The Deepening Crisis of the West

Almost every day, now, we are seeing new evidence of the increasingly serious problems and challenges faced by the West, and the very concept of “the West” as a united entity is increasingly open to discussion. The disputes between the USA and Europe have gone beyond trade wars, and are becoming evident in many other areas.

And within the US itself increasingly serious disagreements among the ruling elites are causing surprise and dismay in other countries, who fear the tensions may break out into some kind of civil conflict.

In Western Europe, the EU is essentially unable to cope with the problems caused by this situation, and more and more political observers are of the opinion that the disintegration of the EU is only just beginning. The Times of London recently published an article claiming that the “European political class is splitting at the seams” It is interesting to note that the European Parliament recently voted, for the first time in its history, to impose sanctions under Article 7 of the Lisbon Agreement on an EU member state, after publishing a report describing “large scale corruption in Hungary”.

In a recently published article a BBC observer noted that the crisis has its roots in society’s lack of trust in government and financial institutions, as the wealth gap between the rich and the poor is continually increasing.

Few can now deny the obvious truth: that in the absence of a counterweight, in the form of the USSR, the rich have cast aside all caution and that as a result the globalization process has led to great inequality, with the poor countries getting poorer while the rich ones get richer. Moreover, social divisions have intensified even in developed economic powers, although the main losers are developing countries. In those parts of the world, the economically active population, aware that things will never go well in their own country, are focusing their efforts on moving somewhere where “the good life” is a reality and not just a promise. Both the wave of migration that is sweeping
through Europe, and the emergence of the self-styled Islamic State and other similar groups, are symptoms of a push against inequality by those who have not benefited from the fruits of globalization.

Having said that, it is worth bearing in mind that many experts see the current wave of migration as just the beginning, and that the real crisis will begin when residents of sub-Saharan Africa start pouring into Europe in large numbers.

A classic example of the short-sighted nature of the EU’s policies is its attitude to the Mediterranean region. This region has played, and continues to play, a key role in human history. It was the cradle of the world’s main monotheistic religions, and the home of flourishing civilizations which gave us the alphabet, democracy, philosophy as well as many scientific discoveries. The place where the first libraries and academies appeared.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the European nations decided they could establish themselves as guardians over the Mediterranean region, and the high-profile Euro-Mediterranean Conference, held in Barcelona in 1995, issued an official Declaration on cooperation between the countries on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Neither the USA nor Russia were invited to that conference. The conference’s main achievement was the declaration that the Mediterranean Sea was a “common area of peace, stability, prosperity and security”. Those goals would be promoted by a free trade zone in the area, which was to have been established by 2010. However the European states were happy to benefit from their resulting preferential status by exporting their manufactured goods to developing countries in the Mediterranean basin, but were less keen to accept agricultural imports from their southern neighbors.

When it became clear that the extremely widely-trumpeted Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue was a failure, France proposed replacing the Barcelona Process with a new union - the so-called Union for the Mediterranean. Like the previous body, it would be made up of members of the European Union, plus African and Asian states bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. In Summer 2008 the first summit of this new union was held in Paris, with a great deal of fanfare. However, in reality this new baby turned out to be stillborn: subsequent events, in particular the so-called Arab Spring, prevented the group from ever becoming a functioning reality.

The short-sighted policies followed by certain European leaders caused the migration situation to get much worse, especially in 2014-2015, and the EU has since then been unable to find any workable solution to a highly sensitive issue that affects the whole continent.

In this connection more and more political observers are seeing the increasing role played by populist movements in many European countries as a sign of a failure of Western liberal values and the increasing irresponsibility of many European politicians. A large proportion of these politicians suffer from a complete lack of strategic foresight.

They are entirely focused on immediate concerns, short-term popularity and getting reelected. Thus, for example, the former UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has been described by his colleague Chris Patten, the former Governor of Hong Kong and EU Commissioner for External Relations as “a hopeless diplomat, always preferring a cheap joke to a serious brief,” who, when he was in office, was “a near-constant cause of embarrassment for the UK, with gaffe after gaffe...”.

The degradation of morality in Western societies and the rejection of many moral values means that such concepts as chivalry, faithfulness, valuing honor above all else, and loving one’s own country are now seen as old fashioned. Not long ago, Yefim Fishtein, one of the directors of the US radio station Radio Liberty, talked about this issue. He sees the West’s new heroes as people like the lawyer Michael Cohen, who “is not a fearless and blameless knight, or a fireman who has saved a child from the flames, or a surgeon who saves lives, or a great artist working in poverty, - no, he is a perjurer, an oath-breaker, a man who has broken his profession’s code of ethics, and who didn’t hesitate to cut a deal with investigators in order to get a lighter sentence.”

Unable to develop any kind of rational migration policy or develop workable proposals for the future harmonious development of Europe, these clueless politicians are trying to pin all the blame for their own miscalculations and blunders on the actions of Russia.

Much has already been written about the underhand and dishonest means they adopt to demonize Moscow’s policies.

However, in this article the author would like to note that, as nationalist tendencies grow stronger, the alarmist slogan “the Islamization of Europe” is being heard more and more. Of course, these tendencies come in many forms and use many methods: seven years ago the Norwegian Anders Breivik shot 77 of his fellow citizens, in what he
declared was an attempt to halt the “Islamization” of Europe.

It is worth remembering the fuss caused by the publication, 8 years ago, of the book “Germany Is Doing Away With Itself” by the German politician Thilo Sarrazin. He claims that birth rates among Germans are falling continuously, and if this trend carries it may, in a few decades, be a country “populated by Moslems of Turkish and Arab origin”.

Notably, in October this year, the well-known polemicist Éric Zemmour published his most recent essay, “The Destiny of France”. He claims that France really is in danger of disappearing, “drowned by Islam and globalization”, and that French identity is threatened by an ideology of human rights and the current influx of migrants. According to him, Paris should take stops to prevent the country’s “cultural colonization by both Islamism and US-style globalism”.

A few years ago, Thilo Sarrazin, the German writer and former banker quoted above, published another book, “Europe doesn’t need the euro”. In that book he criticizes the measures taken by European politicians to tackle the sovereign debt crisis; he believes that anti-crisis measures and packages are a swindle.

He also clearly sets out his theory that the future influence of Europe will rapidly fade away, and cites demographic trends as the main support for his claim: in many European countries with a falling birth rate the population is both ageing and declining, and an influx of immigrants cannot compensate for this decline. Europe’s significance in the world is decreasing: if in 1900, it accounted for almost 35% of the world’s population, it now accounts for less than 11%, and by 2100 this proportion will have fallen to 7%. The winner, in this respect, will be Africa, which in 1900 was home for just 8% of the world’s population. Today this figure is 15%, and is expected to grow to 35% by 2100.

In view of these tendencies, some of the most level-headed political observers are increasingly focusing on the fact that Russia, a third of whose territory is in Europe, is also a European state, and drawing the natural conclusion: that if the EU wants to retain its status in the international community, then developing a diversified partnership with Moscow, and enlarging links with Russia in a broad range of areas is not just a matter of choice but of necessity.

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