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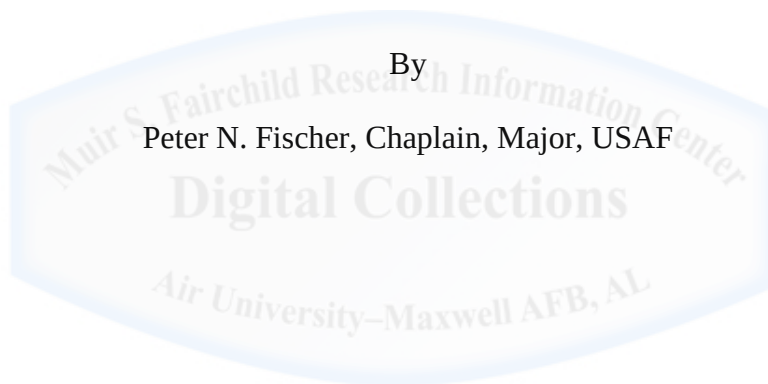
AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

WHERE ARE THE VOICES OF REASON AND HOPE?

By

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Submitted to Dr. Rebecca Oxford
In partial fulfillment of Demystifying Jihad

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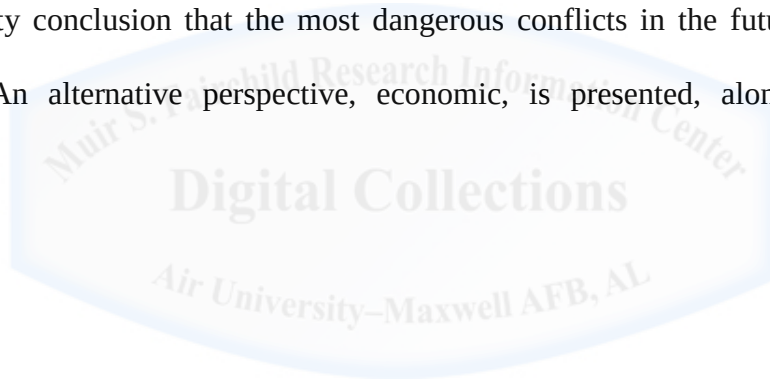
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Abstract

This paper is a critique of Samuel Huntington's book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. His writing is first placed within its historical context, specifically as a response to Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis. An overview of the book, section by section, follows. Arguments by authors from various cultures who responded to Huntington's book and related article ("The Clash of Civilizations?") are reviewed to find common themes, resulting in three main sets of criticisms: (1) the error of viewing civilizations as monolithic units, (2) the ethnocentric perspective displayed throughout the work, and (3) the faulty conclusion that the most dangerous conflicts in the future will be between civilizations. An alternative perspective, economic, is presented, along with concluding thoughts.



The Market is Mightier than the Musket:

Analysis of Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" Thesis

*The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations.*¹

--Samuel P. Huntington

Introduction

With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, the decades-long Cold War officially ended, leaving political scientists and foreign policy pundits scrambling to find a new paradigm to describe the international world order that was emerging. Among those who offered possible new constructs to international relations, two prominent thinkers stand out: Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington. Kunihiro Imai discussed these two theorists:

Just when the end of the Cold War seemed to have ushered us into what Francis Fukuyama (1989) called "The End of History"—making democratization of countries the main focus of attention among scholars and politicians—Huntington (re)introduced the age-old culturalist thesis about the sources of conflicts by drawing our attention to the "inevitable" clash between civilizations.²

Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis predicted the end of the division of peoples along ideological lines (e.g., liberal democracy vs. communism) and the beginning of a new division along civilizational lines (e.g., Islamic vs. Western). According to Huntington's theory, the most dangerous conflicts in the future will not be between states, but rather between civilizations. His thesis is flawed on three points: (1) civilizations are not monolithic, (2) his argument is ethnocentric, and (3) the most deadly conflicts are *intra*-civilizational and not *inter*-civilizational.

Understanding the Context

My critique of Huntington's book, *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), must be understood in context. The book was actually an extension of an article he had written for *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 titled, "Clash of Civilizations?" The article was partly a

response to a 1989 article by Francis Fukuyama titled, “The End of History?” Huntington and Fukuyama were witnessing what later would be called the “collapse” of the Soviet Union. However, each had very different ideas about what this meant for the future of international politics. To Fukuyama, what was happening was

...not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but 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.³

It was to this idea, the universalization of western liberal democracy (further elaborated in Fukuyama's 1992 book titled *The End of History and the Last Man*), to which Huntington was primarily responding. For Fukuyama, during the 20th century the ideologies of fascism (e.g., Germany and Japan in World War II) and then communism (U.S.S.R. and Red China) had been raised successively and failed miserably or, in the case of China, at least begun to adopt more liberal democratic principles.⁴ Thus, liberal democracy was the survivor of this great struggle and the sole heir of all human governments, the end of human “ideological evolution.”⁵

For Fukuyama, this new form of government (liberal democracy) “that emerges at the end of history” is

...*liberal* insofar as it recognizes and protects through a system of law man's universal right to freedom, and *democratic* insofar as it exists only with the consent of the governed.⁶ [italics added for emphasis]

This movement of human history toward a utopian society is posited in opposition to a more static, naturalistic perspective which holds that humanity has essentially retained the same tendencies from the beginning of recorded history. To Fukuyama's rose-colored view (i.e., the West has the *ultimate* form of human government) Samuel Huntington introduces his “clash of civilizations” anti-thesis, *anti-* in the sense that it is against Fukuyama's view of the new world order.⁷

Huntington writes his thesis from this traditional, realist perspective. He argues that Fukuyama's "universal civilization requires universal *power*" [italics added] and that no such state or civilization exists on the planet today. In fact, the closest that any government came was the Roman Empire, which "created a near-universal civilization within the limited confines of the Classical world" primarily through brute military force (i.e. power).⁸ Huntington's realist perspective also appears when he is discussing economic cooperation between civilizations (an anomaly from his theory), which he explains away as a means of balancing power within a region.⁹ However, in a sort of new spin, rather than asserting that states balance the power of other states (in a traditional, realist perspective), for Huntington, "[c]ountries tend to bandwagon with countries of similar culture...to balance against countries with which they lack cultural commonality."¹⁰ The Warsaw Pact and NATO are thus replaced by civilizations.

The two authors do agree on one thing: "The struggle between two opposing systems is no longer a determining tendency of the present-day era."¹¹ However, that is where the similarities of their theories end. In fact, Huntington declares emphatically that the universalism of Western liberal democracy is a false notion; for him, Fukuyama is absolutely incorrect.

In the emerging world of ethnic conflict and civilizational clash, Western belief in the universality of Western culture suffers three problems: it is false; it is immoral; and it is dangerous.¹²

Book Overview

Huntington's basic thesis is "that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilization identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world."¹³ In short, with the end of the Cold War "[t]he rivalry of the superpowers" has been "replaced by the clash of civilizations."¹⁴ When Huntington first wrote his ideas in the article published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 ("Clash of Civilizations?"), it sparked

a significant amount of discussion. The response was so visceral toward his article that he felt the need to more fully explain his ideas in an expanded format. His 321 page book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, was published three years later in 1996 and has gone on to be a New York Times bestseller and contains five sections. Each section of the book will be explored, followed by three-pronged critique of the entire book.

A World of Civilizations

In the first major division, “A World of Civilizations,” Huntington argues that the “most important groupings of states are no longer the three blocks of the Cold War but rather the world’s seven or eight major civilizations.”¹⁵ Huntington then reviews what he identifies as the four currents (as of his writing in 1996) views of the post- Cold War world. He calls these four theories “maps or paradigms of the world politics.” These dominant perspectives are as follows:

- 1) *One World* (Euphoria and Harmony - Francis Fukuyama);¹⁶
- 2) *Two Worlds* (Us and Them);¹⁷
- 3) *184 States, More or Less* (realist theory – states are the primary actors);¹⁸
- 4) *Sheer Chaos* (anarchy).¹⁹

Exploring each of these approaches to international relations, Huntington concludes that none of them gives an accurate view of the post bi-polar world. To support his theory, he asserts that “human history is the history of civilizations.”²⁰ It is “civilizations” (Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Great Britain, etc.) that have been predominant over the recorded history of mankind, and it is “religion” with language as a close second that is the most important factor of civilization.²¹ As Huntington puts it, “Westphalian separation of religion and international politics, an idiosyncratic product of Western civilization, is coming to an end.”²²

Those sharing common religion and language will gravitate together, forming once again great blocks of civilizations based not upon ideologies such as communism or liberal democracy, but rather common culture. Civilizations are “the ultimate human tribes.”²³ Religion plays a key

role in Huntington's clash of civilization theory. However, there is an inherent danger to this oversimplistic approach, as Graham Fuller cautions, "it's important to remember how easily religion can be invoked even when other long-standing grievances are to blame." In other words, religion is often not the real issue, but rather, the ubiquitous symbols and language of religion are used as a rallying cry for a pre-existing political, economic, or other concern. Having defined what a civilization is and the key factors (religion and language), Huntington offers a list of what he believes are the seven "major contemporary civilizations" with Africa obviously absent. He argues that there is no monolithic African culture (e.g. language, religion) binding the countries of that continent together. Thus, Huntington's seven civilizations are:

- [1] Sinic (based on Confucianism),
- [2] Japanese,
- [3] Hindu,
- [4] Islamic,
- [5] Orthodox,
- [6] Western, and
- [7] Latin American.

The Shifting Balance of Civilizations

In his next section, "The Shifting Balance of Civilizations," Huntington argues that the decline (or at least relative decline) of Western civilization has started. The non-Western world has begun its "rejection of the West and of the secular, relativistic, degenerate culture associated with the West."²⁴ As other civilizations (especially the Sinic and Islamic) have seen increased economic growth they have begun to "stress the superiority of their cultures to Western culture."²⁵ This is in opposition to previous centuries in which Western wealth, power, and influence was something that others wanted to emulate. Now, with the vastly increased revenue from petroleum (Islamic civilization) and manufactured goods (Sinic civilization) these cultures no longer look to the West as a model upon which to build their own societies, but rather feel that the West should take lessons from their phenomenal growth. As Huntington puts it, to "the

East Asians economic prosperity is proof of moral superiority... Cultural assertion follows material success; hard power generates soft power.”²⁶ In similar fashion, he argues that

the oil boom of the 1970s...greatly increased the wealth and power of many Muslim nations and enabled them to reverse relationships of domination and subordination that had existed with the West...Just as Western wealth had previously been seen as the evidence of the superiority of Western culture, oil wealth was seen as evidence of the superiority of Islam.²⁷

The Emerging Order of Civilizations

In this section of the book, “The Emerging Order of Civilizations”, Huntington lays out his theory of “concentric circles” of countries within a civilization.²⁸ At the center is a “core” state or couple of states (e.g., Russia and the Ukraine for the Orthodox, China for the Sinic).²⁹ Core states provide neighboring, like-minded states with “both support and discipline.”³⁰ Here, he seems to contradict himself as he lists Germany and France as core states for Europe, yet later in the book he clearly implies that the United States is the core state for the West. Yet, Europe and the U.S. are all part of the Western civilization. So the question remains: Which country is the core for the Western civilization? Additionally, it is difficult to conceive of China as the core state for Taiwan and South Korea although, according to Huntington’s theory, that is exactly what China is supposed to be.

Clashes of Civilizations

In the next portion of his work, “Clashes of Civilizations,” Huntington makes additional predictions of future clashes between civilizations, specifically, among “the interaction of Western arrogance...Islamic intolerance, and Sinic assertiveness.”³¹ Thus, if his theory is to be validated, conflicts between the West on the one hand and Islamic states and China on the other are future flash-points.

Certainly, one could argue that Iraq and Afghanistan support his theory. Huntington himself writes of the U.S. invasion of Iraq (Desert Storm, 1990-1991), arguing that “[f]or Muslims the war thus quickly became a war between civilizations, in which the inviolability of Islam was at stake.”³² However, other than Al Qaida’s limited terrorist activities, there was no inter-state Islamic assault upon Western civilization. Additionally, it is doubtful that anyone would argue that Iraq had intended to lead an Islamic civilizational attack against the West. Rather, it appears Iraq was a totalitarian state attempting to flex its regional muscles as it jockeyed with Iran to become the hegemon of the Middle East. It is unlikely that Saddam Hussein expected a full-on invasion from the West when he rolled his forces across the Kuwaiti border in a misguided attempt to annex that land to Iraq. Regardless, the invasion of Iraq did not kick-off the Islamic/Western civilizational conflict predicted by Huntington’s theory.

As for Afghanistan, once again it was Al Qaida, and not necessarily the Taliban, that “picked a fight” with the United States. It is difficult to see Afghanistan representing a war of civilizations when a small band of radicals from one civilization unsuccessfully attempted to draw the rest of their Islamic civilization into a battle with the West, even after the West has invaded one of their civilization’s states. Contrary to what most Americans may believe, the Islamic world has actually shown great restraint on the issues of Iraq and Afghanistan. Although a few groups have responded, Islamic states as a whole (to include Iran, Syria and Egypt) have done little or nothing to rally against the invading forces from the Western civilization. As Mattox put it in 2002, rather than a clash of civilizations we see

...a welcome albeit negative development, that such a wider clash shows no signs of developing. Opposition to and criticism of U. S. policies have surfaced as a consequence of the Afghan campaign, but nothing serious or sustained, nothing remotely like a forerunner of a collision between Islam with its more than a billion adherents on the one hand and the West led by the United States on the other.³³

In fact, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and other Islamic nations have cooperated with the West, even allowing International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) to be stationed on their soil or, in the case of Pakistan, allowing ISAF supplies to move through their territory. Thus, neither the experience of Iraq/Kuwait nor that of Afghanistan is consistent with the “clash of civilizations” theory of Huntington.

The Future of Civilizations

In the final section of the book, “The Future of Civilizations,” Huntington reviews the various stages or life-cycles through which civilizations pass. The fall of the West as a civilization appears inevitable, but it can be slowed if “North America and Europe renew their moral life, build on their cultural commonality, and develop close forms of economic and political integration.”³⁴ He asserts that the value of Western culture is not its universal application (the end of history thesis) but rather its “uniqueness.”³⁵ At this point, he moves on to discuss several likely future scenarios based upon his theory, none of which have materialized (e.g. the reunification of the Korean peninsula and China with Taiwan, and U.S. military presence significantly reduced in Japan).

However, the single largest problem with Huntington’s thesis is not his failed predictions of Asian unity; rather it is the notion that the sharpest disagreements in the post-Cold War world will be between those groups that are most distinct (i.e. *inter-civilization*) rather than from groups which are close (i.e. *intra-civilization*), as discussed later.

Some of the results of Huntington’s work have been fruitful. Seeing the international world through the lens of civilizations is another way of looking at the influence of culture on the world. Since Huntington’s writing, a much greater awareness of the role of religion in culture, politics, and international relations has been acknowledged in the West. However, just as his

ideas can be used to bring about better understanding between nations, they can also be used to divide, as shown by three general criticisms of Huntington's book.

Difficulty 1. Monolithic Myth

A major problem in Huntington's work is what Andrei Tsygankov calls the Islamic "monolithic myth."³⁶ Huntington's entire thesis is based upon the affinity of super-national structures which he calls civilizations. The problem with this idea is that it assumes a natural and strong affinity across the civilizations which Huntington has identified (see list of seven civilizations above). However, this is not always the case.³⁷ The idea of a monolithic solidarity is not even true at the state level, let alone at the civilizational level. In the case of the supposed "Islamic civilization," the idea that Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Indonesia, and Iran—simply because they have majority Muslim populations—are all part of a unified "Islamic civilization" is simply not true. As Kunihiro Imai puts it,

Careful analyses of the Muslim world would reveal enormous diversities among the Islamic states....[;] an all-encompassing, culturally deterministic view, such as that expressed by Huntington, faces an empirical challenge.³⁸

The same could be said of the West. A look at the political landscape of the United States illustrates this point well. In a Gallup Poll taken in 2010 Americans self-identified as 42% conservative, 35% moderate and 20% as liberal, and this is just one nation within the "Western civilization" as described by Huntington.³⁹ Arshin Adib-Moghaddam writes of Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis:

By necessity of its exclusionary demeanour [*sic*], this type of discourse sets boundaries, contracts the various forms of the other, erects total systems instead of hybrid structures, and produces and determines *false monoliths*: 'the Orient', 'the east', Islam on one side, and Christianity, the Occident, 'the west' on the other.⁴⁰ [*italics added*]

Instead of separate, distinct civilizations as suggested by Huntington's thesis, history shows significant interaction, flow, and interchange of people and ideas across cultural lines. Richard Bulliet notes the "massive transfer of culture, science, and technology" from the Islamic civilization to the west between 1095-1250 C.E. This transfer included Arabic numerals, algebra, commentaries on ancient Greek philosophy (which the Islamic civilization received from the Byzantine civilization), chemistry, medicine, and the West's university system, which was molded after "Muslim madrasas."⁴¹ It is because of this history of shared ideas and culture that Bulliet argues for an "Islamo-Christian civilization model" instead of Huntington's "the West against the rest." Interestingly, in Bulliet's view, "Islam and the West are historical twins" who have more to bind them than separate them.⁴²

To illustrate his point, Bulliet explores the idea of the currently ubiquitous term "Judeo-Christian," which is often used interchangeably with the term "Western." (Judeo-Christian culture or civilization is seen as synonymous with Western culture or civilization.)⁴³ He notes that as recently as the 19th and 20th centuries in the United States (e.g., Henry Ford and Harry Truman) and across Europe during most of the "past two thousand years" there has been little affinity between Jews and Christians. In fact, anti-Semitism has been present and has been vicious and bloody at times. Yet this has not doomed these two great civilizations – although Huntington does not list Israel or the Jews as a distinct "civilization" – to forever live at odds with one another. In the same way, Bulliet envisions a future "Islamo-Christian" culture especially since the Islamic-Christian interaction over the past 14 centuries has been much less violent and deadly than that between Christians and Jews. Bulliet argues that if the U.S. (core state of the West) came to embrace Jewish citizens into their civilization, why not members of the third Abrahamic faith, Islam?

Difficulty 2. Ethnocentrism

Another criticism of Huntington's work is that it is at best ethnocentric, and at worst, outright biased. Huntington argues that a central purpose of his writing is to refute the universalism of Western culture; he states that "...Western civilization is valuable not because it is universal but because it is unique."⁴⁴ He even acknowledges how Fukuyama's ideas are perceived outside of the West, noting "[w]hat is universalism to the West is imperialism to the rest."⁴⁵ However, in spite of this apparent understanding of the imperialistic tendencies of the West's past, some of Huntington's statements can only be understood as offensive generalizations. For example, when explaining why Australia will never become part of the Asian culture, Huntington writes, "...Asians generally pursue their goals with others in ways which are subtle, indirect, modulated, *devious*, nonjudgmental, *non-moralistic*, and non-confrontational"⁴⁶ [italics added]. Concerning Islamic civilization he says, "[w]herever one looks along the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peaceably with their neighbors"⁴⁷, and (in spite of nations such as Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and many others) he writes, "the idea of sovereign nation states is incompatible with belief in the sovereignty of Allah and the primacy of the *ummah* [global Muslim community]."⁴⁸

Others have noted this ethnocentric bias as well. Andrei Tsygankov writes that Huntington's "vision involves a familiar ethnocentric bias toward the outside world."⁴⁹ Bulliet argues that the very phrase "clash of civilizations," the heart of Huntington's theory, embodies Islamophobia and should be "retired from public discourse before the people who like to use it actually begin to believe it."⁵⁰ Because of the plethora of anti-Islamic comments peppered through-out Huntington's book, Seifudein Hussien questions the entire work saying,

Huntington's approach lacks objectivity in that it is openly anti-Islamic....
Underlying the normative foundation of his narrative is his belief that other

‘civilizations’ are inferior or inimical to that of the West and should be kept in check by any means.⁵¹

Huntington calls U.S. citizens and policy makers to reject “the divisive siren calls of multiculturalism” and embrace our Western civilization.⁵² This comment sounds eerily familiar, as it contains the same tone and message as the isolationist call coming from the radical right within Islam and suggests a dangerous movement backward in U.S. policies.

Difficulty 3. Intra vs. Inter-Civilization Conflict

The final and most significant critique of Huntington’s work concerns his statement that “...the central and most dangerous dimensions of the emerging global politics [will] be conflict between groups from differing civilizations.”⁵³ Huntington claims that the Cold-War era of the great ideological conflict between communism and liberal democracy was an anomaly in the history of humanity, because “[t]hroughout history civilizations have provided the broadest identification for people.”⁵⁴ With the collapse of the Soviet Union, once again, history is returning to its normative, stable status where civilizations are center stage. It follows that the fault lines of major conflicts will move from the interaction of the great Cold-War powers to the great civilizations. However, this has not been true in the past, nor has it been the case since writing of Huntington’s thesis in 1993.

Historically, it is not *inter*-civilizational conflicts that have been the most lethal, but rather, *intra*-civilizational conflicts. Mao Tse Tung and Joseph Stalin, two people responsible for more deaths than any other humans on the planet, both killed far more of their own citizens than members of other civilizations. World Wars I and II both began as *intra*-civilizational conflicts that spread to other civilizations. One author, Errol Henderson, studied conflicts between 1989 and 1996 and concluded that “most ethnopolitical conflicts...were clashes *within* civilizations in a post-Cold War era that witnesses the cessation of more of these conflicts than the origination of

new ones [italics added].”⁵⁵ With few exceptions (e.g., the Mongol invasions), the deadliest conflicts have been members of a civilization killing, slaughtering, or attempting genocide (e.g., Tutsi and Hutu) of their fellow civilization members. Seifudein Hussien points out:

[h]ad civilizational conflict been the major lines along which the post-Cold War battles were to be fought, as Huntington’s main hypothesis hints, it would be inconceivable for a Sunni Muslim Iraq to invade a fellow Sunni Muslim Kuwait in the first place. Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was unjustifiable. And yet the conflict and the acrimonious relationship between the two represented a quarrel between two Arab states or, to put it even more precisely, a family quarrel within one ‘nation’: an Arab nation.⁵⁶

Even Huntington seems to briefly acknowledge the inconsistency of his idea that the world is returning to a past of inter-civilization conflict when he writes, “[i]n the past Christians killed fellow Christians...in massive numbers.”⁵⁷

This can also be seen within the Islamic civilization. In his review of Reza Aslan’s article “No God but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam,” Wallace Daniels writes,

...the primary struggle lies not between civilizations but within them, in this case within Islam itself. He [Aslan] portrays Islam as a complex mosaic of ideas and beliefs, not as a one-dimensional religion bent on war and violence... The young terrorists aimed their actions as much at their own community and especially at the internal battle going on there over the idea of a pluralistic Islam as much as they were "part of the Jihadist war against the West."⁵⁸

Thus, in disputes involving groups that are close but distinct (e.g., Shia and Sunnis Muslims, the Hutu and the Tutsi), each group is claiming to be the true representative of that civilization, faith community or culture and is thus in competition with *others* making the same claim.

Groups that are very distinct (e.g., Buddhist and Christian, Hindus and Jews, Ethiopians and Egyptians, etc.) are not competing to represent the same civilization, culture or faith but instead are clearly distinct and tend to be in conflict with each other less often. Huntington’s argument goes counter to this theory, arguing that the more different the groups, the more dangerous and violent the conflicts will be. His thesis also flies in the face of a century of war where Mao,

Stalin, and Hitler have all caused tremendous human suffering not from inter-civilizational conflict, but rather through intra-civilizational wars and genocide.

What's more, religion has not been the prime motivator for these conflicts. As Fuller puts it, "virtually every one of the principal horrors of the 20th century came almost exclusively from strictly secular regimes: Leopold II of Belgium in the Congo, Hitler, Mussolini, Lenin and Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot."⁵⁹ Fuller, a well informed author and "former vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council at the CIA in charge of long-range strategic forecasting," suggests that if one "remove[s] Islam from the path of history...the world ends up exactly where it is today."⁶⁰ He argues that the struggles in the Middle East are really about "power, territory, influence, and trade" and that these issues "existed long before Islam arrived" in the area.⁶¹ He argues that the animosity which has existed between the Orthodox and Western Christian churches for the past one-thousand years would still be in place today if Islam had never entered the landscape of human history. For Fuller, the clash between the West and the Middle East is much less about religion or even modernity. Instead, he says,

...it is about the unceasing Western quest for domination of the strategic space, resources, and even culture of the Muslim world—the drive to create a "pro-American" Middle East. Unfortunately, the United States naïvely assumes that Islam is all that stands between it and the prize.⁶²

Fuller asserts that blaming religion is an oversimplification of the situation. As he puts it, "[h]ow comfortable to identify Islam as the source of 'the problem'; it's certainly much easier than exploring the impact of the massive global footprint of the world's sole superpower."⁶³

Why does it even matter? What is the difference if Huntington (or Fukuyama for that matter) is right or wrong? Ideas *do* matter. Ideas, often expressed in books, come along which change the course of human events. Works like *The Prince* by Machiavelli and *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx's sparked international changes whose effects are still felt today. It is

still too early to tell if such will be the case for Samuel Huntington's work, *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. However, already his theories appear to have had an influence on U.S. foreign policy, at least during the Presidency of George W. Bush.⁶⁴ Mark Salter points out that the nations included in President Bush's "axis of evil" are in fact an exact mirror of Huntington's "Islamic–Confucian alliance." Abdullah Al-Ahsan puts it this way,

The clash of civilizations thesis, first formulated by Bernard Lewis and popularized by Samuel Huntington in the 1990s was, in the course of time, embraced by President George W. Bush for execution, virtually making it the cornerstone of US foreign policy during the early years of the 21st century.⁶⁵

Clearly, Huntington has found an influential audience for his ideas. The problem is that Huntington's view of the post-Cold War world, although somewhat helpful, is too simplistic and in one key point, simply wrong; it is not *inter*-civilizational conflict that will be the most dangerous in the new global order, but rather *intra*-civilizational conflicts that hold this dubious distinction.

Conclusion

So, if the world is not being divided along civilizational lines or along ideological lines, and if we have not in fact reached "the end of history," what is the new world order? What unites and divides people in the post-Cold War world? It appears that the best answer to that question is economics. Perhaps Thomas Friedman was right about his McDonald's thesis. This is the idea that no two countries with McDonald's have ever gone to war against each other, because the existence of a McDonald's indicates a large middle-class that would have little taste for war (although the theory had its first exception when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008).⁶⁶ States are still primary actors, but economics and not ideology (or civilizations) will generate the fault lines and alliances. Seifudein Hussien applies this idea to the Middle East, writing, "Iraq's invasion of Kuwait at another level points to the primacy of economics rather than culture or civilization" in

the new world order.⁶⁷ In his study on the democratization of countries between the years of 1980 and 2003, Kunihiro Imai found that “the internationalization of a country’s economy shows a clear influence on the extent of the country’s democracy” (the McDonald’s theory?).⁶⁸ The Russian author Andrei Tsyankov reaches a similar conclusion, writing, “In today’s world, geoeconomics has gained an upper hand over geopolitics and, thus, Russia must defend its national interests primarily by economic means.”⁶⁹

This being the case, it seems the best way forward is not to rally the wagons to protect our “unique” civilizations (as Huntington and the extreme Wahhabis would suggest); but rather open the floodgates of international trade. Just as former President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger skillfully turned a former enemy, China, into one of our greatest trade partners, so too, increased trade with the Middle East has built and will continue to build peaceful relations. It has been said that the pen is mightier than the sword. Perhaps today it would be better stated: the market is mightier than the musket.

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. (NY: Simon & Schuster: NY, 1996), 28; also, much earlier, Basil Mathews, *Young Islam on Trek: A Study in the Clash of Civilizations* (NY: Friendship Press, 1926).

2. Kunihiro Imai, “Culture, Civilization, or Economy? Test of the Clash of Civilizations Thesis,” *International Journal on World Peace* 23(3) (2006): 3.

3. Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest* (Summer 1989): 3-19.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 66.

8. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 91.

9. Ibid., 128.

10. Ibid., 155.

11. Fukuyama, “The End of History?”

12. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 310.

13. Ibid., 20.

14. Ibid., 28.

15. The “three blocks” are a reference to (1) the West and its allies, (2) the Soviet Union and its allies, and (3) the non-aligned or “third world,” Ibid., 21.

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16. Ibid., 31.
 17. Ibid., 32.
 18. Ibid., 33.
 19. Ibid., 35.
 20. Ibid., 40.
 21. Ibid., 42.
 22. Ibid., 54.
 23. Ibid., 43, 207.
 24. Ibid., 101.
 25. Ibid., 102.
 26. Ibid., 109.
 27. Ibid., 116.
 28. Ibid., 155.
 29. Ibid., 156.
 30. Ibid., 156.
 31. Ibid., 183.
 32. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 249.
 33. Henry Mattox, "A Clash of Civilizations—Real? Potential?," *American Diplomacy*, 7(1) (2002): 1. . http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2002_01-03/editor_clash/editor_clash.html
 34. Ibid., 308.
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