

A CLASH OF SWORDS, A CLASH OF RELIGIONS, A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

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September 30, 2001

Remember in God Tracks IV the concept of moving toward a worldwide brain, a worldwide unity, a Point Omega? A path to a godlike existence for humanity in the minds of some. The concept was that it might take eons, with many ups and downs along the way.

Let's look a bit closer at our recent progress.

One widely articulated paradigm was based on the assumption that the end of the Cold War meant the end of significant conflict in global politics and the emergence of one relatively harmonious world. One world: Euphoria and Harmony. The most widely discussed formulation of this model was the "end of history" thesis advanced by Francis Fukuyama. "We may be witnessing," Fukuyama argued, "...the end of history as such. That is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

To be sure, he said, some conflicts may happen in places in the Third World, but the global conflict is over, and not just in Europe. "It is precisely in the non-European world" that the big changes have occurred, particularly in China and the Soviet Union. The war of ideas is at an end. Believers in Marxist-Leninism may still exist "in places like Managua, Pyongyang, and Cambridge, Massachusetts," but overall liberal democracy has triumphed. The future will be devoted not to great exhilarating struggles over ideas but rather to resolving mundane economic and technical problems. And, he concluded rather sadly, it will all be rather boring.

The expectation of harmony was widely shared. The president of, arguably, the world's leading university vetoed appointment of a professor of security studies because the need had disappeared. "Hallelujah! We study war no more because war is no more." Surely he meant major war is no more.

Sam Huntington doesn't agree. Samuel P. Huntington is the Director of the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Chairman of the Academy for International and Area Studies at Harvard, where he was also director of the Center for International Affairs for many years. In his early life he worked in the Carter White House. In the mid-90's he published The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order and, last year, he co-edited Culture Matters, How Values Shape Human Progress. This talk draws on both books. Many of these words are his.

Maybe the following will help us understand the hurdles facing the human race in the near future—the near future being the next ten, hundred, or thousand years. Remember, we are discussing religion and social evolution. Evolution over tens and hundreds of thousands of years. We have a long way to go to achieve this Point Omega, this worldwide love blob.

On April 18, 1994, two thousand people rallied in Sarajevo waving the flags of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. On October 16, 1994, in Los Angeles, 70,000 people marched beneath “a sea of Mexican flags”, protesting Proposition 187, a referendum measure which would deny many state benefits to illegal immigrants. Why are they “walking down the street with a Mexican flag and demanding that this country give them free benefits?” observers asked.

In the post-Cold War, world flags count and so do other symbols of cultural identity, including crosses, crescents, and even head coverings, because culture counts, and cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people. People are discovering new but often old identities and marching under new but often old flags which lead to wars with new but often old enemies. Quoting Michael Dibdin in his novel, Dead Lagoon, “There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are. These are the old truths we are painfully rediscovering after a century and more of sentimental cant.” For people seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, and the potentially most dangerous enmities occur across the fault lines between the world’s major civilizations.

While one-world expectations appear at the end of major conflicts, the tendency to think in terms of two worlds recurs throughout human history. People are always tempted to divide people into us and them, the in group and the other, our civilization and those barbarians, the Orient and the Occident, North and South, or, in Muslim terms into Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb, the abode of peace and the abode of war.

Human history is the history of civilizations.

Various writers define seven to nine major contemporary civilizations—Sinic, which describes the culture of China and the related cultures of Korea and Viet Nam. Japanese, a distinct culture emerging from the Chinese around 2000 years ago. Hindu, the central culture of the Subcontinent since the second millenium B.C. Islamic, originating on the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century A.D. and spreading across North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula and also eastward into central Asia, the Subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Western, usually identified as emerging about 700 A.D. with three major components in Europe, North America, and Latin America. Latin America, although having a minority culture termed Western, has a distinct identity which differentiates it from the West. African, the north of the African continent and the east coast belong to Islamic civilization, throughout sub-Saharan Africa tribal identities are pervasive and intense, but Africans are also increasingly developing a sense of African identity, and conceivably sub-Saharan Africa could cohere into a distinct civilization with South Africa possibly being its core state. Forces of religion and modernization further divides the West creating a sub-civilization labeled Christian Orthodoxy of primarily, Eastern Europe.

Every civilization sees itself as the center of the world and writes its history as the central drama of human history. This has been perhaps even more true of the West than of other

cultures. Such monocivilizational viewpoints, however, have decreasing relevance and usefulness in a multicivilizational world. Scholars of civilizations have long recognized this truism. In 1918, Spengler denounced the myopic view of history prevailing in the West with its neat division into ancient, medieval, and modern phases relevant only to the West. A few decades later, Toynbee castigated the “parochialism and impertinence” of the West manifested in the “egocentric illusions” that the world revolved around it, that there was an “unchanging East”, and that “progress” was inevitable. Fifty years after Toynbee, Braudel similarly urged the need to strive for a broader perspective and to understand “the great cultural conflicts in the world, and the multiplicity of its civilizations”. The illusions and prejudices of which these scholars warned, however, live on and in the late twentieth century have blossomed forth in the widespread and parochial conceit that the European civilization of the West is now the universal civilization of the world.

You and I must combat this perspective if we are ever going to gain an understanding of the non-Western world.

Cultural fads have been transmitted from civilization to civilization throughout history. Innovations in one civilization are regularly taken up by other civilizations. These are, however, either techniques lacking in significant cultural consequences or fads that come and go without altering the underlying culture of the recipient civilization. In previous centuries the Western world has periodically been swept by enthusiasms for various items of Chinese or Hindu culture. In the nineteenth century, cultural imports from the West became popular in China and India because they seemed to reflect Western power.

The argument now that the spread of pop culture and consumer goods around the world represents the triumph of Western civilization trivializes Western culture. The essence of Western civilization is the Magna Carta not the Magna Mac. The fact that non-Westerners may bite into the latter has no implication for their accepting the former.

It also has no implications for their attitudes toward the West. Somewhere in the Middle East, a half-dozen young men could well be dressed in jeans, drinking Coke, listening to rap, and, between their bows to Mecca, putting together a bomb to blow up an American airliner. During the 1970's and 1980's, Americans consumed millions of Japanese cars, TV sets, cameras, and electronic gadgets without being “Japanized” and, indeed, while becoming considerably more antagonistic toward Japan. Only naïve arrogance can lead Westerners to assume that non-Westerners will be become “Westernized” by acquiring Western goods. What, indeed, does it tell the world about the West when Westerners identify their civilization with fizzy liquids, faded pants, and fatty foods?

By Western actions, democracy is promoted but not if it brings Islamic fundamentalists to power; nonproliferation is preached for Iran and Iraq but not for Israel; free trade is the elixir of economic growth but not for agriculture; human rights are an issue with China but not with Saudi Arabia; aggression against oil-owning Kuwaities is massively repulsed but not against non-oil-owning Bosnians. Double standards in practice are the unavoidable price of universal standards of principle.

By the early 1990's, a "Confucian-Islamic connection" was in place between China and North Korea, on the one hand, and in varying degrees, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Algeria, on the other, to confront the West on these issues.

Europeans, or former European colonies in the Americas, controlled 35% of the earth's land surface in 1800, 67% in 1878, and 84% in 1914. By 1920, the percentage was still higher as the Ottoman Empire was divided up among Britain, France, and Italy. In 1800, the British Empire consisted of 1.5 million square miles and 20 million people. By 1900, the Victorian empire upon which the sun never set included 11 million square miles and 390 million people. Some entire civilizations disappeared. Only Russian, Japanese, and Ethiopian civilizations, all three governed by highly centralized imperial authorities, were able to resist the onslaught of the West and maintain meaningful independent existence. For four hundred years intercivilizational relations consisted of the subordination of other societies to Western civilization.

The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do.

Islam is one of these eight or nine civilizations and certainly the civilization of focus in the light of recent happenings. A band of extremists have reached across civilizational lines, embarrassed the majority of their compatriots and co-religionists with their barbarity, and compelled one civilization, the West, to reach inside the other civilization, Islam, to extricate or destroy the perpetrators.

Huntington writes a few years ago—Some Westerners, including President Bill Clinton, have argued that the West does not have problems with Islam but only with violent Islamist extremists. Fourteen hundred years of history demonstrate otherwise. The relations between Islam and Christianity, both Orthodox and Western, have often been stormy. In the religious world of us and the others, each has been the other's Other. The twentieth-century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism is only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared to the continuing and deeply conflictual relation between Islam and Christianity. For almost a thousand years, from the first Moorish landing in Spain to the second Turkish siege of Vienna, Europe was under constant threat from Islam. Islam is the only civilization which has put the survival of the West in doubt, and it has done that at least twice.

By the fifteenth century, the tide had begun to turn. Four centuries later, by 1920, only four Muslim countries—Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan—remained independent of some form of non-Muslim rule. By 1995, about forty-five independent states had overwhelmingly Muslim populations. The violent nature of these shifting relationships is reflected in the fact that fifty percent of wars involving pairs of states of different religions between 1820 and 1929 were wars between Muslims and Christians. I repeat—fifty percent of wars were between Muslims and Christians.

Both sides have, moreover, recognized this conflict to be a war. Early on, Khomeini declared, quite accurately, that “Iran is effectively at war with America”, and Qadhafi regularly proclaims holy war against the West.

Muslim leaders of other extremist groups and states have spoken in similar terms. On the Western side, the United States has classified seven countries as “terrorist states”, five of which are Muslim (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sudan); Cuba and North Korea are the others. This, in effect, identifies them as enemies, because they are attacking the United States and its friends with the most effective weapon at their disposal, and thus recognizes the existence of a state of war with them.

Huntington believes the underlying problem for the West is NOT Islamic fundamentalism—It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world. These are the basic ingredients that fuel conflict between Islam and the West.

In Afghanistan, American dollars and missiles were indispensable to the defeat of the Soviets. Muslim financial support for the war came primarily from Saudi Arabia. The total amount they contributed during the course of the war was at least as much as and probably more than the \$3.3 billion spent by the United States. During the war, about 25,000 volunteers from other Islamic, primarily Arab, countries, participated in the war. In the end, the Soviets were defeated by three factors they could not effectively equal or counter—American technology, Saudi money, and Muslim demographics and zeal.

The “jihad credentials, religious and political, of the Afghan volunteers,” one U.S. official said in 1994, “are impeccable. They beat one of the world’s two superpowers and now they’re working on the second.”

The Afghan War became a civilization war because Muslims everywhere saw it as such and rallied against the Soviet Union. The Gulf War became a civilization war because the West intervened militarily in a Muslim conflict driven, in part, by its failure to develop its own oil resources. Westerners overwhelmingly supported that intervention, and Muslims throughout the world came to see that intervention as a war against them and rallied against what they saw as one more instance of Western imperialism.

In August, 1990, the Arab League voted by a substantial majority to condemn Saddam’s action. Seventy-five percent of India’s 100 million Muslims blamed the U.S. for the war and Indonesia’s 171 million Muslims were “almost universally” against U.S. military action in the Gulf. Arab intellectuals lined up in similar fashion and formulated intricate rationales for overlooking Saddam’s brutality and denouncing Western intervention.

Arabs and other Muslims generally agreed that Saddam Hussein might be a bloody tyrant, but “he is our bloody tyrant”. In their view, the invasion was a family affair to be settled within the family. The prevailing view was: Saddam was wrong to invade, the West was more wrong to intervene, hence Saddam is right to fight the West, and we are right to support him.

There is a need to recognize that Western intervention in the affairs of other civilizations is probably the single most dangerous source of instability and potential global conflict in a multicivilizational world.

The abstention rule that core states abstain from intervention in conflicts in other civilizations is the first requirement of peace in a multicivilizational, multipolar world. This is a truth which some states, particularly the United States, will undoubtedly find difficult to accept. The second requirement is the joint mediation rule in response to fault line skirmishes. The core state intervenes as a leader of its civilization to negotiate with its core state counterpart in the other civilization to bring the battling parties to containment or to a halt of the fault line war before further damage is done. This is contrary to the picking sides and escalation of the past.

Acceptance of these rules and of a world with greater equality among civilizations will not be easy for the West or for those civilizations which may aim to supplement or supplant the West in its dominant role. In such a world, for instance, core states may well view it as their prerogative to possess nuclear weapons and to deny such weapons to other members of their civilization. Looking back on his efforts to develop a “full nuclear capability” for Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto justified those efforts, “We know that Israel and South Africa have full nuclear capability. The Christian, Jewish and Hindu civilizations have this capability. Only the Islamic civilization was without it, but that position was about to change.”

The overwhelming majority of fault line conflicts, however, have taken place along the boundary looping across Eurasia and Africa that separates Muslims from non-Muslims. While at the macro or global level of world politics, the primary clash of civilizations is between the West and the rest, at the micro or local level it is between Islam and the others. Consider Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Cyprus, Armenia, Chechnya, the Volga Basin, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Xinjian in the struggle against Sinification, Kashmir, Malaysia, Indonesia, southern Philippines, East Timor, Israel, Lebanon, where the Maronite Christians have fought a losing battle against the Shi’ites and other Muslims, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Chad, Kenya, Tanzania, and, perhaps the bloodiest, Sudan, where the 1999 estimate is over 2,000,000 casualties in that decades old war.

Muslims make up about one-fifth of the world’s population, but in the 1990’s, they have been far more involved in intergroup violence than the people of any other civilization. The evidence is overwhelming. Of fifty ethnopolitical conflicts, there were three times as many intercivilizational conflicts involving Muslims as there were conflicts between all non-Muslim civilizations. Only one war where over 200,000 were killed involved only non-Muslims—Angola.

Additional studies yield military force ratios and military effort ratios in Muslim countries about double that of non-Muslim countries—an indicator of twice the effort per capita spent militarily. Further, Muslim states tendency to use violence, and frequently high-intensity violence, in crises in a 1928-1979 study yielded 41 percent of the cases versus the United Kingdom at 11.5 percent, the U.S. at 17.9 percent and Russia at 28.5 percent. Among the major powers, only China's violence propensity exceeded that of the Muslim states—it employed violence in 76.9 percent of its crises.

What was responsible for the central role of Muslims in such conflicts? First, these wars had their roots in history. In these relationships, history is alive, well, and terrifying.

Changes in the demographic balance are another factor. In the early 1990's, the Muslim Central Asian former Soviet Republics rate of net population increase (crude birth rate minus crude death rate) was five to six times that in Russia. In Kosovo, the Albanian birth rate was the highest in Europe in this most crowded of Yugoslavian provinces. Kosovo went from 67 percent to 90 percent Muslim in thirty years. The Kosovars petitioned for Yugoslav Republic status. The Serbs feared, given that, Kosovo would secede and join with Albania. The result is history with the outcome yet to be resolved.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the population went from 26 percent Muslim to 43 percent in a like period. "Why do we kill children?" one Serb fighter asked in 1992 and answered, "because someday they will grow up and we will have to kill them then."

The question remains as to why, as the twentieth century ended, Muslims are involved in far more intergroup violence than people of other civilizations. Six possible causes suggest themselves. Three explain only violence between Muslims and non-Muslims and three explain both that and intro-Islam violence.

First, the argument is made that Islam has, from the start, been a religion of the sword and that it glorifies military virtues. Islam originated among "warring Bedouin nomadic tribes" and this "violent origin is stamped in the foundation of Islam. Muhammad himself is remembered as a hard fighter and skillful military commander". (No one would say this about Christ or Buddha).

Second, from its origin in Arabia, the spread of Islam across Northern Africa, the Middle East and later to central Asia, the Subcontinent, and the Balkans is a history of conquer and conversion, and the legacy of the process remains.

A third possible source of Muslim/non-Muslim conflict involves what one statesman, in reference to his own country, termed the "indigestibility" of Muslims. Even more than Christianity, Islam is an absolutist faith. It merges religion and politics and draws a sharp line between those in the Dar al-Islam and those in the Dar al-harb.

Militarism and indigestibility are continuing features of Islam. Three other temporally limited factors could contribute to this propensity in the late twentieth century. One

explanation, advanced by Muslims, is that Western imperialism and subjection of Muslim societies has resulted in a widespread anti-Muslim prejudice comparable to the anti-Semitism that historically pervaded Western societies. The Muslim as victim argument, however, does not explain conflicts between Muslim majorities and non-Muslim minorities in countries such as Sudan, Egypt, Iran, and Indonesia.

A more persuasive factor possibly explaining both intra- and extra-Islamic conflict is the absence of one or more core states in Islam. Defenders of Islam allege that its Western critics believe there is a central, conspiratorial directing force in Islam mobilizing it and coordinating its actions against the West and others. If the critics believe this, they are wrong. Islam is a source of instability in the world because it lacks a dominant center.

Finally, and most important, the demographic explosion in Muslim societies and the availability of large numbers of often unemployed males between the ages of fifteen and thirty is a natural source of instability and violence both within Islam and against non-Muslims. Whatever other causes may be at work, this factor alone would go a long way to explaining Muslim violence in the 1980's and 1990's.

In these societies, the most successful protagonists of Western culture are not neo-classical economists or crusading democrats or multinational corporation executives. They are, and most likely will continue to be, Christian missionaries. Neither Adam Smith nor Thomas Jefferson will meet the psychological, emotional, moral, and social needs of urban migrants and first generation secondary school graduates. Jesus Christ may not meet them either, but he is likely to have a better chance.

In the long run, however, Mohammed wins out. Christianity spreads primarily by conversion, Islam by conversion and reproduction. As a result of their extremely high rates of population growth, the proportion of Muslims in the world will continue to increase dramatically, estimated at twenty percent of the world's population at the beginning of this century, surpassing the number of Christians some years later, and probably accounting for about thirty percent of the world's population by 2025.

Since religion, however, is the principal defining characteristic of civilizations, fault line wars are almost always between peoples of different religions.

Some point, for instance, to the shared ethnicity and language, past peaceful coexistence, and extensive intermarriage of Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia, and dismiss the religious factor. That judgment, however, is rooted in secular myopia. Millennia of human history have shown that religion is not a "small difference" but possibly the most profound difference that can exist between people. The frequency, intensity, and violence of fault line wars are greatly enhanced by beliefs in different gods.

In the source of the fault line war, multiple identities fade and the identity most meaningful in relation to the conflict comes to dominate. The identity almost always is defined by religion. If in a local war between two African tribes, one tribe can define itself as Muslim and the other as Christian, the former can hope to be bolstered by Saudi

money, Afghan mujahedeen, and Iranian weapons and military advisers, while the latter can look for Western economic and humanitarian aid and political and diplomatic support from Western governments.

Europeans universally acknowledge the fundamental significance of the dividing line between Western Christendom, on the one hand, and orthodoxy and Islam, on the other. The American secretary of state in the mid-90's, in speaking of the Balkans, said, American "would not recognize any fundamental divide among the Catholic, Orthodox, and Islamic parts of Europe." Those who do not recognize fundamental divides, however, are doomed to be frustrated by them. Being oblivious to the shifting balance of power between the United States and East Asian societies resulted in, time and again during the 1900's, of administration leaders proclaiming goals with respect to trade, human rights, nuclear proliferation, and other issues that the administration was incapable of realizing. Overall, the U.S. government has had extraordinary difficulty adapting to an era in which global politics is shaped by cultural and civilizational tides.

Some Americans have promoted multiculturalism at home; some have promoted universalism abroad; and some have done both. Multiculturalism at home threatens the United States and the West; universalism abroad threatens the West and the world. Both deny the uniqueness of Western culture. The global monoculturalist wants to make the world like America. The domestic multiculturalist wants to make America like the world. A multicultural America is impossible, because a non-Western America is not American. The multicultural world is unavoidable because global empire is impossible. The preservation of the United States and the West requires the renewal of Western identity. The security of the world requires acceptance of global multiculturality. Thankfully, there are signs of recent progress in both these areas.

As many have pointed out, the world's major religions—Western Christianity, Orthodoxy, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism—also share key values in common. If humans are ever to develop a universal civilization, it will emerge gradually through the exploration and expansion of these commonalities. Thus, in addition to the abstentia rule and the joint mediation rule, the third rule for peace in a multicivilizational world is the commonalities rule—people in all civilizations should search for and attempt to expand the values, institutions, and practices they have in common with peoples of other civilizations.

Haven't we heard these rules before? Don't stick your nose in somebody else's business. Talk out problems and help others to do the same—don't fight. Build friendships based on common characteristics and interests. Thanks, Mom and Dad.