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José Manuel Durão Barroso, the outgoing president of the European Commission on the date of publication of the article, wrote an op-ed piece (Durão Barroso, 2014) on the occasion of the elections that were to be held from May 22nd to 25th, 2014. It encourages us to vote for a united Europe and not to give up on the European project. It starts by pointing out the consequences of the economic crisis. It has divided Europe between “creditors” and “debtors” and between North and South. There is the sense of a loss of fairness and equity. In addition, there has been a dramatic increase in unemployment and our social model faces enormous difficulties. But the most important thing is that this crisis has made clear the need to undertake reforms if we want to maintain European productivity, employment and our European growth model. It has also made us more aware of our interdependence. To preserve peace and prosperity in Europe, we need to be much more willing to act together, to project power on the international stage and to strengthen the role and the influence of the European Union. A new world order is coming. Either we help to shape it or we will lose out in the future.

Mr. Barroso thinks we should improve our political union following the path of reform, not revolution. For the next phase of European integration we must achieve a true national and European commitment to the European project. But firstly, we must ask ourselves: What is the agreed goal of our Union? To what extent do we unite our destinations? How wide and deep do we want our integration? Who wants to participate in what, and why? Before we talk about greater economic integration these issues should be discussed. The problem is that dialectics in the European policy are characterised by a system in which everyone nationalises the successes and the difficulties are Europeanised. National leaders need to understand that their role is not only national but also European.

Analysis and proposal

The first idea that came up in the seminar “Europe behind (mis)understandings” was that opinion pieces written by political figures are

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perceived as political propaganda and cause rejection among readers, so the article results in the opposite effect to that desired. Secondly, a healthy media system is fundamental for any democracy in two ways: for keeping citizens informed, and for ensuring that politicians are fulfilling their functions properly. In order to have a healthy media system, it needs to be well informed, however there are information blocks and it does not reach every European citizen, causing low participation in European elections (43.09 % last May)¹.

In addition, if the media worked as in theory it should, Europe would be understood as a multiplicity of identities that belong to a community. However, nowadays, as Mr. Durão Barroso says, the mass media tend to nationalise the achievements and defeats are Europeanised, especially with crisis issues, leading us to mutual mistrust between countries and dividing them into debtors and creditors. That is the major reason for the increasing support for Eurosceptic nationalist parties in the last elections in states like France, the UK, Denmark, Austria, Greece or Hungary. The election results showed that, in the end, neither northern nor southern countries are satisfied with European policies. Finally, I agree with José Manuel Durão Barroso that we will need institutional and political unity of the EU to fit into the emerging world order. However, a unified European image is hard to achieve without a common foreign policy and if Europe does not take a position as a global player. A European culture begins with European politics.

Reference

Durão Barroso, José Manuel. "La Unión Europea: Es la política, estúpido". *El País* (8 May 2014) (online) http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/05/08/actualidad/1399567124_862996.html

1. European election results. RTVE (2014) (online) [Date accessed 11.01.2015] <http://resultados-elecciones.rtve.es/europeas/2014/espana/#euResults>