

Uncovering the myths of the clash of civilizations essay sample

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Introduction

In a sensational essay wrote by one of America's renowned political scientist Samuel Huntington (1993) " The Clash of Civilizations," he asserted that the nations have not reached the end of its history yet. Instead, it is only the beginning of a long series of conflict rooted from the fundamental antagonism between the various cultures of the world. That the nations and states sharing their civilizations and cultural identities are less likely to fight each other. Huntington (1993) also accentuated the idea that cultural barriers are the dominating source of conflict in the world. Its manifestation can be seen from conflicts between the Western civilization and the non-Western civilizations (Huntington 1993, p. 22). The cold war is an example cited by Huntington (1993) to depict the conflict of a two different civilization.

It can be recalled that the West have opposed communism in the Soviet regime, but the Soviets stood their ground in believing that communism is the most effective approach in securing stability of their nation. In concluding that culture is driving force of conflict as suggested by Huntington (1993), the idea limits the possibility that there is another element at play that triggers conflict between nations. It is not the cultural difference that starts the fire, but rather a showdown of the global superpower. There are instances in history showing that there is no clash of civilization that the conflict of nations are the result of demonstrating who has the power in terms of economy and military. Each of the powerful

nations in the world is trying to prove that they have what it takes to dominate and to be feared in myriad ways.

Discussion

Cultures in conflict generally applies to nations engaged in a war against religion and social distinctions. If one nation is trying to impose his ideological perspectives over another nation, then it is no doubt a clash of civilizations. But if the cause of the conflict is because the stronger nation is taking over the weaker nation and the other strong nation intervenes in the process, then it is not about culture, but rather a clash of power. The conflict of nations is most of the time perceived as the West versus the East, but that is not always the case. In East Asia for example, China is considered an Asian powerhouse in terms of size, population, military power, nuclear warheads and economy. The country shares cultural similarities among its close neighbors. However, despite that fact tension is still brewing on the horizon as the country continues to aggravate its neighboring countries regarding territorial dispute over the South China sea and its islands (Gupta and Samuels International 2012).

The Spratly islands situated in the middle of the South China sea were allegedly found to have 17.7 billion tons of oil and natural gas deposits, which is said to be one of the reasons that China is fighting hard to claim for territorial ownership (Dosch 2011). The ten square kilometer collection of islands is being claimed by no less than nine South East Asian countries because of the area's economic value and having a massive sea traffic volume. This exemplifies that the clash between nations is not always

caused by cultural differences, but rather of economy and in South East Asia's case is territorial jurisdiction. The controversies about the Spratly islands have resulted in frequent debate over China's direct assault to the Philippine territories because of Chinese fishing boats often sighted within the Philippine waters. The situation was considered by the Philippines as a threat to its sovereignty and national security.

If the clash of civilizations is rooted from culture, then it would seem irrational for China to start a conflict with its neighboring countries. Furthermore, China is very much aware of its power and capabilities and they are using it to their advantage by subjecting other claimant nations to their own rules. The situation with China and its neighbors are not so much different in the other regions of the planet. The United States cannot make any decision yet as to which side they should take (Greenway 2012). The United States and NATO are considered the most pro-active nations when it comes to international conflict. However, the United States backed away from the issue of the Spratly islands because of several reasons. First, the US strongly depends on China for low-cost labor and manufacturing market. More importantly, China is the leading financing source of the United States for Federal deficits (Scissors 2010). Given that fact, the United States hands are tied when it comes to intervening with China's issues and international affairs. The US is bound to it is mutually beneficial economic terms with China. Therefore, the act of interfering with the China's conflict with its neighbors would constitute a significant risk to its economy and the US cannot afford to go down further in the G7 list of powerful nations.

On the other hand, the US also has a strong multilateral relationship with the Philippines, but the amount of benefits that the US can get from its bilateral relationship with China is far more feasible than its multilateral relationship with the Philippines. Having said that, it appears that the clash of civilization does not specifically correlates to culture, otherwise determined by a mutually beneficial relationship. Power always come into play in the majority of international conflicts where leading nations interfere in the process. Nations such as the United States cannot afford to lose its foothold on beneficial alliances, for the sake of a more humanitarian sort of missions and peacekeeping agenda according to Professor Nicolas Fernandez (2011) of the Cuban International Law Society (Fernandez 2011).

The Clash of Civilization as described by Huntington (1993) generally relates to the conflict between the Western civilization and the Islamic regime in the Middle East. The aggressive efforts made by the Western nations in some Arab countries would encompass a culture driven conflict. However, the Western superpowers seemed to be impartial in choosing which Arab nation to interfere with. For example, if clash of the civilization is generally considered a campaign against Islamic nations and its social traditions, then the West should also show interference in Saudi Arabi after all, Saudi is the largest Islamic community in the Middle East. The women's rights law in Saudi Arabia is being pushed aside by the Islamic community due to cultural and social traditions of the land. Although the international community such as the United States has been working with the Arab leaders to promote democracy and public accountability most particularly about women's rights.

But, the West cannot persuade Saudi Arabia to take the first step to democracy because the US is benefiting from its access to Saudi Arabia's oil reserves (Monshipouri 2004).

The United States being the largest oil consumer in the world cannot afford to lose its close economic relationship with Saudi Arabia because of one thing, oil. As modernization takes over the most of the United States, its oil dependence on Saudi Arabia's oil supply have increased by 20% and the risk of losing bottomless access to Saudi's oil would mean loss of economic productivity in the United States (Krauss 2012). There is also an element of suppression arising from the conflict of power between the influential nations against the emerging military power in smaller nations. Iran for example is constantly being bombarded with allegations of developing nuclear power. The US military campaigns in Iran obscures the scale of an emerging war (Saul 2012). The United States repeatedly announces that their efforts in Iran are a precautionary measure to prevent nuclear-armed terrorism to potentially emerge in Iran.

If that is the case, then North Korea should also be considered a threat and therefore, US military presence should also be made visible in North Korea. But it seems that North Korea is not being taken into consideration for a military crackdown. The proliferation of nuclear and missile programs in North Korea is among the objectives of the Obama administration, but dealing with North Korea seems to be treated less harsh than that of Iran. There is a reason why proliferation approach made in Iran is different in North Korea. The United States is using a diplomatic approach in addressing

the nuclear issues of North Korea. This is because any miscalculation of movement against North Korea would result to power struggle between the Asian superpowers particularly China, South Korea and Japan (Signal 2011). The US is generally cautious about losing its economic grip on the aforementioned Asian countries because any form of destabilization in those countries would greatly affect the US economic trade in the region.

When it comes to Iran's nuclear proliferation efforts, it shows a different approach defined by air strikes, bombardment of alleged nuclear facilities and other warlike strategies. There are several reasons as to why the US addressed the Iran nuclear issues differently. First, the US government along with its Islamic ally Israel, distrust the Iranian regime, which they thought Iran had nuclear power would threaten its neighboring country (Ottaway 2009, p. 4). The situation is almost the same as North Korea, but the objectives are different when it comes to Iran. The latter has oil reserves of up to 150 billion barrels, which ranks third largest in the world (Pachymuthu, Fabi and Aizhu 2012). Iran having an economic advantage in terms of oil reserves paired with nuclear strength would mean a threat to the United States position as a global superpower (Ottaway 2009, p. 7). It is an example of clash of power and very much different from the clash of civilization. With Iran emerging in the global scene as an influential player would shake the US off of its global economic and military domination.

Huntington also mentioned the division of world civilizations according to the political and economic system in his essay. According to him, after the cold war the world was divided into first, second and third world (Huntington

1993, p. 23). This division also paved way for the powerful nations that belong in the first world countries to become more powerful because of the exploitation of the third world nations. The conflict occurs when first world countries begin to take over the members of the third world countries. The more third world country that powerful nations took over the more they become stronger to prove to themselves and other powerful countries of their military might. If there is an element of civilization or culture within the described conflicts, the outcomes and the objectives should have been different. If it is indeed about culture, there should also be an accompanying strong policy to back up the initiative of changing the cultural perspective to be rationale in the eyes of the international community. However, the case of the powerful nations taking over the smaller ones are different.

The real intentions were concealed in international welfare concerns and peacekeeping when in reality the objectives are more of personal interest to further military power and economic prowess. The strong nations do not want further competition to power, therefore, the first step to prevent other nations in challenging their position is to suppress them once in for all (Blum, 2003, Web). This manifestation encompasses a clash of power rather than of culture and civilization. If it is indeed about culture, to alleviate differences and the objective to keep the world at peace, then it is right to say that they should be bombed entire civilization regardless of their multilateral ties. But it appears that choosing a civilization to create conflict with is filled with controversies and bias judgement. For example, Washington's war policies with Iraq was created on the grounds of liberating the people of Iraq from

dictatorship. If the reason for conflict is liberating the people from the tyranny of a government leader, then why not also put the same pressure to Mswati III of Swaziland or Al-Bashier of Sudan or Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan. If it is indeed about conflict of civilization in terms of political ideologies, might as well crush all dictatorships in every nation.

However, it is not always and never been the case because there is always an ulterior motive when it comes to dealing with international crisis. There is no clash of civilization in any of the world superpower's actions, but a clash of ideas. American fundamentalists are trying to remake the world according to its liking. The elements of free enterprise and belief of a political system remodeled out of the Western high school textbook. There are countries in the world that took drastic steps in reshaping its political system based on Western political ideologies. Take for example the Philippines, during the term of President Gloria Arroyo, she pushed to create a major constitutional change to shift the political landscape of the country from a complete democratic model into a federal system imagined from the West (Mendoza, 2011, p. 268). The nations are not in a clash of civilization, but in a clash for the possession of energy. Oil is still the greatest economic driver of any commodity in the world. It is indeed a black gold, something that when found can make a nation incredibly rich and powerful and that is what the West is aiming for.

If the cause of the international unrest is cultural conflict, then there should have been steps initiated to change the social relationships among people (Avruch, 2011, p. 2). For example, the prevailing Sharia Law in many Islamic

nations is perceived to be in contrast with the universal human rights law in terms of serving punishment to offenders without undergoing a proper due process of the court. The Sharia law does not allow sex between divorced individuals, post and pre-marital sex, drinking alcohol and highway robbery. Traditionally, the Sharia law will punish sex offenders by either severe flogging or stoned to death (Robinson, 2011, Web). These practices are perceived by non-Muslim communities as unlawful punishments and a complete violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The news about international conflicts are generally rooted from political and national security issues. However, the success of the Western campaigns in other regions of the world has yet to prove that their initiative is to change the traditions that have been perceived to be inhumane. If the clash of civilization is in existence, then there should be bilateral discussion about reconsidering the practice of Sharia law. Foreign policies should have been made more favorable to the welfare of the children in Africa, to change the way women are treated in men-dominated societies, to alleviate poverty caused by socio-political ideologies. However, those were not the true priorities of the intervening international forces, but creating a struggle for power.

There is no clash of civilizations, but a clash of arms industry since the fact that the endless war is the right opportunity for nations to show off what they got in terms of military force. Apart from stacking up nuclear warheads, military manufacturers are raking exorbitant profits out of the ongoing conflicts. The continuous development of high powered weapons creates an

urge for powerful nations to test their military capabilities by engaging into unjustified war fares. The war they created is also a testing ground for their top of the line weapons and military tactics. Having high powered weapons at hand without having to test its killing capacity is like buying stacks of iron and left to rust in the shed. Therefore, in order to make use of the funds poured into weapon development, the global military superpowers would have to find a way to use their creations of mass destruction. There is no clash of civilization, but instead a battle to take over the land and demolish its landscape in order to hand out rebuilding contracts (Blum, 2003, Web).

There is no clash of civilization, but a race to the top of the economic supremacy. Globalization changes the game for every nation playing in the field of the global economy. Basically, the United States is the benchmark of the world's economic and financial stability status. Since the dollar is the country's local and at the same time the universal currency, its inflation and depletion rate moves the economic and financial stability of every nation in the entire world. For instance, the effects of the 2008 US economic crash spread across the globe as one of the largest investment banks in the world owned by the Lehman brothers suddenly failed. Over the course of the next few months the stock market plummeted and the chain of reactions followed as more and more companies laid off employees and announced foreclosures. The European Union has shown similar patterns of economic slowdown following the US recession. If this issue is caused by the clash of civilization. Therefore, the European Union should have not been affected by the problem that came from the United States. This is because the clash of

civilization addresses the cultural differences of the nation and since Europe and America share similarities in terms of Western cultures, they should have not been affected by the circumstances of one another.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the clash of civilization is a totally different context of the reality that is happening in the world today. A clash of civilization is something deeper in perspective and it involves a concentration of the problem solely on the grounds of cultural differences. Political and social ideologies may come as a primary contributor to the conflict, but it appears that it is being used as an excuse by the strong to exercise force over the weak. There is a substantial element of greed and economic interest that drives the existence of conflict in today's modern world. The ancient civilizations clashed because of the claim for territory and resources, this is the same case of today's conflicts. It rooted from the mere interest in exploiting the natural resources of the less able nations and the more powerful nation uses the internal conflicts of that country to intervene and get hold of its natural wealth. Everything boils down to the game of thrones to prove who is the strongest, to show who's the boss and to reiterate the fact that they are the king of the world. Nations clash in together not because of culture, but because of the need to dominate the weak, to gain as many benefit as possible and to keep their presence visible in every corner of the planet. There are allegations that the United States is using its power to interfere with other nation's affairs in order to have a reason to put up military bases in troubled countries as a bragging rights. It can be

recalled that the US became a superpower after the second world war because of their participation in liberating several Asian nations from the Japanese regimes. However, little do people know that one of the reasons that the US liberated the Philippines from Spain is to name the country as one of its colonial states.

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