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Human Rights, Asian Values, and the Clash of Civilizations

MICHAEL FREEMAN

During the Cold War a simple, bipolar model of world politics was dominant. After the Cold War, some politicians and scholars believed that the West had won, and that the Western conception of liberal democracy would become a model for the world. This view was, however, almost immediately challenged by the idea of "Asian values" proposed by certain East Asian political leaders and intellectuals. To the debate about Eastern, Western, and universal values, Samuel Huntington contributed his dramatic thesis of "the clash of civilizations." This thesis caught the attention of many scholars because it evoked both Western fears of challenges from non-Western "others" and non-Western resentment at Western cultural hegemony. The thesis also seemed consonant with the "Asian values" challenge.

This view of the Huntington thesis is, however, mistaken on several counts. First, the thesis rests on a highly implausible account of human nature and history. Second, the argument is based on a misreading of post-Cold War global politics. Third, the Huntington thesis, far from reinforcing the "Asian values" argument, is inconsistent *with it. Fourth, the "Asian values" argument is itself based on a misreading of contemporary politics. Fifth, the Huntington thesis and the "Asian values" argument are both dangerous because they could become self-fulfilling prophecies of violent conflict. Sixth, Huntington's policy conclusions about human rights and international order are inconsistent with the thesis of the clash of civilizations.*

This article concludes, therefore, that both Huntington's thesis and

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Michael Freeman teaches Political Theory in the Department of Government, and is Deputy Director of the Human Rights Centre, at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom. He is author of *Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism*, and co-editor of books on Political Theory and Nationalism. He has published many articles on democratic theory and human rights.

the "Asian values" argument should be rejected as empirically misleading and politically dangerous. In their place, we should reaffirm the internationalist program of human rights promotion, which Huntington and the "Asian values" advocates have called into question, mistakenly, and with potential harmful consequences for the future of international relations.

Keywords: human rights; Asian values; clash of civilizations

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Formerly the things which happened in the world had no connection among themselves. . . . But since then all events are united in a common bundle.
(Polybius, *Universal History*, second century B.C.)[1]

Introduction: New Interpretations of Global Politics After the Cold War

The Cold War period has been marked by many as a time of conflict and controversy. First, the wartime alliance between communism and democratic capitalism turned almost immediately into ideological confrontation. Second, several of the Western, democratic states still remained imperial powers at the end of World War II. Third, ideas of economic justice, which were to some extent shared by both socialist and capitalist societies, left immense inequality in the world as a whole.

At a deeper glance, however, world politics had more underlying consensus and cooperation than is normally recognized. First, there were two opposed and balancing blocs, headed by nuclear superpowers. There was also the dependent, but supposedly developing "Third World." Second, notwithstanding the ideological confrontation between communism and capitalist democracy, Marxism and liberalism shared common origins in Western political values. Third, while the anti-colonial struggle of the "Third World" might be expressed in violent conflicts, the value of self-determination, to which Third World nationalists appealed, was consonant

[1]Cited in Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), 54.

with both the liberal and socialist political traditions.

Moreover, these conflicts took place within the framework of the United Nations Charter, which proclaimed a common commitment to peace, justice, the equality of states, the self-determination of peoples, and universal human rights. The UN may have been weak and frustrated by superpower deadlock and its principles may have been frequently violated, but there was a common global discourse of principles in terms of which international debate could take place. The UN was an attempt to establish a new world order after the devastation of World War II. It was an alliance against fascism and the economic depressions that were thought to have produced it. The promotion of human rights was thus added to the traditional aims of international politics, for the concept of "human rights" was the UN's formula for articulating both its opposition to political tyranny and its commitment to the eradication of economic misery.

Moreover, the dominant global ideologies of Marxism and liberalism had resources to address many of the Cold War conflicts. Nuclear confrontation could be managed by "peaceful coexistence." A consensus developed on the judgment that colonialism was illegitimate. Poverty was an evil and measures should be taken to eradicate it. The *practical* difficulties of solving these problems were great, but the *theoretical* challenge of formulating the problems and thinking of ideal solutions was within the scope of a consensual international discourse.

The superpower confrontation dominated interpretations of global politics during the Cold War to such an extent that, when the Cold War came to an end, there was no obvious way to understand the new order of things. An immediate attempt to fill this gap was provided by the idea of the "new world order" and the "end of history."[2] If the Cold War had been a confrontation between communism and liberal-democratic capitalism, and if communism had collapsed, some supposed that liberalism, democracy, and capitalism must have been the victor. If all the world was not yet liberal, democratic, and capitalist, it would become so, or those societies which did not would be confined to the dustbin of history.

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[2]Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

Supporting this political conclusion was a sociological theory. During the Cold War, Western sociologists had predicted a convergence between capitalism and socialism based on the "functional requisites" of advanced, industrial societies. Modernization was thought to require a division of labor that tended to produce individualist, egalitarian, and universalist values. It also produced such great advantages that its values would become widely diffused. It would therefore be the carrier of the very global values that the UN Charter had proclaimed. Opponents argued that this convergence thesis was refuted by the facts of the bipolar Cold War world. However, with the collapse of the socialist model of economic development, modernization theory appeared to support liberal triumphalism.

Modernization theory was embarrassed, however, both by the failure of many societies to develop and by the persistence of traditional cultures in those societies which were developing. Thus, the idea of "modernization" has recently been replaced by that of "globalization." This idea appeals to some obvious features of the contemporary world: global trade and investment; the diffusion of a global popular culture; the communications and transportation revolutions (computers, faxes, satellite TV, jumbo jets, global tourism, etc.); the problematization of the global ecology; and worldwide concern for such problems as AIDS, drugs, and terrorism. Rapid advances in technology, it seemed, had shrunk political space and accelerated communication.[3]

The concept of "globalization" has an advantage over that of "modernization" in that the former has been emancipated from the metanarratives of progress that liberalism and Marxism had contributed to modernization theory. However, the rejection of the teleological supports of modernization theory left the concept of "globalization" indeterminate. Did the processes of globalization have any particular direction? What were the political implications of economic globalization? Was cultural globalization merely superficial or a significant transformation of world culture? Was globalization favorable or unfavorable towards the project of diffusing

[3]David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

democracy and respect for human rights? There are no clear answers.[4]

An additional deficiency of modernization theory was its suggestion that the end of the Cold War might lead to a new division of the world into the developed North and the less-developed South. Thus another surprise of the post-Cold War period has been that this divide has become much less salient than expected. The "rise of East Asia" has proven a serious challenge to any thoughts of a permanently underdeveloped "Third World."

The economic success of many East Asian societies has already had a significant impact on global politics. Representatives of some East Asian societies have attributed the economic success of these societies to "Asian values" and have held out these values as models for other developing societies to follow, claiming either that their culture was superior to that of the West or that it was at least an alternative of equal value. This cultural assertiveness coincided with, and took advantage of, a certain loss of economic and moral confidence that was widespread in the West.[5] Thus, the theme of "Asian values" resonated not only throughout Asia but also among Western scholars and intellectuals. This "Asian values" theme was introduced into human rights diplomacy at the Bangkok conference of April 1993.[6] Although the UN World Conference on Human Rights of June 1993 reaffirmed the principle of the universality of human rights, the idea that there might be an Asian interpretation of human rights put in question what had been at least a superficial consensus on the universal validity of human rights principles.

Thus, the Cold War confrontation, with its underlying consensus on Western modernism, was being challenged in the post-Cold War period by a new principle of cultural diversity in world politics. The global solidarity that the UN Charter had promised and many felt was soon in the offing, was now in doubt.

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[4]Robertson, *Globalization*; Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

[5]Beng-Huat Chua, *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[6]James T.H. Tang, ed., *Human Rights and International Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region* (London: Pinter, 1995).

Into this uncertain situation Professor Samuel Huntington introduced his concept of "the clash of civilizations." The rivalry of the superpowers, he argued, has been replaced by the clash of civilizations.[7] For a long time there were various great civilizations in the world. Then, one civilization—the West—dominated the others. During the ensuing Cold War *ideological* confrontation concealed this world of differing civilizations. With the ending of the Cold War, the world of civilizations is now not only revealed once again, but it is revealed as a new world of confrontation.

This thesis has been attractive to some people in the West because it appears to explain the fact that the Cold War was followed, not by the triumph of the West, but by *anxiety* about a world that inexplicably still seemed to be threatening. Anxiety is distinguished from fear in that the source of anxiety is uncertain. Huntington's thesis was appealing *because it offered to Westerners a clear explanation of what they were anxious about.* I shall argue, in the next section, that the thesis attracted *global* attention because it also articulated a real, and understandable, resentment in countries that had formerly been subject to Western imperialism at continuing Western hegemony. Thus, the Huntington thesis about "the clash of civilizations" seemed, at face value, to support the argument about "Asian values."

Nevertheless, this paper argues that both the Huntington thesis and the "Asian values" argument are mistaken and dangerous. In sections three and four I shall show both that Huntington relies on the discredited "primordialist" theory of identity and that a non-primordialist reading of post-imperial global politics offers a much more convincing account of contemporary political tensions and conflicts. Section five continues the critique by showing that Huntington's thesis, far from supporting the "Asian values" argument, is *inconsistent* with it, while section six shows that Huntington's thesis is not well supported even by his own evidence of contemporary political conflicts. The last three sections make the arguments that Huntington's policy recommendations would have unfortunate implications

[7]Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 28.

(section seven); that these recommendations derive from his faulty analysis of "civilizations" and "cultures" (section eight); and that Huntington himself partly acknowledges this by reaching a final conclusion that contradicts the thesis of "the clash of civilizations" (section nine).

This paper concludes by arguing that both the Huntington thesis and the "Asian values" argument are based on false accounts of human nature, culture, and history. It further holds that their collective challenge to the idea of universal human rights is both based on a misreading of post-Cold War politics and is potentially harmful to the future of international relations as this "theory" may become a self-fulfilling prophecy of violent conflict.

The Revolt Against the West

Although Huntington identifies nine civilizations in the post-Cold War world, his central thesis is a familiar one of the "revolt against the West."[8] What we now call "Europe" moved aggressively outward as "Christendom" in the late Middle Ages, both westward to America and eastward to Asia. Whereas European Christendom overwhelmed the peoples of America, it found in Asia more substantial societies. What began as trade became European exploitation and domination. Only in the nineteenth century was it justified by the ideology of civilizational missionaryism. China, which had dominated its world before the arrival of Europeans, now became the object of European economic, military, and civilizational policies.[9] In the seventeenth century Europe had become a diplomatic club with a new set of rules: the law of nations.[10] The law of nations was, how-

[8]Ibid., 26, 29, 121; Hedley Bull, "The Revolt Against the West," in *The Expansion of International Society*, ed. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 217-28.

[9]Adam Watson, "European International Society and Its Expansion," in Bull and Watson, *The Expansion of International Society*, 13-32; Michael Howard, "The Military Factor in European Expansion," ibid., 33-42; Gerritt W. Gong, "China's Entry into International Society," ibid., 171-84; R. J. Vincent, "Racial Equality," ibid., 246.

[10]Hedley Bull, "The Emergence of a Universal International Society," in Bull and Watson,

ever, grounded in natural law, which was a universalist ethic. What made it useful for intercivilizational transactions to the advantage of the most powerful also made it available to subordinate parties for ideological counterattack.[11] European imperialism was deeply ambiguous, for it simultaneously expressed the civilization of Europe and violated some of its fundamental values. The proclamation and the violation of human rights were both part of European civilization in its expansionist phase.[12]

The first world-historical revolt against European hegemony in the name of European values was carried out by the Euro-Americans. The United States was to continue the ambiguous imperialist/humanist European legacy by becoming itself an imperial power. R. J. Vincent has suggested, however, that the revolt against the West began to gain momentum with the Japanese victory over the Russians in 1905 and the catastrophic "European Civil War" of 1914-19.[13] The first demonstrated the vulnerability of Western military power; the second that such power could be self-destructive. Later, the Vietnam War was to demonstrate the limits of Western military power in the face of Asian resistance.

Western soft (cultural) power was never more than partly successful in Asia. After the European colonial powers were economically and militarily weakened by World War II, Asia was bound to assert itself culturally as well as politically. Together with the rest of the Third World, Asia employed a discourse of self-determination, anti-racism, justice, and sovereignty. What was not, however, foreseen was how post-colonial elites, having gained power by appeals to apparently universal values of human rights and democracy, would reject or at least question those values for their new projects of "development" and "nation-building." This led to what Adda Bozeman has called the "de-Westernization" of the global

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The Expansion of International Society, 117-26; idem, "The Revolt Against the West"; Gerritt W. Gong, *The Standard of "Civilization" in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

[11]Ian Brownlie, "The Expansion of International Society: The Consequences for the Law of Nations," in Bull and Watson, *The Expansion of International Society*.

[12]Bull, "The Revolt Against the West"; Vincent, "Racial Equality."

[13]Vincent, "Racial Equality," 240-41.

order.[14] The reaction of the "rest" to the expansion of the West had been partly defensive and its consequent commitment to "development" had been both ambiguous and ambivalent about the relation between "modernization" and "Westernization."

The "revolt against the West" was not, however, only a unilateral movement. The forces of globalization continued and tended to strengthen and extend the global rule of law. Globalization, therefore, involves forces of integration and fragmentation. It produces winners and losers. Global culture is more attractive to the winners (economic, political, and cultural elites). Resistance in the form of anti-Western ideologies and "fundamentalist" religious and nationalist creeds is more attractive to the excluded. Ronald Dore has referred to "second-generation indigenization," the process by which the children of those who gained independence from the West on the basis of Western values go on to reject those values.[15] The main outlines of this process are not empirically controversial and had been established by international relations scholars before Huntington reinterpreted them as "the clash of civilizations."

Identity, Culture, and Civilization

Peoples and nations, Huntington claims, are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we?

> And they are answering that question in the traditional way human beings have answered it, by reference to the things that mean most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against.[16]

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[14] Adda Bozeman, "The International Order in a Multicultural World," in Bull and Watson, *The Expansion of International Society*, 406.

[15] Ronald Dore, "Unity and Diversity in Contemporary World Culture," ibid., 407-24.

[16] Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 21.

Huntington offers a "neo-primordialist" account of ethnonationalism and of civilizational conflict. He begins with "the most basic question humans can face": the question of their identity. He claims that they are answering that question "in the traditional way," by reference to "the things that mean most to them." *Thus, his interpretation of a brief period of recent history is grounded in deep claims about human nature.*

"It is human to hate," Huntington says. Why? "For self-definition and motivation people need enemies. . . . They naturally distrust and see as threats those who are different and have the capability to harm them."[17] This is a rather Hobbesian picture of the human condition, although Hobbes pointed out that, since every human individual is different from, and has the capacity to harm every other human individual, the "natural condition of mankind" is a war of every one against every one. Huntington's primordialism allows him to treat cultural groups as the fundamental grounds of identity and difference:

> The increased extent to which people throughout the world differentiate themselves along cultural lines means that conflicts between cultural groups are increasingly important; civilizations are the broadest cultural entities; hence conflicts between groups from different civilizations become central to global politics.[18]

Cultures 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. "Civilizations are the ultimate human tribes, and the clash of civilizations is tribal conflict on a global scale." The world is anarchical, rife with tribal and national conflicts, but the conflicts that pose the greatest danger for stability are those between states or groups from different civilizations.[19]

This argument proceeds by a number of non sequiturs. If we concede that people need to define and motivate themselves, and that they have enemies, it does not follow that they *need* enemies in order to define and

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[17]Ibid., 130.
[18]Ibid., 128.
[19]Ibid., 20, 36, 207.

motivate themselves. The fact that conflicts between cultural groups are inevitable also does not necessarily follow from the fact that people define themselves by reference to culture.

Huntington's thesis rests on his supposition that "civilizations are the broadest cultural entities." This is far from being obviously true. Some authors have argued, for example, that the *nation* is the broadest cultural entity to which loyalty can be expected.[20] Even if it were true that "civilizations are the broadest cultural entities," it would *not* follow that "conflicts between groups from different civilizations become central to world politics." Hatred is a common human emotion. People sometimes (not always) need to define themselves; sometimes (not always) define themselves by reference to their enemies; and sometimes (not always) define their friends and enemies by reference to "cultural groups" or to "civilizations." There is no doubt that cultural groups sometimes engage in violent conflict. However, they often do not. Huntington adduces some uncontroversial facts about human psychology and some other facts about human conflict and links them with an unsubstantiated theory of *needs*.

Huntington concedes to the critics of the primordialist account of ethnonationalism that everyone has multiple identities which may compete with or reinforce each other: kinship, occupational, cultural, institutional, territorial, educational, partisan, ideological, and others. In the contemporary world, however, he maintains, cultural identification is dramatically increasing in importance compared to other dimensions of identity.[21] For lack of a systematic, social-scientific, conceptual framework (not to speak of a theory), Huntington asserts the superior importance of "cultural" identification without articulating clearly how "cultural" identifications are related to, say, educational, occupational, or ideological identifications. The clash-of-civilizations thesis thus rests on a theory of identification which remains obscure.

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[20]David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[21]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 128.

Globalization and the Clash of Civilizations

Huntington's *explanation* of the clash of civilizations may be inadequate, but the clash may yet be real. Such a clash is not necessarily incompatible with global convergence. If two automobiles converge, they may clash. If civilizations converge, the result is not necessarily harmony. Social science provides a theory that links globalization and the supposed clash of civilizations. The naive form of globalization theory is semi-Marxist. It says that the development of the forces of production (technological advance) leads to changes in the relations of production (global economic integration), which in turn lead to changes in the political, legal, and ideological superstructure (a global community). In contrast to Marxism, the end-of-history thesis sees this process not as containing internal contradictions and consequently destined to be overthrown and replaced by communism, but rather as at least a relatively stable and beneficent condition.

No serious theorist of globalization believes this simple and excessively optimistic story. It is empirically questionable and rests on a discredited metanarrative. The thesis of increased economic integration is controversial.[22] Even if it were true, economic integration would not necessarily lead to political stability, for the distribution of economic benefits is clearly extremely uneven.[23] Roland Robertson quotes an apposite criticism of modernization theorists, such as Talcott Parsons, by John Cuddihy: "[M]embers of the Protestant core-culture, like Parsons, theorize from within the eye of the hurricane of modernization, where all is calm and intelligible. But for the underclass below, as for the ethnic outside, modernization is a trauma."[24] Thus, even if globalization were producing economic integration, it would not necessarily be producing political or cultural integration.[25] Globalization produces a field of heterogeneous

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[22]Hirst and Thompson, *Globalization in Question*.

[23]Rajni Kothari, "Globalization: A World Adrift," *Alternatives* 22, no. 2 (1997): 227-67.

[24]John M. Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity*, second edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 9, quoted in Robertson, *Globalization*, 126.

[25]Robertson, *Globalization*, 10.

social meanings. This field includes nation-states and associated problems of national identity.[26] It brings cultural groups, who were once ignorant of each other's existence, into contact, either physically or symbolically through the media of mass communication. Resentment about inequalities and hostility to alien cultures is increased. The dominant global ideology penetrates further and consequently generates more resistance by those who are excluded from the material benefits of globalization, whose cultural identity is disoriented, and/or who experience a loss of control over their lives. As Robertson points out, deglobalizing resistance is part of globalization.[27] The empirical content of this account clearly overlaps with that of Huntington's. The interpretation is, however, different, and more convincing. Instead of Huntington's implausible claim that the end of the Cold War emancipated people to return to their primordial roots, Robertson argues that modernization has *always* created traumas for many people, and contemporary conflicts reflect the present phase of modernization. The end of the Cold War did, of course, make a difference. It reconfigured the global power structure and thereby altered the causes of and opportunities for conflict but did not, however, produce a sudden return to the primitive. What primordialist accounts of contemporary, so-called "neo-tribal" conflicts ignore is precisely that they are conditioned by the late-modern structures and processes of globalization.[28]

Although Huntington's notion of a revived primordialism is, therefore, a misinterpretation of contemporary identity politics, he does correctly identify one of its important features. Cultural domination is *humiliating*. Cultural resistance is a quest for *self-respect*. Such ancient cultures as Confucianism, Hinduism, and Islam provide rich resources for an assertion of *dignity* in the face of the threat of globalizing. Huntington quotes an apt comment by Ronald Dore: "The attribution of value to a traditional religion is a claim to parity of respect asserted against 'dominant other' na-

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[26]Ibid., 69.

[27]Ibid., 10, 26, 80.

[28]Michael Freeman, "Theories of Tribalism, Ethnicity, and Nationalism," in *Tribalism and Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective*, ed. Kenneth Christie (London: Curzon Press, 1998), 15-33.

tions, and often, simultaneously and more proximately, against a local ruling class which has embraced the values and life-styles of those dominant other nations."[29]

There is a challenging paradox here that human rights advocates should confront. The concept of human rights is intended to promote human dignity. However, contemporary globalizing processes threaten the sense of dignity of many whose cultures they threaten, and they seek to restore that sense of dignity in what may be called "neo-traditional" cultures that violate in certain important respects the principles of human rights.

Huntington believes that globalization is leading to increased intracivilizational solidarity.[30] Fundamental beliefs, values, social relations, and customs differ significantly among civilizations. The major differences in political and economic development among civilizations "are clearly rooted in their different cultures." Yet he admits that cultures change, and that the nature of their impact on politics and economics varies from one period to another. No paradigm is good forever. The Cold War paradigm was useful for forty years but became obsolete. At some point the civilizational paradigm will suffer the same fate.[31] Huntington does not explain why a paradigm grounded in fundamental human needs should have such a short life span.

Asian Values

The impact of East Asia on global politics after the Cold War is beyond question. Its interpretation is more problematic. Of Huntington's nine civilizations, six (Sinic, Japanese, Buddhist, Islamic, Orthodox, and Western) have a significant presence in East Asia. Yet Huntington also refers to "East Asian culture."[32] "For East Asians," he says, "East Asian

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[29]Dore, "Unity and Diversity in Contemporary World Culture," 411, quoted in Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 101.

[30]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 67-68, 129.

[31]Ibid., 28-29, 37.

[32]Ibid., 29.

success is particularly the result of the East Asian cultural stress on the collectivity rather than the individual." East Asians value particularly the virtues of discipline, loyalty, and diligence.[33] Others have said that East Asians value the family before the individual, hierarchical authority, benevolence rather than justice or autonomy, social harmony and consensus rather than conflict, and role-based duties rather than individual rights.[34]

Mahathir Mohamad has listed the six most important societal values of East Asians on the basis of a survey by David Hitchcock.[35] These are: (1) an orderly society; (2) societal harmony; (3) the accountability of public officials; (4) openness to new ideas; (5) freedom of expression; and (6) respect for authority. The comparable values held by Americans are: (1) freedom of expression; (2) personal freedom; (3) the rights of the individual; (4) open debate; (5) thinking for oneself; and (6) the accountability of public officials.[36] Two values appear on both lists: freedom of expression and the accountability of public officials. The fourth East Asian value—openness to new ideas—is similar to the American values of open debate and thinking for oneself. The remaining differences, therefore, are the inclusion of order, harmony, and authority in the East Asian list and of personal freedom and individual rights in the American list. This contrast expresses the core of many accounts of the supposed differences between Asian and Western values. East Asians give priority to order-supporting values whereas Americans privilege rights-related values.

Mahathir comments that many of the Asian values were once also Western values. The word "once" is, however, misleading. The problem of balancing order and rights has continuously been a central issue of Western political thought since the seventeenth century. Conservatives tend to

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[33]Ibid., 108.

[34]Bozeman, "The International Order in a Multicultural World," 388-90; Daniel A. Bell et al., eds., *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

[35]The following passage is taken from Michael Freeman, "Human Rights, Democracy and 'Asian Values'," *The Pacific Review* 9, no. 3 (1996): 352-66. See also David I. Hitchcock, *Asian Values and the United States: How Much Conflict?* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994).

[36]Mahathir Mohamad, "Let's Have Mutual Cultural Enrichment," *New Straits Times*, March 16, 1995, 10-11.

place more weight on order and liberals more weight on rights. There are also differences of emphasis among Western societies, some emphasizing rights more than others. Contrasts between "Asian" and "Western" values commonly assume, inaccurately, that the United States is typical of the West.[37] There is a considerable difference, however, between the relatively libertarian individualism of the United States and the more communitarian, social-democratic political cultures of the Scandinavian countries. The individualism of the West and the communitarianism of the East are often exaggerated. Individualism in the West is constrained by families, friendship networks, organizational commitments, ethnic communities, and national loyalties. Hitchcock reports that some Asian elites are concerned that contemporary East Asian materialism is undermining traditional East Asian culture.[38] Commitment to family is not necessarily compatible with concern for the common good, for "family egoism" may take priority over the interests of the nation.[39] Modernization and globalization are undermining traditional values in East Asia, and the assertion of "Asian values" by Asian elites is not only the familiar move of political elites to protect themselves from internal challenges and external criticisms but also an expression of the (also familiar) concern that increases in wealth tend to undermine communal values that were developed in harsher times, when communal solidarity was necessary for survival.[40]

Cultural and civilizational explanations of political differences between East Asia and the West are unhistorical. Edward Friedman quotes Chateaubriand's opinion of the political culture of the French: "Daily experience makes plain that the French are instinctively attracted to power. They have no use for liberty."[41] He rightly points out that, as Confucianism

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[37]Freeman, "Human Rights, Democracy and 'Asian Values'," 354-55.

[38]Hitchcock, *Asian Values and the United States*, 14, 24.

[39]Chua, *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore*, 157-58; Edward Friedman, "What Asian Will or Won't Stand for: Globalizing Human Rights and Democracy," *Asian Thought and Society* 22, no. 65 (1997): 204.

[40]Kenneth Christie, "Regime Security and Human Rights in Southeast Asia," *Political Studies* 43 (1995), Special Issue: "Politics and Human Rights," 204-18; Hitchcock, *Asian Values and the United States*.

[41]Edward Friedman, *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), 50-51.

is now said to provide a cultural barrier to liberal-democratic development in East Asia, so Roman Catholicism was once said to play the same role in the West.[42] As Asians were once said to require Western, colonial guardians to provide them with good government, so they are now said to require neo-Confucian father-figures.[43] Thus, the argument that East Asian culture supports authoritarian government repeats the themes of both orientalist and colonial discourses.

Huntington's reference to East Asia is puzzling because he insists that regions are not political or cultural entities.[44] East Asia is a "cauldron of civilizations." In the region conflicts inherited from the Cold War are being supplemented and supplanted by other possible conflicts reflecting old rivalries and new economic relationships.[45] Huntington's civilizational analysis therefore undermines the "Asian values" thesis. Conflict not consensus or harmony, according to Huntington, characterizes East Asian politics. Yet he refers also to "the fundamental differences between Asian and American civilizations." The Confucian ethos is supposed to pervade many Asian societies and to distinguish their values from those of the United States.[46] Yet Beng-Huat Chua has shown that the attempt to introduce neo-Confucian values in Singapore, a small society with a large Sinic majority, was a failure.[47] Huntington's analysis of the relations between the United States and China since the end of the Cold War is consistent with a traditional, realist account of interstate relations, and depends very little on the concept of civilizational clashes.[48]

Civilizations, according to Huntington, have no clear-cut boundaries and no precise beginnings and endings: "People can and do redefine their

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[42]Ibid., 5, 20, 27-28.

[43]Daniel A. Bell and Kanishka Jayasuriya, "Understanding Illiberal Democracy: A Framework," in Bell et al., *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, 6-7; Freeman, "Human Rights, Democracy and 'Asian Values'"; Friedman, "What Asian Will or Won't Stand for," 207.

[44]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 130.

[45]Ibid., 218-19, 220.

[46]Ibid., 225.

[47]See note 5 above.

[48]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 228-29, 238-39.

identities and, as a result, the composition and shapes of civilizations change over time. The cultures of peoples interact and overlap. The extent to which the cultures of civilizations resemble or differ from each other also varies considerably."[49]

The "Asian values" thesis, therefore, bears an alternative interpretation to that offered by Huntington. As Mahathir himself has suggested, "Asian" or "post-Confucian" values may be similar to conservative Western values that are intended to address similar problems thrown up by the socially disruptive consequences of modernization.[50] Huntington writes of *la revanche de Dieu* in connection with the revitalization of religion in response to the problems of modernization.[51] Part of the contemporary story might be called Marx's revenge. The Marxist playwright, Bertolt Brecht, once said that it was not communism but capitalism that was truly revolutionary.[52] Chua has argued that in terms of explanatory power, the dynamics of global capitalism is a better framework than Confucianism to understand the politics of Singapore.[53] Robertson has suggested that "Asian values" represent a nostalgic-romantic response to modernization, globalization, and Westernization.[54] As such, it excludes or de-emphasizes precisely what is common to contemporary Asian and Western cultures, including commitments to democracy and human rights.[55] Yet traditional Asian values can be reconciled with modernization in a way that is more favorable to human rights and democracy. Aung San Suu Kyi, for example, has appealed to "time-honored" Burmese values in support of her campaign for democracy.[56] Asian values have been made compatible with human rights in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. There is, therefore, no Asian version of human rights and no Asian path to development. There are

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[49]Ibid., 43.

[50]See note 5 above.

[51]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 95-101.

[52]Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

[53]Chua, *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore*, 166-67.

[54]Robertson, *Globalization*, 168-69.

[55]See note 23 above; Masakazu Yamazaki, "Asia, a Civilization in the Making," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (1996): 106-18; Friedman, "What Asian Will or Won't Stand for."

[56]Friedman, "What Asian Will or Won't Stand for," 228 n. 4.

national variations in interpretations of human rights and in economic development strategies in all countries, East and West.

Civilizations, Conflict, and Cooperation

Huntington is remarkably unclear about the relation between civilization and conflict, which is central to his clash-of-civilizations thesis. He suggests that states within a civilization may fight more with each other than they do with states outside the civilization. The history of Europe has been dominated by intracivilizational war, with World War I demonstrating slaughter on an unprecedented scale. Even Huntington calls World War II "the West's civil war." He gives many examples of contemporary intracivilizational conflicts and intercivilizational alliances.[57]

Huntington's clash-of-civilizations thesis is both descriptive and prescriptive. In its descriptive mode it emphasizes the causal weight of civilizations in contemporary politics. In its prescriptive mode—recommending policy for the West in the face of the clash of civilizations—it must emphasize the capacity of political elites to manipulate civilizational variables.[58] Huntington analyzes the relations between China and Taiwan entirely in terms of the strategies and decisions of political elites.[59] It hardly needs saying that civilizational analysis would have little to say about this particular conflict. Apart from the general West/rest clash, Huntington is particularly concerned with the clash between the West, on the one hand, and Islam and China, on the other hand.[60] The rise of China, he says, "is the potential source of a big intercivilizational war of core states." China's history, culture, traditions, size, economic dynamism, and self-image all "impel it to assume a hegemonic position in East Asia."[61] Since Huntington opposes interference by states of one civilization in internal conflicts in

[57]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 42, 50-51, 67, 144, 208-9, 235, 245, 257.
[58]Ibid., 206.
[59]Ibid., 173-74.
[60]Ibid., 245.
[61]Ibid., 209, 229.

other civilizations, he implies that absorption of Taiwan into China is determined by *the logic of Sinic civilization*, and that neither moral considerations of human rights and democracy nor the political strategies of any concerned parties can or should stand in its path.

The impact of Huntington's thesis derives to a large extent from the way it combines the "realist" theory of international relations, in which states pursue their interests, with the civilizational tradition of historical sociology. This raises the question of how he relates the motivational concept of "state interest" with that of civilizational culture. States are and will remain, Huntington says, the dominant entities in world affairs. In the post-Cold War world states increasingly define their interests in civilizational terms. Differences in material interest can be negotiated and often settled by compromise in a way cultural issues cannot. In the contemporary world the most dangerous cultural conflicts are those along the fault lines between civilizations. History shows that these fault lines can be peaceful for long periods. What, then, brings violence to these places? One answer consists of demographic changes, which shift the balance of power between civilizational groups. Neither history nor demography explains all fault-line wars, however. Some have political causes. The globalization of transportation and communication helps to internationalize fault-line conflicts. Thus, communal conflicts can be started in various ways, but, once begun, political manipulation and global communications can create global dangers. A civilizational war may start as a communal conflict, but the parties are liable and able to rally the support of civilizational kin-states and diaspora communities. In the global era local wars can easily become global conflicts.[62]

Huntington's analysis of the relation between civilizations and conflict requires two qualifying comments. First, he generally assumes that causation moves from identity, culture, and civilization to conflict. In a discussion of Bosnia, however, he concedes that the war changed the Bosnian Muslims from strong multiculturalists towards civilizational consciousness.[63] Thus, conflict can be the cause of civilizational changes. This

[62]Ibid., 28, 34, 125, 129-30, 254, 259-60, 261-62.
[63]Ibid., 268-69.

analysis is more consistent with the instrumentalist and situational theory of identity than it is with the primordialism that lies at the basis of Huntington's thesis. Second, he also concedes that states may now conceive of their interests in terms of international norms and institutions.[64] Thus, civilizational fault lines are places of potential conflict, but whether that potential is actualized may depend on *political* choices and the strength of international norms and institutions. These admissions weaken the civilizational determinism on which Huntington generally relies.

How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations

"Avoidance of a global war of civilizations," Huntington affirms, "depends on world leaders accepting and cooperating to maintain the multicivilizational character of global politics." The world will be ordered on the basis of civilizations or not at all. Civilizational fault-line wars begin as communal conflicts but spread by mobilizing kin-states. These states, however, have a dual interest: a civilizational interest in aiding their kin and a "realist" interest in maintaining peaceful coexistence between civilizations. The most intractable conflicts are those that do not involve powerful kin-states, those which kin-states have no interest in settling, and those in which non-kin states meddle. The avoidance of major intercivilizational wars requires core states to refrain from intervening in conflicts in other civilizations. This would require, in particular, the United States, as the core state of Western civilization, not to interfere either with Sinic civilization (the core state of which is China) or with Islam (which has no core state).[65] Huntington's anti-interventionism does not differentiate him from many mainstream international relations scholars nor even from a number of Western, left-liberal political philosophers.[66] Huntington's intervention-

[64]Ibid., 34.

[65]Ibid., 21, 156, 273, 292, 298, 316.

[66]Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980); idem, "The Moral Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9, no. 3 (1980): 209-29; Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,

ism rests, however, on his view of civilizational politics.

Strange Multiplicity[67]

Notwithstanding his thesis of the clash of civilizations, Huntington admits that the world of civilizations has the following characteristics: civilizations are not well-defined entities; civilizations can interact peacefully and form alliances; internal conflicts can occur within civilizations. The idea of the clash of civilizations presupposes that civilizations are unified entities, as states are in the realist theory of international relations. Huntington admits that individuals can have multiple identities, in part because they play multiple roles, but he does not derive from this premise the implications for the *heterogeneity* of cultures and, *a fortiori*, of civilizations. Recent work on cultural diversity has emphasized that cultures overlap, are interactive, and internally negotiated. Strong identification of the state or the nation with a *particular* culture, whether or not claiming civilizational legitimacy, at best diminishes and at worst suppresses the actual cultural diversity that is found in almost all contemporary societies. Cultures are not pure growths but have developed historically through interaction among diverse cultures. What follows from this is not that the clash of civilizations is impossible, but that its probability may be affected by the struggle between the Huntingtonian belief that civilizations are natural enemies and the alternative view that a dialogue among the "strange multiplicity" of cultures, based on mutual respect, provides the best chance for both peace and justice.[68]

Huntington attacks the dual targets of multiculturalism and universalism. Western multiculturalism threatens nothing less than the end of Western civilization. Universalism threatens the West and the world.[69]

1995), 165. For pro-interventionist arguments, see Charles R. Beitz, "Nonintervention and Communal Integrity," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9, no. 4 (1980): 385-91, and Brian Barry, "Statism and Nationalism: A Cosmopolitan Critique" (Draft, 1997).

[67]The title of this section is an allusion to James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[68]Ibid.

[69]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 306-7, 309, 318.

This part of Huntington's analysis is flawed in several respects. First, as he knows well, multiculturalism and universalism are elements of American culture.[70] Thus, the dispute between Huntington and the multiculturalists is a dispute *internal to* American culture and not one between its defenders and its destroyers. Second, this fact is explained better by the "strange multiplicity" account of culture than by Huntington's civilizational analysis. Third, Huntington concedes that cultures change, and thus the defense of American and/or Western culture entails the recognition of change, including changes brought about by interaction with other cultures. This does not, of course, entail recognition that all changes are welcome, but it does require the rejection of nostalgic or purist conceptions of national cultures. State attempts to assimilate cultural minorities in the attempt to achieve cultural unity have been among the great policy failures across the world in modern times. Kymlicka has argued that multiculturalism is more likely to *strengthen* the contemporary nation-state[71] while McNeill has also claimed that polyethnicity has been the normal condition of societies throughout world history.[72] "Those who do not recognize fundamental divides," Huntington affirms, "are doomed to be frustrated by them."[73] This proposition is intended to be a call for the recognition of the clash of civilizations. It could also be the basis for policies of multiculturalism and inter-civilizational dialogue.

Huntington introduces the concept of "universal civilization" to refer to the assumptions, values, and doctrines currently held by many people in Western civilization and by some people in other civilizations. He calls this the Davos Culture after the World Economic Forum in Davos. Almost all the Davos people are highly educated professionals and/or intellectuals, are reasonably fluent in English, work for organizations (mainly governments, corporations, and academic institutions) with extensive international involvements, and travel frequently outside their own countries. They gener-

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[70]Ibid., 290.

[71]Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*.

[72]William H. McNeill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

[73]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 309.

ally share beliefs in individualism, market economies, and political democracy. Davos people control virtually all international institutions, many of the world's governments, and most of the world's economic and military capabilities. The Davos Culture hence is "tremendously important." It is, however, far from a universal culture. It exists only at the elite level. Its roots are shallow in many societies, and it is doubtful whether, even at the diplomatic level, it embraces a common moral as distinct from a common intellectual culture.[74]

Huntington's "Davos thesis" is an ingenious polemical move, for it appears to undermine the universalist on empirical grounds. Yes, there is a global culture, but it is an affair of elites, it is shallow, and it may well be a source of conflict between non-Western elites and popular forces engaged in the revolt against the West.[75] Yet Huntington admits that Davos Culture is "tremendously important." Moreover, it is not only the culture of elites. When Asian governments appeared to deviate from their commitment to the universality of human rights at the Bangkok conference of April 1993, they were opposed, in the name of universal human rights, by an alliance of Asian nongovernmental organizations, some of which have popular roots.[76] There is a global elite culture. There is also a transnational social movement for human rights, the protection of the environment, the rights of women, etc., which combines strange multiplicity with common moral values.

Thick and Thin: Universal Human Rights[77]

Huntington faces a dilemma. He clearly knows that Western civilization is universalist. Its universalism derives from the philosophy of natural law—which underpins international law—and from Christianity. Universalism is more central to Western civilization than the clash-of-civilizations

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[74]Ibid., 57-58.

[75]See note 15 above.

[76]Tang, *Human Rights and International Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region*, 208-12.

[77]The title of this section is an allusion to Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

thesis itself. Universalism may, of course, lead to clashes, if two interpretations of the same universalism or two different universalisms oppose each other. There are elements of conflicting universalisms in certain forms of conflict between sections of Islam and the West, and perhaps hinted at in the more extreme versions of the "Asian values" thesis. Western universalism has historically taken the form of missionary imperialism, and this has generated conflict in the form of anti-imperialist struggles. Both the philosophical merits and the political implications of universalism are controversial in Western culture; Huntington cannot, however, plausibly put forth criticism on the grounds that it undermines Western civilization.

The concept of universal human rights is a critical site in the contemporary world for putting the validity of universalism in question. The promotion of universal human rights is one of the principal aims of the United Nations. The idea of human rights is spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which no state has explicitly rejected. At the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 all member-states of the UN reaffirmed their commitment to the universality of human rights. Universal human rights are now a shared intercivilizational commitment.

In a world of strange multiplicity the idea of universal human rights might appear to be yet another manifestation of Western missionary imperialism. To East Asians, in particular, armed with the self-confidence created by their economic success and pride in their ancient cultures, human rights might seem like the "black ships" of old, bringing Western demands to Asian shores.[78] Western governments reinforce such attitudes by representing themselves as the global guardians of human rights, a representation that is entailed precisely by the fact that the concept of universal human rights is a core element of modern Western culture. Notwithstanding the repeated official reaffirmations of universal human rights principles by representatives of the world's governments, the degree of consensus on these principles is uncertain. Van Hoof has pointed out that this uncertainty is due in part to an ambiguity in the meaning of "consensus" in contem-

[78]Hitchcock, *Asian Values and the United States*, xii.

porary international diplomacy. "Consensus" may mean agreement in principle or it may refer to a diplomatic decision-making procedure by which texts are adopted because no government wishes explicitly to oppose them. "Consensus" may, therefore, be a method for papering over disagreements.[79]

Huntington holds that the belief that non-Western peoples should adopt Western values is immoral and dangerous. He finds such an imposition to be imperialistic, contrary to the Western values of self-determination and democracy, and could thus lead to a major intercivilizational war between core states and to the defeat of the West.[80] But, if the belief that non-Western peoples should adopt Western values is immoral and dangerous, we should not believe that non-Western peoples should adopt the values of self-determination and democracy. Furthermore, if non-Western peoples did not adopt the value of self-determination, they would have no ground on which to object to the adoption of Western values. Moreover, it is not "imperialistic" to believe that non-Western *governments* should respect the principles of human rights on the ground that *they have promised to do so*. The claim that the promotion of universal human rights is dangerous raises questions, not of principle but of prudence. In fact, human rights promotion rarely leads to war. Huntington underestimates the extent to which the Western commitment to human rights might be the basis of solidarity and not of confrontation between the peoples of the West and of the rest. Western values are more complex and ambiguous than Huntington's political imagination allows. They legitimized imperialism, and thereby provoked the revolt against the West, but they also legitimized the struggle against imperialism. The Western values of human rights, democracy, and self-determination now threaten authoritarian, post-colonial regimes. The question of human rights does not, therefore, pit the West against the rest. It creates a global alliance against authoritarianism which crosses the "West/rest" division.

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[79]F. van Hoof, "Asian Challenges to the Concept of Universality: Afterthoughts on the Vienna Conference on Human Rights," in *Human Rights: Chinese and Dutch Perspectives*, ed. P. R. Baehr et al. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1996), 3-4.

[80]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 310, 311.

In the discussion of this question, often forgotten is that the commitment to human rights and democracy is quite recent in the history of the West, is very imperfectly accepted and realized there, and that struggles for human rights and democracy are also indigenous to non-Western societies. Huntington maintains that the ideas of democracy and human rights are European, and not Asian, African, or Middle Eastern, "except by adoption."[81] It cannot be emphasized too strongly that these ideas *are only Western "by adoption"* and their adoption in the West, as elsewhere, took place in the face of strong opposition from those whose power they challenged.

Huntington's book reaches a startling conclusion. Cultures, he says, following Michael Walzer,[82] are "thick": they prescribe behavior and institutions which are right in a particular society. Above, beyond, and growing out of this maximalist morality is a "thin," minimalist morality that embodies reiterated features of thick moralities. Minimal concepts of truth and justice are found in all thick moralities. There are probably also minimal moral "negative injunctions" such as rules against murder, deceit, torture, oppression, and tyranny. Human society is *universal* because it is *human*, particular because it is a society. "At times we march with others; mostly we march alone": "Instead of promoting the supposedly universal features of one civilization, the requisites for cultural coexistence demand a search for what is common to most civilizations. In a multicivilizational world, the constructive course is to renounce universalism, accept diversity, and seek commonalities."[83]

In this passage Huntington concedes a lot to advocates of universalism and universal human rights.[84] He implies that the acceptance of diversity entails the renunciation of "universalism," but his adoption of

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[81]Ibid., 311.

[82]See note 77 above.

[83]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 318.

[84]Onora O'Neill, *Towards Justice and Virtue: A Constructive Account of Practical Reasoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Steven Lukes, "Five Fables about Human Rights," in *On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993*, ed. Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 19-40; Susan Mendus, "Human Rights in Political Theory," *Political Studies* 43 (1995), Special Issue: "Politics and Human Rights," 10-24.

Walzer's "thin" universal morality shows that this is not so. Walzer explicitly defends the "minimal rights" of the Chinese.[85] His "thin" universalism endorses at least a limited human rights universalism. Huntington is also mistaken to suppose that a "thin" universal morality consists of *actual* commonalities among cultures. This would not support, for example, the negative injunction against torture. A more promising approach is to explore what is morally required by the idea of the universally human, which does not require us to deny either the facts or the moral significance of diversity.[86] Nevertheless, at the last moment Huntington veers away from the clash of civilizations, and adopts Walzer's commitment to marching with others, at least occasionally, in the cause of universal human rights.

Conclusions

The argument of *The Clash of Civilizations* rests on the assumption that people need enemies in order to establish their own identities. This is a dangerous half-truth. The half that is true is that xenophobia is a common temptation, and, when given the opportunity, can motivate important political conflicts. The half that is untrue is that people can establish their identities without enemies, and that they can indeed do so by expressing *solidarity* with others. Huntington knows that this is true, and this knowledge leads to his ambivalent attitude to intercivilizational conflict and intercivilizational cooperation.

An important weakness of Huntington's thesis is its dependence on an excessively unified and exclusive conception of culture and civilizations, even though, again, he knows this to be an over-simplification. James Tully's concept of "strange multiplicity," which recognizes both the complex diversity of cultures and the possibilities for cultural accommodation, is both sociologically more realistic and the basis for more hope. Huntington over-emphasizes the association of democracy and human rights with

[85]Walzer, *Thick and Thin*, 60-61.

[86]Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, eds., *The Quality of Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

Western civilization, and consequently is too pessimistic about their diffusion throughout the world. Neither democracy nor human rights are "essential" to Western civilization, but both are the product of contingent political struggles, and both are currently central to political struggles around the world. The concept of universal human rights may not be universally accepted, but the contest over human rights is a central feature of contemporary global political culture. The claims of non-Western (especially East Asian) elites (and supported by some Western scholars) that the concept of universal human rights is alien to their cultures usually depends on the employment of a set of dichotomies—community/individual, duty/rights, consensus/conflict, hierarchy/equality—which distorts the actual cultures of both Asia and the West.[87] The principles of human rights must be interpreted differently in different cultures and different circumstances. The interpretation of human rights principles differs in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Sweden, and Switzerland. These different interpretations are often controversial *within particular societies*, as people struggle through the democratic process to establish the problematic balances between, for example, social order and personal freedom.

Advocates of "Asian values" sometimes say that Asians place the common good before the good of the individual, whereas the West accords priority to the individual. David Held has pointed out, however, that there is a global common good.[88] Huntington relies on the widespread idea that universal norms represent the collective interest of the West. This is another half-truth. Historically, missionary imperialism has worn a universalist mask. However, universalism has also been a weapon of the oppressed in all cultures, and it remains so. Huntington holds that the global struggle for human rights will be shaped by "cultural and civilizational tides."[89] The tidal metaphor suggests an unstoppable force, which is inconsistent both with Huntington's own views about the *political* manipulation of culture and with reality.

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[87]Alan Gewirth, *The Community of Rights* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Freeman, "Human Rights, Democracy and 'Asian Values'."

[88]Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, 83-84.

[89]Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 309.

Mahathir Mohamad and James Tully both believe that intercultural differences can be the source of mutual enrichment rather than the clash of civilizations.[90] Universalism does not entail uniformity nor the refusal to recognize diversity and particularity.[91] The idea of human solidarity is ancient. Recent developments relating to the globalization of military capabilities, environmental degradation, economic inequality, etc., have made human solidarity more, not less desirable, and "realistic," not in the sense of being easy to achieve, but in the sense of being a necessary condition for avoiding the principal contemporary threats to human well-being. The world is now a social and political space in which the *potential* for mutual harm and for mutual aid is unprecedentedly great.[92] Karl Marx once looked for the working class to transform itself from a "class-in-itself" to a "class-for-itself." That dream has faded. We now share a "world-in-itself." We can make it a "world-for-itself." If nations can be "imagined communities," then so can the world.[93] If we can transcend the crass duties/rights dichotomy that is supposed to divide East and West, we can recognize a common set of universal rights and duties of both states and individuals. We should not allow the clash of civilizations to make so much noise that we fail to see how much recognition already exists of a global moral culture, even if there also exist cultural differences and conflicts of interest and of values.

Huntington is right to say that civilizations breed arrogance. The West has to recognize its own morally problematic history and the cause of the revolt against the West. This is both a cultural and a material problem. It is psychologically difficult for the West to acknowledge the damage that the era of imperialist hegemony did to the possibilities of global solidarity, and, even if this difficulty could be overcome, the West has a strong, material self-interest in maintaining its economic privileges. One of the

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[90]See notes 36 and 67 above.

[91]O'Neill, *Towards Justice and Virtue*; Robertson, *Globalization*, chap. 6; Alan Gewirth, "Ethical Universalism and Particularism," *Journal of Philosophy* 85, no. 6 (1988): 283-302.

[92]Robertson, *Globalization*; O'Neill, *Towards Justice and Virtue*.

[93]Robertson, *Globalization*, 183; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

principal barriers to the diffusion of respect for human rights is that non-Westerners commonly perceive the standard mode of Western human rights talk as that of the lecture, which implies the continuance of the traditional relationship between the (civilizationally superior) teacher and the (civilizationally immature) pupil. Friedman has correctly said that democracy is flawed in both East and West.[94] It is common now to call for "dialogue" between East and West. However, a constructive dialogue must include self-criticism, honest disagreement, and the recognition of common, unsolved problems.

Globalization produces complex patterns of convergence and divergence. It may be that convergence takes place mainly at the elite level, but, as Huntington admits, this level is important, and the quality of its dialogues may have momentous consequences for humankind. Partly because the effects of globalization are both unsettling and unequal, they generate plenty of xenophobia and thus motivation for conflict. The best solution to these problems does not seem to be, as Huntington suggests, that we retreat into our gated, civilizational communities (which are, anyway, full of strange multiplicity) and send mollifying faxes occasionally to the enemy without in order to stabilize the "world of civilizations." We have to share a world, in which people continuously make and remake cultures and civilizations, interacting with, learning and borrowing from, and enriching each other. The dangers of state power and popular xenophobia are real, but they should be contested, not accepted. How this can be done without provoking a war of civilizations is not the subject for simple theoretical generalizations. Particular clashes can be avoided only by good judgment about particular cases. General principles can and should guide our actions. The postmodernists have, however, rightly warned us to be wary of grand narratives. The world can, therefore, be made more just and more secure by the prudent promotion of universal human rights, whereas arguments for the clash of civilizations are both immoral and dangerous.

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[94]Friedman, "What Asian Will or Won't Stand for."