



## CHARTER

# Global Civilizations: Do they Clash – or Can They Mesh?

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## Jerusalem Summit: Intellectual Underpinnings

### Assessing the Predicament

The advent of the 21 century has forced mankind to confront a growing array of unprecedented threats: weapons of mass destruction and their proliferation; terrorism and its increasingly global reach; as well as deepening demographic, ecological and economic crises that plague more and more countries across the world. Clearly current conceptual paradigms for the conduct of international affairs, with the UN and its affiliate organizations at its center, have proved themselves both inadequate and inappropriate to address the challenges of today – and of tomorrow.

The rifts have deepened on virtually every level imaginable: from the level of the individual and nuclear family to the numerous socio-political conflicts which involve tensions between North and South; Science and Religion; Private Citizen and the State, Modernity and Tradition, Technology and Nature.

In the last several decades, a number of prominent figures have addressed the nature of these rifts, their underlying significance and possible modes of bridging them, or at least dealing with them. Three widely acclaimed publications had considerable impact on the public debate: Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History?*, Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, and Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*.

Fukuyama's assessment that modern liberal democracy would be the inevitable end point of political evolution seems laudable as a normative prescription. However, as an empirical prognosis of things to come, it would appear to be far less relevant, its validity severely challenged by the surge and spread (and apparent appeal) of radical Islam. The emerging specter of a global clash between the liberal democracy of the West and the tyrannical theocracy of Islam may at first glance appear to give credence

to the Huntington thesis of colliding civilizations. However, a closer scrutiny raises some question marks as to the soundness of this explanation. Most episodes of international violence that have taken place since Huntington published his ideas seem to refute the prognosis of clashes being fueled by cross-civilization animosities. Indeed, most cases where Western (mainly US) military power has been used can easily be construed as being ... pro-Moslem. This is indisputably true in the case of the Kosovo intervention, and is arguably true in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq — unless one believes that it is in the Moslems' interests to be ruled by the ilk of the Taliban or Saddam's despotic Baathists; or that having Moslem Kuwait overrun by a tyrannical Iraqi despot is a welcome development.

This analysis draws attention to the Popper's paradigm that focuses on the rift between open societies and their adversaries. Here we seem to be on sounder ground, for nearly all the major conflicts over the last half century can be interpreted in terms of a clash between open societies and their enemies — whether these took place in an intra- or inter-civilization context. This is true for the deadly battle between liberal democracies and Nazism that culminated in WWII, the struggle against totalitarian communism during the Cold War, and in the emerging conflict between the libertarian world and the tyrannical theocracy of radical Islam.

## **Assessing Solutions**

Popper's advocacy of an open society - i.e. a society in which alternatives can be freely proposed and criticized in a rational way — leads naturally to his view that the desirable society for human beings is open, liberal and democratic. This is a view that dovetails with the concept of "democratic peace" — the notion that mature democracies do not wage war on one another. It is an idea that has acquired such overwhelming empirical corroboration that two leading academics remarked that the "proposition that democracies are generally at peace with each other is [so] strongly supported ... that this finding is probably the closest thing that we have to a law in international politics".

Indeed, even Huntington has endorsed this essentially Popperian derivative, noting that "The democratic peace thesis is one of the most significant propositions to come out of social science in recent decades. If true, it has crucially important implications for both theory and policy".

It thus seems that a major ingredient in any blueprint for the creation of global peace and stability is, on the one hand, the propagation of opensocieties and liberal democratic regimes, and on the other, the deterrence and containment of closed societies and despotic regimes – and their eventual transformation into libertarian polities.

However, it would appear that the question of the acquisition of rights and their preservation is insufficient by itself to account adequately for many historical developments. Indeed, Fukuyama, one of liberal democracy's greatest advocates, recognized that "contemporary democracies face any number of serious problems, from drugs, homelessness and crime to environmental damage and the frivolity of consumerism".

This leads him to pose the following question: "... is liberal democracy prey to serious internal contradictions, contradictions so serious that they will eventually undermine it as a political system?" That generates the next question: whether or not a "man who is completely satisfied by nothing more than universal and equal recognition [is] less than a full human being, indeed, an object of contempt".

This questioning of the long-term durability of liberal democracy by the very man who predicted its inevitable and all-pervasive dominance – both as the end-point and the high point of political evolution – is particularly interesting and warrants closer analysis. The following passage has special significance:

*[Although] religion, nationalism, and a people's complex of ethical habits and customs (more broadly "culture") have traditionally been interpreted as*

*obstacles to the establishment of successful democratic political institutions ... the truth is considerably more complicated, for the success of liberal politics and liberal economics frequently rests on irrational forms of recognition that liberalism was supposed to overcome. [Man] wants to be recognised as a human being, that is, as a being with a certain [distinctive] worth or dignity... For democracy to work, citizens need to develop an irrational pride in their own democratic institutions, and must also develop what Tocqueville called the "art of associating," which rests on prideful attachment to small communities. These communities are frequently based on religion, ethnicity, or other forms of recognition that fall short of the universal recognition on which the liberal state is based.*

Indeed, the drive for libertarian form of government seems to arise from a primordial "thymotic" urge for recognition of self-worth, which runs counter to the master-servant relation that characterizes non-libertarian forms of rule.

It thus appears that the optimal configuration would involve a composite hybrid that would incorporate a duality where two opposing but not inconsistent strains of human endeavor can co-exist in a single societal entity, the one focusing on the materialistic and the rational; the other on mystique and spirituality. In fact, in spite of the apparent clash between the essences of these elements, the two form a symbiotic relationship.

On the one hand, without the facilitating tolerance of the libertarian rationale of the open society, the spirit would be strangled and smothered – or at least grotesquely distorted; on the other hand, without the vitality and the energy of the spirit, it is unlikely that the open society would acquire its freedoms – and even if it did, they would most likely wither and wane into the enervating nihilism of moral relativism.

This hybrid blueprint, in which principles of emancipating liberty and pride-inducing cultural distinctiveness, is clearly not a prescription for cosmopolitan uniformity. Quite the opposite is true. Libertarian forms of government prevail in cultures where some people eat with knives and forks, others with chopsticks or with their fingers, and where religions range from various strains of the monotheistic Judeo-Christian variety to the polytheistic Hinduism to the essentially divinity-less Buddhism. The challenge is thus twofold: (a) how to identify and sustain common cross-cultural values that are amenable to the creation and preservation of open libertarian societies; and (b) how to promote and propagate these cross-cultural values without undermining cultural distinctiveness, self-esteem rooted in uniqueness, and the energy and vigor that the two generate.

### Jerusalem Summit: Facing the Challenge

This is the challenge the **Jerusalem Summit** faces as an ongoing intellectual enterprise. By its very nature it is a challenge that is both multi-faceted and far-reaching. It will attempt to chart the parameters of a fresh paradigm for the future conduct of international affairs — from its philosophical underpinnings and intellectual foundations on the one hand, to discussion of alternative proposals for its practical implementation and analysis of its policy-oriented implications on the other.

This requires providing (a) a conceptual rationale; and (b) a practical *modus operandi* for reconciling, synthesizing, and integrating notions that *prime facie* appear to be generic opposites. It will involve finding ways to mesh materialistic-oriented rationality on the one hand and mystique-oriented spirituality on the other. It will call for the forging of an integrated approach that can combine the merits of the analytical "West" and the holistic "East". It will entail the propagation of egalitarian values of liberty and respect for human dignity, but also resistance

to monolithic uniformity and to the denial of diversity. It must devise ways to facilitate and foster open libertarian societies without impairing the ability to undermine and overcome tyrannical ones. Conversely, it must devise measures to undermine and overcome tyrannical societies without impairing the ability to facilitate and foster open libertarian ones.

Overall then, the challenge will involve designing structures and process to maintain civilization diversity on the one hand, while preserving, protecting and propagating a commonality of shared human libertarian values on the other.

To meet this daunting challenge the **Jerusalem Summit** will embark on a project to garner the wisdom of the most prominent representatives of the world's major civilizations and cultural groupings. This will be conducted by means of a series of seminars, workshops and symposia, culminating in an annual conference, in which major problems and crises on the global agenda will be addressed. Among the invitees will also be eminent exiled dissidents whose advocacy of open society has earned them the displeasure — and even the persecution — of the regimes in their indigenous homelands.

The eventual goal is to form an embryo framework that could be described as a "**Council of Civilizations**" — a consultative supra-political body with sterling intellectual and moral credentials, whose pronouncements and positions on international issues cannot be ignored by governments, international organizations, and other major players on the global stage. The intention is to generate a new center of intellectual power and moral authority that can influence world events in a manner genuinely directed towards enhancing liberty for all on the one hand and harmonizing diversity on the other — and sharply different from the present one of sectarian partisanship driven by short-term egotistical interests.

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## Jerusalem Summit: The Symbolism and the Substance

Jerusalem is the ideal venue to host this ambitious enterprise. Geographically, spiritually and symbolically, the city is situated at important crossroads and straddles important divides between:

- ▶ East and West
- ▶ The Earthly and the Divine
- ▶ The Secular and the Religious
- ▶ Tangible Rationality and Ephemeral Spirituality
- ▶ The outer reaches of democracy and forward approaches of dictatorship
- ▶ The dynamic changes of modernity and the unchanging timelessness of biblical history
- ▶ The protocols of cutting edge hi-tech industry and the enduring wisdom of ancient scriptures

Jerusalem is not only a sacred fountainhead for three of the world's major monotheistic religions. It is also highly revered and respected by other faiths across the globe. It is thus an unrivaled location in which to undertake an on-going pan-civilizational process of harmonizing diversity, moderating extremes, synthesizing variegated parts into a coherent whole, and forging an integrative paradigm that embraces both the analytical proclivities of the "west" and the holistic ones of the "east".

As stated at the outset of this charter, it is clear that current conceptual paradigms for the conduct of international affairs – largely centered on the UN and its affiliate organizations – have proved themselves woefully inadequate for the challenges of today and tomorrow. Yet there is real and pressing need to explore alternative frameworks. This will be the objective of the **Jerusalem Summit's** efforts in the coming years.

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Jerusalem is a kaleidoscope of contrasts, a symbol of conflict and symbol of unity. The **Jerusalem Summit** will work towards:

- ▶ harnessing the compelling symbolism and evocative potential of this eternal city;
- ▶ converting them into a focus of spiritual energy, intellectual power and political will;
- ▶ mobilizing all of these to create the wisdom, the awareness and the sense of purpose necessary to initiate the construction of a new and sorely needed paradigm of global management.

This is a challenge of historic dimensions. It is at once both exciting and daunting. Much depends on its success. Much could be decided by its failure. It is an endeavor worthy of Jerusalem and one the **Jerusalem Summit** is proud to undertake. We invite all men and women of good faith to join us.

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