

# FUTUREtakes

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### First Transcultural Thematic Issue

### *“Transcultural Impacts and Perspectives on the Future”*

**Perspectives from Armenia, Canada, France, Georgia, Germany, South Africa, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.**

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### **Revolution of Traditionalism: Look at Future**

*Mamuka Tsereteli*

*Executive Director of the America-Georgia Business Council  
and  
part time faculty member at George Washington University  
and American University in Washington, D.C.*



The future hides many different uncertainties. The combination of large numbers of variables will determine final shape of the cultural environment of 2025. For those of us who like to focus on the long view of the future, but can only pretend to see some possible developments in the range of twenty to fifty, and maybe hundred years, 2025 may appear to be not far enough away for a futuristic exercise. On the other hand, the events before 2025 pretty much will determine the shape of the rest of the century. So, by looking to drivers that will determine the cultural environment by 2025, we may describe the potential future of not only twenty years from now, but far beyond.

#### ***The Strategic Context***

There is a common future for all cultures, and that common future will be determined by many different factors. In the political arena, the world is left with one sole Superpower, the United States, but the system of international relations is still run by numerous players, and even the sole superpower is not capable of dominating the world. The war in Iraq first of all has a cultural consequence. The US managed to weaken itself by entering into the campaign without a deep understanding of the cultural environment of the country it was invading. So the cultural consequence requires an in-depth analysis. The war in Iraq is an ideological war, and one can not win ideological war without understanding the cultural environment of the operational theater. There is no doubt that the US is still the world's most powerful nation militarily, and it has no match in that regard. But other forces, both traditional and nontraditional ones, cannot be disregarded and some of them will play increasing roles in the years to come. The world's security environment is greatly influenced by newly emerged powerful actors such as terrorist and

transnational criminal groups that affect the politics, the cost of business, economic development, and international trade. The other feature of the modern strategic context is the fact that in a globalized and interconnected world, there are no distant or isolated threats, although geographical proximity to problematic areas increases the threat levels.

Here are some other common features of cultural environment influencing, and determining the common future:

- A growing population of the developing world, coupled with growing demand for food, water, and energy.
- An aging population in Western countries, and particularly in Europe, along with a diminishing workforce and a changing demographic composition, that will affect the military capabilities, market structures, and labor and service requirements.
- HIV/AIDS and other diseases that will significantly affect the demographics of many countries and regions of the world, including Russia and Eastern Europe, China, and Africa.
- A growing demand for energy by the U.S., China, and India and the growing dependence on imported energy resources in those countries, along with growing competition for energy sources among leading powers.
- Resources and markets are generally located far away from each other. The high mobility of goods, people, capital and information creates a different type of economic environment, where access to those factors of production is more important than political control over territory. Hence global economic competition for access to resources will continue to be the important driving force for international politics.
- The world will experience the greater penetration of the Anglo-Saxon business and media culture, and we may see different type of cultural reaction to it in different parts of the world
- Information flow and new means of communication bring “culture of action” closer around the world. Although the messages of the Al Jazeera are somewhat different from the messages of the CNN or Fox, the culture of delivering the messages (“press culture”) is all the same.
- Technology is a critical element of competitiveness, and the education is the key to technological advancement and to the quality of human capital, so that both technology and education are key factors of the international economic system, affecting security.

### ***The Revolution of Traditionalism in Different Parts of the World***

The world is experiencing the beginning of the revolution of traditionalism, driven by radical forces. Today the revolution of traditionalism is visible in US, where evangelical Christians and other religious groups based on traditional values, are playing increasing role in the broader societal life and are actively challenging moral values of the media- and Hollywood-driven mainstream America. We have to assume that this process will deepen and by 2025 we may see more radical clashes between two dominant groups, which in turn may have a profound effect on the cultural environment in the US. The predominant feature of the cultural environment in US will be less tolerance between the rival ideological groups, but no dominance will be achieved by any of those groups and some balance will be maintained.

This revolution of traditionalism is more visible in Muslim countries, primarily because of the events of recent years, including 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The anti-Americanism and anti-Western feelings are on the surface, but deep inside we see the greater cultural solidarity between different Muslim states and revival of religious, as well as traditional values. The pressure from the West, as well as from Shia Iran, will cause greater Sunni consolidation. It is natural to assume that ideas of radical Muslim groups to create a Sunni Caliphate will be gaining the ground. The process may have some resistance in secular circles, but most of the moderate citizens of the Muslim countries are not happy with the rule of corrupt dominant political elites, so they are for change and that increases the constituency for radical forces. The only serious resistance may come from those who are in power and face the challenge of losing both power and wealth. The case of Iran of 1979 shows that the strength of these regimes, and level and effectiveness of support from their Western (i.e. US) allies should not be exaggerated.

At the same time, the case of Dubai shows that very traditional Muslim cultural environment can co-exist with one of the best Western-style business environment in the world. So, by 2025 we may see the Dubai economic model and Al Jazeera media model spreading around the Muslim world, creating traditional value based societies, but economically more competitive and effective, thus creating the base for different type of Caliphate.

The ongoing revolution of the traditionalism in Russia is completely ignored by the outside world. The Western world is hardly aware, and clearly doesn't understand the internal dynamics of Russia. President Putin revived the nationalism as a major ideology of the country. Historically Russia was a nationalistic state and empire. Even in the Soviet times, when the need emerged with the invasion by the Nazi Germans, Stalin changed his Soviet/Bolshevik rhetoric to Nationalistic and Traditionalistic one. In the first day of the invasion he approached the Soviet population with the term Brothers and Sisters, instead of comrades, thus emphasizing the nature of the events and setting up the context for dealing with them. It is not an accident that the war was immediately given the name of Second Patriotic War, the first one being the invasion by Napoleon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the rule of Emperor Alexander the First. President Putin came to power exploiting nationalistic feelings of Russians against the Chechen independence movement, and that rhetoric set up the stage for two parallel process: one is the emergence of radical and aggressive nationalistic movements, much stronger than before, that target minorities in the streets, as well as public life of Russia; the second is the emergence of the stronger and more mainstream traditionalistic forces, who still see the future of Russia as a powerful state that is in charge of the developments at least in its immediate neighborhood, if not far beyond. Unfortunately, there is a big probability that this may be not a smooth process.

The powerful revolution of the traditionalism will most probably take place in Europe. There are many signs that this is coming, and it will require the huge effort to avoid the radicalization of the process, if it is possible at all. The signs of this upcoming revolution are the recent referenda on European Union (EU) constitution in France and the Netherlands; the European reaction on Turkish bid for EU membership; the increased anti-immigration movements in all countries and the fact that most of the immigrants are not integrated in the mainstream societies and are greatly separated culturally; and increased European divide between "old" West and "young" East, where France and Germany lead the West, and Poland and Baltic states lead the East.

The myth of the Europe as one nation is under serious threat of being reconsidered. Most European nation-states experience a substantial growth of nationalism. The mistrust in huge, slow and ineffective EU bureaucracy is a major contributing factor. Most of the developed countries have growing societal problems, including crime and tense inter-ethnic relations, which are related to the isolation of their immigrant populations. Unfortunately, in many countries a public discussion on these issues is a

taboo. As a result, these societal problems evolve into cultural problems, affecting the mindset of both the local and the immigrant population, with long-term consequences for both.

The only region that may not be experiencing the revolution of the traditionalism today, is Pacific Asia, because they are and always were culturally traditional and they managed to avoid the radicalization of either end, although potential still exists for the radicalization in Communist China, if economic growth slows down and opportunities are no longer there to meet expectations of the broader societal groups.

### **Conclusion**

The cultural environment of the world in 2025 will most probably be more traditional than today. The revolution of traditionalism may fail, meaning that traditionalism may not take the lead in most of the countries of the world. At the same time it will leave very a profound trace on world's cultural environment. And despite the penetration of the Western type mass culture in every corner of the world, the language, religion and traditions will have larger role to play with some serious consequences for both national and supra-national structures. The most important results of this ongoing revolution in the long run will be:

- A greater European divide and subsequent strengthening of the nation-states in Europe;
- A more radical internal divide in the United States, with the potential for serious reduction of the US role in the world affairs.
- Greater potential for the creation of the spiritual, if not the actual political, Sunni Muslim Caliphate in the Middle East;
- Substantial radicalization in Eurasia, where processes described above, as well as internal and external conflicts of Russia and the increased role of China will have the greatest contribution.

These are only the few of the potential futures that may consequence of the new, but ever evolving cultural environment in the world by 2025.

*Mamuka Tsereteli is the executive director of the America-Georgia Business Council and part time faculty member at George Washington and American Universities in Washington, D.C. His areas of interests include multidisciplinary strategic analysis, economic and energy security, business environment and development.*

### **POINTS FOR THE CLASSROOM** (send comments to [forum@futuretakes.org](mailto:forum@futuretakes.org)):

- *Tsereteli identifies several consequences of the revolution of traditionalism. What possible additional consequences can you identify?*
- *The article states that there will be less tolerance between rival ideological groups in the US. At the same time, cultural relativism (increased acceptance of and respect for other cultures) is gaining ground in some places. If intolerance prevails, will it be based primarily on identity, or will it be a “vener” for underlying issues such as socioeconomic disadvantage and disenfranchisement?*
- *Certain factors favor the establishment of a Caliphate, observes Tsereteli, who further discusses alternative possibilities for the Caliphate. However, the Middle East has been characterized by intertribal strife for more than two thousand years. Which will prevail, “fusion” or continued “fission”?*

- *More generally, given the independence movements in Chechnya (Russia), Quebec (Canada), Scotland (the United Kingdom), the Kurds (Turkey) – and the contrasting experiences of the former Czechoslovakia, the former Yugoslavia, and the European Community – is “fission” or “fusion” the wave of the future, and why?*
- *Tsereteli refers to the US as the sole superpower. Considering all instruments of national power – economic, diplomatic, and military – and the increasing role of non-state actors, will the US continue to be the sole superpower in 2018?*
- *Tsereteli considers the possibility of reactions to the penetration of Anglo-Saxon business and media culture into other parts of the world. Concurrently, there are traditionalist backlashes against this business and media culture, even in the US. Will this prevailing culture be displaced by a new one, complete with new values and lifestyles – and if so, in what timeframe?*
- *What underlying factors are driving the revolution of traditionalism, within diverse nations and cultures, that Tsereteli discusses? Disenchantment with the present socio-political-economic system or value system? Nostalgia? A search for identity?*