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to the Westernistic Era**

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## Forget 'The West Versus the Rest'-Welcome to the Westernistic Era

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Samuel Huntington was wrong: there will be no clash of civilisations. East Asia's economic crisis—a more significant event than the Gulf War—has demonstrated that East Asia will not become the main challenger to the West. What we are seeing is not the run-up to a clash of civilisations in which the Asians just lost a round. As we argue in our new book, *Anticipating the Future*, it is the making of a world-spanning Westernistic civilisation that will do much more to mix and merge cultures than it will to set them at each other's throats. Westernistic civilisation is where the world is headed, and if we are to manoeuvre our way successfully through present and future turbulence we need to have a clear sense of the larger game within which we are playing.

### **Understanding Civilisation**

Huntington's analysis has been influential, and because it predicted conflict, it could have become a dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy. But Huntington misunderstood civilisation in general and Western civilisation in particular. To make his 'clash' scheme work, he had to see civilisations in territorial terms, and to emphasise their material power as opposed to their ideas. Indeed, he simply transposed traditional thinking about power politics up to the civilisation level, carrying with it two mistaken assumptions: first, that civilisations are like states in having fixed borders and territories; and second, that they are like states in being able to

behave as a single, unified actor. Anyone who has travelled abroad will immediately see the fallacy of thinking that civilisations are like states. In non-Western cities such as Shanghai, Bombay, Bangkok, Nairobi and Tokyo, everything from architecture to fast food shows a strong impact of Western civilisation. And this is not a one-way street. Western cities such as Vancouver, San Francisco, London and Marseilles display a similar array of non-Western impacts in their buildings, restaurants and lifestyles. It is getting hard to think of any major city in which a significant dimension of multiculturalism is not plainly stamped on the faces and fashions of the people.

Civilisations are not like states. They may well have a home base, but they are not territorially fixed, they do not have geographical borders, and they are far too loosely organised and politically fragmented to have policies and to behave in the way that states do. Civilisations are primarily about ideas, and ideas are notoriously difficult to pin down. Good ideas have always travelled between civilisations, and they do not depend on material power to have a wider effect. Greek and Roman ideas about law, philosophy and politics were extraordinarily influential in Renaissance Europe more than a millennium after their imperial power had crumbled. Islam continues to spread, even though it no longer has an imperial sponsor, and Buddhism spread despite never having one. Although civilisations often resist new ideas that clash with their existing values, they will often allow in ideas that promise to enhance wealth, power or style. Huntington missed the centrality of ideas to civilisation, shut out the possibility of more fluid and flexible civilisational relations and saw power as zero-sum. He misrepresented both what the West is and what its prospects are.

What Huntington failed to see is that the West generated almost the entire framework of political and economic ideas within which other civilisations now live: the sovereign state, nationalism, the market, political pluralism, science, progress. In the Americas and Australasia, the Western framework was transplanted lock, stock and barrel by European migrants who displaced the native populations. In most of the rest of the world, adopting Western political and economic ideas was a prerequisite for either avoiding colonisation, or regaining lost independence. Decolonisation remade much of the world (often badly) in the Western

image. It became a world of states, nationalisms, and science and technology. The Cold War slowed the spread of markets, but now this too has become a universal idea. Although Western in origin, these ideas are now independently durable, for without them no state or civilisation in the modern world can generate the power to sustain itself, let alone expand its influence. The fact that so many fundamental Western ideas have become universal more than outweighs the fact that some (most notably human rights and individualism) are still hotly contested. The universalisation of Western ideas also underpins our vision that we stand at the dawn of a Westernistic era.

What do we mean by Westernistic? The parallel is with other great civilisations that have expanded beyond their original core, in the process implanting some of their culture and ideas into wider populations. One example is the difference between classical Greece and the Hellenistic world. Classical Greece rose to glory as a system of city states populated by Greeks and linked together by a common language and culture. The conquest of Greece first by the Hellenised Macedonians, and later by the Romans, spread Greek art, cities and peoples over much of the Middle East and Europe. The shift from classical Greek to Hellenistic inaugurated a period of nearly two thousand years, down to the fall of the Byzantine Empire, in which Greek ideas and culture penetrated and reshaped many other peoples and civilisations. These ideas were still powerful when they were injected into late mediaeval and early modern Europe. A similar kind of story could be told about the distinction between Chinese and Sinified, in which ideas from the core Chinese civilisation penetrated and reshaped the societies on its periphery: Korea, Japan, Manchuria, Mongolia, Vietnam. But Hellenised was not the same as Greek, and Sinified was not the same as Chinese. Both represented fusions and syntheses between a core culture and the many others that came under their influence.

### **Making the Westernistic World**

The same thing is now happening with Western civilisation. We are leaving behind the 'classical' Western era, in which Western power was overwhelmingly dominant. We are moving into a Westernistic age marked by fusions between Western and other cultures, and by a less

lopsided distribution of power, wealth and organisational vitality. A Westernistic world is one strongly shaped by Western ideas, yet where other cultures willing and able to adopt and adapt those ideas can share in the wealth and power that they generate. A Westernistic world is also one in which the West itself adopts and adapts ideas from the cultures with which it has intermingled.

The Westernistic world has been in the making for many decades, but now that the Cold War is out of the way we can see it more clearly. One of the most longstanding examples of it is Japan, which seized the opportunity to absorb most of the empowering Western ideas more than a century ago. The argument about whether Japan is part of the West or part of Asia will never be settled because it asks the wrong question. Japan has a different history and different cultural roots, and cannot ever be part of the 'old West'. Much the same reasoning applies to Turkey, which is why there is such difficulty about its membership in the European Union. Australia's search for acceptance as an East Asian state is equally fruitless and all the more absurd for being a state seeking to 'escape' the West. The recent Asian melt-down may make the Australians think again.

Japan and Turkey are early examples of truly Westernistic countries. Japan's remarkable ability to combine its own culture with Western ideas has been the secret of its tremendous success. Japan has played the Westernistic game not only by finding its own unique fusion of Western ideas and Asian culture, but also by sending ideas back to the West. This return traffic has not just been in superficial adornments such as sushi, sumo, go and karaoke, but also in just-in-time production management systems, miniaturisation, and the manufacture of high quality mass-production goods. In becoming part of Westernistic civilisation Japan has widened the two-way street by exporting not only goods but also ideas back to the old West. A look at the shop windows, restaurants, tourist attractions, corporate structures and finances of any Atlantic country quickly shows the extent of Japan's impact, and thereby also the extent to which the old West itself is becoming Westernistic.

The success with which Japan has become a major part of the Westernistic world underlines the diversity that was already a distinctive

hallmark of the old West, and which is even more true of Westernistic civilisation. The basic Western package of ideas is able to contain a remarkable range of cultural and political forms. This diversity is partly captured in the many stereotypes that Westerners have of each other: the individualistic French, the well-organised Germans, the pragmatic English, the romantic Irish, the materialist Americans, etc. It is more seriously represented by big differences in language, culture and politics. Think of the difference in price and availability when buying alcohol in Norway, France or the USA. Compare the attitudes of the British and the Danes to coalition governments. Look at the heavily centralised political arrangements in France and Britain and the heavily decentralised ones in Germany, Canada and Switzerland. Feel the difference in public transport in Sweden and France on the one hand, and Britain and the USA on the other. Try living on welfare in Denmark versus in the USA. This list could be extended almost infinitely. What it tells us is that despite sharing some basic rules of the game, Western countries and peoples have been able to sustain an astonishing range of cultural, social, political and even economic diversity. Indeed, there is room for the view that even the core West already contains two civilisations: Europe, which organises its multiculturalism in a system of states, and is more open to the forces of politics and history, and America, which mixes its multiculturalism in a single state, and is more open to science, rationality and economic logic. Britain's 20th century role has been to be suspended between these two cultures. This diversity and its inherent encouragement of competitive instincts have always been some of the great strengths of the West. They are the keys to many explanations of why a more divided and competitive Europe, and not a more unified China, expanded to create the first global system.

And what has been true for the West will also be true for Westernistic civilisation. Again, Japan is the perfect illustration. No Westerners who have spent any time in Japan will have any doubt that they have encountered a spectacularly different culture. Yet at the same time they will recognise much that is familiar, and they will find enough shared rules of the game to enable them to connect to a wide range of business, professional and cultural activities. Like the 'native' Western countries, Japan has been able to take on board much of the Western package

without losing its cultural distinctiveness. In the process it has discovered some new syntheses which it has fed back into the West.

This ability to sustain cultural diversity within a framework of shared ideas is one of the great attractions of Westernistic civilisation. If it were better understood, it might go much of the way towards calming the fears of those in other civilisations who think that modernisation will lead to Westernisation, and therefore to the submergence or homogenisation of their own cultures. This fear is particularly strong in parts of Asia and in much of the Islamic world. Islamic fundamentalists and exponents of 'Asian values' both want to believe that modernisation is possible without Westernisation—in other words that they can have post-industrial prosperity without adopting the whole Western package. Most especially they do not want to take on board institutionalised democracy, the rule of law and individualism. Such evidence as we have suggests that theirs is an impossible dream. The elements of the Western package are all interrelated, and it is not possible to have some of them without the others, at least not over the long run. The mounting evidence from the experience of Japan, Korea and Taiwan suggests that over a few generations the introduction of markets and successful modernisation first creates pluralism, then democracy, and eventually even elements of individualism. To that extent, the Islamists and the Asian values brigade are correct that Westernisation is a threat. In some very real ways, modernisation means Westernisation, and those cultures that reject important parts of the package will find, like the Soviet Union did, that their development runs into the buffers. But as Japan, Korea and Taiwan demonstrate, Westernisation means neither becoming identical to the old West nor losing one's own culture. It means becoming Westernistic, and within that framework many cultural forms are possible. And this diversity is not static. Westernistic civilisation is open to change, and one source of innovation is the swapping of ideas amongst the different cultures within it as they all seek to find new ways of adapting to the problems of industrial and post-industrial society. One of the glues that holds Westernistic civilisation together is the shared problem of how to keep society, polity and economy working in a mutually supportive way within the context of a global market. The understanding that the local and the global ends of this problem are intimately connected explains

why Westernistic civilisation has sprouted such a wealth of international and transnational organisations.

During the last two decades most of the countries of East Asia have joined the Westernistic game. They have done so by adopting some, but not all, of the key ideas in the Western package. States and nationalism came fairly easily with the process of decolonisation. Markets and economic openness encountered much more resistance, but during the 1980s even communist China abandoned its commitment to the command economy. Some parts of the Western package still encounter strong resistance in East Asia and elsewhere, most notably democracy, the rule of law, a broad civil society and human rights. But it remains beyond question that the spectacular recent economic growth of East Asia could not have happened without the adoption of key Western ideas. What we have been witnessing is the unfolding of Westernistic civilisation in a region that contains a nearly a third of humankind.

Asia's current economic crisis posed the first test for Huntington's analysis and he flunked. Many East Asian states, and for a time even the Japanese Ministry of Finance, toyed with the idea of finding an 'Asian economic solution to Asian problems', but after a volley across their bows by the US and the EU, most East Asians accepted the Westernistic package of intrusive IMF conditionality designed to liberalise East Asian economic and political systems. When Thailand, Indonesia and even South Korea tried to get fellow Asians to leave the IMF out of the picture, Japan and Singapore said their billions were only available as part of an IMF-led rescue. The crash of equity and currency prices in East Asia also brought down the notion that Asians have evolved a distinctive form of capitalism. The technocrats from the IMF call their medicine "global norms and institutions", but these are in fact Westernistic norms and institutions. As Asian economies are to recover, they will have to take their Westernistic medicine.

### **Why the West will remain powerful**

As Westernistic civilisation unfolds on an increasingly global scale, the old West remains a powerful core. Unlike classical Greece, the West has not been subordinated by outside powers. On the contrary, it has just won the Cold War and remains the premier centre of world power.

Thus while it was Macedonians and Romans that carried Hellenistic civilisation beyond the bounds of classical Greece, the 'classical' West remains a major player in Westernistic civilisation. Although many other civilisations now possess substantial elements of military, industrial, technological and financial power, the old West still remains at the forefront in most respects. And not surprisingly it still has some crucial advantages in a world that is increasingly shaped by the basic package of Western ideas.

One of the West's key advantages is military power. Unlike most other regions, the West faces no danger of war among its leading states. This so-called 'democratic peace' means that the Atlantic states do not waste resources in military competition with each other, and that they can, as during the Cold War, stand back-to-back against any outside military challenger. Their military security has strong foundations, and contrasts sharply with the situation in East Asia where wars over Korea and Taiwan remain a possibility that could easily put great pressure on Japan. The West still possesses dominant military capability, and has embedded this in alliance systems that make joint military action not only possible (the highly developed interoperability of NATO), but increasingly the only legitimate way to use force. Militarily the West is both powerful and highly constrained, a unique combination that makes it much easier to trust than other great powers, past or present.

The second Western advantage is political. All the leading Western states have deeply rooted democracies, and this produces a high level of both political legitimacy and policy stability. Of course many aspects of Western policy may still be questioned and democracy is still the worst system of government we know of, except for all the others. But the West no longer faces the possibility of rapid and fundamental shifts in national policy, either foreign or domestic. That is not the lot of authoritarian or only half-democratic places such as China, Russia, Iran, Egypt and Indonesia. Undemocratic countries with scant regard for the rule of law or individual human rights are ill-suited to stimulating and protecting the innovative thinking that is so crucial to the information economies of the future.

The West's third advantage is economic and social. Because it has lived with capitalism for longer than other civilisations, the West has

had more time to adapt its institutions to the rigours and pressures of life in a global market. It still has better developed economic institutions than other parts of the world. Markets and especially financial systems are better regulated and better integrated with social and political life. There is less crony capitalism, mafia capitalism, institutionalised corruption and money politics. This is not to say that there are none of those things, but they are markedly less pervasive than in many other systems, and this reinforces the stability and legitimacy of Western institutions in times of crisis. Because it is more 'mature' the West almost certainly lacks the capacity for spectacular growth that some less developed areas still possess. But rapid growth has its costs such as political instability, atrocious working conditions and environmental disaster. In these countries with young populations, growth has to be faster if only to absorb an increasing labour force. Flashy growth is in some sense merely a symptom of how far down that ladder the Asians still are, rather than of any imminent ability to take over the top slots of world power.

#### **The challenge of becoming Westernistic**

Because it is Western ideas (state, market, nationalism, democracy, individualism) that are shaping the whole world, the West itself has less adapting to do in order to stay at the leading edge. The result is a process of globalisation that in many respects is merely another name for the triumph of Westernisation. The rest of the world still has to catch up in many areas, and therefore faces greater problems of adaptation. The West already knows how to deal with openness, and although it is still struggling with multiculturalism, the West is generally well adapted to living with more permeable borders. Much of the rest of the world, and particularly East Asia, has yet to confront openness in any systematic way. East Asians have exploited the openness of the world economy, but have only really opened their own societies in limited ways. In the medium and longer term, they cannot have just part of the liberal package. Unless they want their development to stall, it is all or nothing. Most East Asians will find openness a very difficult thing to achieve, both in the sense of creating a more balanced relationship between the state and its citizens, and in the sense of allowing large and permanent holes

to be driven through their borders to allow freer interchange with the outside world. China, Korea and Japan all have longstanding and powerful traditions of closure against the outside world, Korea once being famously labelled 'the hermit nation'. These traditions sought to block off not just political, but also economic and social relations with the outside world. They make the American tendency towards isolationism look feeble by comparison. Japan has shown that distinctive Asian cultures can flourish with higher degrees of openness, though it too still has some way to go before approaching Western standards.

The power of the West has been, and still is, rooted in the fact that it found modes of social, economic and political organisation that allowed individual human beings to make more of their human potential than had ever been possible before. Freeing the individual unleashed vast resources of energy and creativity that could be, and were, translated into everything from military and commercial power to leading edge music, art and fashion. Doing this requires breaking down the excesses of earlier institutions—family, clan, tribe, caste, class, state—that had in various ways blocked the possibilities of individual development. It requires more individualism and more meritocracy, and finding ways of balancing these in a framework of social order. Nobody knows the ideal socio-political-economic mix, but the West is better placed than the rest. As the current Asian crisis shows, those societies are still riddled with excessive influences of family, clan, tribe, caste, class and state, not to mention mafias. In terms of finding stable syntheses between the Western package of ideas and their own cultures, China and the second generation of NICs in Southeast Asia have a long way to go before they match the achievements even on South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, let alone Japan. India, with its unique mix of democracy and caste lies somewhere in between. Having unleashed the market, all of these countries are well on the road to Westernistic civilisation. Some are quite far down it, but others, most awesomely China, have as yet avoided confronting the social and political adaptations that the market, both domestic and international, will require.

As Westernistic civilisation unfolds in Asia, it should generate many ideas that will feed into the West's own reforms. One of the old West's weaknesses is its tendency towards excesses of individualism, with its

corrosive effect on family and society. This may have been necessary to create the early breakthroughs of modernisation, but it is far from obvious that it remains advantageous in the post-industrial phase of capitalism. Individualism will be vital to the coming economies based on information and innovation, but most Western societies have now learned that individuals also require a supportive society. Asia also confronts the problem of how to blend society and market, but it comes to the challenge with a very different mix of social and economic attributes than that found in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries. As Asia finds its own solutions, the West may learn how to achieve a better balance amongst self, family, career and society. Finding such a balance is a shared problem for all of Westernistic civilisation.

It should now be clear that all the crowing about Asian values and Asian styles of diplomacy that we have been treated to over the past decade can be seen as a smokescreen to cover how far they still have to go on the road to Westernistic civilisation. Asian values are indistinguishable from Victorian values (strong family, strong state, strong nationalism) which simply underlines the fact that in everything from industrialisation to democratisation East Asians lag well behind. The old West is richly equipped with a whole array of deeply rooted international and transnational institutions at all levels and in all sectors. It is a real 'security community' in which the states and peoples no longer expect or prepare for war against each other. The Asians have only just started to build anything comparable. ASEAN is impressive, but its main effect is amongst the relatively minor powers of Southeast Asia. It has little influence on the much bigger powers to the north: China, Japan, Taiwan and Korea. They still have only a thin skin of shallow-rooted institutions, and nothing approaching a regional security community. Solutions to their economic problems continue to come from Western powers and global institutions, and the United States continues to hold the ring for East Asian military security. Some states in the region have no diplomatic relations, and some are still technically at war with each other. Few East Asians are net exports of security or compassion (aid).

With the partial exception of ASEAN, there is not much in the way of wider political vision in Asia. Japan still wants to avoid thinking about politics, whether domestic or international. China seems to want to

reinvent the classical regional politics of suzerain and vassal. Most of Southeast Asia is run by narrowly based elites deep in pursuit of their own vested interests. The West may have lost some of its steam, but it is still the only source of political vision, whether it be the EU's project to invent a new political form that transcends the Westphalian state-system, or the (somewhat dented) trans-Atlantic vision of a liberal world order.

The belief in progress and competition, not to mention the making of a wider Westernistic world, ensures that the West is keen to see Asians recover their economic prowess. But the West knows from its own success and travails that capitalism requires intense competition and as Asians move up the ladder of development, many of their companies will and should fail. Periodic crises are a price of capitalist development, and Asia will not escape them. Modern economies also require more empowered women, which in turn challenges supposedly distinctive Asian family and social values. Empowering more middle class individuals in the economy inevitably leads to greater political pluralism, which in turn generates the demand for wider participation in the process of government. An information economy requires no less. If there is one clear conclusion from the recent economic crisis in East Asia it is that East Asian societies cannot find future economic success unless they become more open, more plural, more democratic - in short more Westernistic.

The prospects of East Asians rising to these challenges are good. After all, these are the states who destroyed old illusions in the developing world that modernisation did not need capitalism and open markets. China's capitalist revolution was crucial to the defeat of world-wide Communism. But as the history of the old West shows, past successes are no guarantee of future ones. The logic of Western ideas is naturally posing tough questions for East Asians, as it does for the old West itself. The recent run of Asian successes created a hubris that risks closing Asian minds to the need to follow through on the Westernistic program. Indeed, without a more Westernistic Asia, the Asians will lose their chance of playing a major role in the process of remaking the West. The old West is open to cooperation, competition and debate in exploring the optimum ways to manage post-industrial society. But Asians will

not have a strong voice in these debates if their economies fail and if they pretend that they somehow stand outside the powerful flow of Westernistic ideas.

Some states and peoples will fail to meet the challenges. Having successfully grasped so many of the empowering ideas generated by the West, Asians have an excellent chance of not being among those losers. But to maximise that chance, they need to deepen their commitment to change, adaptation and openness. If they fail to do so, the cost to themselves, the West, and the progress of human history will be high.



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