

The End of an America Open to the World

The election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States is a revolutionary event. It will deepen and accelerate the decline of the United States in the world. And further accentuate the risk of populism.

It is not the end of the world, but the end of a world. The one where America, was interested in "others" as much as in itself, for better or for worse. The date of the political tsunami which has just taken place is not completely random. The 9th November 1989, saw the fall of the Berlin Wall. "Slava" Rostropovich celebrated the triumph of freedom by playing Bach right in front of this symbol of defeated oppression.

Twenty-seven years later, on November 9th 2016, Donald Trump triumphantly emerged victor in the US presidential election. America has democratically chosen to enclose itself within a wall of anger, suspicion and rejection. "Closed" America prevails over "open" America.

Spontaneously, before these 2 dates even coincided with each other, the lines written by Charles Dickens in his book "A Tale of Two Cities" came to my mind: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times".

What has just happened is simply revolutionary. Never in 240 years of American political history has such a "different" man, a man with no political experience, succeeded to the White House. Never has a man so overly self-confident had access to the absolute weapon, the nuclear weapon. The American world that has just collapsed is the one I discovered and loved at Harvard University in the early 1970s. At that time, Stanley Hoffmann was teaching foreign policy in the United States, focusing on mixing both the exceptionalism and optimism that were the strength of America.

Are we witnessing the end of American exceptionalism? Or has it taken a strange, but logical, detour within the context of the multiple rejections which are happening today in 2016 America? It is the rejection of globalization, of

institutions, of elites, and of all those who are different, by a white middle class, doubly obsessed by the decline of both America in a global context and the decline of the white man in America. Faced with this feeling of a double loss of control, which had already contributed to the election of Ronald Reagan - a man infinitely more reasonable than Trump - in 1980, America has just reacted: some would say strongly, others excessively. It was done in a way which shouldn't have surprised us if we hadn't closed our eyes to a reality that was so disturbing. I, myself, am of course also guilty of this charge.

We refused to see it, but Donald Trump is fully part of the American myth. Is he not, in fact, the direct expression of it? The solitary man, armed with his energy alone, emerges from the plain and faces all? By surrounding herself with celebrities, Hillary Clinton provided Trump with an additional and perhaps decisive argument. The "true" American, faced with the "false" elites.

On November 9th 2016, we entered a new world and this "novelty" was greeted as it should have been by the progression of the Moscow Stock Exchange, by the delight of Marine Le Pen and by Canada's immigration site "exploding" in response to the influx of inquiries. But, beyond this never-ending catalogue of first reactions to the unthinkable reality, what are the possible consequences of this election for world balance and for the future of democracy?

Many commentators wish to reassure us; they say "It's not that bad, you'll see". The President of the United States has much less power than his French counterpart. "Reasonable" Republicans in the Senate will oppose the risk of the new President straying from the beaten

track. And Trump is much wiser than it seems. Did he not show moderation and a true spirit of conciliation in his first speech as President Elect?

These judgments do not seem to me to correspond to the truly revolutionary character of what has just happened under our bewildered and unbelieving eyes.

Contrary to Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again", one might consider the possibility that his victory may deepen and accelerate the decline of the United States in the world. From Beijing to Moscow, including Ankara, they are all delighted by the humiliation inflicted by the voters on the proud but dysfunctional American democracy. Has China, in its ambition to regain its pre-eighteenth century domination, not just made 10 years' progress, thanks to the anger and resentment of the American people?

If even the United States rallies to the myth of the strong and providential man, is this not proof that Xi Jinping, Putin and Erdogan are right? Finally America will have to stop giving them lessons on morality.

If, since Tuesday, there is de facto less of America in the world, are there not more risks of populism? "Everything comes in threes" they say. After the Brexit victory in Great Britain, then that of Donald Trump in the US, how can we not consider that Marine le Pen might have a real chance of coming to power in France? - the same causes produce the same effects. By choosing Trump, did the Americans not open up the way to the French? It is up to us to show that we are more reasonable. Trump's victory is a warning for us, a final warning probably.