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A NEW RENAISSANCE FOR EUROPE?

Abstract: The evolution of human societies is shaped by mutual interaction between various cultures and a range of mechanisms. It does not follow a linear path and can lead to unexpected outcomes.

Mutual tolerance or lack thereof has a determining role.

Europe stands in front of previously unseen challenges that will significantly influence its future.

*Itaque non aqua, non igni, ut aiunt, locis pluribus utimur
quam amititia.*

(We need ... Friendship more than water and fire.)

Paraphrased after Marcus Tullius Cicero
(106 BC – 43 BC)

1. SPIRITUALITY AND CULTURE

1. Spirituality is a key factor that influences culture and its evolution. Its disregard lets culture stand in a moral vacuum. Science and technology alone can't be genuine substitutes.

2. Modern Western societies and their democratic politics are facing major dilemmas concerning globalisation. Longer-term close interaction with non-Western cultures is unavoidable (economic interaction is already well underway).

Non-Western cultures are often willing to acknowledge their spiritual foundation, while the West, at least most of its political leaders, more are predisposed to rational pragmatism.

3. The current global crisis is not only a financial one. The very fundament of Western culture is shaking. Powerful forces from outside and inside (often origi-

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nating from outside) are gradually eroding it. Western political leaders are unwilling (or unable?) to acknowledge this fact.

4. The foundation of European culture had been laid by the Greeks and strengthened by the Romans. Christianity contributed with basic principles that were renewed and rationalized by Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment.

5. Ideally, at the meeting of various cultures, each culture contributes to the common good and each enriches human diversity via its own complementarity.

In reality, the culture with the strongest spiritual – and moral foundation has an obvious advantage. It might absorb or suppress the weaker one.

2. MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR EUROPE

6. In Europe the situation is becoming increasingly intricate and complex. Political leaders suddenly have to cope with large-scale influx from outside – desperate people for whom Europe remains the “last hope” (Fig. 1).

7. For many of the newcomers the Western core values are new, even odd. Often they are neither aware of their own human rights in the new environment, nor are they able to display adequate individual responsibilities towards the host.

8. Nevertheless, the newcomers must respect the Western core values.

Those are: primacy of individual human being; human dignity and rights; equality between men and women; democracy and secular governance; and rule of law.

9. In turn, for Europe, it will be necessary to learn how to ensure lasting relationships inside its own house – not repression – with people of varying cultures and faiths. Only that way will it be possible to achieve a sustainable society where cultural – and religious differences can co-exist through mutual tolerance and respect.

In this process the Western core values must remain intact.

3. CHOICE FOR EUROPE

10. European political leaders, in a close dialogue with the society at large, must make a clear choice: should Europe become a *multi-ethnic* – or *multi-cultural society*?

A wisely guided development could lead to a *new renaissance for Europe*. A formidable challenge lays ahead where mutual tolerance is the key.

CONCLUSIONS

11. The unavoidable cultural transformation could present unpleasant surprises:

- An open clash between religious phantasm and enlightened rational pragmatism?
- Or revival of innate spiritualism in Europe?
- Or both?
- Or something unexpected?

12. Europe must be ready to meet these previously unseen challenges. This is not yet the case.

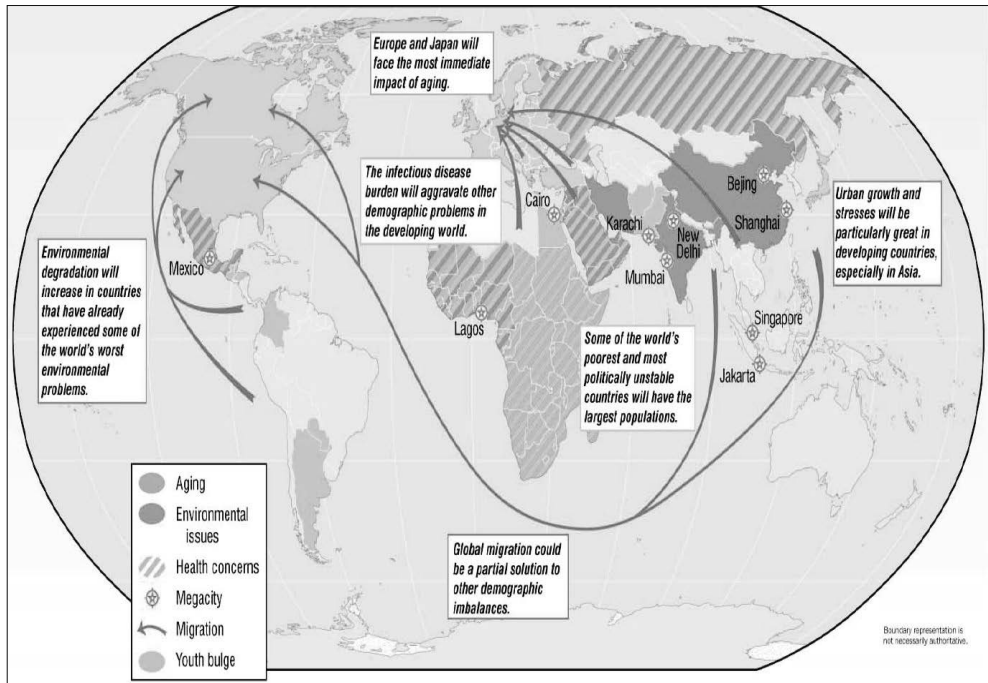


Fig. 1. Reshaping the Geopolitical Landscape
Snapshot of Global Demographic Trends

Ref.: Long-Term Demographic Trends: Reshaping the Geopolitical Landscape, p. 4, CIA – US Government, July 2001.

https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/Demo_Trends_For_Web.pdf

