

REORIENTATIONS IN THE WORLD TODAY

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For several years now, there are perceptible changes in our world. In the late eighties, liberal democracy continued the expansion started after World War II, at least in Europe. Meanwhile, national states have weakened, under the pressure to liberalize trade and the recognition of minority (ethnic, political, sexual, etc.) movements. Globalization of the economy, communications, security, knowledge has become a reality.

The financial crisis that broke out in 2008 surprised the world organized on market principles as economic regulator, and threatens to develop into an economic crisis with extended repercussions still hard to detect. U.S. last two elections favored the advocates of “change”, and the policy reorientation of the first world power does not remain without consequences for all mankind. On the stage of the producers of the world, China replaces Germany, as the first exporters. Russia lies among the powers that cannot be ignored in a serious political approach. For many years, important theologians, like Joseph Ratzinger, Hans Kung, Jonathan Sacks), philosophers (Habermas, Rorty) and economists (Galbraith, Stiglitz, Krugman), as true sensors of the situation, have drawn the attention to the need for a change of direction in the Euro-American culture.

What happens, now? Facts cannot be captured only by impressions, perceptions and occasional random experiences, even though many intellectuals are lured by them, producing the barren chatter around us. *Systematic thinking is always indispensable to those who want to actually understand what is going on.* Not long ago, the famous National Intelligence Council, which, in the U.S., periodically offers interpretations of the global trends, published **Global Report 2015** (2008). The group's previous reports already contained lucid interpretations that could guide action. The 2008 report, however, is disturbing to a greater extent: this report foreshadows the change the world.

Several phrases summarizing the analysis in this report converge towards the image of a change of the world we used to know in the last two decades. In this move, the shift of the relative wealth and economic power from West to East, and the growth of new actors, especially China and India, are crucial. U.S. will remain the single most important actor, but it will be less dominant." Against this background, in the context of globalization, a "mixing of state and non-state actors" (such as companies, banks, religious organizations, networks) will take place, in conjunction with a competition for possessing nuclear weapons. The political agenda is becoming less "local", as the international interconnections and dependencies have their say. *A world of "discontinuities, shocks, and surprises" opens its doors.* Consequently, "any single result is preordered: the Western model of economic liberalism, democracy and secularism, for example, which many have taken as inevitable, may lose luster (luster), at least on the medium term".

For the first time since the eighteenth century, China and India will be "the biggest contributors to global growth". With a foreign exchange reserve of two trillion dollars,

China is already a financial power of the highest ranking. Russia and China after South Korea and Singapore, seem to embrace the path of “state capitalism”, which, considering the importance of the two countries, will prove to be appealing, especially against the background of the present financial crisis. "Ironically, the increasing of the state's role, going on in the major Western economies as a result of the financial crisis, may strengthen the country's growing preference for wider state control and distrust in an unregulated market."

Therefore, the world we have known so far is changing under at least three aspects in our time. Asia, especially China, together with the USA, has become the center of the world economy. Power is redistributed from the states to diverse economic, spiritual, media, and military actors of contemporary societies. Democratic liberalism evolves towards government financial intervention (Robert Reich has recently published *Supercapitalism*, Vintage, New York, 2007, a book exploring the recent changes in this direction in advanced societies), while in East Asia, state capitalism makes its way.

A few years before, in his book *Die Zukunft Macht. Gewinner Verlierer und in der Welt von morgen* (Goldmann, Munich, 2006), Helmut Schmidt gave a "realistic diagnostic" of the situation in the world, away from pessimism (which prevents the action) and optimism (which cultivates false facts), but from an explicitly assumed perspective of a European. He spoke of the "big four complex" issues that mark the societies of our time - "population explosion and its consequences", "technological and economic consequences of globalization," "vulnerability of the international financial markets," the repercussions of global trade in arms "(p. 26) - and drew conclusions about the situation of the world today, as well as the trends that lead to its immediate future. Even if we do not dwell on these arguments now, it is worth to note the results of this competent analysis, which convincingly suggest the fluidity of the world in which we live. "Technological globalization has eased mixtures of any kind and has made possible the carrying out of private wars – as proven by El Qaida" (p.14).

Therefore, the world no longer has a clear and somewhat stabilized structure. U.S. A. remains the world's superpower of reference that cannot be rivaled, but September 11, 2001, proved that even this superpower may be attacked on its own, once unassailable, territory. On the other hand, although remaining deeply undesirable, a confrontation between the West and Islam has become possible (p.120). China is the new emerging superpower, which is met with "respect, cooperation and exchanges" (p.229). Russia still needs time for necessary reforms, but its peaceful (*friedlich*) orientation" and course towards reconstruction need to be taken seriously (p.188). The European Union has difficulty in articulating itself so that a break in extension has become necessary (p. 210). "In the decades ahead, the European Union will not turn into a 'counter-power' to the American superpower" (p.220). In general, the world has become more complicated, and its tendencies so far require lucid reconsideration.

Let me finish by synthesizing the new reorientations on the geopolitical map of Europe. European crisis will continue and will bring about some stringent issues: to overcome the “democratic deficit” by switching from intergovernmental agreements to effective democratic consultation; to clarify the governing of a compound of twenty-eight states; to reaffirm the aim of the European Union. In the present day context, Germany will remain an ally of France, while acquiring a more prominent role and implementing its own policies. Russia will continue its way towards modernization and will seek to promote its interests of superpower in recovery in all directions. Poland will enjoy economic success

and will be an emerging power. Turkey will exploit its enormous potential to radiate influence. Israel, with an advanced defense and an advanced economy, based on innovation, will be an increasingly attractive partner. Eurasia is a region of the world that is gaining in importance, while the U.S.A. will promote policies to prevent a superpower in the Caucasus region to gain prepotency.

The implications are vast, and also for Europe at large. The European crisis lasts. Germany, Russia, Turkey, Poland and Eurasia are about to play new roles. One implication at least has a special weight: communities will solve their problems if they have leaders of quality. The importance of competence, insight and culture increases tremendously in the present change in the world. People of vision regain their place, since they are not only needed, but also indispensable for communities to be successful. Against this background, cultural diplomacy has to find out its strategies and to conceive its initiatives.