

EAST

WEST

I. Political System

1. Communist nations still exist: China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos. Socialistic “guided” democracy: Myanmar.
 2. Tragic experiences of wars in Korea, Vietnam produced sufferings, sicknesses, poverty.
 3. Tribal, ethnic conflicts in Indonesia (E. Timor), Philippines (Mindanao), India (Hindu/Muslim), Sri Lanka (Singhalese/Tamil), Myanmar (Karene tribe) created sufferings.
1. Democracy, monarchial parliamentary system, capitalism have produced political stability and peace in the society.
 2. The conflict in Northern Ireland (Protestants/ Catholics) has created sufferings of the people and produced a bad image of Christianity in the non-Christian world.

II. Economic Development

1. Economically, Asia is divided into three categories.
 - A. Pacific-Rim nations (Japan, S. Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore) have higher per capital income. 1998 Per-capita income: Japan: \$33,800; S.Koerea: \$9,511; Taiwan: 13,303; Hong Kong \$26,400; Singapore \$28,235.
1. Early Industrial Revolutions in England (18th C.) and America (19th C.) developed capitalism and rapid economic growth. U.S.: \$29,950; Germany: \$25,720; France: \$23,810; Switzerland: 36,857; Italy: \$19,470; Britain: \$22,268.

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B. Better off nations in S. E. Asia (Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia) are rapidly developing. Philippines: \$1,203; Indonesia: \$981; Thailand: \$2,450; Malaysia: \$4,287.

C. Developing nations in S. E. Asia (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar) and in S. Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka) are catching up. Vietnam: \$280; India: \$387; Sri Lanka: \$805.

2. Many Asians began to experience materialism.
3. Most Asians' primary concern in life is to provide rice for their families.

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2. Economic affluence & complacency characterize western society.
3. Social welfare system and laid back attitude of many low income groups have created moral and social problems.
4. Time consciousness of western society, bustling busy life in urban areas caused mental health problems.

III. Religious Background

1. All major living religions are found in Asia: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism.

1. Western civilization was traditionally influenced by Judeo-Christian religions.

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2. Politics and religions are intimately related to each other for unifying different ethnic groups in the nation.
3. There has been a resurgence of traditional cultures including religions; the government spends millions of dollars to promote them.
4. Eastern religions are very mystical and are very much I-centered religions.

1. Confucian ethics along with Buddhist ethics is prevalent in East Asia and produced nepotism, favoritism. Hindu ethics in India, Nepal and Islamic ethics in Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh have laid ethical foundation.
2. Emphasis is more on moral practices than religious doctrines —“see your belief” approach.
3. Moral relativism based on human experiences creates more moral dilemmas.

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2. While European nations have close cooperation between church and state, the United States has separation of church and state.
3. With rapid secularization of western cultures, the West is experiencing the post-Christian Era and Post-Modernism.
4. Intrusion of Eastern mysticism, New Age, TM, occultism, Satan worship has increasingly affected many westerners.

IV. Ethics

1. Although Christian ethics laid the moral and spiritual foundation in the West, it has been gradually declining over the years.
2. The use of checks, transparent system are used to combat corruption.
3. Western ethics is more doctrinally oriented with an explanation of beliefs which cause separation among Christians.

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4. Problems of injustice, bribery, corruption, crimes immorality are rampant.

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4. Problems of crimes, drugs, alcoholism, divorce, sex, teenage pregnancy, abortion, homosexuality single parents have plagued Western society.

V. Philosophy of History

1. Cyclical view of history (birth-old age-sickness-death) without any meaning in history.
2. Hinduism, Buddhism teach reincarnation according to karma.
3. Most Asians believe in fatalism in life.
4. Atheistic communism promotes materialistic determinism.

1. Pessimistic view promoted: Arnold Toynbee points to the cyclical-spiral view of history, while Oswald Spengler points to the spiral view of history.
2. Optimistic view was from Karl Marx's material determinism.
3. Pessimistic-optimistic view is for Christians —i.e., Creation-Process-Consummation.
4. Existential humanism, hedonism for Generation X.

VI. Epistemology

1. Asians are interested more in meditative introspection and contemplation than logic and induction.
2. Emphasis on mythological, emotional, artistic.
3. Intuition is important in the apprehension of knowledge.

1. Westerners are very scientific, rational, logical, aggressive to find reality from observed phenomena.
2. The method of research is from particular to general concepts.

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4. “To know” means to investigate things more in aesthetic component and to grasp the reality behind them in order to know in our experience.
5. Man’s metaphysical idealism is not to understand and master reality but to find release (salvation) through mystical experience.
6. The goal of Eastern philosophy is man’s mystical experience of the universal reality rather than a careful analysis of it, and the language used is often imprecise and ambiguous.

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3. “To know” means to have a thorough investigation of the theoretic component.
4. Naturalism is put to scientific and logical tests and to place it in different categories in order to understand the world order.

VII. Education

1. Traditional Confucian method is to consider teachers authoritative and students obedient to teachers and to memorize lecture materials.
2. Non-linear approach (chopsuey) is to create the concrete thinking as each Chinese character conveys its complete picture. The results of this Eastern approach is synthetic, intuitive, global, concretely cyclical, and impressive.

1. Emphasis is on research projects, seminars, independent self-study. Students challenge their teacher’s authority.
2. Linear approach (steak, potatoes, peas, salad separately on the plate) is abstract, analytical, objective, logical, philosophical, systematic thinking, detail, specific, Platonic dialectical method, Aristotelian logic, epistemological dualism.

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3. Inductive method through enough information before action creates the information explosion which promotes specialization in research and systematization of theology.

VII. Cultural/Social Differences

1. East has the human relationship oriented culture with people at the center. The filial piety concept and the respect for authority creates the hierarchical relationship and the attitude of docility.
 2. Chinese Ying-Yang philosophy emphasizes harmony and the maintenance of balance.
 3. Eastern society is basically group oriented with a strong emphasis on the clan, family, corporate nature, community rights from whole group to individual at the end.
 4. Asian meetings are usually planned at the last minute.
 5. Rapid “westernization” of Asian culture is taking place among the younger generation.
1. Western culture is egalitarian with the program center oriented and a strong assertive attitude and self expression. Each person is assigned to his role.
 2. The ultimate goal is to achieve his objective, and the end justifies the means.
 3. West has the extreme individualism, personal ability, achievement, competence, success from individual to whole group.
 4. Westerners love well-planned and organized meetings.
 5. Increasing influences of Asian beliefs and values have come into the West: “Asianization” of Western cultures.

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VIII. Religious Beliefs: Need of Defining Doctrines

1. Hinduism teaches emanation and not creation of the world.
 2. The concept of God is polytheistic, impersonal (Vedantism), and superstitious in Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Folk religions.
 3. "I-centered" concept of gods is popular. People are afraid of evil spirits (kwei) and need to appease the spirits: Animism.
 4. Man is a part of God; God is a part of man, and man has no separate entity.
 5. Ancestor worship is popular in China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea. People offer food and burn incense to appease deceased ancestors' spirits.
 6. Sin and salvation: in Hinduism sin is ignorance of the oneness with Brahman. Sin is not a moral offense, mistakes, shame, societal, and breaking communal duties. Gautama Buddha and Confucius taught that human nature is good, and there is no concept of forgiveness of sin.
1. Judeo-Christian religions taught the doctrine of creation.
 2. Judeo-Christian concept of God is monotheism. God is personal. Good (God) and evil (Satan) are against each other.
 3. "Christ-centered" concept of Christian life puts "I" church, family, society on the periphery.
 4. Man is made in the image of God. There is a clear separation between the Creator and the creatures.
 5. Westerners put flowers at the grave in stead of burning incense.
 6. Sin is a direct transgression of God's commandments. By breaking the law of God, there is a guilty feeling, but God forgives man's sins by Christ's death on the cross.

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7. There is no Absolute Truth in Hinduism/Buddhism
All religions are true and false.
8. Eschatology: reincarnation (Hinduism/Buddhism),
nirvana (Buddhism). There is no heaven and hell
in Hinduism/Buddhism (except Mahayana
Buddhism).
9. Many Christians in East Asia feel that missions
and evangelism are individual matters and have
an attitude of tolerance and a lack of enthusiasm.
10. A number of important Asian theologies have
developed: The pain of God theology by K.
Kitamori (Japan), Water buffalo theology by K.
Koyama (Thailand), Minjung theology by Y.B.
Kim (Korea). Third-eye theology by S. C. Song
(Taiwan), Unbound Christ theology by S.
Samaratha (India), Ying Yang theology by J. Y.
Lee (Korea).

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7. There is Absolute Truth in God. Christianity teaches
the absolute moral standard for human beings.
8. Immortality (heaven/hell) is taught in the Bible.
9. The churches in the West have traditionally
emphasized the importance of evangelism and
missions and have become sole carriers of the
the Gospel.
10. Theological liberalism, Neo-orthodox theology,
radical theology have weakened the witness of
the church especially among the mainline denomi-
national churches.
11. Strong secularism, humanism, atheism, spiritual
apathy, materialism have penetrated into the
family, church, society, and individuals. West is
facing the Post-Christian Era.
12. Liberation theology has dominated theological
discussions for 30 years. The future theological
interest is moving towards the philosophy of
religions in the 21st C.