

The Rekindling of the Clash of Civilizations

——A Debate on Immigration Policy Standing

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Abstract: Supposedly, migrants migrate to a host nation and would become a member of the host nation as they acquire citizenship or residency in the host nation. There shall be no distinction between migrant citizens and non-migrant citizens in the host nations, as they share the same rights and civil responsibilities. Migrant citizens and non-migrant citizens would blend together into the community and society. However, the reality is that migration becomes a social issue as there are debates between political sides in host nations and conflicts between migrants and non-migrants. In order to explore solutions to migration conflicts, this research aims to analyze Huntington's Clash of Civilizations theory in an immigration setting to argue why a more thoughtful immigration approach based on the culture of the "host" and "guest" is suitable in the current world setting, instead of a liberal approach like Derrida's cosmopolitanism, and how to execute a thoughtful immigration approach.

Keywords: immigration, clash of civilizations

1. Introduction

"Civilization" is a heavy word – it is questionable what political form could represent; whether such a concept still exists may be questionable. "Clash of civilizations" sounds like an outdated theory that should appear in ancient history books or Game of Thrones. Thus – why bring the "clash of civilizations" back to the stage, and why associate such an idea to immigration policy could be a question that confuses many readers. To answer these questions and commence, France's case is a must-mention.

People with stereotypical images of France may not tie France and Islam together. In fact, France has the largest Muslim population in Europe, around 5 million in 2016 [1]. Most of the Muslim population are migrants or their descendants – The first generation of the Muslim population migrated to France a century ago, while the most significant number arrived from 1954 to 1962, and most Muslims migrated from North African countries [1]. Islam and France may not combine with each other perfectly – As the debate over Islam and France gets louder and louder, it draws attention from both within France and globally and brings arguments between the left and right wings. After a series of terrorist attacks by radical Islam extremists; and the exercise of some traditions of Islam in public that differentiates from typical French culture, one can estimate that the French government and right wings may be increasingly fearful of Islam on how it may affect the nation.

2. Confrontations Between French Values and Orthodox Islamic Values

The estimation is proper. According to an article from Reuters, the Macron administration has decided to pay attention to Muslim communities in France to prevent “Islamist separatism” from taking place [2]. “What we need to fight is Islamist separatism... The problem is

an ideology which claims its own laws should be superior to those of the Republic,” – Macron, President of France [2]. Macron believes “Islamist separatism” undermines France as this ideology disregards the nation’s laws but overruns them, which causes separation, and his quote symbolizes that he believes the problem is severe for France that needs a solution immediately.

The “French value” cannot coexist with some Islamic values. The French government does not believe “Islamist separatism” is limited to religious extremist attacks, but also some orthodox practices and traditions from Islam: “They cite the refusal of some Muslim men to shake women’s hands, swimming pools that impose alternate time slots for men and women, girls of as young as four being told to wear full-face veils, and a proliferation of ‘madrassa’ religious schools” [2]. Some of the traditional practices in Islam, like the separation between genders and face covering when practiced in public, fear the French government; Therefore, the French government wants Islam in France to have more French characteristics, embrace French culture, and without foreign intervention [2].

Critically analyzing, the French government is justified as France is a nation-state with its own long history, culture, laws, and status quo. France is not obligated to change its culture or adopt another one. Muslim migrants who prefer traditional practices may have different views on culture and laws. Besides choosing to assimilate or integrate into French society, they can also attempt to change the laws by civil participation in politics under the democratic system as a citizen. According to Macron, “Islam Separatism” overruns the law [2]. Thus, action is needed to defend the law and justice for the nation. So far, the French government and people who embrace “French values” are the “victims” of “Islamist separatism” or religious extremists as they are undermining the laws and values of France.

3. Muslim Communities in France

At the same time, Muslim communities are also victims, as Islam extremism may draw an unpleasant image upon these communities and result in racism. But besides Islam extremism, Muslims in France are also victims of the French government, mainstream society, and its arbitrary power. According to a report from Times, Muslims in France do not have equal rights as a citizen because they often face discrimination: “Discrimination against Muslims in France is already prevalent in every sector, from housing to employment and interactions with the police... 67% of French Arab Muslims believe their faith is perceived negatively, while 64% said the same of their ethnicity” [3]. Muslims in France suffer from massive discrimination from mainstream society in all aspects of life and are accused of terrorism: “Children as young as 10 taken into police custody – would automatically be added to a terrorism watch list” [3].

The outrageous incident demonstrates that France treats its Muslim citizen unequally, which is inhumane and intolerable. Despite their background as an immigrant or a different religious belief from the mainstream society – Muslim citizens in France shall have rights as every other French people, as it is their legal right as a citizen, and they are French too. When the French government sent little children to custody instead of caring for their wellness – France lost its justice and morals, thus failing to be a democratic regime and its founding purpose.

4. The “Host” and “Guest”

What happens in France are cultural, racial, and religious conflicts, not because of, but originate from irrational immigration policies. It is an example of the “guest” does not blend with the “host” well, and the “host” discriminates against the “guest,” which the “guest” does not have equal rights to the “host”: When a large group of immigrants migrates to a nation with a significantly different culture – conflict is the “host” and “guest” unavoidable, as the immigrants would not accustom to many aspects of the host nation – language, culture, religion, laws, and even the interpretation of natural laws. Vice versa, the host nation cannot understand the immigrants’ language, culture, and many aspects.

Again, this constructs a phenomenon that is unable to bond, and the “guest” may always be labeled as a “guest” but not a “host” as it is difficult for the immigrants to be accepted and join the mainstream society – then critically and objectively analyzing – why the “host” and “guest” are unable to bond but conflicts. It is because of the grand difference between the “guest” and the “host” – both the “guest” and the “host” holds grand different cultures, social habits and conventional laws, and interpretation of natural laws such as gender – thus it is like each side represents a different “civilization” behind them. Neither side can understand the other, which resulted in two “civilizations” confronting each other and being unable to combine.

5. Huntington’s Theory “Clash of Civilizations”

The phenomenon is not surprising to Huntington, as he developed the “Clash of civilizations” theory, which categorizes the world into several civilizations and believes these civilizations will conflict with each other [4]. The case of France is a solid example of the Clash of civilizations taking place in an immigration setting. France and Muslim migrants can be symbols – a similar phenomenon may happen in immigration between any two groups that are significantly different from each other – American migrates to China, Korean migrates to Ghana, etc. As the world is more interlinked with each other and immigration is increasing.

To prevent the clash of civilizations, one must consider what a civilization is. According to Huntington, a civilization is the highest cultural entity [4]. Cultural entities vary – they can be a village, a region or province, a nation, and a religion; but civilization is the highest among all, defined by common objective elements, and it is the widest identity that people can subjectively identify to differentiate from other civilizations [4]. Huntington categorizes civilizations into Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and a possibility of an African civilization [4]. Instead of stating the above eight civilizations are all civilizations in the world that defines people, Huntington believes that since civilization is a cultural identity, a person can redefine the identity; plus, civilizations may correspond with another civilization or have subdivisions; in the end, a civilization may rise or may fall; thus civilizations are not eternal [4].

Huntington’s categorization of civilization may be too simplistic as he failed to give a set of formulas to define a civilization scientifically. Different opinions can argue whether a subdivision of civilization is actually the civilization itself or whether his definition of African civilization as a whole is because of his ignorance of not understanding the politics and culture of African nations. Indeed, Huntington’s categorization of civilization is imperfect as he attempts to categorize the whole world in less than two pages. However, what can extract from Huntington’s understanding of civilization to immigration is that a civilization can be subjectively identified and objectively identified by common elements [4].

For the common elements of defining a civilization, Huntington examples them as language, history, religion, customs, and institutions. Huntington’s examples may not be precise enough: Multiple nations with significantly different cultures may share the same language because of the

history of colonization. For example, French is commonly used in France and North African countries like Morocco or other African countries like Mali because of the historically French colonization of the African continent [5]. Or South and North Korea – although they are all Korea and used to be a nation together, the recording of their modern history would be expected to be completely different. Their institution is entirely different, too, as one follows a socialist totalitarian and the other follows a capitalistic democracy. Thus, the elements defining a civilization may be confusing as the elements appear indescribable. Or, in another approach – can each nation be a civilization as every nation has its own uniqueness would be a question to consider.

6. Immigration Rekindles the “Clash of Civilizations”

The uniqueness of each nation is cultivated as time grows as the nation develops its distribution of goods and allocation of power as it develops its distribution of goods and location of power. As for the goods and services that the market within the nation does are beyond the needs or cannot suit the market, they may be exported to other nations; meanwhile, the goods that other nations produce that the domestic market needs may be imported. The distribution of power constructs the society of a nation as the distribution of power determines the design of the institution, which the institution will allocate power to all citizens – the method of allocation of power varies from nation to nation – it can be run by monarchies, religion, tribal, constitutional, socialism, capitalism, common law, civil law, democratic, non-democratic and many other forms. The forms of distribution of power can overlap, as there can be a religious monarch nation, a constitutional capitalist nation with civil law, or many other forms. Overall, because of the product of the good, the market that needs the good, and the allocation method of power and goods – every nation has its own uniqueness.

The uniqueness of each nation evolves the nation to cultivate its own unique culture. Even if a few nations speak the same language because of historical background, as time passes by, the grammar and means of the word may evolve differently between nations, thus able to hold its uniqueness even sharing the same language. The uniqueness is linked to the economy and distribution of power also. If a nation is coastal, its primary industry may be built in relation to the ocean – harbor and shipment, import and export, fishing, shipbuilding, etc. These economic elements will contribute to the nation’s uniqueness as relying upon the ocean may build a mentality of exploration and trade and develop its own social habit. The allocation of power will build the social habit and codes and the understanding of natural laws – rights as a citizen and gender equality. These elements make each nation unique, but these fundamental elements are agreed upon within a nation, thus the highest cultural entity, thus a civilization. Therefore, each nation is a civilization, and advocating irrational immigration policies would rekindle Huntington’s “clash” theory as the civilizations would confront or contradict each other.

For example, in a democratic regime, the constitution will protect equality for all individuals despite their gender, racial, and financial background. The United States, for example, indeed the nation suffers from continuing social inequalities, but no matter how, all of its citizens are granted equal rights under the law as declared in the 14th Amendment in the Constitution [6]. Reversely, some regimes, such as Malaysia, do not practice equal rights, as the law gives Malay superior to other ethnicities by article 153 in the constitution [7]. When migrants from a nation without equal rights goes to a nation with equal rights, it is foreseeable that the migrant would need to abandon the influence of their original arbitrary power.

There are also differences in the economic ideology. Under a free market nation, to own more social resources, the method is to be legally financially successful. The more money an individual has, the more goods and services that individual can purchase. Meanwhile, in a socialist nation, the allocation of resources is by the government. Since socialism is in a more collective setting, the understanding of individualism and personal property is different from the setting of capitalism.

The last example is a religious monarch: the large majority would believe in one religion under a religious monarch. Thus the religious doctrine may determine the understanding of natural law (for example, the world is created by a god or gods that the religion claims) and the acceptance of other interpretations of natural law. The understanding of individual rights (to serve a higher spirit or a monarch), the interpretation of gender equality (whether there may be different rituals and rules for different genders), and religious freedom – Morocco, for example, prohibits criticism of Islam and penalizes someone who converts a Muslim to another religion [8]. So when migrants whose religious belief is superior in their home nation migrate to a nation with religious freedom – conflicts would happen between the “host” and “guest” because of religious belief and the principle of religious freedom.

Overall, the different understandings of conventional laws, natural laws, and rights, along with the different social habits and social codes a nation cultivates, must be acknowledged as they are the common elements defining a nation that makes them a civilization. These elements are the defining elements of each nation, have their uniqueness, and may not be “common” to be valued and considered, especially in the setting of immigration. In the example of France, the French authorities did not consider whether migrants would be compatible with the elements of France or whether French society would accept the elements of migrants’ home nation; thus, the “Clash of civilizations” is rekindled because of irrational immigration.

7. Tracking Back to Political Philosophy

Plato’s philosophy can also explain the “clash of civilizations” in immigration. Plato’s idea of “the cave” can also be associated with the idea of “host” and “guest.” As quoted in the book: “See human beings as though they were in an underground cave-like dwelling with its entrance, a long one, open to the light across the whole width of the cave [9].” Directly analyzing the quote, people live in the cave; the society that Athens was living in is the cave.

Applying Plato’s idea in the immigration setting – both the “host” and “guest” nations are caves themselves, and people in each cave would have their own social status quo. When “host” and “guest” nations are exchanging, misunderstandings may happen: “It’s a strange image,” he said, “and strange prisoners you’re telling of [9].” Neither the “host” nor the “guest” may realize they are in a cave as the cave is the society they grow up, and they are the “strange prisoners,” as Plato says. This means that the “host” nation would not understand the defining elements of the “guest’s nation.” As mentioned before, the guest’s nation’s religion, ideology, and other factors would significantly differ from the hosting nations. Vice versa, migrants may have obstacles to adopting the host nation for the same reason. When the “host” and “guest” are exchanging through immigration -- it is like individuals jumping from one cave suddenly to another, and conflicts would happen if no action were taken because both the “host” and the “guest” would see each other as the “strange prisoners” since they were from different caves. Thus becomes the “Clashing of caves,” which can be described as a “clash of civilizations” in an immigration setting.

8. Discussion of Immigration Policies

In the case of France, not considering the defining elements of the hosting nation while forgetting to realize the defining characteristics of the host nation and failing to compare the defining elements of both the host and hosting nation – leads to migrants unsatisfied with the host nation and uncomfortable with the culture. In contrast, the host nation cannot understand the culture of the hosting citizens. Thus, the migrants may become the victims of discrimination.

So does it mean that immigration shall be stopped? Huntington pessimistically believes that civilizations will clash with each other as the interactions between civilizations are increasing; since

immigration is a form of cross-national and cross-cultural interactions, it can be interpreted that Huntington himself personally may not favor immigration to continue [4]. However, Huntington forgets that he has also stated civilizations rise, fall, and evolve; and is also a self-identification [4].

Knowing the fact of common elements that define a civilization which can apply to a nation. The subjective identification of civilization proves people have the right to switch the civilization with which they identify, thus drawing a new ethic of immigration. In practical and immigration terms – people have the right to immigrate to a nation because they are attracted to the characteristics of that nation. For example, suppose a Japanese citizen is deeply attracted by Peruvian and ancient Inca culture. In that case, the interest beyond being a tourist could satisfy, and the person is committed to blending into the Peruvian culture. Thus the person really desires to be Peruvian, and they want to change their identification from Japan to Peru or add the Peruvian identity along with Japan. Or a person from a religious monarch suffers from gender inequality, or a person from a totalitarian regime suffers from having no human rights, and they want to immigrate to a nation with democracy and equal rights.

Such a situation brings a question – when a person decides to change the identity of civilization to this cultural entity – is immigration justified, and what shall the state do? Regarding the subjectivity of identification of civilization from Huntington [4], immigration shall be justified in this case, and there shall be a set of principles for immigration.

So, what should the principles be for immigration? Who shall be the actor and decision-maker of immigration? Under the principle of each nation is a civilization, and also under the principle of caring for the interest of both the host nation and hosting migrants. The main principle of immigration should be the hosting migrants is willing to accept the cultural entities and the defining values of the hosting nation. When the hosting nation once decides to host the migrant, it shall no longer treat migrants as “guests” but as “hosts” themselves – which means there all be no room for discrimination or unequal treatment. Since the migrants are attracted to the host nation and decide to accept the cultural entities and defining values – the migrants agree on the fundamentals of the host nation a willing to add the hosting nation, or civilization – the highest cultural entity to their identification – the hosting nation shall have the duty to accept the migrant.

Furthermore, the migrant shall be a citizen of the hosting nation and carries the same duties as other citizens, while the host nation shall ensure the same equal rights to the migrant as to every citizen, in one word – equal treatment. To execute equal treatment under a liberal democracy – the host nation should accept migrants samely participating in the development of the nation’s defining value, and maybe (depending on the democratic choice of the host nation) accept/prefer migration from those whose defining values are more compatible with the ones in the host nation; Meanwhile, migrants should be willing to stay active in the host nation samely as other citizens, in accepting and/or developing the defining value of the host nation.

As for the actor and decision-maker of immigration, philosophers like Derrida argue city-state shall replace the role of nation-states and create the “city of refuge” [10]. Derrida may have his own standing as he may believe a city-state with a “city of refuge” is more “just and moral.” However, Derrida’s idea is impractical as nation-states control most of the territories in the world. Furthermore, if a city of refuge is created – it is difficult to bond the city together as there will be arguments regarding what language shall be used and what metric measure shall apply – city of refugees cannot hold defining values as nation-states have. Thus, the city of refuge would not be sustainable, and the current world could only give hope to nation-states as actors and decision-makers of immigration.

9. Conclusion

Overall, in the case of France, it is proven that the clash of civilizations is not an ancient term, and it may happen in immigration if the hosting nation and migrants are unable to accept the culture of each

other. From the development of Huntington and support from Plato's "cave" theory, it is essential to highlight the unique elements between nations, thus realizing a nation is a sort of civilization. The "clash of civilizations" approach shows that accepting the hosting nation's cultural entity and "defining values" shall be the principle of immigration. While nations shall be the actor and decision-makers of immigration, they have the duty to ensure equal rights to migrants and citizens while migrants carry the same duty as citizens also – thus creating a true mutual equality that is just and moral.

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