A Turning Point in Our History

At this time when the fight against the coronavirus epidemic is just beginning to be ramped up all over the world, it is probably too early to come to any definitive conclusions. However, one thing we are able to say right now is that this crisis is fundamentally changing the very face of our planet.

To state the obvious, once we have gotten through this epidemic (and we will get through it!), the balance of power on Earth will have shifted. Meanwhile, a propaganda war is being waged. President Trump is talking about a “Chinese virus”, while Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Lijian Zhao tweeted that “It might be [the] US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan.” In mid-March, the Washington Post noted that anti-American theories have gained so much momentum in China that claims about the coronavirus having originated in the US are not even censored online. To a certain extent, these accusations echo the usual information war.

At this stage, three clear conclusions can already be drawn without a shadow of a doubt:

1. As an article in the New York Times correctly pointed out a few days ago, efforts being taken in the West to combat the coronavirus are failing. In fact, according to one European political scientist, the current crisis has revealed the moral bankruptcy of Western civilization, because it has failed the test of “humanity”. China, South Korea, and other East Asian countries, not to mention Russia, have all managed to do a better job at containing the virus than Western countries.

On March 20, the death toll in Italy from pneumonia caused by the novel coronavirus surpassed that of China. It is worth noting that a group of Chinese doctors who arrived in Italy criticized the measures being taken by the Italian authorities to contain the epidemic: a Chinese Red Cross official said Italy’s quarantine measures were not strict enough.

It is rather telling that China and Russia were the first to offer the Italians substantial help, not the European Union or NATO.

All of this has led us to the realization that Western civilization is not fit to weather a crisis situation, it has failed the test, while Asia was able to mobilize an effective response and rose to this unprecedented challenge. Asia’s ascendancy was already visible before the coronavirus outbreak. For example, cities such as Shanghai, Singapore, Tokyo, and Moscow (a Eurasian capital) beat American and Western European cities hands down when it comes to cleanliness, order, and organization. The pandemic has only served to accentuate these differences.

2. The events that have unfolded in the fight to contain the coronavirus signal the end of so-called transatlantic and European solidarity. The West will no longer be united. Europeans will not forgive the unilateral measures taken by Trump with absolutely no regard for EU interests. They will not forget that the US President suspended flights to European capitals without consulting his allies in the EU.

After Brexit, the future of the European Union will be uncertain. Today’s startling reality contradicts the notion of “European solidarity”: Czech authorities seized Chinese masks intended for Italy’s hospitals, and England tried to seize medical supplies sent to France. These events are very telling indeed, and do not offer us much hope that EU member states will be able to reach some kind of consensus.

3. It is now clear that countries need to rethink their approach to critical crisis situations in order to cope with new pandemics. On March 24, the Russian Foreign Ministry urged all parties to regional armed conflicts to immediately
stop hostilities and secure a ceasefire. Otherwise, we will not be able to stop the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus epidemic. The urgency of the situation we are in today requires real cooperation to save lives on this planet of ours.

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