

Stop the populist suicide!

Whatever the result of Britain's EU referendum on Thursday, the lesson will be clear. And it is not what most commentators suggest: an award for blackmail in case of "Stay", or a pan-European exit contagion in the event of a "Brexit". Nor is it the never-ending European self-flagellation, whereby the "Leave" vote is both an English specificity as well as the result of a populist underlying tendency in the Western World.

No, the only lesson to draw from the deplorable soap opera that David Cameron started three years ago is directed at European heads of states and governments: stop playing with the fire! Stop sacrificing the European project, the States you are in charge of, the geopolitical position of the western world and the world economy as a whole, on the altar of self-interest and partisan interests! All these are in stark contrast with the dignity and nobility of public service and of holding a political office.

I can already hear the horrified screams of anti-European pseudo-democrats cheering at the bedside of the Union: the last word belongs to the people, there is no such thing as a European people, and only the individual voice of the people of European nations should be taken into account! But the failure of European elites – heads of state in the first place, but also far beyond that – is precisely that they took this populist rhetoric and considered it at face value, entirely betraying their responsibilities.

Representative democracy was not invented for nothing, and it is more essential than ever in the age of internet, where all voiced opinions are still not valued the same, and where self-motivated beliefs are a worse adviser than ever before. Who would dare to suggest that the British citizen who is about to vote against east-European immigration, and whose country was the first to advocate for it in the first place, has any idea about the devastating impact of a "Brexit" on Great-Britain, on the European project, the Atlantic alliance, or the stability of the world? What European leader will have the courage to state loud and clear that it is time to end unilateral, opportunistic, and populist national referenda on questions involving the future of all Europeans?

Europe has far better and far more urgent things to do than to deal with negotiating for years the result of June 23 with Mr. Cameron or his foreseeable successor. Those who will be tempted to follow his reckless, and nowadays quite pitiful, strategy will bear the cost.

We have seen enough energy wasted, enough useless risks taken, and enough unjustifiable cowardice. Stop this populist suicide!

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