READING *AFTER EUROPE* …

Why did the refugee crisis change Europe in a drastic way? Why do European citizens experience strong dislike and distrust of meritocratic elites? And why is the new revolution the revolution of the fleeing, of the migrating man? These three questions are asked by Ivan Krastev in the preface to his book *After Europe*, which is the first complete interpretation of the European crisis and the European perspective (or lack of perspective) in the last decade during which Europe faced the limits of its identity.

These limits, by the way, are another possible definition of the European crisis. For decades, the success of the European project has been expressed - not least – in terms of its limitlessness. Europe was a centre of attraction and a model of emulation for many countries - close and distant - which yearned to break away from their past and present. The post-communist East was simply the region closest to "real Europe" where people earnestly believed and longed for their return – by right? - to the united European project.

When Timothy Garton Ash - a liberal British, but rather European, intellectual - was asked where Europe ended in the East, he gave the following answer: "To the East Europe does not end - it withers away ..." This was the assumption that in the dimension of its territorial enlargement Europe had the potential not to self-restrict itself to its geographical boundaries but to reach every community - every society - which accepted its identity. And the European identity has almost broken its connection with tradition and the constraints of history. It was based on the Enlightenment - but not on Christianity. It embraced multiculturalism - and it perceived itself more as a successful model for the global world than as a continuation of some particular European civilization.

Has this "puzzle" disintegrated irreversibly, or Europe is simply facing the ultimate challenge of rearranging it into a more or less different picture? Ivan Krastev assembles Europe in crisis through the sheer depth of his erudition and through the logic of his series of interpretations. He knows how to do that. Twenty years ago, he was one of the few Eastern Europeans who were able to "translate" the post-communist drama into the language of the Western world. Later he made great efforts to understand the logic of thinking and perception of the world of Russian post-Soviet elites. And tried to "translate" it to Western politicians and administrators who are known for the fact that every new generation among them at least once steps on the quick sand of its own ignorance regarding Russia. I am sure he is one of the few who have succeeded with the reverse "translation", sometimes to break through the "Kremlin wall" in the heads of some of its inhabitants as well ... What and to whom does Ivan Krastev interpret in his narrative about the modern European crisis?

Like any professional hermeneutic, he respects the rule of external impartiality, trying to assemble the pieces of (until recently) unified world view of a united Europe. I think that (Western) European elites are the first addressees of his analysis. Krastev is careful to explain to them that their anger, contempt and perplexity are narrow-minded - caused by misunderstanding of the change we all experience, not easily. But in order to be convincing, he delicately, as if inevitably, stands on their side. Maybe he does it by his own convictions. Maybe he overcomes his own sadness from the inevitable separation with this Europe which he, together with all of us in the East, was striving for during the exciting years after the fall of the Wall. Krastev understands the changed Eastern Europeans who oppose refugee quotas and Brussels' "hypocritical global conspiracy" against their freedom and national identity, but apparently does not sympathize with them. The ability of Eastern Europeans to push back

from the desired European belonging of yesterday into the corner of "national populism" is candidly saddening him today. To understand does not mean to justify…

... And to explain does not mean to recommend. There are no recommendations in the book *After Europe*. If someone is looking for recommendations – they will have to find them out themselves. How easy it was to write about a prosperous and ever more integrated Europe! How many treatises like "Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century" were written with a student's zeal to list carefully all the sources and lessons of European success! But the crisis is recognized - and it is more difficult to live through it than success. *After Europe* is a liberal treatise on the European crisis. You will not see direct assessments but will distinguish the position of the author. This is the position of a person for whom European cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and supranational integrity are deeply conscious and accepted values and identity.

One of the most profound and heuristic interpretations in the text is about the role of meritocratic elites in the current crisis. Made by his own efforts, the meritocratic leader is a globally convertible expert who does not need to be tied to the community he currently represents. He shares community success but is able to avoid responsibility for the communal crisis. He comes from a particular community, but he can migrate freely together with the prerequisites for his success when the community crisis or challenge catch up with him. By itself, this position is clearly potentiated to turn into a crisis of representation. When our leaders are accountable not to our community but to external forces and elites capable of pushing them up, we are in a crisis of our security and in a crisis of our community perspective. How do we solve this crisis? We go after him who tells us – "I will lead you, but I will not betray you. My family, my children and my whole life are here with you. The traitors must be out! We are a community with deep and glorious traditions. We will survive, we will move forward". The crisis of the meritocratic elite is an important aspect of explaining the ricochet which creates the populist alternative to the status quo.

Still, is it possible to comprehend the European crisis only or primarily on the basis of interpretations and reflections on the worldview of the main actors in the current European drama? And one more thing - is it possible for the crisis to be fully explained within the framework of liberal interpretation? Is it not liberalism, in a particular historical context of the European unification, that participates and is set as one of the factors of the European crisis?

Besides its internal transformations, the European Union is experiencing the crisis in a highly dynamic international context. During the Cold War decades, the European unification was realized as a project under the US nuclear umbrella, in almost laboratory conditions of separation from the external - international environment, conditioned by the isolation of the East from the West. The oil crisis of 1973 was almost the only major external turbulence which triggered policies that left an imprint on the process of European integration.

The collapse of the Wall in 1989 created an international system of liberal consensus in which the values of liberal democracy became almost an imperative. In this system, the United States was the unipolar power hegemon, and the EU - an acknowledged model of international and global cooperation and development, attracting support and aspirations for participation of nearby and distant nations. The "soft power" of the European integration project stemmed from its unique success in overcoming international conflicts and tensions, bringing European nations into a system of interdependence, both in economic and social development terms, as well as in the field of internal European security. The repudiation of

the constraints of tradition - both religious and ethnic, the establishment of a multicultural cohabitation model, both among the countries and within each European national society, turned the EU into a successful example of communal, economic and value-based globalization on the territory of the Old Continent. Europe had no enemies. In every European country there were small Eurosceptic communities and parties that swelled to critical levels on specific occasions (the referendums in France and the Netherlands on the European Constitution), but a European right - both civic and political - did not exist in practice.

The most right-wing on the European mainstream were the Christian Democrats and the British Conservatives who shared the liberal meta-ideology of the European construction. Conservatism and nationalism did not exist within the framework of the progressivist European project - they were rudimentarily preserved at national level without much relevance to the European political process. In international context, the European project had even fewer challenges than those at national level under the conditions of international liberal consensus of the 1990s.

Sequence of international events (and deeper global trends) led to a complete transformation of the system of liberal consensus into an international system of revived geopolitical competition, conflict of values, traditions and interests of rising "great powers". International terrorism, based on religious radicalization, was revived on the world stage. Fukuyama's liberal consensus was replaced by Huntington's "clash of civilizations". In this new system, all of the core values and institutional advantages of European unification as a model for emulation in the liberal consensus system were transformed into structural weaknesses and challenges to EU security.

United Europe possesses only "soft power". As a multicultural project, it has no tools to limit identity on its territory. In the era of Islamic radicalization, this brought against the European nations the radicalized inner ghettos of young Muslims - the second and third generation after immigration, subversive nuclei of which began to emulate the terrorist groups of radical Islam in the Middle East. In its external environment, Europe, for the first time since the Cold War, faced its powerful opponents. Putin's Russia launched a fierce hybrid war to destabilize the EU – both on the Eastern periphery and within key countries of the EU core. The impact was primarily on the liberal meta-ideology of European unification as a system of values "incapable of protecting its citizens". The Aegean Sea Refugee Crisis of 2015 demonstrates the disguised hostility of powerful international criminal cartels, but also of global corporate players and of ... friendly Turkey - a membership candidate which has quietly let through about 1.5 million people to sail from the Turkish coast to the Greek islands. Europe had forgotten to say "no" to anyone. Europe was accustomed to "withering" in friendly gestures towards its neighbours on the South and East. The new international environment painfully reminded Europe that the world is returning to the reality of hard boundaries and firm protection of one's own security.

The impact of refugee crisis echoed painfully and carved out unexpected gaps in Europe. Not only between the East and the West of Europe, by the way. Brexit became a fact based on the anti-immigration wave of British public opinion. The increase in popularity of Madame Le Pen, Geert Wilders and the Alternative for Germany showed the limits of the "welcome" policy in a Western Europe which for decades had pursued a targeted strategy to attract migrant labour force from the Middle East and the entire Third World. Modernization had been the dominant strategy of non-Western world since decolonization, and immigrants in

Europe and America were the forefront of this process of likening and levelling up of the entire world to the success of the modern West.

Following the 1960s, the West voluntarily abandoned its position as a model for modern societal and cultural development. Postmodernism equalled cultures, and Third World elites interpreted the change in their own way: since the modern West is no longer a model, it is time to turn to ourselves. Provided that poor and conflict-ridden nations of the Third World could hardly turn to a particular future, they turned to ... their past. The revival of traditional identity, including religious traditions, transformed unrecognizably the conceptual and political landscape of the Third World. This happened in the era of globalization in which the easy access to (electronic) information awakened huge masses of people for active public-political life. They have a strong desire for change, but only have the ideological and value tools of their limited religious self-awareness. Which is purposefully mobilized by radical religious-political projects. Welcome to the "clash of civilizations" of the era after the liberal consensus. This clash echoes both on the EU's external borders and in the heart of the great European megapolises with their ethnic ghettos ...

The sky of the global world was darkened by heavy lead clouds. But Europe remained in its "summer" - post-liberal garments, waiting for the sun to rise again. I was a guest, a few weeks ago, at a literary meeting with the prominent Israeli writer David Grossman. With his quiet voice he reminded the writer's mission in a warring society like Israel. "When you struggle with your enemy, you inevitably dehumanize him ... You dehumanize him so you can fight him, and, if needed, kill him ... The writer's mission is to rehumanize society, to remind the value and community of all people, no matter what or where they are". The European project is a powerful strategy for humanizing people and society, for building an undivided attitude of humanness and openness towards every person. Western Europeans have lived for four generations in peace. The EU is a project to heal the wounds from the conflicts and catastrophes in Europe from the first half of the 20th century. But here we are in a world where besides friends and followers Europe also has enemies - powerful and uncompromising. Europe finds it difficult to comprehend that. Europe will painfully learn again to make a difference between an enemy and a friend. But it will have to learn. It will have to preserve its humanism and, along with that, to build its system of protection from those who do not treat it humanely.

Europe needs the establishment and consolidation of a pan-European democratic – but conservative movement to balance the values and policies of postmodern liberalism as a hegemonic project of united Europe in recent decades. Europe must preserve its democratic openness, but not persevere in its limitlessness. Europe needs clear territorial boundaries to cope with the "migration revolution" (Ivan Krastev) because revolutions come and go, but some people survive after them, and others – do not. Europe needs clear boundaries of its multicultural definition that exclude the possibility of belonging to Europe and fighting it - including with the weapons of terror. Europe needs to return to its tradition and to publicly acknowledge the fact that its spiritual roots in Christianity are not a burden but a beneficial heritage inscribed in the historical logic of the Enlightenment, classical liberalism, and the opportunity for the Old Continent to be the source of freedom for the modern world. Christianity is the cultural wave which sculpts the consciousness of personal responsibility that paved the way for the Enlightenment and the modern man. Christianity is not just clericalism - it gives depth to our civilization based on human freedom. This in no way means either a denial of the secularism of the institutions and public life, or abridgment of the confessional freedom for the representatives of all other religions. Europe must address the

sources of its demographic decline and rediscover the values of traditional family that creates, brings up and invests in the future of society. The new European conservative project cannot be mutually exclusive with Europe's progressive liberal project. It is the necessary complement and balancing of European value and political debate under the conditions of current crisis. The only alternative to this project is not the revived hegemony of liberalism, but its mutually destructive battle with "national populism".

Europe had to overcome nationalism of the past in order to wipe out the wounds of two military catastrophes of the first half of 20th century. Over time, however, the baby was thrown out with the bathwater. The liberal hegemony of pan-European project sent nationalism and other forms of traditionalism into the corners of national political life where they lived as anti-system political marginals. They resuscitated in the vacuum of European crisis - which is also a crisis of liberal hegemony. "National populism" is a ricochet, a crisis response that does not have its own project for the future. There is no European nation that could prosper outside the context of European integration - today and in the foreseeable future. Every day Brexit provides new evidence for this. Resurgent defensive nationalism is capable of ruining Europe, but not rebuilding it. However, it will keep and grow its potential as long as the status quo and the persistence not to allow change among the ruling European post-liberal elites continues.

Ivan Krastev formulated the first of three paradoxes outlining the crisis of the European project: "... Why voters in Central Europe ... who … are among the most pro-European electorates on the continent are ready to empower parties that openly despise independent institutions ...?" His analysis in response to this question is adequate and in-depth, but several significant touches can be added to it. Unlike post-national European West, Central European peoples live in the period of their national upsurge after centuries of foreign domination and oppression. Mass consciousness is structured around the priorities of national development, which over a long period of time have been seen as naturally incorporated in the pan-European integration process. The refugee crisis interrupted this "natural incorporation".

Central European nations have no postcolonial complex - they themselves have been victims of imperial colonization for centuries - and have no consciousness of duty to representatives of other colonized nations in the past. This may also be an expression of certain provincialism - yet the expansion of community consciousness to cosmopolitanism is a historic process that takes time. Unlike Western Europeans, Eastern European citizens have experienced the second half of the 20th century not in peace but in brutal oppression. For them, national self-government is not an expression of old-fashioned and retrograde attitudes, but the minimum necessary condition for security and dignified existence.

Eastern Europeans have lived in the last quarter of a century not in relative prosperity, but in a process of painful social transformation where a handful of people at the top have benefited in a dishonest way at the expense of turning large groups of citizens into losers in the process of change. The corruption of national elites, legitimizing their control through obedience to Brussels, creates the first germs of distrust and anxiety in the East against mechanisms of elitist solidarity in the European Union. Hence the partial answer to the question of why the pro-European citizens of the post-communist East elect parties opposing independent institutions (courts, media, central banks). Because they recognize the liberal status quo, such as former Hungarian Prime Minister Gyurcsány's governance, as serving corruption and foreign interests. Thus, the EU, which provides structural funds for development, is unfairly recognized as part of the status quo which takes away - international corporations, "greedy"

banks, and so on. Note how enthusiastically the majority of Hungarians approves the policies of the Orban Cabinet for control and higher taxation of foreign banks. Anyone who knows the history of international capitalism will not be very much surprised at this.

The refugee crisis escalates public manifestations of the above-described trends. It seems to me that not so much the intolerance to migrating large groups of Muslims has been a major factor in Central Europe's reaction to the crisis. A major factor is the conscious suspicion that somewhere up there, in Berlin, in Brussels, and elsewhere, our lives are being run by people we cannot control at all. Our local - liberal or non-liberal - elites strike bargains with them, corruptly enrich themselves and sell us out to people who want to obliterate us as nations. A million and a half aliens tread from Greece to Germany. In Italy, thousands of Africans from the boats land every day. The Italian government accepts and registers them - nothing more. In Brussels they want to introduce refugee quotas. Someone, somewhere there is making a *perpetuum mobile* for effacing our identity. Soros and Merkel plan to import one and a half million Muslims annually in Europe. Brussels plans to allocate them according to quotas. No, gentlemen, no. We will vote for those who promise us to say NO ...

It is not the most important thing whether or not this mass image of another conspiracy from "the top" against the lives of ordinary people, of the average Eastern Europeans who have not yet caught their breath since the end of the previous communist experiment with them, is true. What is important is the well-grounded, even proven, view of the behaviour of European elites as part of globalization elites, pursuing their own goals regardless of common people's attitude towards them. Global liberal elites (including the European ones) draw their legitimacy exclusively from the fact that they are advocates of a great, decisive and constantly dynamizing change in the world around us - economic, political, cultural ... This change, called globalization, quickly enriches elites who carry it out, puts them in the role of demiurges of an increasingly unified world. The price is paid by those who find with difficulty a place in this process and the strength to change constantly.

The "rust belt" states, with people who are Democratic Party voters, but who have been unemployed for decades since the exporting of their industry to the Third World, voted for Donald Trump. Those who did not believe that status quo elites would set reasonable limits on external migration, because they serve the economic, ideological and political goals of a global project rather than the interests of their voters, voted for Marin Le Pen and Heinz-Christian Strache. Those who were afraid that they could be once again betrayed - and sold to outside powers by their own status quo elites - voted for Viktor Orban and Kaczynski. They are therefore ready to expel their representatives from the institutions, even at the cost of their recently acquired democracy ...

European liberal elites need a rigorous, shattering warning: your legitimacy stems from our will, even if it is the will of insufficiently - by your understanding - intelligent, liberal, compassionate, ready for any change towards the "bright future" citizens. Get down to Earth, otherwise we will bring you down from the heights to which we lifted you. Regardless of your belief that being meritocratic elites, you owe us nothing.

After Europe, a changed Europe comes. Some will like it, others will not. It is important for me that this changed Europe is democratic. There is a significant difference between the notion of liberalism as the current political ideology of postmodern European left progressivism, and liberalism as the classical framework of this system of governance which is called "liberal democracy". Although they are called "illiberal democrats", national

populists from the East and from the West emerged and established themselves as an alternative to liberalism in the first, narrow, not the second, broad sense of the word. In the broad sense of the word, liberal democracy has very few basic features - civic representation, majority power, separation of powers, human rights and minority immunities ... The most important characteristic of liberal democracy is its inclusivity - its ability to turn its alternatives into part of the mainstream of democratic political movements. In the nineteenth century, liberal democracy integrated its former alternative - conservatism that emerged as a reaction to modern times. In the 20th century, liberal democracy integrated the workers' movement and created the possibility of universal civic representation. Today, liberal democracy must integrate this type of "national populism", intolerable for postmodern liberalism, by transforming it into a conservative pan-European movement, fully involved in the dialogue of the European democratic mainstream. This will lead to the overcoming of the political crisis in Europe and will open new opportunities for a more efficient European dialogue, European security and prosperity. Thus relationship will change its subjects. It will pull down the ugly masks of populism and will help the fast-pacing to the future liberal project get to the ground and move at the bearable speed of the people who follow it.

The book *After Europe* ends with a story that I think is appropriate to put a full stop to this rather long review. When an attempted military coup in Spain took place in 1981, 200 officers stormed into the Spanish parliament, threatening to shoot the MPs. All MPs threw themselves under the benches, except for three who stood straight while the bullets whistled. Their courage doomed the coup to failure. "These three heroes of democracy were the most incredibly possible associates: Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez, a politician who built his career during Franco's dictatorship; Santiago Carrillo, the leader of the Spanish Communist Party, who for years had been fighting the unfairness of capitalist democracy; and General Gutierrez Mellado, an officer who had risked his life in the Civil War, fighting against democracy. Before this fateful day, no one could have guessed that these three would stand up face-to-face with the plotters and thus will save democracy in Spain. But that was exactly what happened".

OGNYAN MINCHEV