

Globalization and Civilizations

Edited by Mehdi Mozaffari



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Globalization and Civilizations

Are we experiencing a "clash of civilizations"?

Can the Islamic and Western worlds be reconciled?

Has globalization eroded differences between civilizations?

The notion of a "clash of civilizations" has never been more topical or contentious. This edited collection challenges stereotypes about the nature of civilizations and the supposed inevitability of the conflict between them.

Globalization and Civilizations critically interrogates the concept of "civilization" by asking whether it is still valid in today's globalized world economy. The book provides an historical and theoretical context within which we can understand the idea of civilization in political science, and demonstrates how the various social, economic, political and cultural processes of globalization have radically altered perceptions of the concept. It includes case studies looking particularly at examples of the interaction between globalization and civilization and contains chapters focusing on Islam, China and India among others.

This book is a significant contribution to two of the most important debates in international relations today – globalization and the "clash of civilizations" – and provides a wide variety of Western and non-Western views.

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Contributors

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Preface and acknowledgments

This book is the fruit of reflections from a number of scholars discussing globalization, civilizations and world order. Contributors stem from different disciplines, have different nationalities, and various cultural, religious and philosophical backgrounds. In a world marked by an unprecedented speed of communication and dominated by uncertainty and unpredictability, there is a vital need for reflection and criticism. Reflection helps us better understand the meaning of events, to establish a comprehensive connection among them and to extract the real essence of our time. Consequently, it is no over-statement to underline that reflection is an absolute necessity of our epoch. Reflection, of course, must be qualified. The contributors' writings are based on their academic research. In this book, argument stands as the prevailing method, and criticism is the dominating trend. Generally, the reader is exposed to a plurality of approaches and points of views. Subsequently, through the means of argument, the author presents his own approach and standpoint. The reader may select among the options presented; or he/she may produce his/her own independent idea. In this way, the book offers an opportunity to stimulate reflection and to challenge long established concepts and ideas.

The first chapters discuss relations between civilizations and world order under the process of globalization. Chapter 1 by Robert W. Cox represents a model of interdisciplinary study. In this chapter, history, economy, political science, international politics, culture and religion are carefully woven together so as to spotlight the architecture of civilizations in the new era of human history. Chapter 2 by Mehdi Mozaffari is an attempt to explain the evolution of the world order parallel to the plight of civilizations and the rise of globalization. Inspired both by world system theory and social constructivism, he attempts to unveil how the rise of capitalism in Europe has contributed to the rise of the standard of European civilization and its spreading to other parts of the world. He argues that the current world order can best be described as a "democratic-hegemonic anarchy".

Globalization is a profound ongoing process embracing all aspects of international relations. This process considerably affects international norms, rules and institutions. Richard Falk, a prominent pioneer in the field who has been advocating for decades the appropriateness of global governance, consecrates

Chapter 3 to raising the question of the emergence of the first normative global revolution. In spite of the manifest despair and complacency of the age, he propounds whether or not we are embarked upon a relatively soft, normative revolution of values as well as of legal procedures and institutions, transforming above all our understanding of global justice. Subsequent to a critical analysis of the very concept of revolution and progress in the normative field, he brings forth several activating conditions necessary for a normative global revolution. Gerrit W. Gong's Chapter 4 is in fact a continuation of Falk's discussion. Gong, author of Standard of "Civilization" (1984), now a classic, explores in his chapter whether the "old" standard of civilization embraces meanings and merits as normative and organizing principles in today's globalized international system. Gong argues no less that the continuing, self-conscious definition of international standards of civilization is a natural and necessary consequence of international interaction. Studying dimensions of the "new" standard of civilization in domains as different as human rights, rules of war, sustainable development and environment, he pays particular attention to international trade standards (GATT and then WTO). In Chapter 5 Michael Mousseau explains from an anthropological point of view how globalization, markets, and democracy are interconnected. In this endeavor, the school of cultural materialism inspires him to emphasize (the well-known) three layers of all social systems: the infrastructure, the structure, and the superstructure. From this perspective, understanding global structural changes begins with grasping the infrastructure of the influential sectors of the global economy. Mousseau argues that the common infrastructure is the reason why all advanced industrial nations share a common political structure (democracy) and superstructure (liberal political culture). Accordingly, the real source of failure of democracy and liberal political culture in all other states lies in the absence of this common infrastructure.

After an overall survey, the book moves on to study specific civilizations. Chapter 6 by Edgar Morin opens this section on European civilization. A number of important concepts, questions and challenges are elegantly put forward. The subject of Morin's inquiry raises explicit yet crucial questions: when did Europe become Europe? Is European culture identical with European civilization? Is European civilization "universal" or "universalisable"? What is the difference between "dialectic" and "dialogy"? He unfolds a historical, sociological, philosophical and political analysis. Morin exposes strong arguments in favor of European civilization that do not in the least derive from a European ethnocentric point of view. On the contrary, Morin's thesis is that European civilization originates from a "coincidence" of history, without a preconceived itinerary. Therefore, this civilization possesses an increased potential to be open towards different cultures; old and new. Most importantly, this chapter contains justifications why Morin who had previously been "anti-European", ultimately became a convinced "pro-European". European civilization has also undergone a number of crises. The strong and deep impact of WWI on European civilization made a few European thinkers doubt the survival of this civilization. Jan Ifversen, in Chapter 7, retraces the paths of the crisis between WWI and WWII. His aim is

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essentially to analyze the discursive and conceptual frameworks within which European intellectuals and politicians could express their ideas on Europe. He argues that these frameworks were held together by the conceptual triangle around the concepts of "crisis," "civilization" and "Europe". To demonstrate his point, Ifversen goes through a systematic analysis of the writings of several prominent inter-war year European thinkers such as Paul Valéry, Oswald Spengler, Ernst Robert Curtius and H.G. Wells. At the end of the chapter, he tries to connect this debate to the current initiated by Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations. The study of European civilization is followed by the study of several non-Western civilizations. Djamshid Behnam in Chapter 8 introduces this section by analyzing the Eastern perception of the West. This perception is limited, however, to the Iranian and the Ottoman world. He demonstrates that Eastern intellectuals and politicians have different perceptions of the West: ranging from "idealization" to "demonization". Attitudes to the West oscillate from fascination to criticism, rejection and even negation. These trends did not always occur in a regular fashion, one after the other. They overlapped from time to time causing further confusion and complication. Behnam's study sheds a light on the tensions prevailing on the one hand within some of the Eastern societies concerning their attitude vis-à-vis the West, and, on the other hand, within the overriding turmoil between East and West. Chapter 9 by Mehdi Mozaffari on Islamic civilization is a sequel to Behnam's chapter. When did the Islamic civilization rise? What were the causes of its decline? Should it be re-constructed? And how? What is the impact of globalization on the current Muslim intellectual mainstream? These are some of the questions shaping Mozaffari's map of investigation. In this chapter, Islam's formative and axial periods are examined, their main characteristics are analyzed and the different theories on causes of the decline of the Islamic civilization are systematically reviewed. Mozaffari states that Muslims moved for centuries between two antagonistic points that metaphorically may be seen as Medina and Athena. The violent tension within Muslim societies is partially explained by this still ongoing movement. In this respect, he identifies three main trends among Muslims: reproductionists, communalists, and universalists.

Chapter 10 begins with a challenging question: "What is 'Chinese' about Chinese civilization"? Right from the start, Xiaoming Huang points out that the central point of his study is neither about the glory of Chinese civilization nor about how the non-Chinese should understand and respect this civilization. The main purpose of his study deals, on the one hand, with the impact of globalization in relation to the moral approach (Confucianism) of Chinese civilization, and, on the other, the institutional approach. Hence, Huang's questions relate to classical theories on civilizations. Civilizationalists built their theory upon the notion that a general breakthrough had occurred within the Axial Age civilizations. The question is whether China experienced such breakthroughs in the Axial Age. Huang puts forward a subtle answer to this question. Subsequent to the clarification of his concept of "civilization" based on "human nature", "institutions" and "culture", Huang attempts to identify different components of Chinese civilization and the role played by the Chinaman, the Confucian Man and the Singaporean.

The final chapter deals with Indian civilization with a particular focus on Hindu nationalism. In Niels Brimnes' view, the reason for insisting on Hindu nationalism is to be found in a parallel process in India. In fact, India witnesses two simultaneous challenges: the increasing challenge from globalization and the rise of Hindu nationalism. The established and widespread notions of Indian civilization reputed to be peaceful, syncretic and tolerant is challenged by Hindu nationalism. Brimnes casts a light on this problematic by questioning the very notion of "civilization" and its usefulness in analyzing the current events in Indian society. After a general critique on different theories on the concept of civilization, or in Brimnes' words, "de-essentializing civilizations", he demonstrates how Indian civilization was constructed. Brimnes bases his analysis on studies and views of some of the most influential "architects" of this civilization. Hence, we are introduced to the views of authorities such as William Jones, the "father" of Indology and founder of the Asiatic Society (1784), and James Mill, author of the monumental History of British India (1818). In the late nineteenth century, the notion of Indian civilization acquired a new significance. Deriving from the romantic notions of the authentic cultural nation, Indian intellectuals began to formulate ideas about a particularly spiritual Indian-Hindu civilization. This angle became a source of inspiration for Gandhi who adopted Indian spirituality and tolerance. In the same vein, Brimnes studies Nehru and Louis Dumont's approaches. At the end of the chapter, the relationship between Hindu nationalism and Indian civilization is unraveled.

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Mehdi Mozaffari

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1 Civilizations and the twenty-first century

Some theoretical considerations

Robert W. Cox

We look to the past in the light of the problems of the present. This is the sense in which Benedetto Croce wrote that all history is contemporary history. Civilizations represent continuities in human thought and practices through which different human groups attempt to grapple with their consciousness of present problems. At some times, these continuities appear to be vigorous, reaffirmed, even redefined. At other times, they are obscured, subordinated to other dominant modes of thought and practices. At such times and for such groups talk of civilizations is absent, suppressed, or seemingly irrelevant. When and why do civilizations become a significant object of knowledge?

For three decades and more, knowledge about world affairs was constructed predominantly with reference to the Cold War. Its pre-eminent form in international relations theory, particularly in its American expression, was neorealism, a problem-solving form of knowledge applicable to superpower rivalry. Neorealism was a technology of power based upon the premiss of a common rationality shared by both sides in the US–Soviet conflict in which game theoretic exercises and rational choice hypotheses could be taken as guides for policy understandable in the same way by both sides.

Once the overarching control of the Cold War was lifted, the underlying but obscured diversity of the human situation became more fully apparent and neorealism lost its monopoly of explaining the world and proposing action. But the salience of the Cold War was succeeded by the salience of globalization: the vision of the inevitable homogenization of economic and cultural practices, driven by competitiveness in a global market and by new technologies of communication. As an ideology, globalization is the ultimate form of alienation: something created by people that has come to wield absolute power over them.

There is, however, an historical dialectical resistance to this vision of global homogenization – an affirmation of diversity through many forms of identity: gender, ethnic, religious, linguistic, attachment to the land, and a sense of historical grievance and humiliation. The two most prevalent forms of identity of the earlier twentieth century – nationality and class – are submerged, though not eliminated, in these other forms. The largest aggregate of identity is the civilization. Globalization is countered by the affirmation of civilizations in this

dialectic of homogenization and diversification. This is the basic reason for a revival of concern about civilizations in international studies.²

How should we theorize civilizations and their role in this future world? What are the implications for international studies? In an attempt to begin answering these questions, I discuss four points in this chapter:

- 1 To consider reflexively the changing awareness of civilizations in Western thought, in other words, to historicize the concept of civilization. For someone born into the Western tradition, this is a necessary exercise in selfawareness as a precondition to awareness of others.
- 2 To propose a workable definition of the entity "civilization". What is a civilization?
- 3 'To consider the dimensions of the entity "civilization" as an approach towards analyzing the dynamics of civilizational change.
- 4 To propose a research program as an heuristic guide to the study of present and future encounters and transformations of civilizations.

Historicizing the concept of civilization

The origin of the word "civilization" is traceable to eighteenth-century France (Braudel 1994: 3–8; Elias 1995). In German, the word Kultur assumed comparable significance about the same time. Both had the connotation of a process of increasing civility, the antithesis of barbarity. The context was the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a strong social force – in France more closely linked to state power, in Germany more separate and having its stronghold in the universities. The civilizing process was conceived as a universal phenomenon characterizing the Enlightenment of eighteenth-century Europe, at one with universal reason and natural laws applicable in the physical sciences, economics, law, and morality. The finality of the process was civilization in the singular.

The Enlightenment perspective of civility was soon challenged by the Romantic movement which rejected the notion of an objective world governed by universal laws and striving towards the attainment of universal norms of law and morals. Romantic thinkers gave more place to subjectivity and uniqueness. Each distinctive national culture had its own aim and destiny in world history. Herder in Germany, Michelet in France, Burke in England voiced this counterperspective to the universalism of the Enlightenment. The theme was developed later during the nineteenth century by German historicism (e.g. by Wilhelm Dilthey). The European expansionism of the nineteenth century gave substance to these philosophical leanings. Les bourgeois conquérants (to borrow the phrase of Charles Morazé, 1957) encountered other civilizations. Civilization in the singular gave way to civilizations in the plural. But imperialism and its accompanying scholarship now defined the non-European civilizations as objects of knowledge. European civilization (and its American offshoot) were to be thought of as dynamic, an active agent inspired by the doctrine of progress. Non-European civilizations were thought of as passive and fixed.

Conditions during the later nineteenth century - the long depression of the last three decades, the social conflicts arising from urbanization and industrialization, the social transformations that Tönnies described as from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft and Durkheim as from mechanical to organic solidarity, and ultimately the imperialist rivalries that led to WWI - encouraged skepticism about the doctrine of Progress. Oswald Spengler's The Decline of the West, the first major European work of the twentieth century on the theme of civilizations, reflected this more pessimistic mood. The manuscript was substantially completed just before the outbreak of WWI and was worked over and published in 1918 in the context of German defeat. The English translation was published in 1926 and 1928. Its pessimism resonated to the era of the Great Depression and the rise of fascism.3

Spengler saw history as recording the birth, maturity and decline of a number of civilizations, each with a distinct spirit. This he called his "Copernican revolution". Europe and the West were not the center around which other societies revolved; they were one among other civilizations, each of which followed a predetermined sequence of stages and European civilization was entering into its final phase. His approach elaborated upon the visions of Giambattista Vico and the Romantics of the earlier nineteenth century. Spengler's thoughts for his own time focused on what remained possible for Western civilization to achieve during its inexorable decline.

The other great work on civilizations of the first half of the twentieth century, Arnold J. Toynbee's A Study of History (1946, 1957), was more optimistic in tone since it envisaged the possibility of rebirth of civilization through a religious revival. This monumental work was published in a series of volumes through the 1930s. Its major impact came after WWII and was quite important especially in the United States. 4 A major promoter of Toynbee's work in America was Henry Luce, the publisher of Time, Life, and Fortune magazines. Luce seized upon Toynbee's concept of the "universal state" as the ultimate stage of a civilization and put the United States in the role of creator of a new universal state for the world. He signed an editorial in Life entitled "The American Century" which reflected the internationalist and interventionist views of the Eastern Establishment against American isolationism. Time published an influential summary of Toynbee's work by Whittaker Chambers, the ex-communist soon to attain renown as the principal witness in the trial and conviction of Alger Hiss. Luce undoubtedly enhanced Toynbee's reputation but his use of the work deviated from Toynbee's own preoccupation with religion as the road to salvation for civilizations as well as individual souls (McNeill 1989).5

Luce's appropriation of Toynbee placed emphasis once again upon civilization in the singular - the creation of a single all-embracing American-inspired world order. As the Cold War came to dominate thinking about the future of the world, the choice seemed to be between two universalisms, capitalism and communism, both derived from the European Enlightenment. The sense of coexistence of a plurality of civilizations was obscured. Whatever was not pertinent to the Cold War did not matter in the top levels of world politics. Of course, at the lower levels, the Cold War was less a matter of concern than the daily struggle for survival in conditions of poverty and deprivation, the subordination of peoples to imperialism, and various forms of discrimination. But such sentiments were obscured in the top-down view of the Cold War. With the formal end of the Cold War these other sentiments began to be more clearly articulated as forms of identity. A plurality of civilizations re-emerged as the largest aggregates of identities. However, these new burgeoning identities were contradicted by the triumphant universalism of the Cold War victor: the ideology of economic globalization.

Western consciousness has been split between a dominant universalistic perspective that sees civilization as a Western civilization encompassing the whole world, and a pluralistic perspective that sees Western civilization (variously defined) as coexisting with and interacting with other civilizations. In the Western historical trajectory, the pluralistic conception is recurrent as counterpoint to major historical upheavals: the affirmation of national cultures in response to the conquest and containment of the French Revolution, the fin de siècle pessimism of the late nineteenth century, and the loss of certainty in the exhaustion of the certainties of WWII and the Cold War in the late twentieth century. The universalistic notion of civilization has, however, remained a characteristic of Western consciousness and an intellectual obstacle to recognition of the ontological equality of other civilizations.

What is a civilization?

Archeologists who have studied ancient civilizations have defined them in material terms (Childe 1942). The process of civilization is associated with urban life, state structures, and technological innovation, from neolithic through copper to bronze eras, including invention of the wheel, the ox-cart, and the sailing ship. Such material civilizations are recorded c. 2500 BCE in the Nile Valley, Fertile Crescent, and the environs of Mohenjo Daro, other such sites of autonomous civilizations being in China, Africa, and Central and South America.

These material, technological, economically organized and class-structured entities were unified by religion, myth, symbols, and language, which were all the same thing until the rationalization of language distinguished among them. Those sets of symbols which made possible meaningful communication among the participants in a material civilization can be called sets of inter-subjective meanings. So a working definition of a civilization can be a fit or correspondence between material conditions of existence and inter-subjective meanings.

The notion of a "fit" does not imply a base/superstructure relationship in a "vulgar Marxist" sense. Different sets of inter-subjective meanings may correspond to the same material conditions of existence. The requirement is that they make sense of these material conditions for the people concerned and make it possible for them to conceive their future and to concert their activities towards certain ends. The relationship is more like Max Weber's "elective affinity" between religions and social groups (Weber 1948: 267-301). Some implications