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SOCIOLOGY OF ITALIAN ENERGY GEOPOLITICS

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For many years, the great availability of low cost energy, also due to the limited number of people who could use it, have induced false certainties among politicians, entrepreneurs and citizens.

Energy policy was considered concluded and mentally kept stored after the end of the national electrification and the outgoing from nuclear. This way, energy policy passed from the technical phase to the ideological one overpassing the real strategic phase which is the geopolitical one.

From that moment, entrepreneurs considered energy as a cost in their annual budget, consumers as something consolidated and a fixed cost in their family budget too, and politicians as something too technical or too ideological to be understood.

A new political interest on energy matters came with the European directives on competitiveness and the liberalization of European markets. These laws are particularly interesting because they changed the form of the decisional process and the characteristics of decisors. Beyond the political phase – or not considering seriously it – the main decisors in energy field, who originally were engineers, became financiers, economists and lawyers.

If we modify the visual point of view, amplifying the concept of energy and comprehending transport too, we could see that for this lack of geopolitical vision, the energy choice were let to the guide of oligopolies. It has been supposed that these oligopolies were controlled by few strong countries (through a consolidated system of alliances) which were able to govern the markets. The oil shock of 70s contributed to consolidated this proxy clearly defining the network of producers and the network of clients.

Recently, terrorism and globalization have tipped over this system of rules, more or less formally codified. These changes have introduced a huge number of actors in the geopolitical decisional process and have revealed the inadequacy of those countries who have used the political delegation too seriously.

This way, the lack of leadership able to pick up the opportunity of complexity emerges. In fact, every perturbation of a complex system cannot be totally controlled (non linear system) and only people able to maintain a vision over the local perturbations or modifications can understand the global direction of changes.

This is the fundamental difference between a manager and a leader: it is the angle of vision and the temporal perspective. For this reason, energy matters are really politically considered in few countries. For example, the European Union has chosen an “administrative way” more than a political one.

But a new political element is modifying geopolitical framework again. It is the social consciousness of global warming or the diffused afraid of climatic changes associated to the human actions inside the environmental equilibrium. In front of the change of public opinion of citizens, the absence of coordinated political action clearly emerged. We can analyse the reflex of this lack of strategic leaders on society (and on citizens).

Above all, after the energy liberalizations many people are not still mentally evolved in clients.

In fact, this status corresponds to a complex sociological transition: from a paternalistic concept of State (nuance of socialism) to a liberal one (nuance of libertarianism). From the concept of energy as a cost to the concept of energy as a opportunity (through the auto-production, the implementation of efficiency or the shift of habits associated to new contractual form in the purchase of energy).

The consumer-citizen is alone in front of his choices and has to assume new responsibilities. No more the hedonism of 80s when the word responsibility was associated to the word opportunity. In the III millennium the word responsibility is associated with the word risk. And this is clearly evident in the geopolitics of energy reading the list of the States which produce energy.

For these reasons, sociologically the geopolitics of energy is always declined as the geopolitics of risks and difficulty the sense of opportunity can be transmitted to the consumer-client-citizen. For this reason we can affirm the ideological phase is not ended at all.

This shock of transition in energy decisional map (from technical to financial and then to daily), that somebody defines as cultural shock, is the cause of the stop of every process of "creative disruption". The Italian perception of risks is slowing down and paralyzing the natural dynamism of life.

Conclusion

In this framework two countries are dominating the scenes for the resolution and the modernity of their policy. Two countries that are on the cultural antipode (from a political point of view) but which are expressed adequate leadership for the geopolitical challenge: California and China.

Analyzing some internal dynamics of the policy in countries traditionally used to extreme form of liberalism, we can find that the thread of political strategy is well expressed by the name of one of its movement: "energyindependencenow". On the opposite way, the Chinese decisionism has driven the Chinese firms to become one of the leader country in the field of renewable energy .

Analysing them we can understand Italian role in energy transition (which is also a industrial transition).

Method

A declination of sociology model in the energy field. The transition from energy manager to energy leader

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