GEOCULTURE, A NEW APPROACH, AIMING TO ASSESS THE LIVELINESS OF CIVILISATIONS

Thomas Flichy de La Neuville and Olivier Hanne
Saint-Cyr’s military academy - France

The geocultural index measures the ability of civilizations to transmit life in the long term. It takes into account five criteria: the fertility rate combined to the suicide rate (transmission of biological life); the age of settlement and statebuilding (policy framework and roots); the richness of the verbal and artistic production (poetical and linguistic creativity); the impregnation of religious reflexes; the debt ratio (safety of the economic situation).

Everything is economic. Supported by images and infinitely diffused amongst the cascades of information, this slogan, amplified by its own echo, claims to embody a reality. In effect, it is not necessary to demonstrate to convince. At first sight, supranational institutions, groupings of States, international summits, government appointments, everything that embodies the heart of political action has become a mere accessory of the economic decision. Although the word "decision" itself seems too strong: ignoring the reasons of economic crises, we believe that a good decision today (a devaluation or lower interest rates) could be catastrophic tomorrow. In these circumstances, why should we choose? The belief in the primacy of economics eventually joined the statement of Stalin, according to which "the technique decides everything." What was true for socialism is even more so for globalized liberalism. Certainly, the human being is not neglected, but it has become the adjustment variable pending the stabilization of the economic system that will occur sooner or later ... or never.
In reality, the primacy of economy proves to be an optical illusion. It is indeed disputed by the anti-globalization and environmental movements, the figures of electoral abstention or the return to a patriotic rhetoric. Everywhere, calls to another type of governance are heard. A new future is announced, the reversal of trade to the benefit of social solidarity. Paradoxically, the anti-globalization protest does not fundamentally challenge the primacy of economy: in fact, the decrease of profits and the taxation of financial benefits only serve to promote a new global material revolution. In short, even for those who wish to abolish merchant capitalism, everything remains economic. However, the figures give us only an imperfect idea of future risks. In addition, these complex indicators can be easily manipulated. Moreover, the reduction of the world to the simple interplay of economic forces eventually represent an obstacle to intelligence in so far as it passes ignores two essential dimensions: the affirmation of cultures and the will to exert power.

In fact, the artificial world built by the media has relegated culture to a museum object: men are presented as interchangeable. Our economic system, feeling that cultures represent an obstacle to the exchange of goods ends up denying otherness. It condones for example the idea according to which the development of Islamism is exclusively based upon an economic frustration, forgetting the religious causes of this revival. Now the rooting in a culture is far from being an illusion. Every culture fixes the integration standards of the individual within the group. Without a culture, the human being becomes an individual, with it he wins the status of person. Culture thus provides to the human being his landmarks, action modes and sustainability.

Culture allows the orientation into the world. The orientation is not a simple marker: if tracking lets us know where we are, orientation helps us decide where we must go. Cultural covers everything for which there is a right way to proceed. With culture, we thus introduce the concept of value.

Culture involves morality. It gives the notion of good, beautiful, just and true, even though these concepts do not cover the same direction in all latitudes. Simplified to the extreme: the culture defines what is human. Nowadays, the denial of the cultural factor has already led to spectacular failures for the West. This is true for the officers exerted to make war on virtual scenarios, as if an army could wage a war regardless of the civilizations in which it operates. This mania of role play within standardized headquarters mechanically leads to disasters on the different theaters of operations: from Afghanistan to Libya, passing through Syria and Iraq. We tend to forget that for most non-Western countries, culture remains of paramount importance. We only have to look at the rate of losses among American interpreters in Iraq to understand that the insurgents have targeted the interpreters of cultures as much as the platoon commanders. It was the best way for them to destroy their opponents. The same considerations apply to international companies where the triumph of standardized procedures of negotiation, lead to commercial setbacks. If one adds to that, the mobility of executives, who remain only two or three years in office and their geographical
confinement into business centers where they are not in contact with the real country, a real loss of influence follows. Like it or not, culture is a reality. It is nothing less than the sap of civilizations. Now every civilizations intends to perpetuate life. It is for this reason that the denial of the cultural factor represents the first step towards barbarity.

On the other hand, the fascination for economy makes us forget the geopolitical factor. For example the massive appropriation of land or Landgrabbing is analyzed solely in terms of economic investments. But most states, unless they are too weak to exercise power, have political strategies. These can be examined in the prism of history. China's current strategy is strangely similar to that adopted by the Tang Dynasty in the early centuries of our era when Central China launched a tremendous push towards the Caspian sea and the Persian Gulf. The exercise of power is based on objective criteria that are by no means obsolete. One can identify three. First, collective self-esteem, or the strength of the cultural and religious values that propel emotional minorities to martyrdom or jihad. Secondly, the strength of innovation combined to work: the creativity of active minorities represent in effect the spearhead of economic development. Third, prolonged demographic dynamism. The current French population genetically descends from 25% of French of 1789. Again, only a minority has had ability to project itself into the future thanks to a responsible demography, that is to say rich in children. The addition of self-esteem, capacity of innovation and to project itself into the future has long been the privilege of Europe. But times have changed.

In their own ways, cultural anthropology and geopolitics have tried to challenge the vision of a world reduced to the clash of financial interests. However, these alternative views have not combined with one another while incorporating the economic factor to restore a true understanding of the world for disoriented elites. The thesis that we will develop can be summarized as follows: sustainable civilizations are necessarily based upon an assumed culture. It is thus necessary to oppose the geo-cultural nations that draw their power and influence from their profound identity, to the techno-abstract constructions that strive to compensate the artificiality of their origins by the use of violence and oblivion. The first are able to influence in the long term and even beyond their political death as it was the case with the Roman empire. Even overwhelmed by invasions, geo-cultural nations are capable of sustainable influence. Persia thus irrigated the Muslim world for centuries despite its obvious weakness. With its demographic growth combined to the preservation of its elites, contemporary India also belongs to geo-cultural nations. It opposes abstract constructions of clerics and thinkers, such as the empires of Charles V, or that of Napoleon I, in which the absence of cultural unity proves the first factor of weakness, and that, beyond artificial homogenization attempts.

Now, what is true for empires is also true for enterprises, whose life and financial health are threatened by their belief in the technocratic myth. It is also true for families that are able to perpetuate in the long term when they adhere to spiritual values forcing their members to surpass themselves. If they reject these values, they will atomize in a multitude of rival individuals, drawn, like fireflies, to the profit that will transform
them into ashes. Sustainable nations are therefore rooted into cultures that can be of an incredible variety, but must be able to renew themselves without denying their past in order to perpetuate themselves. In this context, the geo-cultural strategy consists to draw ones own forces, including economic, from ones millenary culture. Geoculture therefore turns out to represent more than a new geopolitical or historical approach, it claims to be the intellectual reconquest of the old concept of civilization. In effect only cultures survive when financial crises sweep economic powers. This approach reveals paradigms that economists can not see through quantitative assessments. With this prism, hierarchies are recomposed, in so far as to scrutinize empires in terms of geocultural footprint unable us contemplate the soul of the world. In short, geoculture bypasses the frozen materialism of Marx, but also global capitalism which has run its course, in order to discern more discreet by also more sustainable hierarchies. Foundation to sustainable civilizations, the geocultural approach fixes to nations a goal that is placed far beyond economic domination, cultural influence or political power: its objective is merely the transmission of life.