



THE JUNGLE IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Guilherme Machado Dray

The holiday period is always a window of opportunity to escape the banality and seek literary perspectives that fictionalize the future and that rarely may be read in our daily work year.

The Jungle Grows Back, by Robert Kagan, has this potential. It is a book that contains a global geopolitical analysis and which – unfortunately – recalls that the period of peace that has been going on in Europe since the end of World War II is a mere historical dust and not for certain.

In this work, the author analyzes the change that is taking place in the world order and underlines the (real) risk of bankruptcy of liberal democracies and world peace.

The analysis is simple and enlightening.

Liberal democracies are based on individual freedoms. Freedom of thought, expression and association and economic freedom. They are sustained in the Rule of Law and follow the values of tolerance, equality and inclusion, as well as in the separation between the State and religion. Liberal democracies are in the antipodes of totalitarian and autocratic regimes, which subjugate individual freedom in the name of an alleged collective interest. They also distance themselves from religious states, in which State and Religion are merged

What varies in Western democracies is not the primacy of the person and the defense of his self-determination. What varies is just the model of Social State. In the Anglo-Saxon model, the Social State is minimal; in the Scandinavian model, it is maximum; in countries in Southern Europe, it is at half-term.

The preservation of liberal democracies rests, above all, on the radiating force of their values and in the promotion of the common good.

But not only.

Liberal democracies have also depended on the communion of values between Europe and the United States of America (USA), a country that since World War II has always been present in the defense of this way of life. In a first phase, the US was decisive to the defeat of Nazi Germany; during the “cold war”, was on the front line against the Soviet model; more recently, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the US helped containing religious movements with military pretensions, such as that of Daesh.

This road is running out.

The philosophy of “America First” and the exaltation of isolationism leave Europe isolated. The previously touted “Atlantic Community”, based on a democratic order between the US and Western Europe, was virtually set aside by the current American Presidency, which questions the previous world order. Europe is no longer seen as a partner, but instead as a competitor.

This new status quo, along with Brexit and the growth of nationalist movements, leaves the European Union isolated and at the mercy of two giants who do not follow our model and who have (both) expansionist ambitions: China and Russia.



It is in this context that the pandemic crisis, due to the economic and social repercussions, must be fought by the European Union without hesitation, through the preservation of jobs and the European model of life.

A possible failure in this area would have catastrophic effects. It would promote distrust in the regime, strengthen nationalist movements and would pertain liberal democracies. In Portugal, the preservation of business, employment and income is crucial. And the increase of the minimum wage is a sign of hope and sustainability of the regime, especially if it results from an agreement that bring together employers, employees, and the Government. But we must go further. Elites and big companies should voluntarily collaborate in combating the crisis, under their social responsibility, by promoting a greater distribution of wealth and betting on the employment of young people.

The garden of democracy is fragile and must be preserved.

And the jungle is just around the corner.