

## Clash of Civilizations review

Clash of civilizations is copyrighted 1996, 30 years ago. It expresses ideas that are amazingly prescient, yet so politically incorrect that he might have had a hard time publishing it today.

### Definition of a civilization

Huntington notes that humanity has always divided itself between us and them. People like us on the rest, in a hierarchy more or less like this:

- Family
- Clan
- region, a geography usually defined by a common dialect
- nation, an aggregation of regions usually defined by a common language
- civilization, the broadest entity sharing somewhat common values, mores, religion and ways of life.

Though Huntington does not evoke evolution, gene pools within a species have always competed against one another to control resources, usually defined by territory. No species, certainly not humanity, could have evolved without competition and conflict between groups at each of the levels named above.

### The Civilizations

Though division of humanity into civilizations is of course arbitrary, the eight that Huntington identifies certainly makes sense. They are, east to west, with the most distinct ones in regular text, less distinctly different in italics:

1. Japanese
2. Chinese, or Sinic
3. Hindu / Indian
4. *Orthodox Christian*
5. Islamic
6. *African*
7. Western European
8. *Latin American*

They are not, could not be, comparable attribute by attribute. Japan is a civilization unto itself. Africa remains splintered tribally, with far greater differences among them than other civilizations. There is no core Latin American, Islamic or African nation comparable to United States, Japan, China and Russia for the others.

Huntington says that the idea of an “End of History” proposed by his colleague Francis Fukuyama is a myopic Western misconception. Western civilization, the thought went, was so dominant militarily, economically and politically that we Westerners came to believe that the other peoples of the world would come around to our way of seeing things. Huntington wrote forcefully that this was not so, and predicted the problems that this misconception, especially cherished by the United States, would bring over the next few decades.

Among the areas of difference that Huntington cites are:

1. Religion, and the tenacity with which it is held. Islam is by far the most powerful religion in terms of its hold on its civilization. Huntington writes:

To a very large degree, the major civilizations in human history have been closely identified with the world’s great religions; and people who share ethnicity and language but differ in religion may slaughter each other, as happened in Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia, and the [Indian] Subcontinent.

2. Individuality, prized far more highly by Western civilization than the others. The corollaries of individuality are free speech, freedom of religion, toleration of homosexuality, economic freedom, and freedom of migration.
3. All other civilizations expect an individual to feel more obligation to family and clan than do westerners.

Writers such as Richard Lynn, Tatu VanHänen, Helmuth Nyborg and Edward Dutton note that within the different civilizations, evolution has produced different patterns of hormones, different average levels of personality traits such as aggressiveness, openness and the like, and different levels of intelligence. Different peoples have evolved genetic makeups suited to what is called their environment of evolutionary adaptiveness. While Huntington does not address intelligence, he notes its manifestations and describes personality differences. East Asians needed to survive in cold climates with unforgiving soil. Africans needed to survive parasites, predators, and constant battle. Cultures and genomes coevolved within the different civilizations, and they are significantly different.

At the broadest level the Confucian ethos pervading many Asian societies stressed the values of authority , hierarchy , the subordination of individual rights and interests , the importance of consensus , the avoidance of confrontation , “ saving face , ” and , in general , the supremacy of the state over society and of society over the individual . In addition , Asians tended to think of the evolution of their societies in terms of centuries and millennia and to give priority to maximizing long - term gains . These attitudes contrasted with the primacy in American beliefs of liberty , equality , democracy , and individualism , and the American propensity to distrust government , oppose authority , promote checks and balances , encourage competition , sanctify human rights , and to forget the past , ignore the future ,

and focus on maximizing immediate gains . The sources of conflict are in fundamental differences in society and culture.

...Deep imperatives within American culture , however , impel the United States to be at least a nanny if not a bully in international affairs , and as a result American expectations were increasingly at odds with Asian ones .

Huntington does not separate the mestizo populations of Latin America from the European-descended North Americans. Such a distinction is not important in this work, because there are no clashes beyond illegal immigration. The violence that it engenders echoes the violence within the mestizo populations of those countries. It is generally not organized or systematic at a national level.

Political leaders imbued with the hubris to think that they can fundamentally reshape the culture of their societies are destined to fail.

Political leaders can make history but they cannot escape history. They produce torn countries ; they do not create Western societies. They infect their country with a cultural schizophrenia which becomes its continuing and defining characteristic.

## Orthodox Civilization's divide: Russia and Ukraine

Huntington distinguishes between Orthodox and Western Christianity. Living in Ukraine, I the reviewer would make a bigger demarcation along the borders of the Mongol Horde. Putin is fighting the current war like a Mongol, bloodthirsty, cruel, employing terror and torture, and indifferent to his own vast manpower losses. Ukraine, in contrast, has taken a thoroughly Western approach, being markedly more humane towards both its own soldiers and Russians, both soldiers and civilians.

This line dates back to the division of the Roman Empire in the fourth century and to the creation of the Holy Roman Empire in the tenth century. It has been in roughly its current place for at least five hundred years. Beginning in the north, it runs along what are now the borders between Finland and Russia and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and Russia, through western Belarus, through Ukraine separating the Uniate west from the Orthodox east, through Romania between Transylvania with its Catholic Hungarian population and the rest of the country, and through the former Yugoslavia along the border separating Slovenia and Croatia from the other republics. In the Balkans, of course, this line coincides with the historical division between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires.

Huntington places Russia and eastern Ukraine – the left bank of the Dnipro River – in the Orthodox civilization. The decades immediately following publication would have supported that view. The industrial oblasts of the Donbas were of course Orthodox. Moreover, they were predominantly

Russian-speaking, having been populated by Russians brought in, among other things, to work in the coal and metallurgical industries that did not interest the native Ukrainian agriculturalists. He wrote:

A statist paradigm, for instance, leads John Mearsheimer to predict that “the situation between Ukraine and Russia is ripe for the outbreak of security competition between them. Great powers that share a long and unprotected common border, like that between Russia and Ukraine, often lapse into competition driven by security fears. Russia and Ukraine might overcome this dynamic and learn to live together in harmony, but it would be unusual if they do.”

A civilizational approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the close cultural, personal, and historical links between Russia and Ukraine and the intermingling of Russians and Ukrainians in both countries, and focuses instead on the civilizational fault line that divides Orthodox eastern Ukraine from Uniate western Ukraine, a central historical fact of long standing which, in keeping with the “realist” concept of states as unified and self - identified entities, Mearsheimer totally ignores. While a statist approach highlights the possibility of a Russian - Ukrainian war, a civilizational approach minimizes that and instead highlights the possibility of Ukraine splitting in half, a separation which cultural factors would lead one to predict might be more violent than that of Czechoslovakia but far less bloody than that of Yugoslavia. These different predictions, in turn, give rise to different policy priorities. Mearsheimer’s statist prediction of possible war and Russian conquest of Ukraine leads him to support Ukraine’s having nuclear weapons. A civilizational approach would encourage cooperation between Russia and Ukraine, urge Ukraine to give up its nuclear weapons, promote substantial economic assistance and other measures to help maintain Ukrainian unity and independence, and sponsor contingency planning for the possible breakup of Ukraine.

However, the heavy-handedness of the Donbas oligarchs and strongmen such as Akhmetov, Kholomoisky and Yanukovich was off-putting. Even residents of Donbas and Crimea were attracted to the more liberal politics of western Ukraine. Crimea’s Moslem Tatars, who had long suffered under the Russians, were eager to be treated with respect. The people of Donbas were thus torn between east and west. Their post-2014 experience soured them on Russia. The most capable people fled west, leaving primarily the elderly and the inept. The civilizational divide, in the opinion of this reviewer, shifted eastward, at least to Ukraine’s de facto border, and probably to the de jure border.

With the Cold War over, NATO has one central and compelling purpose : to insure that it remains over by preventing the reimposition of Russian political and military control in Central Europe.

## Differences Huntington does not consider

As a parent in Washington D.C. I observed adoptive children from many civilizations, among them East Asian, South Asian, Muslim, African and African-American, Roma, and of course Hispanic being

brought up by white American families. Often to the chagrin of the adoptive parents, the children's personalities were in all cases somewhat characteristic of their civilizations of origin. The same could be said of Gentile children adopted into Jewish families. Peoples are different.

## Political Differences

The great political ideologies of the twentieth century include liberalism, socialism, anarchism, corporatism, Marxism, communism, social democracy, conservatism, nationalism, fascism, and Christian democracy. They all share one thing in common : they are products of Western civilization.

## The Death of the West, and evolution of civilizations

The West is increasingly concerned with its internal problems and needs, as it confronts slow economic growth, stagnating populations, unemployment, huge government deficits, a declining work ethic, low savings rates, and in many countries including the United States social disintegration, drugs, and crime. Economic power is rapidly shifting to East Asia, and military power and political influence are starting to follow. India is on the verge of economic takeoff and the Islamic world is increasingly hostile toward the West.

More broadly, the religious resurgence throughout the world is a reaction against secularism, moral relativism, and self - indulgence, and a reaffirmation of the values of order, discipline, work, mutual help, and human solidarity.

That revival is not a rejection of modernity; it is a rejection of the West and of the secular, relativistic, degenerate culture associated with the West.

## The evolution of Islam

Overall Muslims, as we mentioned, constituted perhaps 18 percent of the world's population in 1980 and are likely to be over 20 percent in 2000 and 30 percent in 2025.<sup>34</sup>

As of 2025, the estimated global percentages of major religions are approximately: Christianity (28.8%), Islam (25.6%), religiously unaffiliated (24.2%), Hinduism (14.9%), Buddhism (4.1%), and other religions (2.4%).

France has experienced a significant strand of demographic pessimism, stretching from the searing novel of Jean Raspail in the 1970s to the scholarly analysis of Jean - Claude Chesnais in the 1990s and summed up in the 1991 comments of Pierre Lellouche : " History, proximity and poverty insure that France and Europe are

destined to be overwhelmed by people from the failed societies of the south. Europe's past was white and Judeo - Christian. The future is not. "

European societies generally either do not want to assimilate immigrants or have great difficulty doing so, and the degree to which Muslim immigrants and their children want to be assimilated is unclear. Hence sustained substantial immigration is likely to produce countries divided into Christian and Muslim communities.<sup>44</sup>

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.

Conflict was, on the one hand, a product of difference, particularly the Muslim concept of Islam as a way of life transcending and uniting religion and politics versus the Western Christian concept of the separate realms of God and Caesar.

Muslims fear and resent Western power and the threat which this poses to their society and beliefs. They see Western culture as materialistic, corrupt, decadent, and immoral. They also see it as seductive, and hence stress all the more the need to resist its impact on their way of life.

In conclusion, Huntington stated emphatically thirty years ago that multiculturalism and broad-scale immigration into the west were dangerous and unworkable. This has proven to be the case. This book presents a very sharp "told you so." To quote Lord Melbourne of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with regard to immigration and diversity, "What all the wise men promised has not happened, and what the damned fools said would happen has come to pass." Enoch Powell was right.