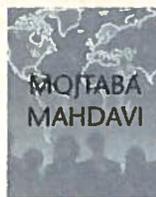


CHAPTER 20

THE WEST AND THE REST

Objectives

The dichotomy of the West versus the Rest, a construct of the colonial period, has been revived and reinforced by post-Cold War international politics, and especially by the tragic events of September 11, 2001. This chapter critiques two ways in which the idea of the West and the Rest is used in contemporary politics. The first approach, usually associated with the writings of American conservative Francis Fukuyama, asserts that Western liberal democracy has triumphed over its challengers, especially communism, and that there are few alternatives for the Rest (non-Western countries) other than to join with the West in embracing Western neo-liberal values and liberal democratic forms of government. For Fukuyama, “the end of history” means that Western liberal democracy will prevail across the globe in the twenty-first century as the superior way to govern global diversity. The second approach, advanced by another American conservative, Samuel Huntington, advances a quite different interpretation of the West and the Rest. He argues that different civilizations, especially Islam and Confucianism, fundamentally conflict with Western values and that civilizational differences necessarily will result in conflict between the West and the Rest. Both of these approaches have resonated in American and global politics, especially since September 11. In this chapter, we examine



the long lineage of the West–Rest dichotomy, including its most recent appearances in two essays that later became books: Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History?* and Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations?* Neither approach, we will see, adequately captures the complexities of our global community. Finally, we will discuss what can be done to get past the West-versus-the-Rest dichotomy.

Introduction

In the past two decades, the world has been shocked first by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and then by the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Although there are many explanations for these separate events, both have contributed to the revival of old assertions about the superiority of the West and the inferiority of the Rest. In previous eras, politicians and scholars used this way of representing the world as a justification for Western colonialism, arguing that it was the “civilizing mission” of the West, and the “white man’s burden,” to bring Western values and institutions to inferior and less advanced peoples. In our contemporary post-colonial world, however, this colonializing gesture has been dressed up in new language. The West is represented as the only society that defends democracy and human rights, while the Rest purportedly lack or resist such noble modern values. Central to these and related assertions is the suggestion that any resistance to Western values, institutions, and power is the mark of rage, irrationality, and backwardness, and, thus, the West is justified in advancing its model of progress globally.

Before the collapse of Soviet communism, politicians used the “us versus them” distinction to justify the Cold War between twentieth-century capitalism and communism. In the early twenty-first century, this construct now identifies new enemies of the West, notably the Orientalist East and Islamic and Confucian civilizations. After the tragic events of September 11, politicians have substituted “the War on Terrorism” for the Cold War on communism. The West–Rest dichotomy, thus, is not new. In fact, it dates back to the colonial period in the early sixteenth century and has survived in various forms ever since.

What Is “the Rest”?

IF THE WEST TYPICALLY REFERS TO COUNTRIES THAT HAVE EVOLVED WITHIN a liberal and capitalist governing framework, what is “the Rest”? The Rest refers to countries located in four regions of the global South (that is, countries that generally lie to the south of what we call the West): Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, most having a long history of Western colonialism. The motivations of the West—in various eras, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the British, the French, the Dutch, and most recently the Americans—to colonize the Rest are perhaps best captured in metaphor by “the three G’s” of gold, god, and glory (Mazrui, 1986). *Gold* represents colonialist demands for accumulation of capital, cheap raw materials and

labour, including slave labour, and expanding markets for Western goods. *God* stands for religious or cultural justifications of colonialism as well as the destructive role of Western missionaries, who assaulted indigenous traditions, often guided by explicitly racist assumptions about the "white man's burden" to civilize the "little brown" barbaric nations. *Glory* points to the colonial arrogance and competition among imperial powers in their global struggle for power and prestige. The great empires of the West were in no small way built through the political and cultural domination and economic exploitation of the Rest.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the era of Western colonialism drew to a close as one colony after another was granted self-rule to emerge as a newly independent country. Although the colonial powers formally withdrew from their colonial possessions, they maintained a vested interest in protecting their long-term control over political and economic resources in the former colonies. The old form of colonialism was revived in a new ideological form. This time the pretext was development and modernization. The former colonies would be retained within the West's orbit by ensuring that they adopted Western values, goals, and institutions rather than by direct rule.

After World War II, the United States became extremely worried by the attraction to socialism witnessed in the growing number of newly independent countries, including India and many newly independent countries in Africa. The dilemma facing the West was how to transform these countries into nominally sovereign nation-states and, at the same time, continue to exert political dominance. Thus, the only legitimate model put forward was a non-communist model of development, a Western liberal-capitalist model.

Western countries and international development agencies embraced **developmentalism and modernization theories** and policies that advanced Western values as a universal paradigm to be followed by the rest of the world. The Western path to development and democracy, it was argued, would save the Third World (developing and under-developed countries) from the dangers posed by the Second World (the Communist bloc, headed by the Soviet Union). Just as important, developmentalism would emancipate these countries from their traditional values, which were seen to stand as impediments to the spread of both liberalism and capitalism. Developmentalism was concisely conceived as a Western alternative to the socialist path of development. In practice, it turned out to be an ideological arm of American expansionism during the Cold War.

We cannot fully explore the intellectual foundations and political implications of developmentalism and modernization theories and policies here. Suffice it to say that they advanced three foundational assumptions about "us versus them." First, the modern West was, by definition, developed and a model to be emulated, while the Rest was under-developed. Second, the causes of under-development were seen to be rooted in the traditional culture and institutions of the Rest. Third, the Rest had to abandon its traditions and adopt Western practices; otherwise, the West and the Rest would remain under-developed.

Although developmentalism dominated thinking about the appropriate relationship between the West and the Rest in the post-war years, it did not go unchallenged. Serious doubts were raised about the universal application of these theories and policies. It could be readily observed that in many countries, modernization did not lead to democracy but, instead, to various forms of authoritarianism, middle-class revolutions, and/or fundamentalist politics. Moreover, others argued that modernization had simply set in place a new form of unequal relations between the West and the Rest that had been previously established in the colonial period.

The persistence of under-development and the continuing lack of liberal democracy in the global South—along with the inability of developmental and modernization theorists to present compelling explanations for these failures—contributed to the rise in the 1960s and 1970s of a new set of radical theories, such as dependency and world-system theories. Andre Gunder Frank (1969, 2–15), one of the founding fathers of **dependency theory**, argued that the nature of the West–Rest relationship could be best explained by dividing the world into two categories: the North “metropolis” and the South “satellite.” He further argued that the colonial legacy and unequal international structures created conditions in which the satellite remained highly dependent on the metropolis and that, contrary to modernization theory, development in the North actually caused under-development in the South. Development and dependency, Frank argued, are mutually reinforcing.

An extremely conservative reaction against mainstream developmentalism came from Harvard political science professor Samuel Huntington in 1968. He also rejected a universal positive correlation between development and democracy in developing countries and boldly challenged the idea that non-Western civilizations would follow the Western path of liberal democracy. Stability, he argued, had priority over democracy and development in Southern countries, and politicians in the West should focus on public order rather than social and political change, even if that meant supporting authoritarian regimes. For Huntington, it was “not the absence of modernity but the effort to achieve it which produces political disorder” (1968, 41). During the Cold War, Huntington’s theory of political order prescribed to decision-makers that pro-Western governments and stability in the Rest must be privileged over promoting political change and democracy, which could ultimately challenge Western domination and create conflict.

“End of History” or “Clash of Civilizations”?

UNFORTUNATELY, THE “DEVELOPMENT DEBATE” HAS NOT BEEN RESOLVED. During the past two decades, there has been renewed theorizing, especially in the United States, about the appropriate relationship between the West and the Rest. Reflecting on the collapse of Soviet-style communism, for example, Francis Fukuyama

proclaimed in his 1989 essay, "The End of History?" (and later in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* [1992]) that Western liberal capitalism had defeated its two major opponents—fascism and communism. The collapse of the Soviet Union, Fukuyama argued, signalled nothing less than "the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (1989, 271). The West had won.

Resting at the centre of Fukuyama's thesis was the idea that Western liberal democracy had proved itself to be the best and, indeed, the only viable option for the governance of the many and diverse countries of the contemporary world. *The End of History* thus revived the old developmentalist claim that Western liberal capitalism is a universal paradigm, one that could be and should be embraced by countries in the North and the South. Although Fukuyama suspected that there might be lingering resistance to the liberal-capitalist model, he predicted that the Rest would eventually see the error of their ways and embrace the intellectual and material value of liberal capitalism. Like the West, the Rest would come to understand that the modern world had arrived at the end of history because "the basic principles of the liberal democratic state could not be improved upon" (1989, 272).

The End of History found many critics, not the least of which was Samuel Huntington, who warned against Fukuyama's overly optimistic view of history and the universality of the Western paradigm. His objection to the principle of "Endism" rested on Huntington's argument that the "weakness and irrationality" of the Rest stood as an enduring obstacle to the global spread of Western values and institutions. "The hope for the benign end of history," Huntington argues, "is human. To expect it to happen is unrealistic. To plan on it happening is disastrous" (1989).

Huntington developed his critique in his 1993 essay, "The Clash of Civilizations?" and later in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). His central thesis was that conflict, not cooperation, best characterizes post-Cold War politics. Moreover, he claimed that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world order will be cultural rather than economic or ideological. "The great divisions among humankind and the dominate source of conflict will be cultural . . . The **clash of civilizations** will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future" (1993, 22).

Huntington reasoned that the world consists of seven or eight major civilizations: "Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African civilizations" (1993, 25). For Huntington, the domination of the West over the Rest was an ongoing source of conflict between the two: "The next world war, if there is one," he suggested, is likely to be "the conflict between 'the West and the Rest' and a response of non-Western civilizations to Western power and values" (1993, 41). In the post-Cold War era, "the Velvet Curtain of culture," he explained, "has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology." For Huntington, "this is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historical reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the world-wide expansion of both" (1993, 31–32).

For Huntington, fundamental and innate differences between civilizations necessarily lead to conflicts. “The efforts of the West to promote its values of democracy and liberalism as universal values, to maintain its military predominance and to advance its economic interests endanger countering responses from other civilizations” (1993, 39). The hegemony of the West, he contended, promotes “the growth of civilization-consciousness” on the part of the Rest and “de-Westernization and indigenization” such as the rise of Asian-ization in Asia and (re-) Islam-ization in the Muslim world (1993, 26). The greatest conflict, he suggested, will occur between the West and either Confucian or Islamic civilizations—or both.

Given these non-negotiable facts of contemporary politics, according to Huntington, the West has only two options. First, the West should consolidate its power and defend itself against the Rest; and second, the U.S. should consolidate its relations with Europe and Latin America, maintain friendly ties with Japan and Russia, and protect its interests against non-friendly civilizations, in particular Islamic and Confucian civilizations. In doing so, moreover, the West should exploit differences among these civilizations and maintain its economic and military superiority (1993, 48–49). In other words, Huntington’s advice to contemporary Western policy-makers was to follow the old policy of *divide and rule* over non-Western civilizations.

Although it is difficult to assess the direct impact of Huntington’s work on Western policy-makers, especially in the United States, it is probably no coincidence that the Bush administration has frequently pulled out the “clash of civilizations” card to justify its War on Terror and its unilateral foreign policies. American conservative politicians have often suggested that “our enemies hate ‘us’ because they hate our *values* and our *civilization*.”

Neither “End” nor “Clash”

THE END OF HISTORY AND THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS ARE TWO SIDES OF the same coin: both theses turn the West and the Rest into two monolithic categories. *The End of History* implies that the West offers a universal paradigm of development and democracy: the West is the best, and the Rest, lacking its own models of development, should and will follow the West. *The Clash of Civilizations* also suggests that the West is the best and thus must prevail over cultures with different histories, values, and institutions.

The two theses are seriously flawed, however, for three reasons. First, the “End of History” thesis assumes that there is only one path to modernity: the one already trod by the West and down which the Rest must follow. In this view, the cultures and traditions of non-Western societies are residual factors, “leftovers” from a pre-modern, backward time. The Rest or the global South itself is a residual category because its character, cultures, traditions, and institutions are examined in terms of Western standards, not in terms of its own values. The reference point is the West: the Rest is defined not in terms of what it is but in terms of what it lacks. This **Western-centred**

viewpoint ignores that societies can modernize themselves by reinterpreting their own traditions and cultures.

Second, the “Clash of Civilizations” thesis relies on a vague, abstract, and wholesale notion of “civilization identity.” It discounts that there is always a contest over the definition of “civilization” and who represents a civilization. Civilizations are not unitary entities; there are official and unofficial, current and countercurrent voices within each civilization. Each civilization is a dynamic plural entity, not a “shut-down, sealed-off” unit (Said, 2001). In other words, there is no single West, just as there is no single Rest.

Finally, Samuel Huntington argues that Western civilization (or culture) is unique and fundamentally different from other civilizations, especially Islam. For Huntington, it is not “Islamic fundamentalism” but the “fundamental” essence of Islam that makes it incompatible with modernity and democracy. Huntington’s simplistic argument is that the “Islamic mind” and democracy are mutually exclusive and inalterably grounded in culture. Yet one of Huntington’s many critics, Fred Halliday, reminds us that “there is nothing specifically ‘Islamic’ about” obstacles that hinder democracy in Muslim societies, though some of these obstacles “tend to be legitimized in terms of Islamic doctrine.” Any argument about incompatibility or compatibility between Islam and democracy adopts “the false premise that there is one true, traditionally established ‘Islamic’ answer to the question, and this timeless ‘Islam’ rules social and political practices. However, there is no such answer and no such Islam” (1996, 116). For Halliday, Islam is so broad that “it is possible to catch almost any fish one wants. It is, like all the great religions, a reservoir of values, symbols and ideas. . . . the answer as to why this or that interpretation was put upon Islam resides . . . in the contemporary needs of those articulating Islamic politics” (1994, 96).

It is, therefore, legitimate to challenge the assumption that the West and Islam, even the West and Islamism, have been in a constant fundamental clash. The West supported the totalitarian Ba’thist regime of Saddam during, and arguably before, the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988). It has consistently supported the Egyptian autocratic regime under Sadat and Mubarak since President Sadat made a peace with Israel. It has had longstanding relationships with the Arab oil monarchies, in particular Saudi Arabia. Since the nineteenth century, the West has supported—to use Fatema Mernissi’s phrase—the “palace fundamentalism” (2003) of the Saudi regime, the ideology, considered fanatical by non-adherents, known as Wahhabism, which is taught in the radical Islamist schools (*madrasas*) in Pakistan that gave birth to the Taliban.

The symbiotic relationship between Western liberal democracies and “palace fundamentalism,” for example, challenges the simplified binary of the liberal democratic West versus the traditional autocratic Rest. The relationship between the West and the Rest is far more complex than clash or cooperation. There are several examples of clash *within* civilizations, not between civilizations. The Iran–Iraq War and the Iraq–Kuwait War (1990) are two cases in point, where two countries within a “civilization” have been in conflict. More important, in the 1990 and 2003 American-led wars

against Iraq, some Arab countries remained on the American side, while France and Canada of the “Western civilization” opposed the American war against Iraq in 2003. These examples underline that states, not civilizations, are the primary actors of international politics. States will act in their best interests and forsake their traditional civilizations in favour of political, economic, and military interests (Ajami, 1993).

Many scholars have offered alternatives to Huntington’s confrontational civilizational thesis. Some argue that contemporary global instabilities are more appropriately understood as a “Clash of Globalizations” (Hoffmann, 2002). Benjamin Barber (2002) offers a similar line of argument by suggesting that we are in an era of the collision between **Jihad** and **McWorld**. The collision, he asserts, is occurring between “the forces of disintegral tribalism and reactionary fundamentalism” (Jihad) and “the forces of integrative modernization and aggressive economic and cultural globalization” (2002, 245). More specifically, “The Jihadist’s quarrel, Barber argues,” is not with modernity but with the aggressive neo-liberal ideology . . . they are not even particularly anti-American.” They “suspect that what Americans understand as prudent unilateralism is really a form of arrogant imperialism.” This is not, therefore, a clash of civilizations “but a dialectical expression of tensions built into a single civilization” created by McWorld; this is a “war within civilization” (2002, 248–249).

In a similar vein, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that “**Empire** is the new world order” (2000, 3). Empire “is the political subject that effectively regulates [the] global exchanges, the sovereign power that governs the world” (2000, xi). Empire is reducible neither to the United States nor to another form of imperialism (2000, xiv). Unlike imperialism, Empire is not imposed on people; rather, it is a complex web of institutions and socio-political and economic relations through which people participate in the making of Empire. We participate in the construction of Empire by our active participation in the political rule (good citizen) and economic regime (good consumer). We live in the post-modern age, and Empire is the dominant rule of this age. It has no foundation, no centre. “Empire is the non-place of world production where labor is exploited” (2000, 210). The “new proletariat” is “multitude” with no centre, no place; like Empire, it is, at once, everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Multitude is “counter-Empire” (2000, 207); it is no longer a traditional working class but a joint global axis of resistance against complex networks of Empire (2000, 55). In our post-modern age, the paradigm of the West versus the Rest has transformed into the relations of “Empire versus Multitude.”

Contemporary global tensions are perhaps more accurately described not as a clash of civilizations, but, instead, as a **clash of fundamentalisms** (Ali, 2002), a clash between two versions of political extremism, a clash between two tiny aggravated minorities who exploit religious or cultural rhetoric for political purposes. This clash can also be characterized as a clash between market fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism. In either case, this is a “clash of ignorance” (Said, 2001), in which democracy and social justice are “caught between a clash of movements each of which for its own reasons seemed indifferent to freedom’s fate” (Barber, 2002, 245).

Summary

This chapter has examined the rise and revival of the political construct of “the West versus the Rest,” especially the theses offered by Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington. This chapter argued, however, that neither the “end of history” thesis nor the “clash of civilizations” thesis adequately captures the complexities of culture or the sources of conflict in contemporary global politics. The current conflicts in the world are not between civilizations but, rather, occur between political actors who often are pursuing specific political goals that are not tied to culture or civilization per se.

What is to be done to achieve a better, more peaceful world? Benjamin Barber suggests that we must begin by “readjudication of north–south responsibilities” (2002, 247). We need to democratize global economic and political institutions. A true victory in the current global conflicts lies in democratization of globalization. “The war against jihad will not,” Barber argues, “succeed unless McWorld is also addressed” (2002, 247).

Jonathan Sacks suggests that we must begin by appreciating the “dignity of difference” (2002). The dignity of difference stands for self-respect and respecting others. It implies self-critique and criticizing others and promotes dialogue among ourselves and others. It requires a careful critique of global and local models. This means that each culture or nation should engage in a critical dialogue with its own traditions and formulate the universal values of democracy and social justice in a local language that can be implemented through local or homegrown institutions. The dignity of difference never suggests that we should not learn from other cultures, or that they have nothing new and valuable to offer to our own culture. The dignity of difference calls for a “third way” and not solely “my way.” Put differently, the best way to eliminate the West-versus-the-Rest dichotomy is a “third way,” one in which the West is not the best and the Rest can take the best of the West. As the great Martinican poet Aimé Césaire (1983, 77, quoted in Said, 2003, 86) reminds us, “no race possesses the monopoly of beauty, of intelligence, of force, and there is place for all at the rendez-vous of victory.”

Discussion Questions

1. Is Western modernity/democracy a universal paradigm, or should non-Western countries seek a particular path of modernity/democracy?
2. Which thesis of the post–Cold War period presented in this chapter best explains the complex picture of our world?
3. How convincing is the argument that the major conflicts in the world are better explained by the following theses: “Jihad versus McWorld,” “a clash of globalizations,” “a clash of fundamentalisms,” and “Empire”?
4. In what ways can we eliminate the old and dangerous dichotomy of the West versus the Rest? Discuss intellectual and political solutions.

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Weblinks



- Benjamin Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld
www.theatlantic.com/doc/199203/barber
- Edward Said, "The Clash of Ignorance"
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- UNESCO—Dialogue Among Civilizations
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