



HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW 1ST

Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople

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Thank you very much. Your Holiness.

His Holiness Bartholomew 1st, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople

Europe as a Laboratory for Global Governance

His All-Holiness

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Your Excellencies, distinguished participants,

Since the 15th century, Europe has been the protagonist in the unification of the Oecumene, the 'inhabited world'. If we further take into account Europe's overseas offshoots, globalization is, in fact, the result of many centuries of European Ecumenism.

In the past, the ideal of bringing together the whole of humanity inspired many political and religious entities. The Roman and the Chinese Empires, the Christian Church and the Muslim Ummah, all faced the same political challenges: namely, what we term today 'problems of governance'.

Small territories and populations can be administered in a relatively easy manner. Cultural homogeneity, a common language and similar customs lead to an awareness of the common good, the *res publica*, for which all members of the community are ready to sacrifice themselves. In different periods of history the ancient city-state, or polis, and the modern nation-state achieved the same goal of a coherent government, albeit on different geographical scales.

The widening of the territorial and demographic scale brings about heterogeneity. Above a certain limit, expansion makes it impossible to achieve a centralized government, at least for relatively long periods. Governance, then, becomes the only long-term option. Looking at historical precedents, we find a variety of governance schemes, some rigid, others more flexible, often combining centralization in certain crucial aspects and autonomy in others, as in the Ottoman Empire. European politics tried to convey the mix of opposites, centralization and autonomy, through the concept of subsidiarity.

The wisdom of old institutions can prove a valuable asset for today, and a source of inspiration.

For instance, the tradition of governance followed by the Orthodox Church is in many ways similar to the European paradigm. Under the spiritual and administrative authority of a Bishop, a local community enjoys quasi-sovereignty, much like the member-states of the European Union today. The collegial organization of the Holy Synods ensures the necessary coordination among equal members, as also happens in the European Councils. The Ecumenical Patriarch, as the first bishop of the Orthodox world, is a president but not a ruler. In practice of course, Metropolitans, that is,

Bishops of large cities, have a stronger influence in the same way that some member countries of the European Union are more equal than others. The rise of nation-states, with their national Churches, has somewhat modified the Orthodox Christian tradition, without however bringing about a radically new system of governance. The Church's transition to modernity has certainly not been easy; it has been made possible thanks to the inherent flexibility of the Orthodox principle of "economy," namely of prudent adaptation. Here too we find parallels and similarities to the European Union. Thus the Union sometimes adapts its democratic principles to the necessities of the Markets, in an effort to 'economize' or adapt the global Economy.

As we see, the nature of the challenges involved in governance was not radically different in the past. However, as previous sessions of this conference have demonstrated, the space and time scales of governance have changed dramatically during the last decades. Over a century ago, Halford Mackinder, one of the most influential thinkers of international politics of the time, wrote in an article that was subsequently to become famous:

From the present time onwards, we shall have to deal with a closed political system, and none the less that it will be one of world-wide scope. Every explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, will be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe [just as we see in ecological issues of our time], and weak elements in the political and economic organism of the world will be shattered in consequence.¹

The two world wars that followed offered a tragic confirmation of Mackinder's Cassandra-like premonitions.

Monsieur Thierry de Montbrial conveys the same message today, but the technological environment in which it applies is far more dangerous:

A consequence of globalization is growing interdependence. Any war – particularly in the Middle East and in West or East Asia – or any new major economic or financial failure would immediately have catastrophic global repercussions.²

It is therefore, dear friends, imperative that we should mobilize all of humanity's resources of wisdom and experience in order to encourage the emergence of global governance capable of avoiding catastrophes.

So how can the European experience help in this direction?

The European Union and Europe more generally, is beyond all doubt a laboratory for global governance. However, as history shows, it is not the only one. If we take into consideration Europe's secular role in promoting globalization, as well as the West's world influence, Europe certainly appears to be the most important experiment. However, things may not be quite that simple.

Most scholars of International Relations argue that we are at a historical watershed, at the end of the European (and western) monopoly of world power and influence³. By a historical irony, Europe, heir to medieval *Christenheit*⁴, may be witnessing a repetition of the past. In the Middle Ages, the Western Christian ecumenical ideal confronted a similar but competitive challenge, namely Islam. The Crusades, the major episode of this "clash of globalizations," marked a tragic period of Mediterranean history, a moment of intense suffering, particularly for Eastern Christianity.

The modern European model of global governance may also have to reckon with alternative paradigms stemming from the global poles emerging in our time. Based on old and venerable civilizations, these poles have their own inherited wisdom in regard to the organization of large spaces. Divergent concepts of global governance, which arise whenever the balance between efficiency and legitimacy is at stake⁵, might weaken the common effort, with grave global

¹ Halford Mackinder, "The geographical pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal*, no IV, April 1904, p. 422

² <http://www.worldpolicyconference.com/wpcmeeting.php?lien=wpc&&lang=en>.

³ For example, Paul Kennedy, "Crossing a watershed, unawares," *International Herald Tribune*, 26-10-2011.

⁴ Novalis, *Die Christenheit oder Europa*, 1799

⁵ Thierry de Montbrial, "Les Fondements de la WPC," *World Policy Conference Compendium*, p. 16



consequences. Not surprisingly, during the post-Cold War period, we have often seen that the question of state sovereignty versus the legitimacy of international intervention can be filled with tension.

In all these matters, much depends on the evolution of the European governance paradigm itself, which can hardly be considered stable and definitive. On the contrary, the economic crisis has brought to the fore many unresolved contradictions. The temptation to closure, introversion, Eurocentrism and centralization, is becoming stronger and stronger. It reinforces short-term efficiency and relieves the fears and anxieties in Europe's core countries. However, it will limit drastically the relevance of the European model on the global scale. It will also deepen the chasm between alternative governance modes.

On the contrary, a wider, more inclusive, more democratic European Union, a Union more sensitive to cultural diversity, would show convincingly that it constitutes an experimental model for the whole world, rather than a world apart. How can Europe convince others about its model's role in handling cultural diversity on a world scale, if it retreats from the challenges of the much more restricted heterogeneity that characterises the European continent and its overseas outer limits?

From the cultural and geographical viewpoints, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, based in Istanbul, is at the crossroads between the Slavic, Greek, Arab and Turkish speaking worlds: an interface of East, West, South and North. The enlargement of the European Union to include Turkey and the Balkans, the balanced relationship with Russia, the opening of Europe to the Mediterranean, indeed even the drawing of lessons from the Greek crisis with regard to East-West relations-- these are fundamental issues that directly and deeply concern the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Yet these are only some of the challenges, and by no means the least, that will determine whether Europe will be able to reach out to the world in the coming decades.

For these issues will determine whether Europe will play a major role in the effort towards a collaborative rather than a competitive model of global governance-- or whether it will move towards global insignificance and decline, as predicted in the aftermath of the First World War⁶.

⁶ Albert Demangeon, *Le Déclin de l'Europe*, Paris, 1920