



XII BILBAO DIALOGUES: EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA

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Protests and upheavals in the global era of social and political crises

By Carmen Beatriz Fernandez

JUAN M^a ATUTXA welcomes, as Sabino Arana Fundazioa Chairman, remembering that on June 5, 2008, the first edition of what was baptized as the Bilbao Dialogues was celebrated with the topic “A world in transformation”. During twelve years a value proposal has been created. It is a young institution, but it has already roots, and every year it bears fruit. “The world has changed radically in these 12 years, but we maintain the initial purpose: we are united by putting on the table the challenges on both sides of the Atlantic in this global era. We have discussed issues of debate on the relationship between politics and economics, climate change, 21st century sovereignty, and today the mobilizations and revolts of the global era. We do it from our Christian-Democratic DNA; determined to be active subjects of the world in transformation. We are running out of ethical reference models, both in politics and in economics. We are becoming orphans, and at the mercy of the law of the jungle. Some of the mobilizations reflect this reality. However we still need to be rebellious with cause, because the cause of a better world will always be worth it.”

Thus began a stimulating day, marked by many questions and some answers. Probably more questions than answers, on the current issue of protests and the global political crisis. The fight was divided between those who see the future with optimism and those who do not. Among all the participants, however, the need to offer solutions as an antidote to populism emerges, seemed to be a consensus.

Francesco Rutelli, President of the Institute of European Democrats-IED, gave a short talk from remote video: Europe must be a global and democratic power, especially in an era where multipolarism grows and multilateralism decreases. “European policy must extend to the sister nations of Latin America. Latin America is challenged today by extremist radicalisms, from the left and the right, with populists from both extremes as an expression. Our complex world requires solutions. A good example can be considered

the Basque National Party, with its 125 years, resistant to the storms of both extremes, such as the Gernika tree, it shows the essential Basque democratic experience as a model ”.

Andoni Ortuzar, EBB (Executive Body) Chair of the Basque National Party, mentioned that Chile's tensions and mobilizations were unexpected, but noting that almost anywhere on the globe where we are aiming there is conflict, mobilization and protests. “In Europe, the rest of the world is usually looked over the shoulder when talking about democratic spaces, but right here we have the phenomenon of “yellow vests”, or Brexit, which began as a call for a referendum of an irresponsible president Cameron”. We live in times of anxiety, how do we respond well to these challenges? "I see three possibilities", continues Ortuzar: the first is the classic one from the left: everything must be resolved by the State, as patriarch. This is a formula that has made crisis. The second possibility is that of the classical right: the market has the answer, a formula that has also failed. The third is the one we want to strengthen and we wanted to try: put the person at the center that all political and institutional action revolves around the needs of the person. Back to the humanistic values that inspired us in the foundation of our parties.

Next **Izaskun Bilbao**, MEP Vice-President for relations with the Andean Community of Nations, offers her Introductory talk: Causes and Consequences of Social Crises. “We must reset the policy. The voracity of financial capitalism, climate change, the transformation of our mobility model or the productive system, other labor relations need global norms and rules because they are global problems. But the actions, the attitudes, the ways of living and working, of educating oneself, that translate into acts the norms and the values, that are going to reverse the threats are executed at ground level, in the spaces on a human scale, where we live, we know each other, and we recognize each other. ”

To reflect on these issues, this seminar has been structured in three parts: In the introduction we will take care of deepening the diagnosis then we will think about how this situation affects politics and what we can do to boost the social knowledge that can help us put people back in the center of political action. Finally, we are going to think about a new, more inclusive and participatory economic model.

Fuad Chahín starts the first panel: “Crisis of politics: representative democracy and new avenues for participation”.

Chahín is Chairman of the Christian Democratic Party of Chile-PDC. “the consistency and coherence between what is said and what is done is necessary. The indignation of Spain quickly had their corollaries in Latin America. We are living a process of “deglobalization”. Those excluded from the world feel anger, indignation, and become an ideal breeding ground for extremists. The impact of the migratory crisis of Venezuela in Latin America is monumental. We must be able to take care of the solutions; it is not enough to denounce the evils of populism. ”

There are huge social and environmental liabilities in the subregion. And to find solutions we must remind Konrad Adenauer: "All the market that is possible, as much state intervention as necessary." The circular, inclusive and collaborative economy is necessary. There are windows of competitive opportunity in these elements in Latin America, giving added value in environmental and social matters, rather than in technology where it is more difficult for us to be competitive. Docks to populism must be put precisely in the solutions: strengthen democracy to solve the problems of democracy.

The corruption and cancer of Odebrecht, the crime and the narco-culture are part of the problems. They have been installed transversely in the region. First it corrupts people, then it is installed in the territory and finally make a takeover of the institutions. We question Maduro's dictatorship and Bolsonaro's authoritarianism, but they complement each other. Complaints are not enough. If we are not able to take charge of the problems, we cannot demonstrate that democracy is useful for people and we will create the breeding ground for extremisms.

Our challenges are clear, and we must add those of robotization, as well as those of climate change. We have to rethink our development models, in a creative and innovative way.

Currently there are no interlocutors in Chile. Our institutions are weakened from the point of view of distrust of citizens. All of our main institutions have single-digit numbers when public trust is measured. We need organized citizenship.

In spite of everything I am optimistic about what is coming: the institutions must mark the way and channel the demands, through the constituent process, to build a new democracy and a new civil society. Again, the Basque example is pointed out as a model for the reinvention of society, on the basis of solving social challenges.

The panel on the Crisis of politics begins with **Gabriel Ascencio**, MP, former speaker of the Chilean Parliament and former ambassador, who makes a great recount and reflection on the Chilean protests, starting from a provocative question: When did we forget that the epicenter of politics was the human person?

We should be proud of what we did in Chile. Eduardo Frei Montalva was the great revolutionary who led the transformation of Chile. We recover democracy in Chile and face the dilemma before dictatorships: do we participate with the dictator's rules? Or do we continue with the revolt? "And it turned out that we won with the dictator's rules." People today can send their children to college. People have more than social security. It all happened in 30 years. From 44% of poverty we go to 8%, indigence from 18% to 1.5%. Road works, telecommunications, globally integrated ... All with aspirations.

And suddenly ... "a child jumped a tourniquet in the subway ...". The boy protested against the 30 pesos increase in the passage of the subway. That child was followed by 20 or 30 similar to him, to which the forces of order over-reacted. And this was followed

by media coverage. The next day the protest was unstoppable... And we had people farther and farther from us. "I'm tired of your abuses, of privileges, of being mocked, I'm tired of greed ..." they began to tell us. And what were we doing for our countrymen?

Now we are in another process: that of the Constituent. A process that did not ask the child who jumped the tourniquet, but that he contributed to take there. In April we are going to ask people if they want a new constitution. The rightists want to preserve the Constitution, but we will vote for change. It has been called "Constitutional Convention", during October we will decide who goes to that convention. But people are restless ...

All this is similar throughout Latin America. In Peru, traditional parties were swept away last Sunday... "We want new faces, other faces, other ideas, we don't want them. We are tired of corruption, of impunity, of privileges, of abuse." Colombia is another issue that is not easy. We often focus the problem on Venezuela, and Venezuela serves to win elections: Maduro has become the great voter, for fear of Venezuela. But the reality is that the problem is NOT Venezuela. There was a coup in Bolivia, of course due to mistakes made by Evo Morales himself, but there was a coup in Bolivia. We have problems everywhere in Latin America.

"We left UNASUR and dynamited it. We are leaving political forums, focusing exclusively on economic forums. We have problems at CELAC. There are Chileans who want to leave the UN forum after Bachelet's adverse report. The case of Venezuela has been very disruptive, and has undoubtedly left the bad example ... What are we doing? What happens in Latin America today is not so different from what happened in the 60s: USA intervening and corrupting the political with its dollars. The idealistic political boy becomes the greedy political operator boy. The challenge remains the same: solutions.

"He confesses not to be optimistic: "I don't see the light, there is no clarity at the end of the tunnel."

"Let's meet the common faces again," is his final call.

Next is the turn of **Mariana Gómez del Campo**, former PAN-Mexico Senator and Vice-President ODCA- Christian Democrat Organization of America, who highlights the importance of the existence of this space to reflect on the Latin American agenda, as well as the EU-Latin American relations. In Latin America we are going through very complicated times and Mexico is no exception. After 70 years of an important corporatism tied to the PRI as a single party, Fox comes to power and initiates major reforms. After him, the frontal fight initiated by President Felipe Calderón against drug trafficking is what began the unstable times. There are tasks that remained pending in Mexico, despite the successes between 2000 and 2012, despite economic growth and stability, as well as public security and person-centered reforms. It was not possible to communicate properly to the citizen, and the PAN lost power in 2012.

Gómez recall that Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) was 18 years in campaign, since he assumed the government of Mexico City. The discontent and tiredness of the

traditional political parties drove him. Today we have AMLO that calls its government the "IV Transformation" and that means dealing with five riders:

1. Threatened institutions and concentration of power
2. Crime and drug trafficking, without serious political institutions that face it
3. Stagnant economy. ZERO growth. Disappearance of popular insurance
4. Violence unleashed
5. Polarized society

Venezuela is permanently a topic on the table because AMLO has been copying a lot of Chavez.

In 2021 will be held very important elections, for the Mexican parliament, where it is vital that AMLO lose the majority. The PAN today has 10 governors, and there are 23.5 million people under PAN governments. We have to make an enormous effort to counterbalance in Mexican democracy, it is equally important to have a strong UN and OAS. The task is not easy, but we are fighting and we have to close ranks and work hand in hand.

I would love to be optimistic, she concluded...

Professor **Ander Gurrutxaga**, teaches Sociology at the UPV / EHU and Essayist, continues with a provocative intervention that began by recalling that "we are always in crisis, and there are countries capable of living permanently in crisis." "Europe has ceased to be a democratic reference for the rest of the world, because it has not been able to solve the entropy itself that it causes. Every time I hear about generalities about democracy I say: "Put yourself in front of a map." Today more than half of the world's population lives without democracy, and they don't despair about it: China, Indonesia, Malaysia or Singapore. And the system, without democracy, can work... "

There are some elements that are not resolved in the West, and that prevent people from joining as a fan of democracy. For example, how do we ensure generational relief? It is a puzzle that is not clear. At the moment the employment does not exist, it must be created... The concept of innovation has black holes, such as the "entrepreneur" and "creativity".

This brings us to a key element: How should we think about change? Democracy has good travel companions: one is that of the Welfare State in Europe. This is associated with a strong idea of economic development, social development policies, and wealth distribution.

There is no possible change if inequality and the distribution of wealth are not addressed.

The engine of history is not the class struggle: it is upward social mobility. May we live better than our parents, and may our children live better than we do. Well-being is

quality of life, but it also implies institutional trust. We are living, however, a moment of “downward social mobility”.

Former Senator **Iñaki Anasagasti** started the question time: The problem with politics is that it has ceased to be a vocation, to be a profession. Bachelet, who was close to Maduro, has signed a very strong report. The situation in Venezuela is on everyone's lips to analyze it, but there is little action. What are the international organizations for?

Chahín answers: If the rules cannot be imposed, there are doubts about the validity of the international institutions system, it becomes a very fragile framework. It is necessary to improve the musculature of the international system, both in human rights and in global legality. We have a debt that must be resolved.

Txema Montero intervenes: The boy who skips the tourniquet, the bread tails in Petrograd in 1917 or Maria Antonieta saying "if they don't have bread to eat cakes" are historical trances that show us that when your claims have no voice the mechanism is the exit. Either you vote against, or you leave, or you react with violence. That is not new. The new thing is that the idea of an ascending process of humanity has been broken, and the restless retreat. We see the future with perplexity and concern. In the field of human rights, domestic resources must always be exhausted to go to international instances, the case of Juan María Atutxa is very illustrative in this regard, after being condemned by the Spanish Constitutional Court, the European Court gave the reason and made change the Spanish sentence. The Bachelet report has affected the European legal community in an important way: at the moment we know that in Venezuela a corvette Captain has been tortured until the murder, then we cannot enter into a logical, coherent and democratic dialogue with the regime that did it.

The session continues with the second panel: on the time for a collaborative economic model, starting with **Guillermo Herrera**. He is consultant, and Carmen Frei's Chief of Staff, tasked with PDC thematic panels. Chile has had a strong economic development in the last 30 years: economic growth, health coverage, access to education, Internet penetration, growth of the middle class, are part of a long list of successes. But already in 2015, 42% declared themselves “loser of development” (UNDP survey). In a context of high inequality this indicated an alert. There is economic growth with ups and downs. The 2007 crisis marks a first turning point in the virtuous period of growth of the Chilean economy. A couple of major concerns have emerged: productivity has remained at a very low level and there is a decoupling between household consumption and income evolution. Here is a clue: The middle class is overwhelmed by the risk of non-payment, both in general consumption and in the education of their children, and suffering from frustration arising from progress.

We have a country that is having progress, but whose population feels frustrated. The Fake news that delves into the deepest fears also has a place here. The average voter is having now less patience and is more critical, he has more potential to be attracted to populist and extremist proposals.

The mother of all battles is the conquest of the center, without being dragged along the ends. The middle classes may choose to support anger policies. Cold passions accept reason more easily, but emotion drives more irrational behaviors. How can we guide decision making? Christian humanism must assume the struggle for dignity and freedom from a conversation between progress and social integration.

The last presentation of the day corresponds to **Javier López**. López is MEP Co-Chair of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly. He mentioned a recent study compiled by Cambridge University, that explains the level of disaffection with democracy, as a global phenomenon, that is increasing, and reaching up to 47% of the population (Cambridge's Center for the Future of Democracy). It is generating toxicity towards institutions.

The MEP López affirms that three common patterns can be identified in the protests:

1. Inequality as an explanatory element
2. Institutional fragility
3. Polarization

How much inequality fits in a democracy? Inequality is not only an ethical problem, but a serious economic problem. Nor is it necessary to grow and then distribute, but it is necessary to distribute in order to grow... There is a spatial impact on inequality: we have urban centers well inscribed in global economic dynamics, with quality jobs and growth. But there are also interurban areas where the crisis is more severe for the population. Globalization and the digital revolution in aggregate terms generate benefits, but both phenomena share badly the benefits that generate and define their own losers. We must be very attentive to how benefits are shared and what compensation mechanisms we define.

Institutional fragility and the flexibility of institutions affects democracy. Institutions have to be able to absorb new demands.

Regarding polarization, there is a need to build new consensus, but with very polarized public opinions it is very difficult to build new consensus. You can't even hold a public conversation with excessive polarization... We have to rebuild common spaces

Carmen Beatriz Fernández intervenes in the question session: The protests we saw in 2018 and 2019 have as a common denominator the technology that facilitates immediate mobilization and makes that political parties are not anymore needed as articulators. Although a structural substrate gives rise to it, the short-term technology gives life to the protests, facilitating them. What can we learn from the phenomenon?

Herrera responds: The agora as we know it in political theory no longer exists. We no longer have assemblies, and few discussion spaces. Unlike what happens in the Basque Country, of great capillarity towards the population, in Chile we no longer have citizens but consumers, even the political: we have political consumers. There is, without a doubt, a generation with which we are distanced, which is explained by video games: there are people who are going to look for meaning in their lives. They learned the

strategy on YouTube, from what happened in Ukraine and Hong Kong. That phenomenon, articulated in cells of no more than 5 people, we still do not fully understand ...

López replies: Traditional representation structures are part of the crisis of democracy: it is the crisis of intermediate spaces not only in the parties, but also in the media. This is serious, because if there are no spokespersons, who do they do business with? How do we rebuild intermediation spaces?

These movements are spontaneous and horizontal and have a double effect on politics: Technology empowers us individually, we channel demands without the need for leadership. But a second effect is that it also makes us more manipulable. Democracy until today had been seen as a strategic advantage, today democracy is increasingly perceived as vulnerability.

The European Parliament has been thinking a lot about the issue of post-truth and how to put limits on the distortions that are taking place in the public space. Set limits on advertising and demand transparency on who spends what. One problem is that of fake news, which can be tackled, and another problem is the functioning of the networks, which groups people from similar positions, and become sound boxes. It contributes to polarization and makes public conversation very difficult; this second problem is much harder to attack.

Luis Maria Goikoetxea asks: our Chilean friends agree that it has been passed from citizens to consumers, but that does not happen overnight. There has to be a review and deep self-criticism. How does that citizenship fighting for freedom and human rights become a consumer?

Chahín responds: we have to be self-critical, but that does not imply denying everything we did well, and all the achievements that Chile achieved. Chilezuela's speech connected with many people. The rightists with Piñera went from 36 to 54% in the ballotage. And we had all come together. It is a fallacy that Unity leads you to victory. We lost the epic of politics, we became the administrators of a model we didn't share, instead of being managers of the necessary change.

At the time of the conclusions **Mikel Burzako**, Managing Director of the Institute of European Democrats (IED) mentioned that there is a new stage in the institution. "On January 23 we agreed in Brussels a minimum of premises that we wanted to have our next activities. It is a satisfaction that the first event is in this house: we want high level debate, to improve the political content". Although today is a sad day for Europe, January 31, with the departure of United Kingdom, Europe has opportunities, with its lights and shadows. Europe worries citizens, but let's be aware that Europe is more difficult to handle today than five years ago. The initial reading of the new European Commission is correct: it establishes three priorities: energy, competitiveness and social policy; as well as the need for a re-foundation of Europe and the beginning of dialogue, and taking a global leadership.

Burzako concludes with emotional words addressed to Juan Mari Atutxa: We are from and we feel this house, and wherever we have to go, we defend this country. “You have dignified this Foundation, this party and this country. With your good work, with your righteousness, with your full dedication. I have had the honor of checking it out in person throughout all these years. Those who have to assume certain political responsibilities are more concerned about the relief than the political situation. How to make the PNV the best reference for the next generations? Juan Mari, you are one of our greatest and main references of these 40 years of democracy”.