. They stood by as corporations hammered trade unions, the backbone of the white working class (…). Partly as a result, union membership sank from 22% of all workers when Bill Clinton was elected president to less than 12% today, and the working class lost bargaining leverage to get a share of the economy's gains. (…) The unsurprising result of this combination – more trade, declining unionization and more industry concentration – has been to shift political and economic power to big corporations and the wealthy, and to shaft the working class. This created an opening for Donald Trump's authoritarian demagoguery, and his presidency.'

Recent developments do confirm this diagnosis. Everywhere we see that an increasing amount of (new) employees does not get a fixed job. In a country such as the Netherlands, the fixed job de facto has been abolished, especially for the young and the old. People and organisations have been submitted to a regime of hyperflexibilisation. People, because of permanent change and reform, have lost their way into the arrangements of the welfare state. On top of that, there is a dual European crisis: of input (lack of democratic representation) and output (euro crisis, ill-managed migration and refugee flows).

Restoration of trust

All is pointing in the same direction: western democracies are entering the future in more and more separate worlds. The divisive tensions seem to triumph over the binding, bridging forces. Brexit and the Trump Revolt in the US are two key outliers. An earlier example was the Dutch Ukraine referendum (April 2016).

The alarming news about these events was that they all were a complete reconfirmation of the populist cleavage or conflict line running through contemporary western societies. The clash between the Establishment and the non-Establishment, splitting society into more or less 50% versus 50%. This Revolt of Citizens (as it has been phrased in the Netherlands after the breakthrough of Pim Fortuyn in 2001/2002), this 'unpredicted' revolution, demonstrated that both academia and media had lost touch with the undercurrents of discontent – especially in lower and middle strata in society.

The fact that this 50/50-distributive code or formula resurfaces in research, elections and referenda (Brexit, Trump vs. Clinton) suggest that we are confronted with the following fundamental phenomenon: about half of the population may well resist the future direction of our contemporary society. 50% distrusts neoliberal globalisation, is against EU integration, resists the overall erosion of the post-war welfare state, criticises increasing inequality, has big worries about labour migration and refugee migration in general, and Islam in particular. They fear that their country because of immigration and open borders is losing too many of its characteristic traits.

This analysis recently has been empirically demonstrated by a big country-comparative research project of the German Bertelsmann Stiftung: 'Globalisation fears weigh heavily on European voters'[13]. Large groups of citizens have the feeling that they do not feel home in their own society because of immigration. And that economic globalisation will not benefit them nor their children or grandchildren. And they have a strong conviction that 'people like us' can

do little or nothing about these changes and developments. Politics and politicians just go their own way. That's why this near-majority of 50% is in favour of referenda, to wake up, correct or punish the political class. They have the feeling that it no longer represents them or listens to them.

What is even more unpleasant is that this 50% more or less equals the amount of lowly educated and average/secondary/medium educated people in countries such as the Netherlands. These segments feel much less comfortable in the globalising knowledge-based economy, where the world has become a 'global village', but at the same the traditional village has become the world. They profit less from this new global order.

This deep cleavage in our post-welfare state societies does not seem to be socially sustainable. No country can welcome and embrace the future with such a bizarre rift between future-optimistic academic professionals and future-pessimistic non-academic professionals. Between insiders and outsiders in the new 'meritocratic democracy'. Let alone the growing tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims as a result of jihadist radicalisation and terrorism.

All signals point to polarisation and sharpening of dividing lines. Worrisome is that this diverging of opinions is coupled with more and more poisonous smears and slurs on social media and with mutual contempt between Establishment and anti-Establishment.

What such divided countries now need most is a break-up of stereotypes and group identities. Concepts such as 'people', 'elite', Establishment, populism and Islam must be refuted and invalidated as false entities. Pluralism and pluriformity must unsettle and shake up solidified contradistinctions. The image of politics as an old boys' network for academic professionals only is destroying traditional political institutions. The 'elite' should leave its post-political bubble, and again fight against each other for a left-wing and right-wing alternative political future. Muslims who wholeheartedly and deliberately opt for the Western way of life should distance themselves sharply from radical Islam, as right-wing populists should demarcate themselves sharply from the far and extreme right.

This will result in more varieties of the elite, more flavours of Islam, more sorts of populists, and thereby a visible break-up and deconstruction of stereotypes and identity-political group stigmas. How else could segregated, divisive, unequal societies in future be fought?

Everywhere in Europa an enormous populist anti-Establishment movement is proceeding, pretending to be the alternative for the mainstream centre politics, for *la Casta*, for the Elite. For twenty years now, since Jörg Haider in Austria, the Established parties are challenged and provoked by the so-called populist alternative. Mainstream parties and politicians thus far do not seem to have found the final explanation of this phenomenon, let alone the solution. No doubt, the populist revolt is a dangerous attack on the post-war liberal order.

A shortcut between elites and non-elites

The traditional mass parties that have ruled the region at least since the end of the Second World War have lost members, voters, élan, and a monopoly on ideas. Because they are the pillars of both the party-oriented parliamentary system and the welfare state, their slow but steady decline affects European societies as a whole. Due to changes in labour, family and cultural life styles, the Christian Democratic (conservative) and Social Democratic pillars of civil society are eroding away, leaving behind 'people's parties' with shrinking numbers of people.

This erosion of political representation eats away at the foundations of the European welfare states and European party democracies.

The representation problem of the traditional political party system; the anger about growing inequalities and the growing cleavage between higher educated and lower educated; the discontent with ill-managed mass migration; the growing unease with the European integration process (not a shield against globalisation, but instead the transmitter and 'visible face' of globalisation): these all fuel the political and electoral potential of (right wing) populist movements, which exploit feelings of anxiety, fear and resentment while constructing a narrative of social and moral decline.

In the process of adaptation to the New Global World Order, there has been a fundamental breakdown of trust and communication between elites and the general population. The pressures of adaptation to the new globalised world are particularly directed at those who do not fit in to the new international knowledge based economy, the unskilled and the low-skilled. The overall discourse of adaptation and competitive adjustment has a strong bias against the lower middle class and non-academic professionals. This bias is one of the root causes for populist resentment and revolt. Policy and political elites are selling and producing insecurity and uncertainty, instead of showing security and stable leadership in a world of flux.

Unease and distrust in contemporary European society must be located at more levels than welfare state reform. We are experiencing a shift right across the board: the magic of the post-war period seems to be all used up: the post-war ideal of European unification, the post-war welfare state model and the post-Holocaust tolerance for the foreigner; they all seem to be eroding and under pressure. The over all-process of internationalisation (globalisation, immigration, European integration) is producing a gap of trust and representation between elites and the population at-large around questions of cultural and national identity.

Europe faces a dangerous populist revolt against the good society of both the neoliberal business community and progressive academic professionals. The revolt of populism is, at least partly, 'produced' by the economic and cultural elites. They advocate, without much historical or sociological reflection, their 'brave new world' of the bright, well-educated, entrepreneurial and highly mobile. Their TINA-project is creating fear and resentment under non-elites. The deterministic image of a future world of globalisation, open borders, free flows of people, lifelong-learning in the knowledge-based society is a night mare world for non-elites, the 'losers of globalisation'.

A world in flux

The 'populist pan-European revolt' has been empirically demonstrated by Hans Peter Kriesi et. al. In a Six European Countries Comparison, they offer that 'the current process of globalisation or denationalisation leads to the formation of a new structural conflict in Western European countries, opposing those who benefit from this process against those who tend to lose in the course of events'. They observe a structural opposition between so-called globalisation 'winners' and 'losers', which results in a new cleavage that has transformed the basic national political space. 'We consider those parties that most successfully appeal to the interests and fears of the "losers" of globalization to be the driving force of the current transformation of the Western European party systems'.

Populism or protectionist 'politics of demarcation' may be analysed as reactions of fear and discontent to globalisation, denationalisation or detraditionalisation, a revolt against economic and cultural liberalism, the ideology of the modern internationalised professional elites, a revolt against the universalistic, cosmopolitan global village without boundaries and distinctions. In nucleus, this is what the new populism is all about, both in its moderate version (conservative or left-wing anti-capitalist protectionism) and in its nasty version of xenophobia, racism or aggressive nationalism.

The process of economic and cultural modernization has resulted in a new social polarization. Major economic changes associated with globalization and new technologies result in a new redistribution of opportunities for participation and success. The level of education in particular, pre-determines individuals' life-chances, their confidence in politics and public institutions and their expectations of the future.

As a result, a new dividing line is emerging between two groups: those who embrace the future and those who fear the future, people who believe that the new world holds nothing good in store for them and who feel betrayed by the 'political elite'. This concerns both a cultural-political cleavage as well as a social-economic class divide. On the right, this new dividing line creates a breeding ground for anti-immigrant right-wing populist parties; on the left it provides a basis for left-wing populist parties, such as the German *Die Linke* or the Dutch Socialist Party. More and more, the traditional people's parties, which functioned as a connecting umbrella between higher and lower middle class, higher and lower educated, are faced with an existential issue as the dividing lines between these groups now threaten to split and fragment their electorates, foreshadowing of a fragmented and split society?

There are some who dismiss the discontented electorates, one-dimensionally and straightforward, as xenophobic nationalists, as frightened enemies of the open society, as people who turn their back on the future, as deniers of globalisation and immigration. But these critics are wide of the mark. There is a great danger involved when a cosmopolitan post-national elite carelessly argues away the nation state and national identity, just at the moment that the nation state is for many the last straw of identification to cling to, a beacon of trust in a world in flux.

A casual cosmopolitan reaction painfully denies the strong polarising forces to which society is currently subjected and which have very different results for different groups. It denies the extremely weak socio-cultural and political climate in Europe. The issue is thus the crisis of trust and political representation, to a great extent caused by the new sociological fault line in today's European society.

The dialectics of globalisation

One could argue, and thinkers like Manuel Castells made this point long before, that globalisation implies two contradicting things at the same time:

1. the world grows more together, becomes more 'familiar', interdependent, connected, better-known, better reported and visited and travelled, because of revolutionary changes in transportation, media (the world wide web) and the economy. *The world is becoming flat*;

2. but, 'at home', within nation states, globalization implies that through global migration or by mergers and acquisitions, national societies become more global, more diverse, more 'strange', more fragmented and heterogeneous.

So we see a dialectics of more 'familiarity' and more 'strangeness' at the same time, caused by the same factors. And if we relate this simply defined dialectics of globalization to the populist revolt analysed above, we can observe that globalization in the first meaning, that of more familiarity, is predominantly an experience for those people who are internationally connected, who act on a transnational or global level, i.e. the international business, academic, political (including ngo's) and cultural elites.

The impact of globalization at the nation state level, however, is predominantly directed towards low-skilled and semi-skilled workers, who are the first to experience job and wage competition as a result of labour migration. Towards people living in worn out inner city or *banlieu*-neighbourhoods where non-expat migrants settle first, and so on. To put it in one bad formulated English phrase: 'The world is becoming flat, but national democracies and welfare states are becoming less flat'. The impact of a globalised world in flux has, in other words, a strong pro-elite-bias. Again, what is the sense and sensibility of cosmopolitanism against this background?

The problem with the in itself beautiful concept of cosmopolitism, apart from its dreamy, John Lennon-like ('Imagine all the people') connotations, lies in our inhabitation of a world in flux. We have experienced an acceleration of the process of modernization, including globalization, mass migration, the financial crisis, the international knowledge economy. As a result, and research in many countries backs this up, we see a split between those who are able to connect internationally, and those who cannot connect internationally, between national, local citizens and non-bound international oriented citizens.

In the literature, there has already a distinction been made between 'multilingual mobiles' and 'single language, localised immobiles'. The ideology of global, cosmopolitan citizenship threatens to downgrade those who cannot connect internationally. So, cosmopolitanism, as a matter of fact, produces second-class citizens. This puts democracy at stake in the long run. Society is threatening to split into globalization winners versus losers of globalization among countries and within countries, a fault line running right through the European and American middle class society.

In the context of the contemporary globalization process, cosmopolitism threatens to become the neoliberal and cultural ideology of international business and expatriate interests, instead of the philosophy of cultural universalism, the global open mind, of, say, Erasmus or Stefan Zweig. Instead of paying homage to cultural openness and curiosity, it tends to become the accompanying song of cultural standardization and commercialization. Philosophical cosmopolitism threatens to become replaced by the pseudo-cosmopolitism of the world market and the world consumer.

Cosmopolitanism is basically an a-historical, a-political and a-cultural concept, and an unprecedented, laconic replacement of traditional historical and cultural identities through a thinly layered veil of cosmopolitan attitudes. It is risky business at a time when we are witnessing a hard separation between globalization winners and losers. In this picture, a misunderstood cosmopolitanism sides with the elite-winners, turning cosmopolitanism into an ideology of the international top class only, turning the internationally disconnected into second-class citizens. On top of the already negative impact of socio-economic trends on non-academic professionals, now they are culturally dismissed as well, categorized as atavistic dinosaurs and xenophobic nationalist provincials.

According to this reasoning, globalisation, demographic shifts and technological revolutions will continue to shake the foundations of the world. Nothing will remain the same. Jobs,

professions and industries hit wonders. Nation-states are powerless dwarfs in the global arena. Europe will hardly survive in the twenty-first century, unless the countries finally unite in becoming a global player. The West will lose out to China, unless our best and brightest are totally committed to an excellent innovative knowledge economy. If we want Europe to succeed in the new century, and nation states to succeed in Europe, we must give priority to our international elites, the smartest, the strongest, the best. They are the ones who only can safeguard our future.

And all this under the mantra of inevitability: *TINA, There Is No Alternative*. According to the conformist opinion of international policy experts, there is no substitute for intensive adaptation to the brave new world of globalization, permanent immigration, lifelong learning and liberalization. That is the price we have to pay for our ideal of an open global society, economically and culturally. There is no left or right adaptation, there is only one way to go. *The World is Flat*, so the people will become. I have once labelled this discourse of total adaptation, without any reference to cultural traditions and existing institutions, the 'pornography of change'.

The alarming warning should be: those who arrange the world for cosmopolitans only, and assume that everyone wants to be and can be a world citizen, run the risk of huge resistance, such as the contemporary revolt of populism. Or worse. Anyone who thinks that globalization naturally brings forth global people, global politics, global democracy, global ethics and solidarity, will in the end play with historical and sociological fire.

Concluding observations

Europe faces a dangerous populist revolt against the good society of both the neoliberal business community and progressive academic professionals. The revolt of populism is, as I have argued in my paper, 'produced' by the economic and cultural elites. They advocate, without much historical or sociological reflection, their 'brave new world' of the bright, well-educated, entrepreneurial and highly mobile. Their TINA-project is creating fear and resentment under non-elites. The deterministic image of a future world of globalisation, open borders, free flows of people, lifelong-learning in the knowledge-based society is a night mare world for non-elites, the 'losers of globalisation'.

In the elite narrative, sizable parts of the middle and working class are being confronted with economic and psychological degradation. Theirs is no longer the future. They feel alienated, dispossessed and downgraded, because the society in which they felt comfortable, in which they had their respected place and which has been part of their social identity is being pushed aside by new realities. To what extent can the ideology of 'globalism', multiculturalism and world citizenship be reconciled with the heritage of national democracy and welfare state communitarism? To what extent can a uniform global culture of neoliberal and hedonistic capitalism be reconciled with the rich cultural diversity of the world?

This essay examined unease and popular distrust, an instable undercurrent in European society. The unease is to be found in the perception of threat through processes of internationalisation: on the one hand the globalisation of production of goods and services as well as capital markets and the apparently boundless European unification; on the other hand a seemingly uncontrollable immigration and the development of multi-ethnic societies with problems of integration, segregation and multicultural 'disorientation'. Research is showing that immigration, since the 1970s, has become the most salient and polarising political issue. In some coun-

tries (Switzerland, Britain and more recently in the Netherlands), the question of European Unification has also become part of the new political-cultural conflict. According to Kriesi c.s., this cultural dimension has become the primary basis on which new parties or transformed established parties seek to mobilize their electorate.

Contrary to the gospel of the postmodern, cosmopolitan pundits who advocate the self-abolition of the nation state in favour of new regional power centres, instable and dislocating undercurrents in European society require not only prudence in (the discourse on) modernisation and innovation but also the rehabilitation of the nation state as a forum for restoration of trust, as an anchor in uncertain times, as a source of social cohesion between the less and the better educated, between immigrants and the autochthonous population. A restoration of trust between politicians and citizens will have to take place at the national level – the only tested legitimate arena for democracy – as will the creation of a harmonious multi-ethnic society.

The precondition for regaining political trust is also the renewal or even reinvention of the *Volkspartei*, as a bridge between the winners and losers of the new world trends. This new 'Volkspartei' will possibly emerge from coalition-building encompassing other political parties, as well as civil society-actors, and should design a new deal between the privileged and the less privileged: a pact of social-economic security and cultural openness, forging a new idea of progress. It should also be based on a sensibility for cultural and identity politics, because the big discontent and unhappiness in affluent welfare democracies are to a serious extent about community, social cohesion and, security: postmaterialist problems of social psychology.

It is important to restore the divide between left and right in politics – with alternative scenarios to adapt to the new world trends – in order to fight the dangerous populist cleavage between the establishment and (a false entity of) the people: *We must be tough on populism and tough on the causes of populism.*

Once in its history, the establishment parties let the extreme-right take over as mass parties. The lesson of the dark twentieth century was and is, to let this never happen again. Back to political values, roots and principles therefore. Away from the neoliberal, elitist, technocratic politics of the last decades.

As German sociologist Wolfgang Streeck stated: 'Rather than devising "constructive solutions" and acting as capital's loyal opposition where there is no loyal government', we should support trade unions, even if they are often not very farsighted; no longer vote for the public relations specialists that are now impersonating political leaders; refuse to believe their professionally crafted excuses and There Is No Alternative rhetoric'[14]. In the end, political parties have to overcome, what political theorist Chantal Mouffe, has called the 'post-political condition'. It has to break out of the establishment, out of the "consensus at the centre" between the centre-right and centre-left around the idea that there is no alternative to neo-liberal globalisation[15].

In addition Fareed Zakaria rightly states: 'Western societies will have to focus directly on the dangers of too rapid cultural change. That might involve some limits on the rate of immigration and on the kinds of immigrants who are permitted to enter. It should involve much greater efforts and resources devoted to integration and assimilation, as well as better safety nets (…) But in the end, there is no substitute for enlightened leadership, the kind that, instead of pandering to people's worst instincts, appeals to their better angels'[16].

In conclusion

The post-war order is in a state of flux. In a negative state of flux, for that matter. Everywhere we see a crisis of trust and representation, a shortcut between electorates and mainstream political elites. Anti-pluralist, anti-democratic authoritarian tendencies attack the established liberal order.

One of the symbols, manifestations of this shortcut is the pan-European rise, or even global rise of populist movements and parties. Keywords: Brexit, Trump Revolt, East-European 'Putinism', West-European right-wing-populism. Populist pressures and discourses at the level of institutions (the crisis of representation), individuals (media-driven authentic-authoritarian leadership) and ideas (anti-globalisation, anti-EU, anti-migration, anti-internationalist, anti-solidarity) are a huge challenge to all established politics. Populism is putting the vulnerable relations between higher-educated and lower educated, cosmopolitans and communitarians, workers and migrants, under extreme strain. Populism maybe the face of morbid transition, in a time that traditional party systems are fragmenting, that democracy in a global era has to be reinvented, that an apolitical technocracy of experts and ngo's is running the neoliberal global world without much democratic interference.

There is a famous expression of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci for this time of transition: 'The political crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear'.

Notes

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[16] Zakaria, *ibidem*, p. 15-16.

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