

Norberto Bobbio's *Right and Left* between Classic Concepts and Contemporary Crises

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“Doktor König, der linksgerichtet war, mit Rußland sympathisierte und sich für einen Revolutionär hielt, dem nur eine Revolution fehlt, hörte mit der Andacht zu, die Gegner der bürgerlichen Gesellschaftsordnung für deren Stützen immer bereithalten. Bernheim hielt ihn für einen mächtigen Führer des Proletariats, und er sah in Bernheim einen geheimen Vertrauten der Schwerindustrie. So saßen sie einander gegenüber, die Repräsentanten zweier feindlicher Mächte, persönlich objektiv bis zur Freundschaft und jeder erfüllt von dem Gedanken an die Wirkung, die er auf den andern ausübte.”

Joseph Roth, *Rechts und Links*

Eighteen years after the publication of Norberto Bobbio's classic statement on the concepts of Right and Left (Bobbio, 1994), the dichotomy is as central as ever to the functioning of democratic institutions and to the self-perception of ordinary people. At the same time, its political content appears eroded, to the point where many have claimed it lingers merely as an empty signifier. In order to account for this discrepancy, I will sketch an argument drawing on the pragmatic valence and on the historical development of the Left-Right cleavage. Tracing the paradigm of the dichotomy, underlying Bobbio's argument, to 19th century debates regarding the speed of progress understood as a linear process ultimately productive of social leveling, I interpret the contemporary predicament not as a transcendence of the antagonism of Right and Left, but as a displacement of the locus of political decision that renders national politics irrelevant for the issues that characterize the dichotomy. Such a state of affairs is not understood as a decisive victory of the free-market, globalizing Right, but rather as a general failure of democracy, an abrogation of collective subjectivity. On this basis, the revitalization of the dichotomy is seen to depend on the development of a theory and practice of the politics of Left and Right at the international level, which the 20th century signally failed to bring about.

I.

The figure of Norberto Bobbio is difficult to elude for anyone who began to reflect on the concepts of Left and Right, and perhaps on politics *tout court*, by considering the case of modern Italy. Bobbio's central position within Italian social-scientific discourse in the second half of the 20th century (the period that has come to be associated with the country's *Prima Repubblica*) is in no small part related to his own personal trajectory, which in turn was deeply attuned to the political history of the country. From the anti-fascist resistance to the

constitutional convention, from postwar reconstruction to industrial take-off, from the challenge of student activism to the defense of the republican institutions against terrorism in the 1970s, all the main phases of public life found an echo in Bobbio's biography, and bibliography. So pronounced was this role, as the "critical conscience" of the republican regime, that today, nearly a decade after his passing (and in a wholly different cultural and political climate), the reader of Bobbio is faced with —if I may be permitted the expression— a type of classicism. Perhaps ironically, for a man who thoroughly shared the anti-rhetorical mores of the generation of Montale, Pavese, and Fenoglio, his works today appear more as a corpus to interpret than as a series of arguments with which to debate.

In particular, *Destra e sinistra* can most meaningfully be read today, I believe, as a symptom of a specific historical context. 1994, the year in which it was published, saw a key shift in Italian politics, with Silvio Berlusconi's first electoral victory at the close of the *Tangentopoli* crisis that had liquidated the ruling class of the First Republic. Beyond the personalistic element of the new political system, a deep change in the political culture of the country was set in movement, whose origins can be traced to the end of the Cold War (Ginsborg, 1996): despite the reactivation (and discursive spectacularization) of the communist/anti-communist cleavage, the 1994 election marked the beginning of a shift away from the traditional political configuration of modern Italy, the "material constitution" that had endured since the late '40s.

Like many classics written at a crucial historical juncture¹, *Destra e sinistra* records, but also circumscribes, a crisis in the subject matter of its inquiry. Reflecting on this text today will, I hope to show, highlight some of the ways in which Bobbio's argument was the conclusion of a cycle and the crystallization of a long tradition of previous understandings and insights, rather than a fresh beginning for an essentially new world.

The main elements of the argument Bobbio sets forth are too well known to discuss extensively here. In extreme synthesis, Bobbio's treatment of the matter is analytic and procedural. In search of a unitary criterion to distinguish Left from Right, he focuses first on the rules of the game whose acceptance separates moderates from extremists in both camps. The preference for liberty is equated with this fundamental option in favor of democracy and constitutionalism (Bobbio, 1994: chap. II): liberty, therefore, is not a substantial goal of

¹ One is reminded for instance —though the crisis was of course of an entirely different proportion— of Horkheimer & Adorno [1947].

politics *per se*², but rather a mode of its instantiation, a necessary procedural precondition (80). Once Bobbio has absorbed the value of liberty into the notion of institutional guarantees of pluralism, he can then locate the substantive essence of the distinction between Left and Right in the normative relation to equality as a social goal (chap. VI).

II.

In using Bobbio's text as a mirror for the continuing relevance of the Right-Left political worldview at the beginning of the 21st century, I will be exploring two related methodological paths that escape the purview of his analysis: one investigating the pragmatic valence of the terms, the other, their conceptual history in the long run. The goal will be to highlight certain historical and conceptual dynamics that problematize Bobbio's analytical framework for our contemporary predicament.

The initial question to be confronted is: what kind of objects of analysis are 'Left' and 'Right'? Preliminarily, it may prove useful to circumscribe the argument by eliminating certain possibilities. In particular, I will not be discussing the psychological or neurological substratum that some have claimed to be at the basis of the most fundamental political cleavages (Lakoff, 2002). I will be focusing exclusively on the level of concepts and their social instantiation.

From a pragmatic, or sociolinguistic, point of view, I believe it is important to note first of all that 'Right' and 'Left' are at one and the same time heuristic instruments for the understanding of politics and real-life objects of political analysis in their own right. In other words, they are not mere analytical constructs of the researcher (as Weberian ideal-types are), nor are they simple empirical facts of the matter with no associated subjective identity or self-evident mobilizing potential, in the way demographic data such as age, educational attainment, or geographical distribution tend to be. We can make sense of the components of a party system, or of a range of policy options, for instance, by ordering them on a Right-Left dimension, but at the same time we can observe, say, the self-description of politicians or voters as Right-wing or Left-wing, using other variables to account for it. 'Right' and 'Left', in other words, can map a directly experienced workaday worldview, widely shared by ordinary people, and can be seen to describe basic attitudes to social life, as well as directing

² Chataway's (1998: 416) review has this key point exactly backwards.

fundamental psychological sympathies and enmities (Langford, 1991: 475), as in our Weimarian epigraph.

Hence, a conceptual analysis is barred from reaching purely nominalist conclusions: the scholarly redefinitions of these terms find the limit of their plausibility (and analytic usefulness) in the lived experience of common, lay participants in politics. Some have claimed that the Right-Left conceptual couple is in fact only a pair of empty signifiers (White, 2011: 124-5), and to a certain extent it is indeed possible to trace a shift in their meaning in different contexts, in space and time. It does not follow, however, that 'Right' and 'Left' can intelligibly mean whatever one pleases, but only whatever the outcome of the power game for their redefinition (and the historical trajectory of the iterations of such games) has made them mean in specific circumstances.

Along these lines, one should note how much 'Right' and 'Left', as identity mechanisms, are sticky: they are entrenched in the institutional setup of contemporary democracies (especially in Europe³), and this entrenchment represents a powerful factor of conceptual and terminological inertia. The configuration is all the stronger, because in many ways the Right-Left dichotomy has assumed the role of ur-dualism, functionally required by many political institutions, and, arguably, by political culture at large. Such a function is most visible in parliamentary dynamics, as well as in electoral contests; indeed, wherever the agonic character of politics is prevalent, the dichotomous form is typically favored, and the Left-Right cleavage has often been integrated into this confrontation⁴. The institutional preference for this form of dualist political dynamic can be seen comparatively in the myriad constitutional engineering attempts to tweak electoral laws in order to oblige party systems to conform to an "orderly conduct", with the two main groups alternating in power.

So far, our discussion has not reached conclusions incompatible with Bobbio's position. If ordinary people by and large know how to distinguish Right and Left in politics, and if official political life is run by and large according to such a cleavage, or in other words, if institutional structure and political culture are in a mutually reinforcing feedback loop, in

³ The argument that the Left-Right cleavage is a specifically European political preoccupation is set forth in Gold's (1998) review of Bobbio, and even more forcefully by Griffith (1998: 549-50), in a frankly superficial and ill-reasoned appraisal.

⁴ This requirement for the expression and sanctioning of division, and the coercive implications for the electorate of its mapping upon the existing institutional embodiments of the Right-Left cleavage, is the starting point for José Saramago's startling deconstructive thought experiment in his 2004 novel *Ensaio sobre a lucidez*.

what sense can we say that the concepts of Left and Right have entered a phase of indifferentiation in contemporary politics?

The main problem, I claim, has to do with collective subjectivity. It is indeed still possible (as it in fact actually occurs) for individuals today to describe themselves broadly as Right- or Left-wing, despite all the inconsistencies of political culture as it is experienced “in the wild”; similarly, it is possible to describe certain policy solutions as more or less Right-wing or Left-wing. However, while the political system in many countries has built-in, near-automatic labels for a dualism in political discourse and competition centered on the Right-Left divide, what is becoming increasingly hard to imagine in Left-Right terms in our time is the existence of a collective subject (typically, a political party) able to exhibit the characteristics of agency, authorship, and consistency. In other words, the ability to operate within contemporary politics as a purely Left-wing or Right-wing force is gradually being foreclosed: the pressure towards syncretism, hybridization, and a “catch-all” attitude has become irresistible. To paraphrase the protagonist of Nanni Moretti’s film *Aprile*, the question is not so much whether one can *say* something Left-wing, but, rather, whether one can *be* Left-wing, and act organically as such.

III.

In order to put this contemporary development in context, it is useful to turn to the historical dimension of the Right-Left cleavage. It is well known that the terms ‘Right’ and ‘Left’ first gained a political connotation in France, in a revolutionary context, and specifically to describe a parliamentary arrangement⁵. Indeed, at least for those for whom the French Revolution represents a fundamental historical *caesura*, the modern age could appropriately be termed the age of the politics of Left and Right. The aspect of the narrative that receives less attention, and that I believe to be of fundamental importance, is the cultural framework within which the dichotomy was placed. This framework can be detected from the outset, but is often obscured by the contingencies of revolutionary action. It can be observed, paradigmatically, in a somewhat later period, the years of the mid-19th century that have subsequently been termed the ‘*moment Guizot*’ (Rosanvallon, 1985). In this historical

⁵ It is perhaps one of the fringe benefits to be expected of the waning of the Continent’s global fortunes that the original (and avowed) Euro-centrism of the dichotomy may progressively come to be perceived more through the lens of historical contextualization than through the stigma of implicit supremacism.

phase, the distinction between Left and Right was seen (to simplify radically) as one regarding the speed of adaptation to progress, consistently with a broad range of philosophies of history that basically agreed on the descriptive notion of change in modern society. This contextualization of the Right-Left divide can perhaps most clearly be observed in Tocqueville or in Auguste Comte, but it informs more generally the dominant frame of mind of the entire mid-century generation.

Progress was seen to imply the transformation of society in the direction of democracy and social leveling, as a stage-model transition to political and economic modernity. Within this process, it was possible to conceive of a systemic balance between the opposite *Weltanschauungen* of Left and Right, as voicing two complementary and equally valid desires, for stability and for change. Thus, the reason to consider this phase of the conceptual history of Right and Left as paradigmatic is that it displayed most explicitly the capacity for coexistence of these opposite but complementary ideologies, and the normative value of such coexistence. Right and Left were considered necessary voices in reasonable politics, in competition, not in mortal conflict. Many times before and since, from the purge of the Girondins to the strictures of revolutionary socialism to contemporary neo-conservative rhetoric, one of the two sides has portrayed the other as completely superfluous, parasitic, foreign, essentially inimical to the sound element of the body politic. In fact, exclusionism has perhaps been the norm, rather than the exception: yet, by the immanent logic of the concepts, and their nature as relational spatial metaphors, a Right-wing is inconceivable without a Left-wing, and vice versa. Consequently, I believe an argument can be made that a more nuanced understanding of the historical development of such terms should take as its baseline a configuration in which they both accepted each other's legitimacy, as alternating teleologies, or, to be more precise, as different rhythms of the same teleology.

This choice of a baseline, of course, should not be taken to imply that within the general liberal and progress-oriented framework of the mid-19th century there was no space for some redefinition of terms: what the material content of progress would be, or what counted as an arena of social leveling, could in fact shift over time, and not necessarily gradually. Furthermore, the dichotomous principles of Left and Right could be detached to some extent from the specific social actors embodying them. Thus, Italian parliamentary politics, for instance, was divided during the first generation after independence between a so-called *Destra e Sinistra storiche*, who conceived of themselves respectively as the party of stability and

the party of movement, but whose social referents both belonged to the approximately 2.5% of the population who had the vote; a generation later, it was the socialist party (P.S.I.), affiliated with the Second International, who had donned the mantle of social and economic change⁶.

Some flexibility, therefore, existed. When considered from the perspective of the pace of progress, however, it is not hard to notice a major discontinuity within 20th-century European history in the relationship of Right and Left. It is not necessary to agree on the causes of the end of this historical configuration, whether they are to be found in the attainment of socio-economic modernity, or rather in the catastrophic crisis of violence of the 30-year European civil war (Traverso, 2007), nor is it necessary to isolate a specific turning point (1914? 1917? 1933?), in order to conclude that we are no longer part of that world. Today, Left and Right no longer map out attitudes to progress and its speed, because progress is no longer conceived of unitarily, and as an unavoidable, immanent destiny.

It follows (it may be remarked in passing) that Victorian modernity is no longer something that can be rejoined, after the detour of the “Age of Extremes”, as some, especially in the post-cold-war euphoria of the 1990s, had advocated⁷. A naturalization of technological advance and economic expansion as the leading social dynamics, such as defines the dominant worldview today, clearly is not at all equivalent to the almost metaphysical belief in progress present in such texts as Mill’s “The Spirit of the Age” (1831), or even Spencer’s *Social Statics* (1851). Otherwise put, contemporary society cannot reflexively endorse an overarching philosophy of history: Weber has conclusively won the argument with Hegel⁸.

The most important development in this shift in the notions of Left and Right away from the reference to progress can be seen in the severing of the constitutive tie between the notions of democracy and revolution, which undergirded the relations of moderate Left and Right during the *moment Guizot*. In the 19th century, it was possible to conceive of democracy as a goal to be attained through revolutionary means; at the same time, revolution could figure as the alternative to democracy, the shortcut for the attainment of political progress

⁶ Another example from the same time-period can be found in the progressive slide to the Center of successive radical Left-wing parties under the Third French Republic (Bouthillon, 2005).

⁷ The argument on the “end of history” was, essentially, an ideological attempt to place the history of the 20th century in parentheses.

⁸ On the crisis of teleology in 19th-century German thought, see the classic study by Löwith (1964).

and social leveling. Revolution was the radical alternative whose possibility maintained an equilibrium in the political game, by permanently threatening the stability of any procedural blockage of the reform process by the agents of the traditional status quo.

Such a tension is no more: democracy is an actually-existing phenomenon in the First World, all the less an object of normative aspirations as the lack of any credible alternative has tended to turn it into an empty universal. The expectations of democracy's workaday functioning have been ever-more circumscribed with respect to its inclusivity, ethos, and publicly beneficial outcomes, from Pareto's elitist critique to Schumpeter's electoral market to public choice theory. In parallel, revolution no longer credibly promises the possibility of better worlds, or indeed of anything except variations on violence. The civilizational impossibility of attributing any political meaning to violence finds its historical consummation today, when the only collective actors who are prepared to assert the necessity of force in any other guise than police action in a damage-limitation mode are chiliasts of various religious persuasions. For everyone else, the idea (or myth) of "progress" can no longer justify the effort, the sacrifices, the fate of the vanquished: the loss of a generalized "desire to believe" is reflected in the pragmatic un-felicitousness of any discursive appeal to revolution. In Europe, in the wake of the historical experience of totalitarianism, the idea of progress is radically weakened; all the more so are the modern modes of political intercourse, democracy and revolution. In this perspective, the institutional structure separating moderates and extremists, which for Bobbio was a precondition of the Left-Right cleavage, is decisively sapped.

Quite apart from speculation on a world-historical scale, however, we should not be blind to the empirical fact that, even independently of these developments, certain elements of political life had all along resisted incorporation within the worldviews of Right and Left. We need not be detained overmuch by cases such as the "triangular" Socialist-Liberal-Christian Democrat politics of the Low Countries, which appear to escape a neat one-dimensional Right-Left continuum, or the peculiar case of Ireland and its civil war-originated political cleavages, although both examples suggest that the Right-Left dichotomy has been far from exclusive even in its European heartland (Lijphart, 1984: chap 8, esp. table 20). More importantly, at least since the aftermath of 1848, the notion of nationalism, taken not as a reactionary *instrumentum regni*, but rather on its own terms, as the foregrounding of the fundamental question of politics regarding the definition of the boundaries of the polity, has

transcended the framework of the dichotomy. Nationalists of all nations and in all historical circumstances have aimed to place themselves beyond Left and Right, aspiring to an ontological unity of the body of the people that would subsume as contingent any political dichotomy. Contemporary notions of Empire and cosmopolitanism, while completely at odds with nationalism (whether of nation-States, sub-national entities, or stateless peoples), may be seen to follow the same broad logic. The idea of unity predominates, the question of belonging is the burning one: issues of equality are definitely concerned, but it seems that the mapping of Right- and Left-wing positions within these debates, as opposed to more traditional material issues, is problematic at best.

One might almost be tempted to turn the problem on its head, by suggesting that a conceptual history of the Right-Left dichotomy could only be completed by attempting the parallel history of the slogan “Neither Right Nor Left”— a history which to my knowledge has never been attempted systematically. I suspect that one would come across quite strange bedfellows, from the French proto-fascists that Zeev Sternhell has studied (Sternhell, 2000²), to Horowitz’s anti-elitist insurgents (Horowitz, 1997), to the contemporary student/populist movement of the *Indignados* in Spain, not to mention the radical Third Way aspirations of the 1990s (Giddens, 1995; Dyrberg, 2009). At least some groups and positions might perhaps give the lie to the tongue-in-cheek formulation of the issue by Serge Quadrupani (Wu Ming 1, 2012: 2a), according to whom there are two fundamental ways of being neither Left-wing nor Right-wing (a Right-wing way, and a Left-wing one).

IV.

What are the consequences of the historical shift we have been at pains to describe for the suitability of Bobbio’s categorization of Left and Right in our present historical predicament?

It is widely argued that the end of the Bretton Woods system, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the advent of globalization have sent the traditional concepts of Left and Right into a state of indeterminacy. Opinions differ, however, as to the dynamics of this shift. In one sense, one may simply speak of a secular victory of the Right, itself coming at the end of a long period of responsibility-inducing “*apprivoisement de la gauche*” (of which the “tribunical” roles of the French and Italian Communist Parties in the first postwar decades, for instance, were a notable transitional form). Inasmuch as the topic of equality is considered from a

material, economic standpoint, there is today no systemic political alternative to free-market globalization. There are discontents, but no viable theory of this discontent, and for all intents and purposes economic processes at the source of inequality are depoliticized and naturalized⁹. In short, despite the plight of globalization's dispossessed, and the traumas of this past half-decade (not to mention the ones still to come), we appear to be within a broadly hegemonic situation, of which the proliferation of groups who feel non-represented or mis-represented by the instantiation of the traditional Right-Left cleavage is a symptom, more than a transcendence.

Strange defeat for the Left, to be sure, in that the antinomies of the Right-wing position highlighted in the course of the 20th century by Left-wing critiques were in no way overcome by new social or cultural developments at the end of the Cold War: one could hardly speak of the winning over of hearts and minds, especially outside the First World, as much as of unilateral disarmament, or of a forfeited game. In any case, public discourse has undeniably shifted, and certain areas of contestation have simply been removed from mainstream debate.

In spite of these considerations, I believe that Right-wing triumphalism is an ultimately one-sided description of the situation, which masks the existential threat to the Right itself under the new prevailing conditions. For instance, it is rather significant, I would claim, that in the past twenty years the electoral force of many established conservative parties in Europe has been eroded by the rise of a congeries of radically anti-system populist movements (who, more often than not, claim to be "beyond Left and Right"). The de-politicization of what once constituted the core of the Left-Right divide is not simply a partisan victory— it is driven by a crisis of politics as a whole, and in particular a crisis of democracy at the level of the nation-State.

One indicator of the disempowerment of national politics is the substantial failure of the project of economic and social rights. In the immediate postwar years, the codification of minimum standards for the services citizens were allowed to expect *as a right* from their governments was seen as a key aspect of the recovery from totalitarianism and of the re-legitimation of nation-States after the war (Milward, 1992). The route chosen was

⁹ It is perhaps not merely coincidental that the naturalization of economic processes proceeds hand-in-hand with the de-naturalization of political obedience and the disappearance of deference, i.e. the closing of an epoch in which politics could still rely on popular faith in the redemptive power of violence (*v.* section III).

consciously molded on the liberal tradition of civil and political rights codification: key elements of the social order are placed beyond the whims of transient majorities, as unconditional guarantees of the “rules of the game”, defining social interaction and limiting partisan political decision-making. The assertion of new rights, in the suitably august setting of UN-sponsored international treaties, themselves seen as the final juridical sanction of a transition originating in the evolving normative perceptions of global political culture, could therefore be considered an embodiment of the march of social progress as emancipation.

In the decades since 1945, the popularity of the main planks of social and economic rights, such as decorous employment, access to healthcare, availability of education, protection against work-related injury, and so forth, has not been significantly eroded among electorates. However, political systems (with notable local differences, in magnitude and sequencing) have on the whole proven incapable of implementing the notion of economic and social rights. In fact, the spirit of modernity has ever more closely come to coincide with the severability of economic and social advances: the end of pre-modern status distinctions has not spelt the end of stratification or social distance— indeed, quite the contrary. A series of traumatic events, beginning perhaps with the debt crisis that hit many developing countries in the early 1980s, and ultimately reaching the center of the global economic system with the current financial meltdown, have impelled governments at the very least to scale back significantly the social policy goals that constituted the key popular demands at the heart of the post-war social compact. The result is a net loss of relevance for politics as a whole, which punishes Right- and Left-wing political forces indiscriminately, as electorates rail in vain against what are seen as economic inevitabilities, disavowing successive governments in turn, as overall trust in the institutions wanes. As the State's decisions lose their importance for the everyday economic life of ordinary citizens (i.e., as the naturalization of macroeconomic processes is consolidated), a new pluralism erodes the political space once claimed by the mass parties of Left and Right. In addition, increased political apathy and a fall in electoral participation lead to the progressive evaporation of the underclass' political representation.

V.

In conclusion, I would like to claim that a reconstruction of the shift in the semantic content of the concepts of Right and Left, leading to the current crisis in their usage, cannot

truly be separated from an appreciation of the general crisis of politics in its national form. If this is true, however, Bobbio's idea of liberty as a procedural option in favor of democracy is fundamentally called into question. In other words, 'Right' and 'Left' mean less to us today because the material ground on which these ideas pitched their battles is now occupied by forces that are essentially beyond the grasp of the institutions within the political arena that can be directed to Left- or Right-wing agendas.

A possibility that suggests itself in the face of these developments is an expansion, a morphing of partisan action to the global level, where forces affecting issues meaningful to the Right-Left cleavage may still be of an endogenous nature, potentially subject to political will. The course of the 20th century, however, witnessed the repeated, complete, and often tragic failure of just such a transformation. A politics of Left and Right among nations was proposed in many forms, from the early myth of the 'proletarian nation' devised by Italian colonial agitator (Pascoli, 1911) to the Comintern; in no case did the logic of partisan ideological loyalties manage to assert itself decisively in the face of traditional reason of State, and the results were uniformly exploitative. In this, the antinomies of U.S. "democracy promotion" during the Cold War, as well as contemporary international criminal justice campaigns, are merely following a well-worn path¹⁰.

If such a transformation of the politics of Left and Right is to be at all possible, new identities and new institutions will need to be imagined. This, in a Weberian mode, is the political task of the future, the *Forderung des Tages*. The alternative is our current status quo: if politics, especially as regards popular participation and mobilization, is to remain concerned primarily with questions of membership, in the face of the indeterminate multitude of non-represented Others (as has increasingly been the case in the past twenty years), it is probable that 'Left' and 'Right', in the sense in which we have historically known them, and of which Bobbio has provided an admirable portrait, will no longer appear relevant, and ultimately intelligible, to the new global world of our century.

¹⁰ The dilemma of internationalization is all the more wrenching for Europe, as in these days we are witnessing what will perhaps amount to a decisive failure of the "little globalization" project, with which the Continent was counting to live out its age of retirement from the world stage, a project occupying a peculiar but wholly characteristic middle ground between an aggregation of national party systems and the well-meaning and out-of-touch technocracy of international organization.

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