

Article

The crisis of liberal democracies and the need for a new “social contract” in the post-Covid 19 era

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Abstract. This article analyses the crisis of liberal democracies, coming before the Covid 19 era but worsened with this virus emergency. The main argument of the article is that this public health threat amplified problems that Western liberal democracies already had, at different levels and with different actors, and that our democracies need a new social contract in order to rebirth. The article starts analysing the concept of “State of exception”, from Italian philosopher Agamben, then speaks briefly about the democratic erosion during this time in order to explain the reason for a new social contract for a Western liberal democratic rebirth. The second part analyses ten issues, ten P-robblems (all starting with P letter) affecting modern Western liberal democracies, in particular: Poverty, Partitocracy, Populism, Polarization, Post-fact/post-truth informational society, Post-secular/Post-ideological world, Power erosion (of democratic nation states), Political illegitimacy (of the West), and Planetary identity crisis. With Pandemics another P-robblem will be added. The virus crisis could be used as a tipping point for the adaptation of Western liberal democracies to post-modernity and globalized world, not only for their survival but for the survival of the species.

Keywords: liberal democracies, autocracies, nation states, social contract, Covid-19.

Riassunto. L'articolo analizza la crisi delle democrazie liberali prima dell'avvento del Covid-19 e peggiorate con l'emergenza del virus. L'argomento principale di questo articolo è che la sanità pubblica minaccia di amplificare i problemi che le democrazie liberali occidentali avevano di già, a diversi livelli e attori, e che le nostre democrazie necessitano un nuovo contratto sociale per rinascere. L'articolo inizia con l'analisi del concetto di “Stato di eccezione”, del filosofo italiano Agamben, successivamente si sofferma brevemente sull'erosione democratica durante quest'epoca con l'obiettivo di spiegare le motivazioni di un nuovo contratto sociale per la rinascita di un Occidente democratico-liberale. La seconda parte esamina dieci problematiche, dieci P-roblemi (tutte iniziati con la lettera P) che riguardano le democrazie liberali dell'Occidente moderno, in particolare: Povertà, Partitocrazia, Populismo, Polarizzazione, società informativa del mondo Post-fatto/post-verità, Post-secolare /Post-ideologico, erosione del potere (di stati nazione democratici), illegittimità politica (dell'Occidente), e la crisi d'identità planetaria. Con l'avvento della Pandemia sarà aggiunto un altro P-robblema. La crisi legata al virus potrebbe essere utilizzata come un punto di non ritorno per l'adozione delle democrazie liberali occidentali alla post-modernità e al mondo globalizzato, non soltanto per la propria sopravvivenza, bensì per quella della specie.

Parole chiave: autocrazie, Covid-19, contratto sociale, democrazie liberali, stati nazionalne.

1. Introduction

Giorgio Agamben, the famous Italian philosopher, spoke recently again about his concept of “State of Exception” referring to the lockdown in Italy for the COVID-19 crisis. The first time he used this term was after 9/11, to show the risks for Western democracy to go towards totalitarianism. In the last two decades, with globalization and information technology, with global threats but also with the sharp power of authoritarian powers, liberal democracy was increasingly eroded. Today it seems that even a germ, a biological threat, more than terrorists or the risk of *Big Brother*, could be able to create a permanent “state of exception”, which would mean the end of a really democratic and free society. Twenty years after the terrorist threat narrative now the West has a new one to justify a state of exception: the biological threat. And this could be even a longer lasting one respect to terrorism, as the Corona virus is probably just the first one of future biological threats to our species, especially when will be coupled with climate change disasters.

How we arrived at this point? How Western liberal democracies arrived to be so eroded that their existence could be in danger? There are many reasons but an important one is that when people have freedom, they give it for granted and they don't realize what it means to not have it anymore. We can call this as lack of consciousness because of the laziness created by the guarantee of our rights but also because of the feeling of fear, fueled in purpose by politicians and media, to accept the change. This is the main threat of the current crisis of democracy and rule of law, that started much before the COVID-19, in the West. One century ago, also it happened the same, as it seems that history repeat itself cyclically. People didn't remember what it meant to live under a dictatorship, so they didn't worry too much when Communism, Fascism or Nazism took the power either suddenly or gradually, through nationalism, populism and authoritarianism. Today, after 70 years of peace, democracy and integration in Europe, nationalism, populism and authoritarianism seem to be up again.

The difference is that one century ago this happened mostly in Europe. Today, there are signs of crisis not only in our continent and the so called “West”, where both matures democracies (like Italy) or new democracies (like Hungary) are having troubles to maintain on the path of rule of law and liberal values. There are signs of crisis also in emerging democracies of the “Rest”, as a strong resurgence of authoritarianism is coming from the other regions of the world, more hierarchical and communitarian than the West: the “East” (from Turkey and Russia to the Philippines) and the “South” (both Africa and Latin America). That means there is a democratic crisis in every region of the world, apart from the Anglo-Saxon and Protestant world, where individual rights and representative democracy were actually institutionalized¹.

¹ Actually is not a case that during this crisis countries of the Northern Europe, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, UK and Germany didn't apply a complete lock down of societies like in the Southern Europe.

The point is that the human attraction towards authority and with it towards authoritarianism is directly proportional to the level of political instability and economic crisis that democracy is unable to solve. Democracy needs strong and inclusive institutions that can reform themselves in time, and this unfortunately is not always the case. But it needs also a constant nurture by an educated population, in order to avoid elite’s corruption and an inefficient party system. And again, unfortunately this is not always the case. As Benjamin Franklin answered to the lady outside the Constitutional Convention who asked him if they had chosen a Monarchy or a Republic: “We gave you a Republic, if you can keep it”.

This because when a population keep growing in numbers (both demographics and economics) but not in their citizenship self-consciousness, the Republic goes in crisis, as it did two millennia ago in Rome and today in the US and Western Europe. Self-consciousness of citizens means first civic sense, based on the respect of rights and duties and tolerance of diversity, but also awareness of the power that all citizens have to “control the controller”. And also, individual responsibility to participate to the “*Res-Publica*” the “Public thing”, which include, in the case of the current crisis, to fight against common threats: there is no collective solution in democracy if people doesn’t take individual responsibility of their own behaviors. In a dictatorship is the authority that force a behavior on the population instead, that’s why in emergencies the dictatorships seem to work better. And that’s the battle of ideas we have in the world right now between democracies and autocracies.

Today the citizens of the Western democratic world, have less and less civic sense, helped in this by the crisis of old social institutions (family, church and state) that in the past guided them. And they also have more and more difficulty to get clear information and understand complexity, not helped in this by the technological development with the new religion of *Datism* (which cannot explain the causation of things and don’t give the possibility of debate or critical thinking) and by the new communication style of social media (less based on facts and more on fake news and hate speech). We live in uncertain times, times of transition, not only at domestic level but also at international one. Chaos and instability accompany the new complexity of postmodern world that seems unable to remain on the path of democracy and rule of law, that is also directly proportional to international cooperation, free trade and world agreements. So how can we go back on the good path of liberal democracy for the sake of the planet and the freedom of our humankind? What we need is a new social contract.

2. COVID-19 at domestic level: state of exception and the need for a new social contract

A “state of exception” in our current times may be justified for different reasons but mostly because the modern threats and challenges to national security and social cohesion are becoming more and more global and also immediate. This means that there are no borders that can protect from them and that there is no escalation of threat but an explosion which doesn’t give time to discuss for solutions in Parliaments or different fora. This can happen for terrorist attacks as well as for pandemics, natural disasters or whatever disruption arrive to the world society, including a meteorite that may fall in the atmosphere (that by the way is still a possibility in the near future for the planet Earth). Artificial intelligence and climate change are more gradual, but they will also have tipping

points and moments of explosion, especially AI, with great risks for our species, as Yuval Harari argues (Harari, 2017).

With the Covid-19 crisis this has been evident. Nobody was prepared, neither institutions and nor populations, as usually happens. Italy has been the political experiment this time, like the US had been after 9/11. Italians were the first to be forced to stay home, more than a quarantine in a de facto curfew, suspending Constitutional rights as possibility to assembly or just meet. The government had continuous interventions with decree, an executive power growing at the expenses of Parliamentary discussion and sharing of information (the lack of clear information about the lethality or the level of contagious was actually functional to the acceptance of extreme measures by the population).

In democracies the exception to the rule of law should be temporary, just for the emergencies, and so have a time limit, otherwise from temporary they may become permanent as often happen. But there is no clear time limits in the European cases, with fears of executive overreach, at least in cases like the Italian one and, even worst, like in the Hungarian one (to which the EU seems not having protection). The situation is that in modern liberal democracies the separations of powers begin to blur, with the executive power becoming also a legislative one, as it doesn't only apply the exceptional norms but create them. This is accepted by the population as said in particular because of fear, that is fueled by politicians and by the media, and which is very dangerous, because it is for fear that we start to accept the end of our freedoms (dictatorships always start making people to be afraid in a way or another for their lives).

The purpose of a legitimate state is to provide for the fundamental needs of the people: security, order, economic well-being, and justice as individuals cannot secure these things on their own. But a democratic state should have the power given to a government "of the people, by the people and for the people". Yet this issue of relationship between "legitimacy and power" is difficult to be settled during "states of exception", like this one for the Covid-19, where the situation doesn't allow for too much discussion. But after that we will need this discussion, at least if we want to defend our liberal democratic institutions, because the temporary can become permanent quickly and it is difficult to go back. We will need a new social contract. Rousseau theorized the best way to establish a political community few centuries ago through a Social Contract, that is the agreement through which people surrender some of their freedom to the authority in exchange for protection and social order. His work helped inspire political reforms and revolutions in Europe, but in his time there was only the press for communication and information, while today there is Internet. So, with internet, fighting fake news, hate speech and mass hysteria, we need to find a way to share better information and empower citizens to become more participatory actors to the "Res-Publica", with a new social contract.

In phases of structural crisis what happens is a paradigmatic shift, a shift of the paradigm of our societies. Thomas Kuhn presented this notion explaining that when a paradigm becomes incompatible with a new phenomenon, we need to adopt a new theory, a new standard, a new model (Kuhn, 1962). This is what is happening with our Western democracies: they are not suitable anymore to the current global and fast times, they need a new model, a new agreement between citizens and authority, between individuals who have to become more responsible and authorities that have to become more transparent. The crisis of representative and liberal democracy (because of political corruption, eco-

conomic inefficiency and now inability to deal with global threats) and the crisis of nation state (because of its erosion both from above and below, and the consequent unequal representation) show therefore the need of a new agreement between the people and who govern them. This new agreement must pass from a new definition of democratic norms and rules, but also of new national identity and citizenship: as Anderson would have said, we need a new “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983). Democracy and nation states are never ending processes, as all human inventions, they have a start, a development and also an end, as nothing is eternal, unless they transform, they change. The new social contract therefore is a necessity to transform democracy and nation state and avoid the rise of authoritarianism and nationalism, that seem again present after one century as the biggest threat to our world in this new century, may be even bigger than the pandemics.

First of all, democracy and nation states must learn to adapt to postmodernity as they did with modernity. Modernity based on industrial development, produced a new world order, with new societies and new economies, including with mass migrations. Postmodernity is the continuation of that phase, based on same two processes both accelerating all the time: economic development and social change, facilitated by technological revolution. Second, democracy and nation states must learn to adapt to globalization, not only economic and social globalization but, as we can see with COVID-19, also biological and environmental. We are becoming one, the humankind oneness is demonstrated by the fact that we cannot escape biological or environmental threats closing our nation states borders. On the side of institutions, after City states, Empires and Nation States, today we are seeing the embryonic birth of multinational states, with integration at supranational levels and disintegration at domestic levels, with erosion of national sovereignty from above and from below. Instead, on the side of social identity, globalization and modernization are creating an identity crisis with post ideological, post secular, post fact, post truth societies that create anxiety and an “age of anger” as a recent book of Pankaj Mishra says (Mishra, 2017). Will all these processes destroy democracy and social peace or make democracy stronger and winning on tyranny? This is the main question that we need to answer today.

As Jefferson said: “The will of the people is the only legitimate foundation of any government”, that is why today we are in a profound crisis of representative democracy, because the will of the people is not always listened or put in practice. Today strong men and highly personalized regimes, but also “states of exceptions”, are on the rise. Much before the COVID-19 we had processes of “re-authoritarianization” with new autocrats consolidating power in emerging democracies of Africa, Asia and Latin America. But concentration of political power is happening also in more “mature” democracies like in Eastern Europe, as strong men were already on the rise few years ago² and are even more today, as we saw recently with Hungary.

Therefore, we need to create a new social contract taking into account all areas of human life: society, politics, economics, and identity. From the Sumer onward, the long march of humankind towards freedom equality and justice never stopped. From the

² Data shows that in 1988 personalist regimes comprised 23 percent of all dictatorships (majority were military juntas or state party like in Mexico). But in 2016, the 40 percent of all autocracies were ruled by strongmen. Cults of personality was proliferating especially in Central Asia, ruled by strongmen. From: Andrea Kendall-Taylor, Erica Frantz, and Joseph Wright, *The New Dictators. Why Personalism Rules*, Foreign Affairs, September 26, 2016.

Roman Republic, born against the Roman kingdom, to the British Magna Carta, that created the liberties of the barons under the English King; from the French revolution, that ended the noble privileges over the lower classes, to the American civil war, that ended the white domination over the black race, human beings fought against kings, nobles, property owners and slave owners, to be liberated by the chains of oppression. From Urukagina in Mesopotamia to Spartacus in Greece, from Martin Luther King in the US to Ghandi in India, great leaders from the oppressed parts of society came out with courage and value, to lead their people towards freedom. Today we don't see such people as leaders don't lead masses anymore, they mirror them. Still we need new revolutions, hopefully nonviolent ones, with which the people come again at the center of the stage. Today we need a major participation by the people, in particular the new oppressed people (the poor cut out of the globalization and the migrants, representing the new discriminated minorities) to be liberated by the domination again of the few, that nowadays are represented by corrupted business people and bureaucratic politicians that built an alliance to protect their wealth and power. But before to think on how to build a new social contract we need to deeply understand the main reasons of this crisis.

3. The crisis of liberal democracy: ten 'P'-problems, worsened with Covid-19 and applied to Italian case

The issues that Western liberal democracies are experiencing since at least the past decade are defined in this article as the ten "P-problems" as they all start with the letter P. Here they are:

Poverty. The inequality is evidently increased in the last decades, because of the extremes of neoliberalism and financial power, in particular with the contradiction of crony-capitalism that when in crisis might destroy the economies (including the savings of people). Economic inequality is a principal threat to the health of democracy. This inequality has been worsening with globalization, that even if reduced the extreme poverty at the same time increased the distance between the very rich and the middle class, without bring the expected results for all also because of a non-democratic global economic governance, being politics not able to control the economic sphere. This inequality is getting worst now also with global threats, including with this COVID-19 crisis, that will produce more and more poverty with economic recession probably never seen before. Obviously is not the same to be in quarantine if we have a remote work or if we are unemployed, if we live in villas or in rented rooms, or worst on the street, if we have a family that support us or we are alone. The fundamental problem again is that economic power, both in terms of business and financial economy, became stronger and stronger to finally overcome the political power. In the Italian case the problem of poverty, intensified with the virus crisis, has been evident with so high unemployment rate, an economic stagnation that lasted a decade and now with parts of lower classes that are not able to cope with the lockdown, so much so that the government had to start giving € 400 million in food stamps to avoid risk of social unrest triggered by rising poverty. To fight this rising inequality we will need to bring back the economic sphere under political guidance, with strong reforms for a more equal and efficient welfare state, a more transparent and meritocratic job market, and a better control of finance and bank systems, also with a change of the global economic institutions.

Partitocracy. At institutional level the party system of democracies became very inefficient, because of endemic corruption and a permanent protection of the political class, that made it detached from the population, creating a de facto political process dominated by parties instead of citizens. This, together with the inefficiency of executive, legislative and in some cases also judiciary power, created anti-establishment sentiments, because people felt dispossessed, disenfranchised, and disconnected from dominant political and social institutions. Plus, in the Western world we started to experience a gradual end of the differentiation between left and right, which created the inability to propose political alternatives to the status quo. The 5 Star Movement in Italy became famous for example a decade ago because it proposed a new way of approach to representative institutions, giving temporary elected positions to non-professional politicians and promoting citizen participations online. It was able to arrive to the government finally as the major party, but it didn't really succeed to fight the Italian *partitocracy* and showed a lack of preparation in many areas, losing much ground recently in the polls. With the current crisis the 5SM seems to have found in the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, a lawyer coming from civil society, a new statesman. The problem though is that even a person that seems correct and professional like him, has to deal with parties, before the ones that support him and then the ones that oppose him, and the risk is again that the participation of citizens is reduced in emergency times with a stronger role played by bureaucratic parties e detached institutions. What we need instead are more participatory and representative institutions, not only parties but political and social institutions, with more transparency and accessibility for the people. This will increase the “social capital of civil society (Putnam, 1994) and make democracy flourish again.

Populism. Populism is the idea that we can and should mobilize the alienated part of a population against its government, with the goal to unite the uncorrupt but unsophisticated people (the ‘little man’) against the corrupt dominant elites (usually the orthodox politicians) and their followers (usually the rich and the intellectuals). The problem with this concept in democracies is that populism puts responsibility only on governments when in reality the problem is often also with the people and in particular their culture and identity, as governments are mostly a reflection of societies. For example, who created increased inequality in the last decades in the US? Yes, the banks and financial sector but also the individualistic culture of self-made and a government that facilitated that, including with the lobby system that can erode an equal democracy. Who created corruption in Italy? Yes, the corrupted politicians but also the clanistic Italian culture of belonging/supporting to a group (the ‘amoral familism’ to say it with Banfield) and the governments mirroring it with the corrupt party system of clientelism. Who created unemployment in the Western world? Yes, technological automation besides globalization, but also the inability of the people to go to work abroad or to shift skills with new training to improve competences before having expectation of government assistance. So populism, even if can be useful at the beginning to fight against corrupted regimes, can be also a fake call, manipulated by demagogue that use the hope for a “savior” to change things top-down when in reality what will change things would be a cultural change bottom up. With the Covid-19 crisis this has been seen in Italy too, at least at the beginning of the crisis, with populist reactions of some right-wing parties saying that the government should have gone home and leave the place to a new one. What we need to fight populism is therefore a cultural change for more forms

of participation, with civil society actions able to counter the corrupted regimes but at the same time the populist narrative, and so also a new and stronger education for the citizens, in order not to be manipulated, as “knowledge is power”.

Polarization. The electorate in recent years started to polarize not only between left and right but also between a more liberal, cosmopolitan urban elite (in big cities like London, Budapest, Istanbul or American cities) and a less-educated rural nationalist base, with big differences in political positions between these two geographical and demographical areas as we saw with the recent Brexit, or the support to “strongmen” in Hungary, Turkey or even US. Among the reasons of this division, that fuel political extremism, there is first of all the reduction of public spheres and moderate spaces, where people talk to each other from different positions in a safe environment with respect and tolerance of diversity, caused also by the modern social media. Another reason is the reduction of education in liberal arts and humanities that teach critical thinking: as a recent book (Nussbaum, 2016) explains, since Reagan and Thatcher the education in the West started to go towards sciences and data, without developing the ability of debating, having a critical spirit etc.). Divisions and hate speech evidently make democracy weaker, threatening the social contract and the social fabric, and this can be seen also with the COVID-19 crisis, especially in Italy, where the few people who reacted to the executive decisions of limiting the freedom, forcing people to stay inside their house and even blocking their daily jobs, were considered anti-patriotic or worst a public danger. What we need therefore are new rules on political debates, to recreate the public sphere, but also reconnect and reconcile people from different spectrums: gender, age, ethnic origins, geographic distribution etc. in order to reduce polarization and open space for debate and democracy.

Post-fact/post-truth informational society³. Today opinions of famous or important people, the so-called *influencers*, even if they speak about things they don't know, are more important than data, facts and analysis. Superficiality and improvisation are more valued than depth and preparation, entertainment is more impacting than high culture and infotainment (very common in Italy for example) is more followed than press conferences or public news. Internet is the biggest democratic tool since the press, so we should defend it from manipulation, but in reality, we are not able to see it in this sense. Besides an internal, domestic issue, for liberal democracies, this is also an external one, as non-democratic countries use information war, for propaganda against democracy and this will be probably the biggest threat, in particular with the development of AI. It is evident this right now with the COVID-19 crisis: China and Russia used their Sharp Power to try to divide Europe, first of all with “helps” to Italy and second with spreading misinformation about the origins of the virus. That's why some scholars in Italy retook the concept of “militarization of internet”. What we need therefore on this issue are new rules on social media, including public intervention for correct information, defending from abuses of freedom of speech, and a new attention to external propaganda threats.

Post-secular/Post-ideological world. Democracy, which is not a fixed ideology, but still a set of principles, values, institutions, rights and duties that live and prosper with

³ Polarization and Post-fact information are facilitated by social media, and technological revolution, through filter bubble, emotional reactions and hate speech (being behind a screen, fast, short and without evidence) besides anxiety and depression (as fake/imaginary relationships and dependence created on answers/likes etc.) and racism/sexism/nationalism.

the acceptance of the society, seemed weakened after end of bipolarism also because it had not a clear ideological or religious enemy anymore, in a post-ideological and post-secular world. Since the 2000s things changed in this sense, especially with the “Jihadist terrorism” after 9/11 and the rebirth of a “Communist China”, but democracy was anyway weakened by the inability to deal with new religion powers in MENA (which included also to integrate new religious sensibilities in multicultural/multireligious societies to avoid religious extremism) or to deal with post-ideological Asian dictatorships (from Russia to China that seemed not trying to export a precise ideology). This was again evident with COVID-19 crisis, as politics is indirectly trying to retain again power over spirituality, with religious gatherings completely blocked in Italy, so the spiritual upliftment of people was reduced exactly in the moment of more need (creating isolation or even issues of mental health) and Western world has difficulty to deal with post-ideological dictatorships, pushing their propaganda in a battle for future spheres of influence. What we need therefore today is a new agreement based on shared principles of communal rights, including religious rights, that might reinforce democracies in the sense of pluralistic integration; and a clear “battle of ideas” between the values of democracies and the values of dictatorships, whatever ideology they follow, to make sure people around the world understand deeply the consequences of living under one model or the other.

Power erosion (of democratic nation states). Nation states are in the West very much related with liberal democracy, while in Asia they are related either with dictatorships or fake “democracies” that are in reality “dominant party” systems. Nation states and democracies had difficulties in the last decades to answer to global threats with global but also national governance⁴ (from migrations to terrorism to financial crisis, now biological threats and in the near future probably also environmental problems). On one side nation states and democracies don’t want to give up national sovereignty because they consider it a tool to face global threats, as we saw with the recent difficulty for a stronger European integration. On the other side they are not able to keep an effective sovereignty and efficiency because the threats are immediate and don’t allow for too much discussions. So as a consequence, there is an erosion of sovereignty, someone spoke about an “end of power” (Moises, 2014), but also of democracy, in particular of the power of Parliaments, that are not always included in the discussion before executive decisions. This was clear with the recent COVID-19 crisis as for example in Italy the government decided to govern through a set of decrees, informing directly the population with live connections on TV or even on social media in the evenings, without passing from the Parliament or even a press conference to allow for questions. So, to reduce this erosion, and transform the power of nation states, on one side we need a redefinition of nation state sovereignty, in particular in the context of global or at least regional cooperation, and on the other a redefinition of representative and parliamentary democracy to streamline and simplify its decision making process, in order to make it faster and more efficient.

Political illegitimacy (of the West). There is an increased “perception of illegitimacy”, outside the West, about the Western democracies that are still dominating the international system, with their institutions created after WWII. This because of a perception of

⁴ Already Hannah Arendt, with *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in 1973, spoke about the “decline of nation state and rights of man”. Today among the excluded from the nation state there are not only the dispossessed middle classes, but also the stateless refugees and ethnic minorities, who became isolated and deprived of legal recognition.

failure of the liberal international institutions (IMF/WB in particular) but also of a lack of democracy at international level, especially with the lack of inclusion of the big emerging powers on the world stage (even if the G20 is already more inclusive). The paradox is that often emerging powers are asking more democracy internationally but have less and less democracy internally (from Russia to Iran or Turkey) using terms like “guided democracy” to show the need to guide people (in Russia and Iran) or “sovereign democracy” to show the need of independence from Western values (in Russia) but at the end they are just “illiberal democracies” meaning autocracies, even if not completely dictatorships. With COVID-19 this lack of legitimacy is increasing as it is exactly the West that seems not able to deal with this threats, looking first of all to the Italian case, while Asian countries seems not touched so much by the pandemics (showing at the same time a lack of legitimacy as obviously their number are not transparent). So what we need here is to recuperate legitimacy with more inclusion at international level but at the same time firmness in the defense of the liberal values coming from centuries of progress, raising also the voice when domestic politics in democracies that are not democratic anymore (like the EU is trying to do with some Eastern European cases like Hungary).

Planetary identity crisis. As we know national cultures and identities have been very important in the past and recently there has been a resurgence of this, as a reaction to globalization, a reaction to the process of planetary citizenship formation, with new forms of racism, nationalism, exclusion of old and new minorities and their securitization. But in reality, new global identities are still in formation, with migrations and diasporas and with new globalized ways of living in the world. This COVID crisis has also demonstrated that, on one side with nations thinking for themselves, to try to solve the crisis closing borders at the beginning, but later with the sensation that people of the world are in reality all interconnected and on the same ship (the same will happen with environmental disasters that soon will affect human population). In the case of Italy has been emblematic the support from countries around the world, that even if sometimes may have had second goals (like for Russia and China) has been also representing the feeling of planetary solidarity. What we need for the future, therefore, is to facilitate the formation of a planetary citizen, a “cosmopolitan nomad”, a *Homo Mundi* with an open identity that will support global collaboration.

Finally, after these ten “P-robblems” we can say that in 2020 another P-robblem started for liberal democracies: Pandemics, becoming global threats not only to democracies but even to our species. At the same time, pandemics could be the crisis to bring a new democratic Renaissance, representing a tipping point for the adaptation of Western liberal democracies to post-modernity and globalized world, not only for their survival but for the survival of our modern civilization. So, we can conclude saying that what we need for this tipping point to arrive, and a new social contract to be written, is also to better use three important tools that we are lucky to have today, much more than three centuries ago: education, technology and human oneness. These three tools are changing societies since the last century and in particular in the last 20 years. Education allowed people to know and, more important, to understand the world, as real education help to comprehend the factual knowledge, to connect dots, analyze and so understand complex reality. Education goes together with information, that is becoming global, accessible and “from many to many”, also thanks to technology, that enabled people to connect among them-

selves, not only in their places of origins but again all over the world, to access information, to communicate much faster and to expand their brain capabilities with the computer, so making human intelligence an “expanded intelligence” (on the path of the final “upgrade” with AI towards a new species, to say it with Harari). The problem with technology though is that can be used for the opposite goal too, and so for the social contract technology can be a tool but also a limit. Finally, human oneness is the best part of globalization, as enable people to learn languages, travel around the world and live and work in other cultures and environments, but also to feel all interconnected in order to build a global cooperation in a democratic way. With educated and well-informed citizens, technology use at its best and a human oneness that facilitate a planetary citizenship, democracy can rebirth and by the end of this century humankind might be able to have a world government to help our species to survive on this tiny and fragile planet in the infinite Universe.

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