Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies
The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies

Volume 7 | Issue 2 Article 6

1-1-2007

The rise of the east and the decline of the west

Reg Little

Follow this and additional works at: http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cm

Recommended Citation
Little, Reg (2007) "The rise of the east and the decline of the west," *Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*: Vol. 7: Iss. 2, Article 6.
Available at: http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cm/vol7/iss2/6

This Viewpoint is brought to you by the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies at ePublications@bond. It has been accepted for inclusion in Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies by an authorized administrator of ePublications@bond. For more information, please contact Bond University's Repository Coordinator.

The rise of the east and the decline of the west

Abstract
Extract:
Two hundred years of Anglo-American global order offers little to prepare the global community or the Anglo-American peoples for the immediate future. This will be shaped from Asia – commercially, technologically, politically, culturally and psychologically. Indeed, Beijing, rather than Washington, is already emerging as the defining force behind major, if often discreet, global developments.

Keywords
Anglo-American global order, world politics, Confucian and Daoist traditions, China

This viewpoint is available in Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies:
http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cm/vol7/iss2/6

The Culture Mandala, Vol. 7 no. 2, December 2006 - Article Copyright © Reg Little 2006

VIEWPOINT:

THE RISE OF THE EAST AND THE DECLINE OF THE WEST

by Reg Little (author of *A Confucian-Daoist Millennium?*, Connor Court Publishing, 2006)

A PRECIPITOUS DECLINE IN AMERICAN POWER

Steady erosion of the Anglo-American global order, which has shaped the past two hundred years of world history, has been apparent for several decades. By allowing its economy to become increasingly dependent on East Asian manufacturing, technology and finance, the United States has not disputed this process. Yet, the manner of the dual involvement of America and its allies in Afghanistan and Iraq seems best explained as a belated and counterproductive effort to reverse this process.

Consistent with the history of the past hundred years recounted in William Engdahl's *A Century of War: Anglo-American World Politics and the New World Order*, these initiatives appear to have been conceived to facilitate and disguise a strategy designed to preserve an Anglo-American quasi monopoly over global energy resources. If this was their intended outcome, present indications are that they have achieved the exact opposite.

The United States has become mired in disasters of its own making that have inflated the price of oil and gas. This has enriched and empowered major rivals in Russia, Iran and Venezuela with large energy reserves. It has also facilitated the quite evolution of a tacit alliance between Russia and China. This has strengthened their military technologies while developing a range of asymmetric tactics that are beginning to leave the United States emasculated, economically, politically and militarily. Simultaneously, a number of communities in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East are displaying a growing readiness to break away from the Anglo-American sphere of influence. Finally, remaining areas of American economic strength, such as global energy markets, military technology and the pharmaceutical and food industries, are all beginning to reveal serious vulnerabilities.

Perversely, the longer the United States maintains its present policy settings and strategies the more precipitous the decline. Even more perversely perhaps, the delicate political wisdom of East Asian communities, which has most contributed to creating this situation, is likely to dictate that recognition of this process will be disguised and delayed as long as possible. That is, of course, as long as the policies of the authorities in Washington improve sufficiently to allow them that option.

THE CURSE OF INTELLECTUAL APARTHEID

Two hundred years of Anglo-American global order offers little to prepare the global community or the Anglo-American peoples for the immediate future. This will be shaped from Asia – commercially, technologically, politically, culturally and psychologically. Indeed, Beijing, rather than Washington, is already emerging as the defining force behind major, if often discreet, global developments.

The global community confronts a time of remarkable challenge - and even more remarkable opportunity. Unfortunately, however, the Anglo-American heritage carries a curse - a form of intellectual apartheid. This once promoted universal values to build an unprecedented empire but it now blinds them to unfamiliar forces of civilization that are transforming the global community.

John Hobson, in his *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*, identifies how the West moved from an openness to Eastern culture to a denial of it around two hundred years ago. The Anglo-American globalization project and civilizing mission have extended power over this period by asserting the superior and universal character of their values, compared to those of all others. It has consequently been necessary to insist on the inferiority of other traditions of civilization. This can be said to have worked remarkably well for two centuries but there is now accumulating evidence that it is becoming disastrously counter-productive.

Without a major commitment to rethink the world, escape false certainties dictated by mythologies from Jerusalem, Athens and Rome, and discover the wonders long nurtured by the Confucian-Daoist world of East Asia, it is unlikely that many will make the best of this emerging world. The stubborn insistence of the US-led West to deny the cultural dimension of East Asia's economic transformation over recent decades has left it increasingly defenseless before the strategic, intellectual and spiritual subtleties of that part of the world. Their use of the marketplace to reassert global leadership has been subject to remarkably little serious evaluation that has not relied on culturally biased assumptions.

CONFUCIAN-DAOIST REALITIES

Both the Confucian and Daoist traditions have been relentlessly slighted and disparaged by the promoters of Anglo-American empire, intellectual apartheid and universal values. This has succeeded in leaving most people outside East Asia with little or no understanding of perhaps the world's two most remarkable spiritual and wisdom traditions. Little attention is paid to the fact that they are the foundation of successive and unique revivals of Chinese political authority and civilization after periods of decline. This capacity for regeneration after imperial decline is almost totally lacking in Western history.

Confucianism builds spiritual character on the discipline of education, the morality of community and aspirations of service in high office. Daoism builds spiritual character on the acute and paradoxical observation of nature, the discipline of intuitive consciousness and the aspirations of cultivated self-empowerment. Both support a highly inventive and largely benign form of holistic and organic science. Neither encourages the unquestioning faith and institutionalized dogma that tends to characterize the endlessly contending religions of the Abrahamaic tradition and that often breeds the false prophets warned against by Jesus.

Manufacturing and technological standards are increasingly defined by one or other of the Confucian-Daoist communities of Japan, Korea or China. The training of vast numbers of the highest quality engineers and scientists in this part of the world, which dwarfs comparable numbers elsewhere, leaves little room for doubt that the influence of East Asia will continue to grow and will soon overwhelm memories of American political, economic and technological leadership.

Intellectual apartheid ensures, however, that few in the West understand that the force that is beginning to define the 21st Century is of a Confucian-Daoist civilization with a profound holistic and organic approach to human and natural ecologies. It contrasts starkly with the mechanistic and reductionist corporate sciences that have come to characterize two hundred years of Anglo-American global order. While striving strategically to recapture lost political and economic autonomy, East Asians have worked with discreet resolve to guard traditional approaches to food and medicine, ecological balance and environmental sensitivity, even as they have of necessity sought to master industrial practices that threaten long-held cultural values.

TEN DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

One might suggest something of the rich and challenging character of these Eastern traditions by identifying distinctive practices in ten critical areas of behaviour - those of administration, education, spirituality, consciousness, change management, science, service, knowledge, health and energy

Chinese administrative culture has a history and mythology that has maintained an unrivalled record of achievement and continuity over several millennia. It oversees today's most successful economies. Chinese education equally has a remarkable record that preserves rigorous standards of rote learning and social virtue closely identified with administrative excellence.

Chinese spirituality has a prolific and robust record of practical and liberating disciplines that are free of the faith and dogma synonymous with Western religion. This spirituality has been the source of an intuitive consciousness that is acutely attuned to nature and the challenges of this world and that is free of the illusions that accompany much Western rationalism, founded on false, hidden assumptions.

For at least three thousand years the Chinese have utilized a book of divination, the *Yi Jing* or *Book of Changes*, as a textbook of self-organization to manage the imperatives of change. This book, based on sophisticated mathematical formulations that mirror patterns in natural processes, has also inspired a holistic and organic scientific culture that led the world until the early 19th Century.

China has over a thousand strategic classics that inform the world's most sophisticated culture of conquering peacefully. This includes detailed instructions for using service and knowledge to identify and exploit a rival's vulnerabilities.

Finally, it is possible to identify in the Chinese scientific tradition approaches to maintaining health through unifying food and medicine and through mastering the energy flows of life. These highlight the bankrupt and corrupt character of much contemporary Western food and medicine, the economic vulnerability of associated industries and the extent and depth of the East Asian challenge to Anglo-American certainties.

The Culture Mandala, Vol. 7 no. 2, December 2006 - Article Copyright © Reg Little 2006

The Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies,

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,

Bond University, Queensland, Australia