



THE VISION AND THE PATH

Javier Cercas

BIG IDEAS III

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The vision and the path

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BIG IDEAS

What is Europe? A continent fragmented through the centuries by wars, border conflicts and cultural diversity.

As Europeans, we do not have a common language or a common history, but we do have common roots, needs and ambitions. These similarities led us to fulfil what at the end of the Second World War could have been called a “reasonable utopia” — the European Union.

The Spanish writer Javier Cercas investigates Europe and Europeans, our past, the conflicts, the ideologies and the people who forged Europe as we know it today. Though no final answer to all the questions can be found, the conclusion seems inevitable: Europe will be unified, naturally, sooner or later, despite all the hostility.

This is the eleventh essay in the *Big Ideas* series created by the European Investment Bank.

The EIB has invited international thought leaders to write about the most important issues of the day. These essays are a reminder that we need new thinking to protect the environment, promote equality and improve people’s lives around the globe.

The background of the image is the flag of the European Union, featuring a circle of twelve gold stars on a blue field. The flag is shown with a slight ripple, giving it a three-dimensional appearance. The text is centered at the bottom of the image.

**THE VISION
AND THE PATH**

THE VISION AND THE PATH

I'm not really sure what Europe is. My most honest single-sentence answer would probably be a rehashing of Saint Augustine's dazzling reflection on the nature of time from *Confessions*: "What is Europe? If no one ask of me, I know; if I wish to explain to him who asks, I know not." Although that isn't completely true: I do know some things about Europe. For example, I know that for many people, perhaps above all for many young people, Europe is now closely associated with the European Union. I also know that for many, young and old, the European Union is, at its worst, seen as a listless and unlikely grouping of countries with a lot of history but very little future. At best, it is seen as a cold, abstract and distant supranational entity called "Brussels" with no clearly defined purpose other than to provide jobs for hordes of grey-clad bureaucrats and that is blamed for a multitude of ills by populist politicians from across the continent. It doesn't matter that the reality is completely different, that the well-being of Europeans depends on the European Union and that its institutions build or help to build schools, hospitals and roads, support small and medium-sized enterprises and finance scientific research. What is certain is that, despite all this evidence with an immediate impact on people's lives, Europe, or at least the European Union, is viewed with suspicion or indifference by many Europeans.

“ For many young people, Europe is now associated with the European Union. [...] and the European Union is, at its worst, seen as a listless and unlikely grouping of countries with a lot of history but very little future. At best, it is seen as a cold, abstract and distant supranational entity called “Brussels”.



**EUROPE:
THE PROMISE
OF MODERNITY,
PROSPERITY
AND FREEDOM**

EUROPE: THE PROMISE OF MODERNITY, PROSPERITY AND FREEDOM

Europe's image hasn't always been so tarnished, at least not everywhere. On the contrary, for centuries Europe was actually the dream of many Spanish people. Aware that from the beginning of the 17th century they had been living in an increasingly isolated, poor and ignorant country lacking freedom and beset by obscurantist dogma and the fiction of an empire that was falling apart, from the early 18th century, my esteemed ancestors felt that Europe promised modernity, prosperity and freedom. I myself grew up with this idea in a Spain that was trying to drag itself out of Francoism. But you don't need to go so far back, or only consider my limited experience or that of my fellow Spaniards. A little over a decade ago, shortly after the birth of the euro, while the European Constitution and enlargements were being prepared and initial meetings for the implementation of a common European defence policy were being held, a united Europe was emerging as the major world power of the 21st century, the only power capable of challenging the might of the US or China. In 2004, young British political scientist Mark Leonard even published a book called *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century*^[1] and veteran US sociologist Jeremy Rifkin wrote: "While the American Spirit is tiring and languishing in the past, a new European Dream is being born.^[2] (...) Europeans have laid out a visionary roadmap to a new promised land." It seems incredible now, but thinkers from all over the world were saying this about Europe not so long ago.

“ From the early 18th century, Europe promised modernity, prosperity and freedom.

THE DEATH OF THE EUROPEAN DREAM



THE DEATH OF THE EUROPEAN DREAM

Here, the following question arises: what happened to make these hopes collapse almost overnight and why, in May 2010, did renowned journalist Gideon Rachman write an article entitled “The death of the European dream” for the *Financial Times*? The answer, of course, is that Europe saw its deepest economic crisis since 1929. Although this crisis did not spark a world war like its predecessor, it did cause a huge political earthquake and the resurrection of Europe’s worst demons, starting with nationalism, the demon of division and of discord. Now that the crisis appears to be behind us, could Europe once again be what it was to my Spanish ancestors, what it was to me in my youth, what it was to everyone or almost everyone at the turn of this century?

Obviously, I don’t know. This brings us back to our original question: what is Europe? Is there a European identity, like that of France or Germany, the UK or Italy, Norway or Spain? And if there is, what is it exactly?

Does Dante have anything in common with Shakespeare, Cervantes with Montaigne, Ibsen with Goethe? Do all of these writers – who don’t even share a language – share anything at all? And, incidentally, does sharing a language mean you share the same identity? Does Milton have the same identity as Melville, Quevedo as Borges?

“ Europe saw its deepest economic crisis since 1929 and the resurrection of Europe’s worst demons, starting with nationalism, the demon of division and of discord.

D. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra



Juan de lauriguí. Pinxit. año 1600.

A few years ago, George Steiner made an attempt to define a European identity at a seminar entitled “The Idea of Europe.” There, he argued that our continent can be reduced to five axioms. The first is that Europe is its cafés, those places where people conspire and write and debate, and where great philosophies, artistic movements and ideological and aesthetic revolutions were born. The second axiom is that Europe is its domesticated and walkable environment, a human-scale landscape in contrast to the huge and impassable wilds of Asia, the Americas, Africa and Oceania. The third is that Europe is a place rich in history, a vast *lieu de la mémoire* whose streets and squares are littered with names harking back to an ever-present past that is both luminous and suffocating. The fourth is that Europe has a twofold contradictory and inseparable inheritance: that of Athens and Jerusalem, of Socrates and Jesus Christ, of reason and vision. The fifth is that Europe is its eschatological self-awareness, the awareness of its own mortality, of the dark certainty that whatever begins must have a more or less tragic finality.

“ Our continent can be reduced to five axioms. The first is that Europe is its cafés. The second axiom is that Europe is its domesticated and walkable environment. The third is that Europe is a place rich in history. The fourth is that Europe has a twofold contradictory and inseparable inheritance. The fifth is that Europe is the awareness of its own mortality.



**THE ONLY EUROPEAN
IDENTITY IS IN ITS
DIVERSITY**

THE ONLY EUROPEAN IDENTITY IS IN ITS DIVERSITY

The above are Steiner's five axioms for defining the nature of Europe. It almost goes without saying that the idea is brilliant and provocative, but insufficient. These traits definitely describe Europe, but are not enough to define its identity, and I'm sure Steiner knows it. I'm also sure that he knows the problem is not with the answer his seminar gives to the question of European identity, but rather with the question itself. In the second half of the 16th century, Montaigne wrote: "There is as much difference between us and ourselves as between us and others."^[3] This means that, long before Freud, the great French author understood that individual identity was to a certain extent a fiction, that within us is a *drama em gente*, to apply the words Fernando Pessoa used to explain the heterogeneity of his work, or that within us dwells a confederation of souls, as an Antonio Tabucchi character once said, drawing inspiration from Pessoa. So if individual identities are fictional, why wouldn't collective identities be fictional too? In reality, these collective identities, starting with that of Spain, are simply collective inventions induced or directly imposed by governments that know (as all governments do) that to govern the present and future you must first govern the past by creating a history to legitimise a shared present and prepare for a shared future. In truth, the only real European identity is in its diversity – a contradictory and impossible identity, an oxymoron – and the only history able to legitimise it would be the true story of a group of old countries with disparate languages, cultures, traditions and histories that, at a certain point after centuries of merciless conflict, decided to come together to build a new country united by the values of mutual understanding, well-being and freedom for its people. From this point of view, the motto of a united Europe could be one of the first mottos of the US – that great political utopia, leader of the enlightenment and historical success. The motto was *E pluribus unum*; many countries, languages, cultures, traditions and histories in a single state.



At this point I should make a confession: in my mind, Europe has never stopped being what it was to me as a teenager recently liberated from an endless dictatorship, just like it had been for my esteemed Spanish ancestors for centuries before that. In other words, like my friend Erri de Luca, I am a pro-European extremist. This means that, for me, a united Europe is the only reasonable political utopia that Europeans have ever managed to create. We have devised a whole host of fallen political utopias – theoretical paradises that become hells in practice – while to my knowledge the only reasonable political utopia we have seen is that of a united Europe.

If I am not mistaken, there are a range of obvious facts supporting this idea. They are so obvious, in fact, that I fear that we tend to forget them, living as we all do under a tyranny of the present in which yesterday's news is already in the past and last week's

news is practically prehistoric. I will only be covering three of these facts. The first is that Europe's premier sport is not football, like so many people think, but rather war. Europeans were killing each other throughout the last millennium without so much as a month-long truce, and in every way possible: 100-year wars, 30-year wars, civil, religious and ethnic wars, and world wars that were basically European wars. The latter were truly horrific. As Steiner himself writes, between August 1914 and May 1945, from Madrid to the Volga, from the Arctic to Sicily, an estimated 100 million men, women and children died as a result of violence, famine, deportation and ethnic cleansing, with Western Europe and the west of Russia turning into a land of death, the scene of unprecedented brutality, from Auschwitz to the Gulag. The European Union project clearly arose from the horror of this indescribable carnage and from the wise, weary and courageous conviction that nothing like it should ever be seen in Europe again. The result of this conviction is no less obvious but also no less amazing: my father knew war, as did my grandfather, my great-grandfather, my great-great-grandfather and probably all of my

“ A united Europe is the only reasonable political utopia that Europeans have ever managed to create. ”



ancestors, but I have not. I am part of the first generation of Europeans to have never experienced war, at least between major European powers (we should of course not forget the ferocious fighting that tore Yugoslavia apart). Some even say that another European war would be inconceivable. That seems naive to me.

In European history war isn't the exception – peace is. If serious problems like those behind the 2008 crisis return to the surface, it is all that is needed to bring nationalism – the ultimate cause, insignia and fuel for all European wars to have taken place over the last two centuries – back with a vengeance. European unity was conceived to fight it, but this is no easy task. Nationalism is not a political ideology but rather a religion. After all, the nation replaced God as the political foundation of the State, and supplanting it in Europe will be almost as hard as it was to supplant God. As George Orwell observed, nationalists are indifferent to reality. This means that it doesn't matter that data shows, for example, that leaving the EU is a bad deal for the UK or that anti-immigration rhetoric is nothing more than xenophobic ranting, because nationalists will keep thinking that Britain should leave the EU and that immigrants are threatening their jobs and safety, and as a result will still vote for Brexit. Condorcet^[4] wrote that "fear is the origin of almost all human stupidities, and above all of political stupidities," and Walter Benjamin said that happiness was living without fear. Nationalists are unhappy and very afraid; for many of them the European Union is nothing more than a distant, useless and soulless nuisance that obliges them to live exposed to the elements, with strange people speaking strange languages and with strange customs. They prefer to live with others like them, or rather with those they believe or have been led to believe are like them, protected by age-old false securities, sheltered under illusory collective identities and breathing in, as Nietzsche would say, the old smell of the barn. The only way to do something useful with the future is to keep the past in the present, so it is a massive mistake to forget the dark history of violence that devastated Europe, acting like it never happened; to forget that the European Union has been key to wiping clean this sinister past is an even graver error.



WINSTON CHURCHILL, FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT AND JOSEPH STALIN, YALTA CONFERENCE (1945). THE LEADERS OF THE "BIG THREE" DECIDED ON EUROPE'S BORDERS AT THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR



There is another reason why I believe that European unity is the most attractive and ambitious political project of our times. We know that Europe was the centre of the world for centuries, but we also know that

“ The only way to do something useful with the future is to keep the past in the present, so it is a massive mistake to forget the dark history of violence that devastated Europe, acting like it never happened; to forget that the European Union has been key to wiping clean this sinister past is an even graver error.

this is no longer the case. For some time, not a day has gone by that we have not heard or read that almost all that is left for us Europeans to do in the face of the drive of the great emerging powers is to languish like impoverished nobles among the ruins of our past splendour (to paraphrase Spain's best post-war poet, Jaime Gil de Biedma). I don't think this pessimism is justified. It is true that the individual global clout of our countries is on the decline, above all compared to that of China, India or Brazil. But it is also true that, together, we still have enormous power – for example we have the world's largest economy, with a GDP of EUR 18tn in 2018^[5]. It is also true that united Europe's political

clout is limited, as is its cultural and scientific influence. However, this isn't because it is united, but rather because it isn't united enough – the old countries are fighting tooth and nail to keep their sovereignty and to avoid being politically absorbed into a single federal state. Utopia is still a long way off, so nobody can be satisfied with how the European Union currently works. Firstly, the democratic deficit is glaring, which is perhaps the Union's main issue because it stops what was originally and necessarily an elitist project conceived and directed by an enlightened vanguard from becoming what it should be: a project for the people, directly backed and led by citizens.

However, this is only the beginning of the problems: we lack a common economic and fiscal policy (but do have a shared currency and bank), shared domestic and foreign policies, a common defence policy, and of course a common cultural policy. From the latter point of view – which is my domain as a reader and writer – the disunity is complete, beyond the contacts and cross-fertilisation that have always taken place and that, it's true, are perhaps more fluid than ever.

They aren't enough, however: each one of our countries operates totally different literary, educational and intellectual systems; we don't have common newspapers, magazines or TV channels, meaning we lack a shared public discourse; we have no European publishers or European-level debates; nor am I sure that we have many truly European authors with real influence across the continent; and I am only aware of a European literary prize (presented annually by the European Parliament) because one of my novels won it three years ago, meaning its Europe-wide impact is very limited.



STRASBOURG PARLIAMENT





- | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bohemian | Swedish | French |
| Wendish | Danish | Spanish |
| Slavakish | | Portuguese |
| Serbian | High & Low German | Illyrian |
| Bulgarian | Dutch | (much mingled with Slavian) |
| Kroatian | English | |

of Languages.
Welsh Breton

of Languages.
Ethiopic

guages.
Turkish Mongolic

guages.
all spread over the Southern Part of Japan.

guages.
Laos Birmese

Languages
Laos Birmese

Asia
Japanese Tibetan

according to Lynch's theory
perhaps their original home
about 300 B.C. and pass th

FRANKS after 437
Migrate under Clodion, and found under Clovis the kingdom 481-511

ALBERIC AL. MEN
About 20,000 warriors under Radagaisus advance to Florence 405, but repulsed there by Stilicho

VISIGOTHS
under Ataulph 412-507 pass into Spain, subdued by Clovis

BURGUNDIANS 455
Their kingdom founded by Gundobad. Overthrown by Clovis

GEPIDES 460
The kingdom founded in the Hungarian plain by Ruga

ALANS 409-411
Accompany the Vandals, soon after subdued by the Visigoths

LOMBARDS 568-774
Settle under Alboin, subdue the Ostrogoths under Theodoric, conquered by Charlemagne

OSTROGOTHS 453
Found a powerful kingdom Italy, under Theodoric, are subd by Narces

409-385
The Visigoths conquer the Kingdom of the Visigoths

419-711
Ataulph under Roderick the Arabians

419-711
Roderick, subdues almost the found under Abderrahman the Caliphate of Cordova; 1492

A VARIETY OF LANGUAGES, CULTURES, TRADITIONS AND AUTONOMIES

A VARIETY OF LANGUAGES, CULTURES, TRADITIONS AND AUTONOMIES

The above might seem banal or secondary – particularly when compared to the big economic and political issues – but I don't believe this is the case. Perhaps the major challenge for Europe, or for the Europe in which I would like to live and that I'm hoping for, consists in reconciling two things that at first glance seem irreconcilable: cultural diversity and political unity. Without cultural diversity, Europe will be irredeemably poorer, because our variety of languages, cultures, traditions and social autonomies is an almost limitless source of wealth, and so must be protected and developed. There is no contradiction between this urgency and that concerning the creation of a common European culture, with a common intellectual system and a community of interest, because this European culture for all must be what it has always been in essence since the fall of the Roman Empire: the result of a cross-fertilisation of different languages and cultures. However, at the same time, without political unity Europe seems doomed to destruction, as such fertile cultural diversity has become the political source of the ethnic hatred, regionalist demands and chauvinist nationalism that have relentlessly faced the continent and threatened to annihilate it. *E pluribus unum* – here we come back to diversity, to Europe's multiple identity, to its central oxymoron: Europe must have political and cultural plurality. I believe this is the only way for it to give its best and not surrender to irrelevance.

“ Without cultural diversity, Europe will be irredeemably poorer, without political unity Europe seems doomed to destruction: a united Europe is the most valuable political project of our times.



The third and final reason why I think a united Europe is the most valuable political project of our times is no less important than the previous two, but can be explained in fewer words. Classical political treatise writers usually considered the ideal situation for democratic development was, to quote Rousseau's *Social Contract* (Book III, Chapter IV) "a very small State, where the people can readily be got together and where each citizen can with ease know all the rest."

Clearly this recommendation is no longer applicable to a modern context. The reason for this lies in the fact that one of our main political issues is that, in today's globalised economies, large multinational corporations are so hugely powerful that they are able to impose their standards on national governments, particularly in smaller countries with insufficient clout to stand up to them and that are consequently subject to their demands.

This means that, as it currently stands, a truly united Europe bringing together the power of multiple countries might be the only way for politics to put an end to the blind and all-embracing influence of the economy, and as a result may be the only tool enabling us to hold on to a democracy worthy of the name. Jürgen Habermas^[6], among others, has correctly emphasised this point: "National democracies cannot even defend themselves against the furious ultimatums of capitalism that spreads beyond national borders."^[7]

“ National democracies cannot defend themselves against the furious ultimatums of capitalism that spreads beyond national borders.

A portrait of Thomas Jefferson, showing him from the chest up. He has a powdered wig and is wearing a brown coat over a white cravat. The background is dark and textured.

**THREE PILLARS:
MUTUAL
UNDERSTANDING,
PROSPERITY
AND DEMOCRACY**

THREE PILLARS: MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, PROSPERITY AND DEMOCRACY

Mutual understanding, prosperity and democracy are the three pillars that the European Union has helped to uphold over the past 50 years, and these are the values that should guide our future reasonable utopia. Ultimately, they are not essentially different to the founding values of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. It is true that, as I mentioned above, utopia is still far from becoming a reality. This is clear every time Europe experiences a major crisis (such as the economic or refugee crisis), and the European Union is incapable of acting as one, with each country closing in on itself, defending its own interests and ignoring the common interest. Here they are failing to recognise that, at least in Europe as it stands, we cannot defend our own interests without defending the interests of others, because the interests of others are also our own interests.

It is impossible not to recognise that the European utopia has yet to be realised at all. However, if you look at it closely, perhaps it is better that way, because utopias are to a certain extent like democracies. Perfect democracy doesn't exist. A perfect democracy is actually a dictatorship, or a false democracy. What distinguishes a real democracy is not that it is perfect, but rather that it can be perfected ad infinitum; there is always room for improvement. The same thing happens with utopias. A utopia made reality is a false utopia, because all human beings are different, with their own needs, hopes and desires – heaven for some can become hell for others. A real utopia, then, does not provide the same happiness to everybody living in it, but rather enables each of us to seek our own happiness. Could a future united Europe become this? Could it become

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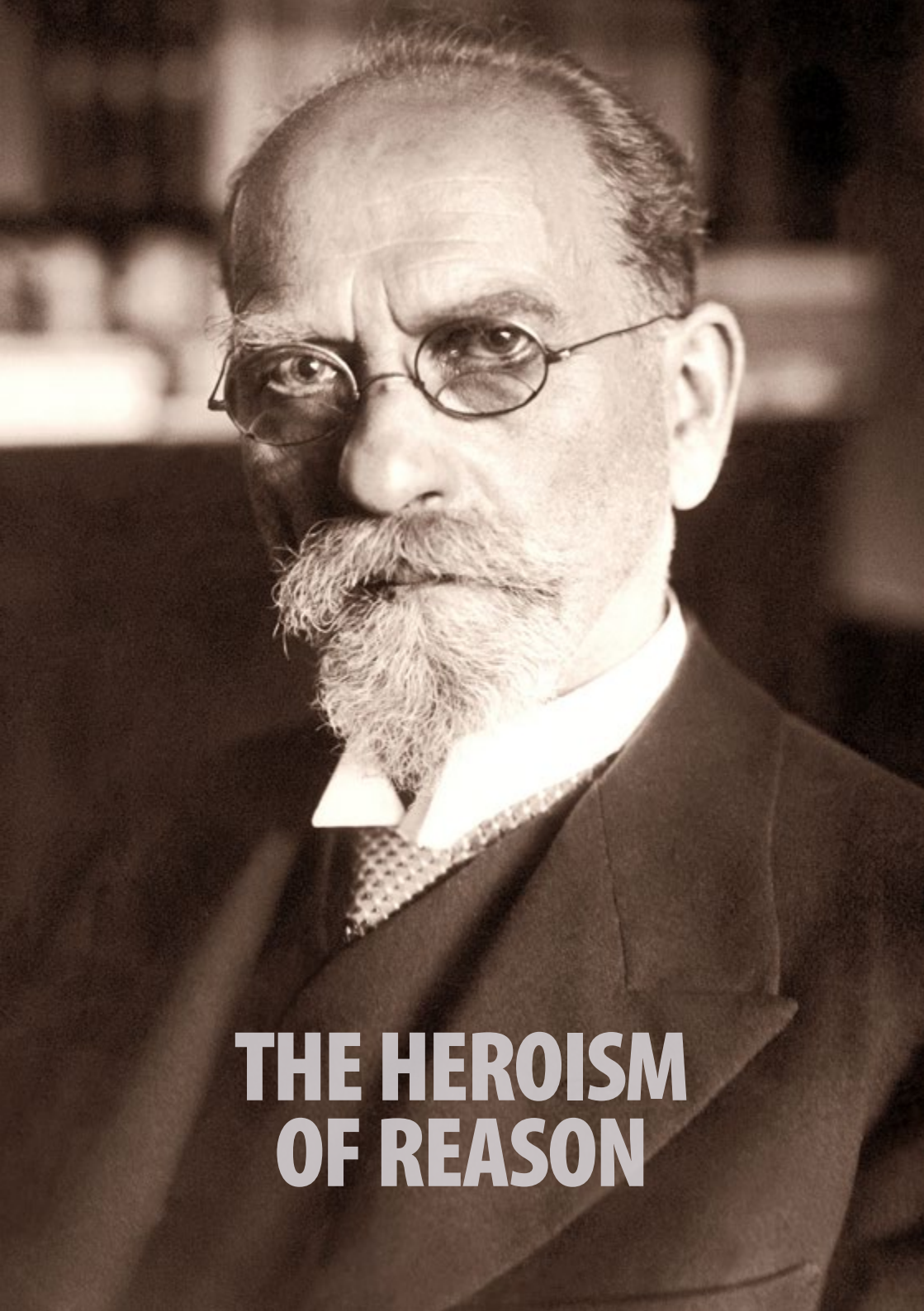
what, just a few years ago, political scientists and sociologists from across the world thought it was going to be: running the 21st century like Mark Leonard envisaged, a new promised land like Jeremy Rifkin predicted?

I don't know – I still don't have an answer to this question. But I would be lying if I said I didn't know anything at all. For example, I know that – as some international political specialists such as Moisés Naím are now noting – for some time we have been witnessing the extraordinary phenomenon of the world's number one power, the US, voluntarily renouncing its power and influence without ceding them to its rivals. This phenomenon has been exacerbated by Donald Trump's ascent to power, to the point that ex-US Secretary of State John Kerry has described this general withdrawal as a "grotesque abdication of leadership," and there is no lack of people – like the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, known for having predicted the fall of the Soviet Union – who have been using substantial arguments to announce the impending collapse of US power for some time. I don't know whether it will happen as quickly as Galtung says, but it is true that, after a century of global hegemony, the US is rapidly isolating itself. This can be seen across many fields: it did not sign the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement^[8], it ignores events in Europe, and its influence is diminishing every day on key issues such as combating climate change, nuclear proliferation, development aid, global pandemic control, internet regulation and intervention to contain financial crises.



We know that, like empires, global hegemonies don't last forever, and I just hope that the end of US hegemony doesn't simply mark the beginning of Chinese domination, as many are predicting. I hope that, when the time comes, European unity will be much more stable than it is today, and that it – and Europe's conversion into a federal state – will enable us to occupy a relevant position in the post-hegemonic world that some are predicting, even if we don't directly take over the role of the US. I very much fear that if, on the contrary, our position in this new world without a clearly dominant force is secondary or subordinate, we will be seriously endangering the privileged way of life that we have enjoyed for decades and that many people seem to be recklessly taking for granted.

I say "recklessly" because this way of life did not come together spontaneously. It is the result of the blood, sweat, and tears of generations of Europeans and, in an immediate sense, of an extraordinarily audacious and unprecedented political experiment that emerged from the lessons learnt from the horrors committed in Europe during the 20th century – that I will simply call the heroism of reason – and that over the past 50 years has built the most peaceful, prosperous and free society we have ever seen. As Michel Serres wrote not so long ago, this experiment has enabled Europeans to enjoy "the longest period of peace and prosperity since the Trojan War."^[9] This isn't triumphalism, but rather recognition of historical evidence. Ignoring it is a mistake, because anyone unable to see the positives they have will find it hard to see the positives they lack and the negatives they must correct.



**THE HEROISM
OF REASON**

THE HEROISM OF REASON

Having just used the term “heroism of reason,” I should point out that it is not my own but was actually coined by German philosopher Edmund Husserl in 1935, at the end of a famous series of lectures he gave in Vienna and Prague on the crisis of European man. In these lectures, he said that Europe was defined by its passion for rational knowledge, and that at the time, when the continent was recovering from one indescribable bloodbath and was beginning to sense the beginning of another, there were only two possible results: “a Europe alienated from its rational sense of life, fallen into a barbarian hatred of spirit; or in the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy, through a heroism of reason.”^[10] I believe that this heroism of reason is the founding impulse of European unity and, as I said above, is based on and legitimised by the true story of a group of old countries with disparate languages, cultures, traditions and histories that, after centuries of merciless conflict in never-ending wars, decided to come together to build a new country united by the values of mutual understanding, well-being and freedom.

“ This heroism of reason is the founding impulse of European unity and [...] is based on and legitimised by the true story.

Some readers might think me optimistic, or perhaps naive. Some will even think that, since 1935, we have moved even further away from the rational sense of life Husserl spoke of, that we have fallen more fully into a barbarian hatred of spirit. I don't believe that, and I don't think the great Italian writer Alberto Savinio – with whose words I would like to conclude – would believe it either. The text below was published on 27 December 1944, shortly before the end of the war in Italy and the rest of Europe, and the memory of the recent horror and the euphoria of liberation from fascism is palpable. They are words imbued with genuine emotion, which in this sense lies in the immediate origin of Europe's reasonable utopia. I would add that, for me, Husserl's heroism of reason also resonates in this emotion.



Savinio writes: "I am increasingly convinced that the huge scars inflicted on the people of Europe will not heal unless they form one nation united by shared opinions, mutual interests and a common destiny (...).

"Deep down and without knowing it, Europe wants to unite, and sooner or later this will happen. Who knows? Such is the folly and the stupidity of men – such is above all their insistence on not resigning themselves to destiny unless forced to do so (...) that perhaps a third world war even more disastrous than the first two will be necessary to make the need for a union clear in the minds of Europeans. In this case, it will not be living Europeans that unite, but rather the shadows of Europeans, what Homer called the ghosts of those who have lived. But perhaps not (...).

"No one man, no power, no force will be able to unite Europe and its people. Only an idea can unite them. Only an idea – that most human of things – can build Europe.

"This idea is that of social community (...)

"This 'natural' union of Europe will happen. It will happen sooner or later. It will happen no matter what."^[11]

Notes

- [1] Mark Leonard, *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century* (Fourth Estate, 2005)
- [2] Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream* (Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2004)
- [3] Michel de Montaigne, *Essays (Essais)*, 1580
- [4] Marie-Jean-Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794). Mathematician, economist and philosopher, he was a representative of the *encyclopédistes* and played an active role in the French Revolution. His most well-known works are *On Integral Calculus*, *Essays on Analysis* and *Essay on the Application of Analysis to the Probability of Majority Decisions*.
- [5] <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ny.gdp.mktp.cd>
- [6] Jürgen Habermas, Peter Bofinger and Julian Nida-Rümelin, "Für einen Kurswechsel in der Europapolitik," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 August 2012; Javier Cercas, "Por un cambio de rumbo en la política europea," *El País*, 12 August 2012; and Javier Cercas, "Las ideas y la sangre," *El País*, 31 July 2016
- [7] Ibidem
- [8] TPP
- [9] Michel Serres, "La humanidad progresa adecuadamente," *El País*, 3 January 2017
- [10] Edmund Husserl, lecture given at the Vienna Circle on 7 and 10 May 1935 entitled "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man", (Editor's note)
- [11] Alberto Savinio, *Sorte dell'Europa*, 1977, Adelphi Edizioni. This book includes a series of works that Savinio published between 1943 and 1944. The extract presented here emphasises the urgency of a united Europe. This quote has been translated with the kind permission of the author's heirs.

BIOGRAPHY

Javier Cercas (Ibahernando, Spain, 1962) holds a PhD in Spanish Studies, and he has worked as a Spanish literature professor first at the University of Illinois and later at the University of Girona, a job that he had for many years while he also wrote novels. In 2001, he published *Soldiers of Salamis*. It was a resounding success both in Spain and abroad, receiving praise from prestigious authors such as Mario Vargas Llosa, George Steiner, J.M. Coetzee and Susan Sontag. Since then, Cercas has dedicated himself to writing full-time, occupying a leading role in Spanish fiction and taking an active part in cultural and political debates in the country through his articles in the press, which have a very broad readership. He is a regular contributor to the newspaper *El País*. Cercas' work has earned international acclaim, and is a daring exploration of the lines that separate reality and fiction; the author himself describing his work as "real stories", always looking to scrutinise the present and its roots in the past. The publication of *Lord of All the Dead* (February 2017) closes this formidable literary exercise of personal memory on the Spanish Civil War. His books have been translated into more than 30 languages and have won several national and international awards, such as the 2016 European Book Award for his work *The Impostor*, which was longlisted for the 2018 Man Booker International Prize. In 2018 he was awarded the Prix André Malraux for *Lord of All the Dead*. He also recently won the 2019 Planeta Prize for his novel *Terra Alta*.



