

The economic crisis of the western system a geopolitical approach

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Concerning the ongoing crisis several analyses have been performed, generally from an economic point of view. In this context, several studies have been produced with the purpose of analysing the impact of the crisis on global economy and on worldwide industrial systems. The results of these studies contribute to finding solutions for the overcoming of the crisis, without loss of power by the western system led by US. Since at the present time a new multipolar system seems to be emerging after the US's unipolar moment, it is necessary to think about the relation between the different geopolitical postures of the world players and the crisis. Taking into account the different geopolitical strategies of the main global actors (US, EU, Russia, China, India), their different cultural identities and ambitions can help us to define better approaches in order to rebuild (or build) social stability and to find new forms of international cooperation in the conditions of this crisis.

GLOBAL CRISIS OR WESTERN SYSTEM CRISIS?

Generally, we refer to the ongoing financial (but also economic and industrial) earthquake as to a "global crisis"; this is an expression which is true only partially and in some contexts. But, if we analyse it from a geopolitical point of view, we see that the financial disaster is, first of all, an inner crisis of the Western System, which is generating some consequences in other geopolitical areas.

In order to express this concept in a better way, it is worthwhile to describe, concisely, what we mean by Western System and Global System and analyse the role of the so-called globalisation process in the geopolitical frame.

Definitions

1 — Western System (WS). From a geopolitical point of view, we can state that the WS is constituted basically by US, Europe (EU) and Japan (plus Canada, Australia, New Zealand). The central role of this large geopolitical area is carried out by the US and its historical special partner: Great Britain. EU and Japan (respectively the western and the eastern sides of the Eurasian Continent) are the periphery of this zone, with an important geostrategical function with respect to the Eurasian landmass. In fact, since the end of the Second World War and in the frame of US geopolitical doctrine, EU countries and Japan constitute two symmetrical US bridgeheads having the peculiar function of controlling Russia and China, the two lungs of Eurasia. Actually, for historical, geographic and cultural reasons the natural geopolitical position of Europe and Japan should be Eurasian, not Atlantic.

The control of the Eurasian landmass, which would bring about the hegemony of US in the north hemisphere of the planet, has conditioned both the foreign policy of Washington and the North American military industrial system, particularly in the last few years.

According to Henry Kissinger the US is an island outside of Eurasia. The former National Security Adviser and Secretary of State under President Richard Nixon reckons that a unique Great Power hegemonizing Eurasia's two main spheres, Europe and Asia, would be a strategic danger for the US. This kind of danger, Kissinger clarifies, must be averted, even in the case that the supposed Great Power would not show aggressive intentions, because, if these intentions become aggressive in future, Washington could not determine the events, because the effectual resistance capacity of the US has decreased. (Henry Kissinger, *L'arte della diplomazia*, Sperling & Kupfer Editori, Milano 2006, pp. 634-635).

2 — Global System (GS). In the current geopolitical framework this expression (originating from the Information Communication Technologies lexicon) means the programmatic will of the Western System to hegemonize the planet, mainly on financial, economic and technological basis. The Global System has to be considered as a project; a goal to be reached by means of the economic and financial competitiveness' tools and processes.

The architrave of the strategy aimed to the creation of a Global System is the economic interdependence among the States at worldwide scale.

The attempt to create a Global System — at the financial level — reflects the "political" intentions of great financial groups.

3 — Globalisation. We agree with the definition given by French economist Jacques Sapir "the so-called *globalisation* is actually the combination of two processes. The first one is the world extension of the capitalism — in its industrial form — to areas that it had not yet touched. The second one, which is to a large extent the implementation of US policy, corresponds to a voluntaristic policy of financial and commercial opening" (Jacques Sapir, *Le nouveau XXI siècle*, Paris, 2008, p. 63-64). In other words, the role of the globalisation process has been a US strategy for the world hegemony, during its "unipolar moment".

The Western crisis and the new Multipolar System

All of us know that the so-called global financial crisis is, actually, a cluster of several crises that, starting from the US, are now spreading all over the planet, affecting national economies and, hence, impacting their related social stabilities. Adopting a geopolitical perspective, we can observe that the crisis, starting from the geopolitical centre of the Western system, has first begun to propagate within its periphery, mainly EU countries and Japan, and in a second phase has irradiated to the eastern hemisphere of the globe. The speed and intensity of the crisis' spread is conditioned by the structural differences of the countries targeted.

Moreover we see that the global (western) crisis occurs:

- during a geopolitical shift (from a unipolar to a multipolar system, which seems to have its fundamental pillars in Eurasia and South America, respectively in the north-eastern hemisphere and in south-western hemisphere of the globe);
- in a specific economic frame, where new key players are emerging in Asia (China and India), economically, financially and industrially;
- during the reaffirmation of Russia as global player and, above all, as potential Eurasian pivot area.

In such a situation, the crisis could not only accelerate the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar system, but also could consolidate it. In fact, European countries, finally, should understand that their fundamental and specific interests (energy supply, security, cultural development) have a continental dimension and are strictly connected with Russian and Asian ones.

Within a Eurasian integrated context, Europe would find its natural geopolitical posture, cooperating with these countries on basis of parity. The European "peninsula" would constitute a sort of hinge area between Asia and Africa and carried out the role of the Eurasian port on the Atlantic Ocean.

The consolidation of the multipolar system requests the shifting of the European countries from the passive peripheral role of the Western System to an active one within the potentially emerging Eurasian integration. The change of geopolitical posture of Europe is an essential condition in order to overcome the ongoing crisis and build social stability, coherently with its culture based on anti-individualistic principles.

Analogous signals seem to appear in Japan. Tokyo is more and more interested in increasing political and economic relations with Beijing and New Delhi, and, above all, in gaining an active role in partnership with these two Asian countries, in the eastern area of the Eurasian landmass.

TENSIONS WITHIN THE WESTERN SYSTEM WITH RESPECT TO "HOW TO OVERCOME THE CRISIS"

Referring to the solutions aimed at solving the crisis, we observe that some important tensions have been arisen within the Western area. The crisis, in other words, seems to unveil the deep differences between Europe and US, with respect to their attitudes about economic matter and social welfare. Paris and Berlin - even if they both are dominated by Atlanticist governments (Sarkozy and Merkel are, in fact, the expression of the neo-Atlanticist European oligarchy) - had to take into account the fact that, structurally, the so-called neo-liberalist dynamics of the European economies (apart from Great Britain) are based on the contradiction between neo-liberalist behaviours and the practices inspired by the principles of solidarity.

Behaviours and practices characterized by an attitude of solidarity are, nowadays, still present in Continental and Mediterranean Europe - despite the periodic and massive waves of ultra-liberalism occurred during the last two decades and, above all, the recurrent warnings (more often real threats or diktat than simple warnings) advanced by some international economic organizations (among them: World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, some private credit rating agencies).

The solidarity-based attitude of European countries articulates itself into several social institutions; among them we can mention (even if partially privatised in the last years) those which aim at supporting retired and unemployed people (social security), at providing some social services (for instance, medical care), at supporting some strategic companies and, particularly, SMEs which constitute - for some aspects - the economic tissue of the whole European Union.

If we take into account what we have described in the last lines, we understand better the discrepancy occurred - between US and EU representatives- in the frame of the multilateral meetings devoted to the "global" crisis.

Anyway, even if the marked differences (more regulations requested by EU countries; more "free market" requested by US) did not generate a "real" solution for the crisis, (at least so far) and even if, in addition, they did not provoke a split between US and EU countries, these differences have posed surely a big problem inside the "western home".

The Western System, administrated by the Atlanticist oligarchy, must face the fact that its "peripheries" (EU countries and Japan) are no longer so reliable as they were in the past, despite the several military and economic treaties, the deep economic interdependence and the presence of US military troops (NATO) widely spread out in Europe and in Mediterranean Sea. Europe, in particular, could escape out of the US control, if the north American economic strategy tries to put the own debts of US on the shoulders of the European citizens.

The return to an economy "controlled" by the State and the so-called protectionist measures undertaken by the US and some European countries, far from being really political solutions, sound more as selfish and opportunist temporary ways out, adopted by the western ruling oligarchies. In other terms, this kind of *escamotages*, based on the involvement of the State in the economic and financial fields, have the clear aim of using the State to pay the debts provoked by irresponsible speculation of some financial lobbies. There is neither a political vision nor a solidarity-based vision of the economy, but, rather, the neo-liberalistic exploitation of the national revenues and savings. US finance needs the neo state-based economy just to take breath in a particularly moment of its history.

The designed targets to pay the crisis are the peripheries of the western system; i.e. Europe and Japan. These two geo-economic areas are characterized, for historical reasons, by a still diffused familiar culture of saving, which is completely missing in the US. Moreover their related economic systems, even if free-market oriented and on neo-liberalist behaviours based, still maintain some corporate characters. For different, but analogous reasons, the two peripheries of the Western System should face the crisis better than US.

THE EMERGING PLAYERS

The new global players (Russia, China and India) should face the global crisis with less damage with respect to US and Europe.

Russia and China should react enough well to the tremor, triggered by the financial speculation, mainly because of their political structures and the steadiness of the respective central political powers. To a certain extent, we can expect that the shock wave of the financial crisis could break against the Eurasian wall constituted principally by China and Russia. This is possible if Moscow and Beijing start carrying out joint economic and monetary policies, in the very next future.

Concerning India, we think that New Delhi, in order to overcome the crisis without deep damage, should balance the weakness of its own political system by strengthening economic relations with Moscow and Beijing within the frame of a common Eurasian vision. The geopolitical integration of Eurasia could be the better way to reduce the aftermath of the crisis and, obviously, to contribute to consolidate the emerging multipolar system.

Among the new emerging players, obviously, also Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela must be included. As known, during the last few years these countries, located in the southern American subcontinent, the one time US "backyard", have strengthen strategic relationship with the main Eurasian countries, China, Russia and some middle east countries (among them, Iran) in order to participate actively to the geopolitical global shift from unipolar to multipolar system. In such a new context of important relations among countries owners of energetic resources and worldwide important raw materials, Brazil, Venezuela and, under some aspects, Argentina, should resist to the consequences originating from the "global" crisis.

EUROPE

Regarding the building economic security and social stability in Europe we reckon that the European governments must, first of all, reconsider their geopolitical postures, which means to acquire the total sovereignty in all the fields: political, economical, military, cultural. In general, the

Europeans should reflect that their own interests are "Eurasian interests", no US or "Western" interests. For Europeans (not for the nowadays ruling oligarchies) there is no economic freedom without continental sovereignty.

Concerning some practical aspects, we point out only two main aspects on which the European governments should focus their attention:

- a) reformulation of the banking system and
- b) building of a new mixed economy.

The banking system, as all of us know, is, nowadays, a "private" institution, focused to make profit. It doesn't take into account the social frame where it acts and the consequences that it could provoke. The banking system is "not responsible": that cannot be longer tolerated. In order to rebuild the social and the economic stability, in fact, the banking system should become a "social" institution, having the aim of providing a service to the whole society.

The creation of a European "integrated new mixed economy" is something very important and deeply connected with the European banking system's reformulation.

This is possible starting by the public financing of strategic infrastructures related to energy and communications at continental scale, in the context of a cooperation with Russia and North Africa and Near East Countries.

Other main axis to be regarded are:

- the development of the European integrated military industry;
- the development of the European integrated research devoted to high technologies;
- the implementation of useful tools for the increasing of the social justice and solidarity at continental scale with respect to the local traditions;
- the creation of a collective security organisation at continental scale (Europe – Russia) and at Mediterranean scale (Europe – North Africa);
- the strengthening of cultural relations within the Ancient Continent (Europe – Asia – Africa) on the basis of the "Eurasian spiritual unity".

CONCLUSIONS

The geopolitical perspective, for which the so-called global crisis is mainly an inner crisis of the Western System, has led us to consider as unnatural the posture of Europe within the US geopolitical area. Hence, the solution of the crisis has to be found out of the "liberalist" practices, imposed by the US as winner of the second world war and "adopted" by Europeans in the last 60 years, in contradiction with their solidarity-based attitudes.

The reposition of Europe within the Eurasian context is considered as the prerequisite in order to build social security and economic stability, following the principle: there is no social and economic development without sovereignty.

The main European frameworks which need to be considered and reformulated are the banking system and the economic system. The shifting of the banking system from private to public service is stressed. The reorienting of the liberalist economic system to a European new mixed economy is proposed.

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