



## JORDI PUJOL

Former President of the Generalitat de Catalunya

My assigned topic is the role regions play in globalisation and governance, I suppose.

Region and globalisation and region and governance. On this second point, this second subject, we could have a good discussion on, for example – and this would relate to governance – on which of the two systems is better: the French system, for example, which is centralised, or the German system, which is largely decentralised. In fact, the decentralised system was imposed on Germany after the Second World War because certain countries thought that a decentralised system would prevent the Germans from becoming as strong as they were before.

In any case, there are two systems, the very centralised French one and the largely decentralised German one. We could discuss which is better from the viewpoint of economic progress, social progress and balance, people's ability to take initiative, the capacity for innovation, political development, etc.

Other States also have this same type of decentralised system, such as the United States, Canada and even, to a certain extent, Spain.

We could further debate this subject. Even in France, some citizens say there are too many requirements. But you could also argue that the federal government in the United States should be stronger from a governance standpoint. Having said that, I need to return to the topic of my presentation, "region and globalisation".

All of the issues discussed here have been presented from a global perspective, including the economic crisis, energy, climate change, agriculture and health. And another very important issue, a major issue of our time that deserves our full attention is immigration, which is also a global concern.



In my opinion, after having listened to all these discussions on all these topics, I think we're ignoring a subject that I would like to introduce as part of my talk on regions and that's "identities" – not necessary regional identities, but identity in general. This issue is important to talk about because identities, so to speak, serve as a complement and corrective to globalisation. In the same fashion, we could talk about regions from the perspective of effectiveness or democracy, the closest authorities, the most distant authorities – we could talk further about those issues, but we could also talk about regions from the viewpoint of identity.

I would like to say a few words about this issue. Not concerning regions, but from a general perspective because difficult relations – for example, between Pakistan and India, which we talked about yesterday and today – are not only an economic or political issue in the strict sense of these terms, but also a question of identity, especially one of identity, religion, history and culture. There are a lot of components to the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it's mainly a conflict of identity. And the mistrust Poland and the Baltic countries feel towards Russia also has its origins in history, culture and identity. There is an economic component and a political component, but at bottom the issue is rooted in history, culture and identity.

Perhaps we have not spoken much about this topic the past two days. People keep saying that the more globalised the world becomes, the more people will come together – through the Internet, faster, more efficient transport and an economy turning into a vast global marketplace – and that identity will therefore carry less weight. It's true that these processes can lead to the disappearance of certain cultures and civilisations. After the First World War, and someone brought this up yesterday, Paul Valéry said, "After this savagery, we now know that civilisations can die". Many nations have died over the millennia, yet globalisation is sparking a search for identity and a need for a reference or anchorage point. If the world becomes a huge ocean, a very good swimmer may not be able to avoid drowning but, in general, we all need an anchorage point, a boat and a rock. In the great ocean of globalisation, many people feel an absolute need for an attachment to something strong, and especially personal, that touches them individually, something that gives them a sense of personhood, of personal reassurance, from both an individual and collective point of view.

I remember giving a lecture at Harvard a few years ago on the topic, "Europe: Globalisation and Identities". I quoted a sociologist of Spanish origin, Manuel Castells, who said, "To steer a course between flows, you must have a reference point; you must have an anchor". The wider and stormier the ocean, the more difficult it is to control and the more people need an anchor, a reference point.

Already in 1990 in the United States, for example, people were talking about a future defined by what they called a "global life style" and "cultural nationalism". By that, they meant a set of ideas,

memories and specific values that define a community and that make the members of this community feel a sense of comfort and belonging. It is always important to have a place to call your own. Of course, globalisation is giving rise to a stronger collective conscience, whether positive or not. Identities: regional and national identities and perhaps a European identity. So much the better if there's a European identity. To my mind, a cultural identity exists and we should talk more about it.

This brief talk about identities, about all types of identifies, is merely intended to underscore that knowing the role identities play helps resolve, or simply helps us understand, the nature of problems.

In conclusion, allow me to say a few words about France because we often hear in economic, and sometimes even practical and intellectual, circles that talking about identity is an anachronism – and people even make fun of this topic sometimes. France is a good swimmer. It has a powerful culture and language, a remarkable economy, great political power in Europe and even global influence. France is a good swimmer that should not fear the effects of globalisation, but it has always strived and is still striving to define and preserve its French identity.

During the 20th century, people as varied as De Gaulle, Braudel and Jean Daniel worked politically and intellectually to strengthen this identity. President Nicolas Sarkozy himself stresses the importance of this challenge. Yesterday, in the copy of Le Figaro that you found in your hotel room, there was an article about a seminar being held at the Montaigne Institute that will conclude with remarks by President Sarkozy himself. In defining the 10 pillars of French identity, Max Gallo of the French Academy states that one of the major ones is the language. I recall when Thierry de Montbrial said during a lecture a few months ago in Barcelona that he was concerned about the French language. In my opinion, French is in excellent health. In any case, France wants to be sure that the French language withstands the effects of globalisation and the powerful influence of English.

If France feels a certain sorrow about French, it stands to reason that the same holds true for many other identities – religious identity, for example. Religion plays an important role in today's world. Religion as a component of identity truly plays a major role. There are many other types of identity as well, including those related to culture, nationality and lifestyle. There are many identities that are afraid. There are so many identities that feel a certain fear sometimes – even Muslim, Christian and Russian identities in certain aspects, though North America has perhaps not yet been affected. But that will change. It is logical to see this type of anxiety in the world. It's a fear common to all fields, all nations, all civilisations.



I will end by asking a fundamental question: is there a European identity? In my opinion, it's unfortunate that the European constitution does not pay more attention to this issue. Europe is sufficiently stable and capable of acting and influencing the world. The fact that Europe is not only an object of global policy, but also and especially instrumental in shaping it, depends on the economy, the balance of power, unity and the smooth functioning of institutions. But it also depends on having a clear awareness of this identity and how to leverage it. These are issues that exceed the time the organisation has allotted me. I'm sorry, Thierry, for not speaking more about regions. Thank you for your attention.