

# **Cultural coexistence and Human Values An anti- Huntington Project**

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## **Part I: Critique**

### **1-The Huntington World**

Human beings are the prey of fear. Life is a fragile, breakable, good surrounded by danger. This menace especially looms over luxury, social security, cultural stability and identity. People need an identity, they need to know who they are and on which side they belong. Having an identity means drawing a line: one person exists where the other does not. In times of crises and distress these two main feelings meet: fear grows and borders wear and even bigger importance. The search for an enemy or a scapegoat is suddenly a primary need, stubbornly directed towards the “other.” Enemies represent a frightening danger, but

not less frightening is the nostalgia for them, especially during bad periods.

This gap is the hole from which emerges the “clash of civilizations.” Despite the fact that the western world is more secure now that the big enemy is defeated, i.e. Communism and the USSR, since neither war nor nuclear conflicts stand at people’s doorsteps, life and world as we know it is not safer. Many things are fractured, not because of the end of the East-West crisis but through the same mechanism which brought on this end: the growing international economic web, the fast monetary trade with its lot of increasing communications, including the grand movements of immigration. Daily life is not what it used to be, the future seems obscure and the fault cannot be incumbent on the Soviet Union.

Huntington lays out his directive: Global history is now pushing cultures against each other, after it has done so with nationalities and ideologies. He speaks of “civilizations,” a term replaced by a more preferable one to the

Anglo-Saxons, “cultures”; the same cultures which will form tomorrow’s enemies, or rather, today’s enemies. In the horizon looms the specter of an Islamic-Confucian coalition menacing all that is western. With brilliant meticulousness, the “Yellow danger” is forming a union with the “Turks on Vienna’s doorsteps,” and together, they represent a psychological shock for western peoples, extending to the very depth of their collective memory.

*The Clash of Civilizations* is inscribed in the context of a very ambitious project. It seeks to explain the core nature of today’s and tomorrow’s world, the motives which push the great majority of people towards action, what is more, towards thought. To Huntington, this represents the evolution and borderline of the biggest grouping of mankind on Earth: cultures. Cultures formed through historical connections, common values, standards of living, visions of the world, social and political ways of thinking. What is interesting is Huntington’s grouping of world civilizations

around religions, a surprising opinion when many parts of the world are actually more laicity-oriented. He nevertheless brushes this religious elimination in modern societies off and takes the controversial decision of holding onto religious fundamentalism as the most important and decisive direction. Accordingly with this vision, he makes the following classification:

- Western Christian civilization in Europe, North America and Oceania.

- Orthodox Christianity in the Slavic-Greek world.

- Islam, following a crescent-shaped extension from the bulge of Africa, through the Middle East, to central Asia and Indonesia.

- All aspects of African civilization.

-Indian Hindu civilization.

-Japanese civilization.

-Confucian civilization in China and its South Asian surroundings.

Huntington did not take a clear stand on whether Latin America was culturally independent, or linked to the western Christian civilization.

Western civilization was able, through technological advancement and economic progress, as well as through the dominance its countries and military power exerted, to place itself in the number one position throughout the world. This phase is however coming to an end; others are catching up with it, even getting ahead of it: Asia will excel over the West, and China will become the world's

greatest economic power in the twenty first century, while western imperialism is causing world resentment. This anger has started to manifest itself in the form of fundamentalists, and severe criticism of western values. The reverse attack targeting the western culture grows with the tilting of the balance of powers towards the other cultures. The anti-West pulse beats significantly faster through demographic developments. Everywhere around the world, population growth is greater than in here. Population growth average in Africa and the Islamic world reached percentage of 3% or more. The majority of population is under 25 years of age and the deficits in the balances of progress eliminate all possible perspectives this uprooted youth may develop. They become frustrated and look for a way to relieve their frustration. The propaganda against western culture identity provides them with the possibility to define their stand. These young people are more prepared to wage war and violence than they are to become moderate heads of households. Thus, they are the perfect candidates for

fundamental cultural mobilization, and effectively represent the source of high anti-western politics zeal.

On every occasion, all cultures gather around a central state: The United States of America, surprisingly enough, gathers around Europe which is not yet fully formed as a state in the west. Confucian culture, joined willingly or unwillingly with Japan, around China. In India, state and culture represent one unity. As for Africa and Islam, they each stay without a central power. In the last case, Huntington “advises” Muslims to elect Turkey as a leading state. To this end, the European ambitions bred by Ankara must be finally rejected and Turkey must be allowed to be set free from the NATO. Huntington believes that civilizations, each embodied and led by its own relevant power, will clash. Tomorrow’s areas of collision appear today. Multiethnic states, like Bosnia, Sudan, Malaysia and Indonesia show signs of internal fractures reaching the levels of violent internal wars, while Islam “has bloody borders.” Division appears as the only gate to

a pacific solution. Enough pluralism--we should establish culturally pure states. Enough cross cultural preaching--be it for private religious purposes or Civilizational advantages like human rights, separation of state and religion, or women's emancipation. A mutual policy of drawing borders that prevent the confrontation of inter-related cultures and fault lines is the only possible solution to a universal clash with its load of serious repercussions.

In the absence of such a policy, Huntington predicts a Confucian-Islamic connection nightmare looming over the West: a civilizational war brought on by severe contradictions, various regional conflicts, the continuous increasing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, possibly leading to a nuclear war. This is a scenario of terror that leaves little room for wishes and an even smaller one for hope.

This dark diagnosis of the situation is surprisingly followed, in the last chapter of Huntington's book, by an unexpected speech



for the defense of a universal cultural cooperation which fully contradicts all that has preceded it. Is this a tactical maneuver to pull in the liberals among the readers? Or is it rather the pragmatic mind fighting the dogmatic straightjacket way of thinking?

Whatever the case, Dieter Senghaas was right when he casually remarked that the issue at hand is but a reconciliatory project that cannot be taken seriously when once traces its gloomy analyses.(1)

## **Interpretation Vs Reality of the World**

Such then, is the interpretation of the world after the end of the East-West conflict. One is to admire it, in any case, since it shows our contemporary complex mosaic of a world organized according to a system not less orderly than the old division of the world into two separate camps: the free world on one side and communism on the other. This simplification is its heart and soul, but unfortunately, it is a very high price we pay for

it. This interpretation of the world is unrelated to the innumerable details of the stubborn and controversial reality which it tries to organize. Speaking with less euphemism, we say that it contains many empirical mistakes, casting serious doubt on the effective use that this intellectual construction whose contact with reality creates violent criticism, could be to us. History bears proof of many elegant theories that led their preachers and practitioners alike, whether directly or indirectly, to their doom; Lenin's Marxism has only just been buried. In what follows are examples of the misguided and distorted remarks to which the creator of the new interpretation of the world fell victim:

First example: Huntington speaks of Islam's "bloody borders," and tries to back his theory with statistics: among thirty-one violent conflicts opposing two or more parties of different cultures, twenty one, or two thirds of the conflicts include a Muslim party;(2) a direct indication that Islam is a culture particularly prone to violence. Further

meditation shows that Muslim combatants in every intercultural conflict need a non-Muslim opponent. From this perspective, one can have a new reading of these statistics:

Among the 62 parties engaging in violent, intercultural conflicts, 21, or a third of the parties (states or groups) are of Muslim origin. This information has a different impact when one hears it, but if one were to go to the trouble of even looking in the cultural border section of the atlas, one would find that Islam has more external borders than any other religion, due to the fact that Islamic populations and states are squeezed in the middle or “sandwiched” between different cultures of the world. Whereas the sea provides protection for large parts of other cultures, Latin culture has only one land border with the others, i.e. the Mexican-American borderline. In other words, Huntington’s statistics adds no novelty to what we have known for a long time: countries with common land borders have increased chances of fighting against each other.

Second example: to support his Confucian-Islamic connection terror scenario, Huntington mentions the Chinese and North Korean arms deals with the Islamic world, at the top of which are Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria. He also cites the Sino-Irani cooperation in nuclear technology,(3) all the while choosing to remain silent on the subject of western exporters of arms to the Islamic countries, headed by the U.S. The Chinese and North Korean deals are not even the tenth of the Western deals. Does that indicate a western-Islamic connection? Iran's main partner in peaceful nuclear technology today is none other than Russia who is preparing two nuclear reactors and building two others, and who has committed to a big number of other individual research projects; does this indicate an Orthodox-Islamic connection?

Furthermore, nuclear cooperation between Argentina and a number of countries in the Islamic world is a known fact. Argentina has provided Algeria with a nuclear reactor to

conduct research on, installed another one in Egypt and signed a similar contract with Syria. Argentina exports nuclear fuel to both Algeria and Iran; does this indicate a looming Latino-Islamic threat?

Third example: Huntington considers western states to have been the allies of Catholic Croatia during the Bosnian conflict, while Orthodox states such as Russia and Greece provided Serbs with their support and the Islamic world clearly backed Bosnian Muslims. The fact of the matter is that Germany (majority of Protestants) and Protestant Denmark stood by Croatia's side while Catholic states such as France, Spain, Italy, and Anglican England took the Serbs' side. As the fighting progressed, it brought with it a shift in attitudes: the west, pressured by its public opinion, extended a helping hand to Bosnian Muslims. In the end, and after much hesitation, came the decision of a military intervention risking the deployment of fifty thousand soldiers to protect the rest of the

culturally colored states and the Islamic autonomy. During the crisis, Russian only protected its Serbian interests and supported, at first, the continuing economic sanctions against the rest of former Yugoslavia, not interfering to prevent sanctions enforced by NATO.

Had the war respected the model of “clash of civilizations,” western and orthodox states not only would have backed Milosevic and Tudjman’s plans to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina between Croatia and Serbia, they would have demanded it with force. This behavior would have been a dangerous proof to Huntington’s theory.

In the end, Huntington failed to note that the Greek alliance with Serbia was primarily conditioned by finding an ally against Orthodox Macedonia, who, according to Athens’ suspicions, has implicit claims on the Greek province of the same name. This alliance represented a negative response to the “clash of civilizations.” What is even a greater failure of Huntington’s theory, is that his

prejudices are concomitant to the views on the war “In Bosnia, the Muslims waged a bloody war against Orthodox Serbs and perpetrated violent acts against Catholic Croats.”(4) This statement mirrors to a great extent the murderer-victim relationship. When Huntington relates the war, however, the historical truth is marginalized, veiled by his prejudiced conceptions of “bloody Islam.” Beware then of the “big theory”--he who wears blue glasses can only see a blue world, and after a while, he will believe that blue is the only color there is. This is not a distortion of reality when one is looking at a clear blue sky, but when he lowers his gaze to the ground, his senses will trick him into seeing false colors. This is what Huntington experienced with his “clash of civilizations.” His glasses of “theory” have distorted his vision of reality.(5)

## **The Image of the World and the Need for Orientation**

Why was the book met with this great a success? The three examples chosen were not isolated cases. Despite this fact, this book, with its theory on the “clash of civilizations” undoubtedly had a great impact and even more, was widely welcomed. *Foreign Affairs*, the distinguished magazine, voice of the political elite in American foreign policy issues stated that no contribution has ever created such controversy and drawn so many readers’ comments, whether for or against it. In Germany, the reaction to the book was very favorable and it spread wide and fast, making of Samuel Huntington the most wanted guest on talk shows. The German parliament, the Bundestag, even welcomed him as a guest expert of foreign cultural policy. What’s more, the concept of “clash of civilizations” became part of our political and cultural language. This is true, since our language coined our thought, just as our intellectual realms define it. The more we use concepts without investigating their backgrounds and origins, the more we adopt them unconsciously. The more this concept infiltrates into our minds, the bigger



the danger. The “clash of civilizations” is a concept bearing a universal aspect for it contains a vision of the world.

The previous signs and warnings showed that the theory behind the concept is seriously and hopelessly lacking. It would be erroneous to build our thought and behavior according to it and it is necessary to examine it thoroughly. This necessity appears also after we study the different reactions to both book and essay, particularly the ones from specialists in different fields.

As previously mentioned, the book was definitely not met with unanimous acceptance. On the contrary, the cultural and regional specialists have highlighted the many mistakes the author made. Historians and political experts alike attacked both the theory and its implications.(6)

Faced with evidence-backed criticism, one seriously wonders why this theory was so popular and acclaimed. This question brings us back to the opening remarks, and will be

discussed later on. We live in a phase of violent euphoria, when change is transforming every part of the world, however small, or developed like the industrial countries. This sort of historical phase is repetitive.

In her historical essay, *Distant Mirror*, Barbara Tuchman painted the image of a cataclysmic fourteenth century where feudality came to an end, monetary exchange supplanted the traditional ways of earning a living, and everything started changing. The predominant atmosphere was one the end of time, narrow religious extremism, and the persecution of Jews.(7)

In the sixteenth century, trade grew considerably and astrologers discovered that the earth was not the center of the universe, while Reformist Protestantism shook all social constants. The nineteenth century, essentially close to our own, drastically transformed western societies by way of industrialization and urbanization. The phase of the protestant reformism and its opposition produced Christian fundamentalism on both sides whilst

the industrial revolution resulted in the emergence of nationalism and racism.

Today, the world is changing under the motto of “globalization,”(8) a concept meaning a series of parallel operations, with the final victory of the capitalist market economy. All the economic barriers were removed; barriers which until recently took the form of national economy in the communist world, economic protectionism, nationalization and interventionism in the economy which was common to most third world countries. The traditional economic models, including big public factories, knew considerable losses, if not complete ruin. The traditional ways of living which millions of people had adopted were suddenly subjected to a drastic change, concomitantly with the tenfold increase of speed in the movement of international capitals which made the transformation of economic conditions smoother and faster than before. The sudden shift in things was experienced by the Asian countries in 1997, which before this date, went

through periods of “miraculous success”. One’s job and standard of living have become uncertainties, rarely guaranteed. International transportations and universal communications by technological means, combined with immigration to faraway places created more concentrated and recurrent interactions of different systems of values. The traditional images of life and natural daily behavior were subjected to relentless query.

Certain observers see in the worldwide elimination of borders, particularly in what were previously nation states and societies, a qualitative novelty, almost a second modernity essentially different from the first.(9) Others, myself included, see globalization as the logical result of what the emergence of the modern world brought with it of technological and natural sciences, alongside capitalist market economy.(10)

Both opinions concur that political and social consequences of this transformation were substantial. Furthermore, it is not an easy task to limit the insecurities and challenges

this transformation initiated. The detachment and independence of personal life obligations is much harder when they coincide with an unstable identity and questionable material bases of life.(11)

In the midst of all this, it is only logical for one to look for new orientations in life that act as guides in this intricately dangerous, incomprehensible world. Thus the need for maps, standards of values and commercial directions. Huntington's book also addresses this need, fulfilling it almost to perfection. The reachable and easy model Huntington uses to describe the world hides behind veils of the thick complexities of disciplinary specialization, deep delving into the wells of history and cultural philosophies and details from all over the world, that make of it--especially to the common man--credible and reputable. The discrepancies and faults, examples of which have already been shown, have not been observed, or have been marginalized. The need this theory addresses is a real and serious one, and herein lies the

achievement and danger of the “clash of civilizations.”

2-Do we need a simple universal theory?

The “clash of civilizations” is a child of the American discipline of international affairs. Many American social scientists follow an illusory example that depends on the secrets of natural sciences. From a few, basic assumptions a wide range of theoretical doctrines emerge, which are said to be able to pass the tests to which reality subjects them. These tests should either temporarily confirm the theories, or completely refute them. All certitudes are, however, temporary, and do not obviate the need for future tests that can refute any theory. The scientists have the especially hard task of making all possible efforts to refute their own theories. Once a large number of attempts to refute a theory fail, the tested theory is considered a highly resistant one. Thus “critical rationalism” was formed and Karl R. Popper’s philosophy of science,

developed from natural science experiments, has a predominant position in it.(12)

Accordingly, a perfect theory is the one built on the least of basic assumptions and still gives the best possible explanations. The “race” between theories is won by the theory which produces more explanations using fewer assumptions, an “economical,” or “simplified” theory. This virtue of theoretical economizing was historically known as “Ockham’s razor,” after the scholastic philosopher William of Ockham, a founder of modern science, whom Umberto Eco and Sean Connery paid tribute to in *The Name of the Rose*. Unfortunately, many American social scientists take this method of simplification literally, not only eliminating the unnecessary things in a theory, but along with them many meditations which are necessary to understand the theory itself.

These theories and models do not mirror the growing complexity of our world. They are so unrelated to reality that many important factors and variants of lasting impact on the political events of the world are overlooked.

The most illustrious example of this orientation is “realism,” still, as always, the most popular theory in international affairs to the extent that it is the foundation of the “clash of civilizations.” Through “realism,” world events are explained from the perspective of the chaotic world order where nation states constantly compete. The absence of judge and jury leaves no choice for these states but to rely on themselves.

To this end, the tools of power are compiled and multiplied: first and most importantly, military power, followed by the occasional alliances between states facing similar threats. These states cooperate with each other on occasion, founding commercial ties, and negotiating pacts through which they multiply their sources of power.

This type of cooperation, however, is rare and temporary. There is the danger of the unequal distribution of the profits this cooperation engenders. These profits being the sources of power, each unjust distribution is a threat to the party it effects since the one who



took more can become a future opponent whose present economic privileges can be used to increase his military power in preparation for the next conflict. The situation being such, alliances last as long as the common threat; today's ally is tomorrow's enemy.

To the "realists," this simple theory explains all international events. They see that all states follow this pattern of behavior, whether they were democratic, authoritative or absolute regimes of rich countries or broken up party regimes. The difference between all these orders lies in their sources of power alone. International order (state positions and centers of power) is defined by the distribution of power sources among the states. World history evolves following this pattern: An established balance is shaken with the change in distribution of the power sources; some countries gain in power while others become weaker. New alliances are made to restore the lost balance. When all other means are exhausted, the last recourse to re-establish

order is waging war.(13) This theory is oblivious to internal politics, regional differences and international organizations--all of these elements are cut with “Ockham’s razor.”(14)

The line separating these critical rational theorists from the founders of natural science philosophy, who have succeeding in spreading the concepts and standards of natural science, appears here. It may be true that great theorists in the U.S., beginning with the new realists and ending with Huntington have reacted well with “Ockham’s razor,” but it is also true that they were less rigorous concerning the high standards of empirical testing requirements set by critical realists. Instead of adopting impartial stands and trying to refute their own theories, they have instead chosen to become their own lawyers: They gather supportive evidence that back their client’s case, while disregarding all the counter evidence and arguments that exist against him. Theoretical development remains devoid, in this fashion,

of Thomas Kuhn's analyses on the progress created by "scientific revolutions."(15)

According to Kuhn, different visions or models of the world enter a vicious circle when there is an accumulation of results of empirical knowledge which seem naturally contradictory. This warning sign is then overlooked by scientists, who try to fit new results with commonly spread knowledge, and their first act towards this end is to develop supportive plans that fit the dominant model and connect these results with inappropriate experiences and knowledge. The more necessary these connections are to a theory, the less accurate it is. The difference between these theoretical constructions based on supporting theories and the "simplified theory" model is that in the latter, courageous minds are encouraged to modify the basic assumptions and try to find a new basis to explain the differing information. When this attempt succeeds the whole model changes. Based on this scientific orientation, the accuracy of practical tests is the foundation to

scientific progress. When this condition is not assured, then neither is progress, and in the end, this is the best solution so as not to follow the old example.

Thus the theories are immunized against all possible doubt and correction, which represents a big danger since social science theorists claim to provide the practitioners of politics with advice and help. To link a merciless razor with directed and biased empirical “tests” simultaneously leads to a number of complex theories whose faults can neither be traced nor rectified. What the theory marginalizes and ignores will not be an issue of wonder, and what contradicts this theory, according to Popper, will be eliminated. All that remains is a hard academically-backed theory; any political practice using such models and theories as directives will remain controversial, dangerous, incomplete and, in the worst case scenario, catastrophic.

Over-simplification suits the needs of a common mass for simple facts and interpretations, something easy to digest. In

the U.S., in particular, the academic body and its representative elite are constantly on the lookout to write bestselling books and appear on generous talk shows. All the complex theories, which involve a right but difficult explanation, laden with controversy, circumstance, diversity and vague morals of international affairs, will be out of reach for average people. Ockham's razor has unintentionally turned from a rigorous scientific tool to a hand tool used to cut unnecessary shadows that bother the VIPs.

### **“We” against “Them”**

The basic example of an oversimplified theory. Simplified theories usually follow the easy example that can be described using the model of the Manichaeans. Manicheans are the followers of an old religion which divides the world into two conflicting opposing poles: light and darkness. The conflict between them defines world events. When we take one side against the other, we create the "us. Vs. them"

conflict. Karl Schmitt was, unquestionably, the one who introduced this concept into the world of politics. Schmitt is a prominent figure in the history of German political science, described as the legislator of Nazism because he academically justified the dominant state. To him, politics are, in its essence, the ability to distinguish friend from foe. Stretching this distinction to its farthest limits and preparing political tools to fight the inevitable war with the enemy is an internal and external political duty. Schmitt maintains that only the leading nation can provide the safe exit out of this war of existence because only it can preserve the right order of affairs.(16)

Leninist Marxism has also applied this “us vs. them” example first to the class struggle, which is an imperative in the dialectic of history, where the crushed classes sap the foundations of the old structure, so that the next social structure may rise from the ashes of the last and later on split in turn into conflicting classes. This continuous struggle of classes pushes historical evolution forward.

The Marxist Leninists adopted this idea of dialectic from Hegel, a philosopher who saw history as the history of the mind. In his opinion, the next historical period is the product of past contradictions. On the opposite end of this movement, the Marxist Stalinist "class-strugglers" were made to vanquish the enemy: the total victory of the proletariat leading humankind to the noblest of levels in communism after it finally eliminates the bourgeoisie, thus making it possible for real progress to happen: from the slaughter of Russian nobility to the elimination of the Gulags and the Katyn forest massacre where the Russian executive hands shot the elite of the National Polish Army. To the Stalinians see that the conflict opposing East and West is also one between darkness and light and should end with a victorious communism, even if this entails waging a nuclear war.(17)

**“The Consecrated Easy”--Us vs. Them in American History**

The conduct of the U.S. as a superpower seems more acceptable when comparing it to the terrible bloody practices of those who simplify the world. Truth is that history has yet failed to produce a “dominance” which acts in a relatively kind and responsible manner towards the weak. This point should be taken into account when criticizing the U.S., as many voices in the German public opinion do, despite the fact that Manichaeism extends deep into American culture and history. The founders of the U.S. had placed their collective consciousness in the face of the intolerant, backward, monarchist Europe that was torn by cultural persecutions and internal conflicts. They considered America to be the “New Jerusalem” in the midst of this world of evil: colonialists vs. natives, countries of the South vs. those of the North, free America vs. backward colonial powers. Thus were the main lines imprinted in the collective consciousness of American history, continuously branding the principle of “we against them.” At first, all strength was to be concentrated to fight the German Kaiser, then



came evil Hitler's Nazi Germany, followed by imperial Japan's Tojo. All this prompted the increase of Americans' leadership who have always regarded this role as their historical duty of protecting "good," or democracy and human rights from "evil."

## **The Cold War Theory**

When the conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union erupted, it seemed logical for "Uncle Joe" to change from a wartime ally into the real dictator, Hitler's successor. With the outbreak of the Cold War, the highly accurate achievement developed by historian and diplomat George Kennan between 1946 and 1947 was the policy of containment of the Soviet Union. It carried a number of economic and political measures which have soon become political tools for military power. The theory of the cold war was thus formed on the basis of a defense policy led by military strategy.(18) It represents a high example Huntington reveres, for it is a clear "map" of

international politics which serves as guide on the road ahead.

How was this theory applied?

It has served as a line breaking the world in two: “the free world” camp, headed by the U.S. vs. the communist bloc controlled by the Soviet Union. The rest of the world had to choose either one or the other. To the well-meaning third-world countries who have nationalized interests to protect against being taken over by multinational companies, the anti-colonial movements and socialist parties were labeled as marginal parties, or the idiots backing the Soviet Union. On the other hand, severe opponents of communism, dictators like Spain’s Franco and Philippines’ Marcos were seen as loyal allies of the U.S.

As for countries of nonalignment who have tried to balance its effort between the two superpowers, they were totally disregarded by the U.S.’s policy. Extreme scenarios at the beginning of the fifties, McCarthy’s era,

subjected internal American opposition, from the liberal left to any and all U.S. citizen sympathizing with, in any manner, communists, to blame and political persecution. Many names were smeared from Robert Oppenheimer, the “father of the atomic bomb,” to Humphrey Bogart.

International organizations were also subjected to the same evaluation and classification. The U.S. saw in the U.N. a useful tool so long as the West, and its close allies of the Third World (particularly Latin America) were the majority in it. This usefulness was obvious during the Korean war, waged by the U.S. and its allies under the veil of the U.N. In the following decades, the fifties and sixties, the decolonization sweep permitted countries of nonalignment to take over the majority of votes in the United Nations General Assembly. In a number of times, there was a concurrence in opinion between this bloc and the socialist bloc, making of the United Nations, in American eyes, the international political playground of

the opponent, thus considerably diminishing its value.

The U.S. has always contained voices of excellent analysts who undoubtedly have the ability to understand complicated world politics and explain them to others. It is also true, however, that the double simplification, seeing things through the "we against them" perspective, or "good vs. evil," reaches the highest levels of influence in American politics. One of the most popular American presidents, Ronald Reagan, often used the expression "the evil empire" to describe the Soviet Union. Since the simplification of matters is this appealing to the leading political figures of the country, it is not a matter of political cultural particularity or one of the political system in the U.S. It is a matter directed towards the "inside," towards the large sphere of a whole-continent country. Interest in and knowledge of the outside world is limited. The political isolationist movement must be taken seriously. In the event that a president wishes to mobilize great resources to

wage a world-class war against an international political enemy, or he wishes to play a leading role in a world that needs leadership, the U.S. must then do what it was always forced to do against its will: it should break its isolated boundaries. The Iowan farmer, the Wyoming cowboy, the Texan oil worker and the Chicago secretary must all understand why their tax money is being spent in external rather than internal interests, they should understand why these American soldiers have to risk their lives in remote countries they know nothing about, sometimes not even its location. This hard task to convince can only be carried out through vulgarizing matters, like the need to ward off a dangerous evil and hard enemy, like confronting something like the “Lord of the Rings.” These simplifications extend to the whole of the American society and produce the greatest of impacts on it. It is not strange, then, that the theoretical construction of international affairs in the U.S. often follow the logic of “consecrating the easy,” when their theories depict the Manichean division of

the world, and are met with applause in the milieu of the political elite.

## **The High Cost of Easy Theories**

Cold War theory was true and successful, and the West won the war, as its supporters say. But in the midst of all the victory euphoria during the beginning of the nineties, no one mentioned the high cost of this war, and the unnecessary victims who fell as a result of the simplistic theory of the Cold War. The consequences of this mistake are still felt in today's world.(19)

First: The U.S. viewed Communism as a closed bloc, and it has therefore seen the Chinese revolution as a mere increase of Stalin's authority. The national elements of this revolution remained unknown to it, which made it enforce the harshest form of defense policy against China. Washington has even threatened to resort to nuclear weapons, during the Korean War and the Taiwan Strait crisis. This reaction caused a deep lack of confidence

to two generations of Chinese in the U.S., and the West in general. The impression of balance of powers and race of great world powers lingered on in the minds of the Chinese intellectual elite in the nineties, making it difficult to peacefully organize Asian affairs. The U.S. neither understood nor accepted India's impartiality and its attempt to establish good relations with the Soviet Union and this has weighed and still does on its relationship with Asia's second giant.(20)

Second: The American government saw the Soviet Union as one deaf bloc only and therefore failed to understand Khruchov's efforts at reform, directed with the help of his internal political alliance towards the followers of Stalin. Khruchov essentially worked to limit the military budget and control the army, but his attempts failed because of America's policy concerning the East. The tension could have ceased earlier, and the race to arms in the sixties and seventies avoided. This expensive bill was paid also by the RDA who remained

in captivity because of the fifties' policy and the building of the wall.

Third: National liberation movements were automatically linked to Moscow. There was a profound misunderstanding on the part of the U.S., of the Vietnam War. So, instead of seeing it as a war to accomplish a unification and national unity, after a long period of colonialism, the U.S. saw the war only as a substitute for their opponent. This misguided vision made Washington enter an unnecessary bloody conflict in which it failed. The "domino effect" component of the Cold War theory has not materialized: The countries of South Easter Asia have not succumbed, one after the other, to Communism. On the contrary, these countries are among the most successful capitalist countries in the Third World, despite the present crisis. In the meantime, Vietnam began to set itself free from Communism and exert efforts towards catching up with its neighbors and develop its market economy.



## **Conclusion**

The alleged victory of the Cold War came at a high cost because of the faults of the theory behind it. Furthermore, to credit it with the victory over Communism is but a myth. The tension clearing policy in the early seventies developed an alternative and accurate understanding of the world political situation. It was only after this period that the U.S. was able to elaborate a special policy directed towards China, to set military containment, the monitoring of arms and economic cooperation aside, and treat states that were previously obliged to ally with the Soviet Union in a different way. The effects of this same policy were to deepen the fractures in the socialist societies and elite of the political parties, and paved the way to Gorbachev's reforms, after the "second World War" issue. All this was not the work of the simplistic Cold War theory.

"If not civilizations, then what?" asks Huntington. When one faces him with true scientific knowledge that contradicts his

theory, he will have to admit to the absence of a simple explanation to everything. What is, in this case, the alternative explanation which can vow to lend itself to the world in simple, unarmed and better notions?(21)

This question does not go to the heart of the matter. If the theory cannot explain everything, then that is just insignificant. But for this theory to overlook significant parts of international political realities, or wrongly describe them, and for it to give false predictions means that it is not qualified to enter the “race.” It is in vain to look for an easy alternative, for one does not exist, and is unnecessary since the world has its own load of “we against them” theories, or according to Huntington’s example “the West against the rest.” These theories are found in fundamentalism, social Darwinism, Leninist Marxism, Realism, etc. They all economize on truth, are simple, and wrong, are superficially applied through convincing and noble principles that end up becoming a race to

arms, war and carnage: we can be spared this kind of theories.

What should any given theory present to international affairs? Should Ockham's razor fall in the hands of an incompetent barber, he might unintentionally let it slip, causing serious, life-threatening wounds. When we apply Huntington's map, this simplified version only works in small areas that can be monitored with the bear eye. Any mountain climber knows that in steep and wild lands with no passages, the only map that is of any utility is the one with the 1:25000 measurements. Other, inaccurate measurements lead either to rock barriers of worse to doom.

The matter is no different in international politics. The theory must be in harmony with the reality it depicts and explains. This is not to say that it should describe every little aspect of it; that would be the mirror's job. One can demand, however, that this theory take into consideration all variables and factors that affect big world

politics. When we minimize the world and subject it to one tool of measurement, this will definitely not be achieved.(22)

We must expect it to include the future aspects of globalization, the worldwide “capitalization” of public economies, mutual support in environmental issues, and the widening cross border surge of communications. We have the right of demanding that political organizations, like states and international organizations, be rightly valued; that the players include NGOs, per example, and finally, that historical factors and culturally conditioned values also be rightly considered.(23)

The theory of international affairs should also take into account that the most important reality in our world is the “simultaneousness of the non-simultaneous,” which is an effect of the violent emergence of globalization. Simplification and economization are not the magical recipe that can analyze international politics, even if they manage to produce a “bestseller” good in the

media and political culture spheres of the United States, more of a naivety than inadequacy; a complex world which throws extremely difficult challenges at us is to be met with a complex vision.

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