

The Clash of Civilizations Has New Venues  
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When historian Samuel Huntington wrote Clash of Civilizations in 1997, our already politically-correct culture found him over the top at best, and bigoted at worst. Academics around the world weighed in at conferences and in reviews of this book, many of them uncomfortable over his picture of Islam.

Huntington recognized that the end of the Cold War did not mean the end of conflict in the world. The newest variety would be more difficult in some ways than that between the Soviets and the West, both of which were at least varieties of the same civilization. The rise of Islamic militarism, however, would be a different sort of war because such militants lived widely throughout the world, often embedded within other civilizations.

After the 9/11 attack on America, Huntington was given another look. He commented that everywhere Islam was and had been, the borders with other civilizations were bloody. We have focused on the hostilities between Palestinians and Israelis too much, whereas other border areas are in far more peril. We have also concentrated on the problems between Arabs and the West, whereas Islamists are just as hostile toward Buddhists and Hindus.

Thailand, a country known for its appeal to tourists, has been fighting Islamism for years in Muslim majority enclaves. Today, however, the conflict is escalating. On March 31, Muslim insurgents staged the most deadly coordinated attacks in years in Thailand's restive south (see Sumeth Panpetch, Associated Press), killing 134 people and injuring 340 with car bombs that targeted Saturday shoppers and a high-rise hotel frequented by foreign tourists.

Note what they are targeting: tourism, a mainstay industry for Thailand. The midday explosion at the 405-room Lee Gardens Plaza Hotel targeted Malaysian and Singaporean tourists enjoying their weekend getaway. This same hotel was targeted in 2006 as well. Last year, suspected militants staged coordinated attacks at more than 30 spots across Yala city, killing three people and injuring more than 50. A month earlier, a trio of bombs hidden in vehicles hit a busy section of Sungai Kolok, killing four people and wounding more than 60.

India has suffered from several appalling attacks such as the coordinated massacres in Mumbai, coordinated from Pakistan. The terrorists were going after not only secular Hindus, but secular Muslims as well, and even managed to find a lone Jewish family to murder.

Terrorists managed to explode a nightclub in Bali, Indonesia, a tourist mecca for Australians and other westerners. There have been more attacks in Indonesia, which, although primarily Muslim, is \223too western\224 for the insurgents.

These places are obviously Islam's Bloody Borders. But what happens when the insurgents are embedded in the west? Do we have bloody bordered neighborhoods? Apparently so. In Sweden's city of Malmo (population of 300,000), Muslims now comprise between 20% and 25% and have a virulently anti-Semitic Muslim mayor. Much of the increase in anti-Jewish violence in recent years is being attributed to shiftless Muslim immigrant youth. In recent months, the only synagogue serving Malm\366's 700-strong Jewish community has been the focus of repeated attacks. The synagogue, which has previously been set on fire and been the target of bomb threats, now has guards stationed around it, while the Jewish kindergarten can only be reached through reinforced steel security doors. This is but one of many such enclaves throughout Europe.

Many in Britain fear the loss of their culture altogether. The Baroness Cox told a House of Lords symposium on March 19 that a growing number of British Muslims are shunning the official court system in favor of Sharia councils to settle legal disputes. Sharia law, of course, authorizes such brutal punishments as stoning, whipping, and amputations, not to mention absence of legal rights for women.

We cannot expect a culture so different from ours to change overnight to become a model of democracy. Just watch the Arab democracy movement crash and burn as the "elected" Islamist parties take over. Watch ethnic strife emerge in Syria and Libya, neither of which are candidates for democracy, no matter how much money we pour on their heads.

Huntington knew bloody borders when he saw them.

685 words

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