

Book Review

RESHAPING THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER: *A Warning to the West*

Samuel Huntington is a Professor at Harvard University and director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies and was director of security planning for the National Security Council in the Carter Administration. He is noted as one of the world's most distinguished political scientists.

His recent work, *The Clash of Civilizations and The Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, 369 pages, ISBN: 0-684-81164-2), has drawn major acclaim and comment from around the world for daring to inform Western leaders that their reshaping of the world is doomed to failure and will backfire if they continue on their current track.

While our leaders go about their business attempting to build a world trading and cultural framework, an international order which would supposedly bring about world peace and prosperity for all - Samuel Huntington raises some concerns which, if ignored, could spell the end of Western civilization as we know it. His argument, based on current trends and historical precedence, will see the West subsumed into other cultures and civilizations, unless current trends are arrested. His reasoning should not be lightly dismissed.

For decades, the post World War II generation has assumed a world divided on ideological and economic lines. But with the collapse of communism, the Cold War system which we were so accustomed to is no longer the model for international relations or understanding the world's conflicts.

Today the most important distinctions between peoples are no longer political/economic -- but once again cultural. People define themselves in terms of values, history, ancestry, language, customs and religion. As such, future conflicts will be between civilizations. They will become the battle lines of the future. These probable clashes pose the greatest threat to peace.

He further argues that while the West assumes that its civilization, language and values are being superimposed upon the rest of humanity, trends and statistics bear out the very opposite. Western civilization is in a steep decline and is taking on board the features of other civilizations. For instance, English is not becoming the world language and its usage is declining in real terms. And there certainly is no evidence that a global culture is emerging that is based on Western values.

In recognition of the "right to life" of all civilizations, Professor Huntington proposes a new model for world peace: a new international order based on civilizations maintaining their existence and co-operating, rather than one civilization imposing itself upon another, or being subsumed. Building a new world system that attempts to reshape other civilizations in the image of the West has not been successful and will not be attained.

Western society, with its tremendous economic prosperity, fresh from its triumph over European Communism, has a successful facade which belies its weakness which lurks beneath the surface. Society is in deep decay and our civilization displays evidence of a lack of will to survive. Historically, civilizations experience a phase which may be described as a “blissful golden age with visions of immortality . . . ended either dramatically and quickly with the victory of an external society, or slowly and equally painfully by internal disintegration.” (Page 103)

Professor Huntington’s warning to Western leaders is clear: our civilization has a “right to life” on mother earth, but trends indicate that it will disappear unless we display leadership and a will to ensure that it continues.

History Research Projects

GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001

www.originofnations.org

No limitation is placed upon reproduction of this document except that it must be reproduced in its entirety without modification or deletions. The publisher's name and address, copyright notice and this message must be included. It may be freely distributed but must be distributed without charge to the recipient.