

<p>Culture, Civilization or Religion: The Clash of What?</p>		<p>Cultural Studies</p> <p>Keywords: Culture, civilization, religion, the others.</p>
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Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to identify the relationships among culture, civilization and religion, based on the Huntington and Philips’s Clash of Civilizations. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to know the foundations of these cultures, the differences among them as well as understanding them correctly. The approach implemented in this paper is generally based on the synthesis and interdisciplinary, approaching the topic from several angles and viewpoints of different theories. The purpose of this article is to present opinions on this matter, to compare and to reach a conclusion about the differences and similarities between the concept of the clash of civilizations and cultures. This concurrent political theory war has tended to regard the identities of religion, culture, race and ethnicity as part of the old world and that these constructs have an irrelevant functioning shaping the world order in modern times. Huntington, in the Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of the World Order analyzes the contemporary conflicts, implementing that the clash of civilizations will create material for all conflict to follow. Philips, in the Clash of Civilization: An Islamic View begins his argument by looking at the importance to understand Islam from a cultural point of view because the basis of much of the current turmoil within Muslim countries and conflict with their neighbors can be attributed to cultural clashes.

1. Introduction

This paper was inspired by the appearance of two books of two American authors having the same title. Namely, we are all familiar with the title “Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of the World Order” by Samuel Huntington but, not with the title “Clash of Civilization: An Islamic View“by Bilal Philips. The approach implemented in this paper is generally based on synthesis and it is interdisciplinary, approaching the topic from several aspects and viewpoints of different theories. The aim of the paper is to express the opinions about this matter and to compare the differences and similarities between the idea of the clash of the civilizations and cultures.

2. Civilization and culture

The concepts of civilization and culture remain differently defined to the present day. Due to their interlink age, different theories appear, which result either with a merge or with a clash. Thus, the definition that prevails in German history considers that a civilization is everything that covers mechanization, technology and material factors, while a culture covers the high values, ideas and aims of intellectuality, morality and art in a society. As for the term referring out of Germany, the civilization represents a cultural overall.

However, the civilization and the culture are defining the way of living of people, both covering the attitudes, values, norms, institutions and the way of thinking of certain population. What is the term ”culture”? In the German language, the word “culture” is often distinguished from the word “civilization” and it refers to certain social field, besides religion, politics and other areas. Culture in broader sense, meaning “civilization” is used alongside with religion, politics, while the term “culture” in narrower sense, the philosophy and history are being part of this civilization. "Kampf der Kulturen" is an appropriate term for "The Clash of civilization". “Cultures” in plural refers to the plurality of cultures, thus the whole mankind does not belong only to one culture. In addition, an idea arises that among certain cultures there must be similarities and differences, since the cultures are neither strictly static, nor dynamic. Of course, this can change with the course of time. The cultures could come close in certain areas, while, in others, they can move apart. The culture represents internal unity of rules, and ways of thinking, which focuses on all areas in life, making them unrecognizable. This differentiation is noticed in almost all levels.

Köchler (2004) mentions at the beginning of the 21-st century, when the traces of the ideological rivalry between East and West are fast receding into history, the new danger to global order lies in the paradigm of a “clash of civilizations” becoming the vehicle of a “post-ideological” justification of international conflicts. If the civilizations paradigm is being used as cover for the pursuit of a policy of national interests (whether by the dominant global power

or by regional powers), everyday conflicts may acquire a quasi-metaphysical dimension, which will make conflict resolution infinitely more difficult and, according to the actio-reactio scheme of social relations referred to earlier, may further aggravate the problem of international terrorism instead of containing it.

3. The “clash” of Huntington

Huntington offers six main explanations for why civilizations will clash:

1. Differences among civilizations are too basic in that civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition, and, most important, religion. These fundamental differences are the product of centuries, so they will not soon disappear.

2. The world is becoming a smaller place. As a result, the interactions across the world are increasing, and they intensify civilization consciousness and awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations.

3. Due to the economic modernization and social change, people are separated from longstanding local identities. Instead, religion has replaced this gap, which provides a basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and unites civilizations.

4. The growth of civilization-consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the west. On the one hand, the west is at a peak of power. At the same time, a return to the roots phenomenon is occurring among non-Western civilizations. A west at the peak of its power confronts non-Western countries that increasingly have the desire, the will and the resources to shape the world in non-Western ways.

5. Cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones.

6. Economic regionalism is increasing. Successful economic regionalism will reinforce civilization-consciousness. Economic regionalism may succeed only when it is rooted in a common civilization

4. The “clash” of Philips

4.1. *Same culture of the world*

Philips argues in his “clash” that the culture of most of the world today is that of Western Europe and America. It was exported to the remainder of the world during the period of European colonization and continued during the neo-colonial era by way of indirect rule. In the twentieth century, Western culture has been promoted on a massive scale through the far-reaching effects of the media. Today, it is not surprising to find in the pages of National Geographic pictures of South American Indian youths in loin cloth in the middle of the Amazon wearing baseball caps with a Nike logo or Mongolian horsemen in the middle of the Gobi Desert wearing striped Adidas sweat pants and Reebok trainers. Western culture now represents the dominant cultural influence in most countries, both non-Muslim and Muslim. And it is the natural conflict that arises from the clash of cultures, which dominate the social and political policies in both the West and the East.

4.2. Muslims desire of Islamic law

The other quality, says Philips, is that Muslims desire that the laws that govern them be Islamic. Much of the turmoil in the Muslim world today, in Algeria, Egypt, Chechnya, Dagestan, etc., is a direct result of this desire. During the era of European colonization of the Muslim world, the colonial administration substituted European laws for Islamic law. During the neo-colonial era, Muslims who were trained by their colonial masters were given the reins of government of Muslim territories and continued to Govern according to European law.

Today, the vast majority of Muslim governments rule according to British, French, German and Dutch laws, and Muslim law is only partially applied in the area of family law. Consequently, as the wave of Islamic awareness sweeps over the Muslim world, the aspiration of Muslims for self-determination has exploded in a series of violent confrontations with existing administrations. In places like Indonesia, where since the era of Sukarno (1945 — 1965) and his successor Suharto (1968 - 1998), Pancasila, has been the state philosophy/religion taught in all schools to the population of some 200 million Indonesians, 95% of whom are Muslims. And, to suggest that Islamic law be introduced was considered an act of treason. In 1998, Suharto was finally overthrown by popular dissent. All of those who clamored for power, including Suharto’s henchman and substitute, B. J. Habibie, immediately began paying some

allegiance to Islam. And in recent elections, Sukarno's daughter, Megawati Sukarnoputri, was decisively defeated by Nahdlatul 'Ulama's 'Abdur Rahman Wahid, who is half-blind and can hardly walk.

4.3. The foundations of Western Culture

4.3.1. *The Holy Roman Empire*

The roots of Western culture can be found in Europe. Western civilization is often referred to as being a Greco-Roman civilization. It began in Greece and Rome while the rest of Europe existed in a state of savagery. However, as in the rest of Europe, their official religion was one of idolatry. The Greeks and Romans worshipped a multitude of gods, all distinguished from men by their immortality. Distorted Christianity in the form of the Roman Catholic Church ruled Europe along with temporal kings and emperors during the Middle Ages. "The Renaissance or "Re—birth" represented a casting off of the shackles of Roman Catholic dogma that had long stifled and crushed independent thought and any attempt at scientific inquiry and reform. Church scholars as well as scientists who questioned any aspect of the teachings accepted by the Roman Catholic Church-State were branded heretics and were often tortured or burned at the stake. And that period of church rule subsequently became known as "the Dark Ages." Two distinct trends in the context of religion were produced by the Renaissance movement; one of reform led by Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Calvin (1509-1564) and the other of total rejection led by the likes of Hume (1711-1776). The reform movement which became known as the Protestant movement rejected the accumulated rites, rituals and hierarchy of Roman Catholicism in an attempt to return to a purer form of Christianity. After a bitter struggle with church leaders leading to the excommunication of many reformers, a number of communities throughout Europe broke off and formed new churches in which Mary the mother of Jesus was no longer worshipped and intercession through saints was no longer sought. Priests were allowed to marry and the infallibility of the authority of the Pope was totally rejected. Rites like communion in which little pieces of bread were served to the congregation in the belief that the pieces were somehow transformed into the body of Jesus Christ, were dropped along with the use of Latin in church rites. On the other hand, the total rejection movement denied or questioned the existence of God and with it the validity of religion. It became popular among philosophical circles of that period to deny God's existence. And, for the first time in recorded history, pure atheism began to be propagated on a wide scale. At first it was done quietly, but eventually it spread and became openly stated, especially in scientific and political circles.

4.3.2. *Darwinism*

Second effect of clash is that, Darwin regarded white Europeans as more "advanced" than other human races. While Darwin presumed that man evolved from ape-like creatures, he surmised that some races developed more than others and that the latter still bore simian features. In pre-Victorian England, Darwin's thoughts about dark-skinned natives prevailed, providing new footing for racism and in turn imperialism and colonization. Darwin's views gave a pseudo-biological rationale, a sciatic veneer, to Europeans marching into the underdeveloped lands of Africa, Asia and the Pacific to plunder their peoples and their resources... Progressive imperialists explained that their mission was to civilize the natives, those backward unfortunates on the lower rungs of man's evolutionary ladder."

4.3.3. *Secular Democracy*

The third effect is that the main banner of Western Civilization today is that of secular democracy. It is held up by Western nations as the ideal for all societies of the world to follow. Since the most advanced societies, according to the Western view, are those of the West, the systems which they have developed must also be the most advanced and appropriate for modern human society. Secularism is a system of beliefs which rejects all forms of religious faith and worship. It is also the view that public education and other matters of civil policy should be conducted without the introduction of a religious element. In the medieval period, there was a strong tendency for religious persons to despise human affairs and to meditate on God and the afterlife. As a reaction to this medieval tendency, secularism, at the time of the Renaissance, exhibited itself in the development of humanism, when man began to show more interest in human cultural achievements and the possibilities of his fulfillment in this world. The movement toward secularism has been in progress during the entire course of modern history.

4.3.4. *Democracy*

Both the name and concept of democracy originated in ancient Greece. It meant “rule of the people.” In the Greek city—states, particularly Athens, slaves and women were excluded from the vote so only a minority of the inhabitants (20-30%) were active citizens.” The realities of Western democracies today are not much different. In fact, the minority which rules has become even smaller. The United States of America goes through the motions of elections, in order to give the population the illusion that it participates actively in governing itself the absence of free education from kindergarten to Ph.D. ensures that the mass of society cannot participate in government. The high cost of tertiary education also prevents most people from the lower classes from elevating themselves in society. However, if a poll were taken among American citizens, the vast majority would favor free education, free health care and subsidized housing. Free education stops at the end of high school not because it is economically impossible to continue, but because it is necessary to keep the majority dependent on the explanations of the minority. Countries like Sudan have managed to provide free education in spite of their economic difficulties. Democracy, as perceived by Western thinkers, is not merely a political tool, but a social principle and philosophy. They boldly state that “Western democracy reaches beyond the confines of government and affects all phases of human relations. Philips says that only Islam has a real alternative to Western civilization and culture. Although the Foundations of Islamic civilization are clearly in direct conflict with those of Western civilization, it does not mean that there are no common grounds. There remain many areas of good achieved by the West which Islamic civilization can benefit from as Western civilization benefited from the achievements of Muslims in the past.

5. Is there a clash of civilizations?

Considering the theories of Edward Said, John Wall, John Esposito, Ahmet Davudoglu and many others who are provoked by the controversial and provocative topic by Huntington, that clash either exists or it is imagined. However, the World Values Study conducted within the period of 1995-2002, for the first time gives opportunities for examining a lot of data connected with the theory about the clash of civilizations.

Due to the vague definition of the terms civilization and culture, that is to say, whether religion is within the civilization or not, we have an improper classification such as: Western and Islamic civilization, West and Muslims.

The comparative analysis made by Pipa Noris from the University of Harvard and Ronald Inglehart from the University of Michigan, showed that Huntington is partly right: “Culture has a great impact on the values and attitudes of people, but the point of disagreement between the West and the Muslims states is not democracy, but gender equality and sexual liberalization“.

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