



BOGDAN KLICH

Senator, Minority Leader of the Polish Senate, former Minister of Defense and Member of the European Parliament

Sean CLEARY

Bogdan, I am going to come to you. You are going to speak more generally about the emergence of populism as a phenomenon in the European landscape, not least driven by this debate on migration.

Bogdan KLICH

Thank you very much for this opportunity, because first of all it is good that you are speaking about the problems of migration and populism here in Morocco, in a successful country, in a country that was able to accommodate more than 50 000 migrants from Sahel, during the last three years and was able to collaborate fruitfully with Spain and some other countries, and some other countries, concerning the protection of European borders. This is the success story, not only of Morocco but also of Spain and it can be an example of a good collaboration with partners of the European Union in our neighbourhood. Secondly, the problem of migration is one of the main reasons for the expansion of populism in Europe and the government that the Minister presented is a good example of this populist government that emerged, in a sense, around Europe, that was known in the world during the last 25 years as a protector of European transition, a protector of European values and even projected European and democratic values abroad. Now, in some countries of Central and Western Europe, we have the re-emergence of very dangerous political tendencies, which are populism and nationalism. There are regions, like Catalonia for example, where those two tendencies go together, reinforcing each other.

Populism has the same source. It is the convenience that establishments were not ready to deal with crucial issues in the European Union, and migration is one of those issues. They also create major threats for democratic systems and they reverse the tendency that was described by Schumpeter and Huntington as the third wave of democratisation. Maybe from the perspective of American foreign policy, it is not so important, but American Freedom House in its Nations in Transit project observed that 2018 was the second year that there were more consolidated authoritarian systems than consolidated democracies. It underlines that among 29 countries, 19 had noticed declines in the overall democratic scores. Freedom House experts emphasised that illiberalism had not become the main tendency in 2017, but the effects of illiberalism, what Viktor Orbán presented as a concept of illiberal democracy, were visible so strongly one or two years ago. In Central Europe particularly, this populism means that people can protest. They can do it, establish and conduct independent NGOs. Yes, they can do it but many of them, or even the majority are financially supported by the state, so they are not independent in a tradition approach. People can publish critical articles in some of the independent media. In Hungary, the independent media sector is very limited. Fortunately, in Poland the independent media still exists as an important partner for civil society, but people know in Hungary, Poland and some other countries that expressing themselves could lead to government inspections and attacks in government-aligned media, or they could even be discriminated against in employment. I do not want to say that those tendencies are similar to those that created the violent authoritarianism in Eastern Europe, because what is going on in Russia and some other post-Soviet Republics is completely different. I only want to say that those tendencies visible in Central Europe are also visible in some countries in Western Europe, in which populists have either won or are ready to win elections. We can see the results of the German election to the Bundestag; 12.6% for AfD and 12.4% in Bavaria. We can see ruling parties in Italy, which do not undermine the institutional framework of constitutional, democratic regimes, but they can do it because the source of Western and Central European populism is the same.