

Clash of Civilizations
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Western Civilization does not have all the answers to those wanting a perfect society. Even the excellent American Creed (everyone is an equal citizen under the law) does not have all the answers, but both are far better than any other older, traditional civilizations.

Modern intellectuals do not like to repeat what seems to be the arrogance of 19th century Europeans and Americans who looked down on all other cultures. We shudder at the notion that only White people of Northern European heritage are fit to rule, and must teach the rest of the world, through colonialism if need be, how to live.

However, with my knowledge of what the other civilizations have to offer (Islamic, Chinese, Indian, and sub-Saharan African), I am going to make that case. Colonialism is no longer an approved system, but in its time, it was responsible for introducing some valuable concepts to people badly in need of it. The British colonialism of India was often oppressive and bumbling, but it provided the Indian sub-continent with an identity as a single nation-state, India. It provided a common language, English, rather than the hundreds of mutually unintelligible languages and dialects, and introduced a governing system based on participatory governance. Indians obviously wanted these things because their continued resistance to the British was not against these values, but against their overlordship.

The United States came late to colonialism, only experimenting once, with the Philippine Islands. This island group had been under the colonial grip of Spain for four centuries before we took them, and during that time, Spain enforced Catholicism on the people but failed to create a single national school system. The Americans at least did the latter, providing English as the common language and opening a public school system. We also introduced the concept of participatory rule, American style. Also different was that the Philippines did not have to revolt to gain their independence. At the beginning of World War II, we promised their emancipation upon the conclusion of the war, which then happened. All the other European colonial powers faced often bloody revolts before they relented, and doing so was largely under US pressure.

The biggest challenge to Western Civilization and the American Creed today comes from a constituency not ready to defend them. In the aftermath of World Wars I and II, empires fell and former colonies gained nationhood. The Western World, and particularly the US, offered the model for these nation states, which some took and others did not.

After both wars, the world was awash in homeless refugees, most of whom have been taken in by the US and Western Europe. Because we had witnessed a virulent type of nationalism (Nazi and Japanese), we automatically condemned nationalism as a bad thing. This has unfortunately given many new immigrant refugees the idea that they can continue to practice their cultures and religions as practiced in their former homelands. The United Kingdom suffers most from this problem, with Muslim and Hindu citizens forgetting that they came to the West to get away from their oppressive cultures, not to transplant them here.

The British are beginning to rethink this. A British jury has convicted a couple of attempting to force their teenage daughter to marry her first cousin in Bangladesh. This is Bangladeshi culture, not British, and British is better. The French are now going after African immigrants trying to send their daughters to Africa every summer to have their genitals cut (FGM). Not a good culture, which the US also punishes. Forced marriage and oppressive childrearing is hideous enough in their homelands, along with stoning and decapitating disobedient girls or wives. Don't bring such practices here.

It is essential that we understand why our civilization has produced more freedoms, better treatment of children and wives; better governance than by priests, absolute monarchs, or dictators; and that we insist that new immigrants know that this is the law here. Tolerance and tip-toeing around bad cultures is unacceptable. If people are voting with their feet, they must surrender cultures that violate modern values. Enlightened self-interest prevails here.

682 words

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