



4-1-2014

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### Recommended Citation

Isaac, Tseggai (2014) "Civilizations: Which Constitutes Africa's Most Effective Choice?," *Comparative Civilizations Review*: Vol. 70 : No. 70 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol70/iss70/4>

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## **Civilizations: Which Constitutes Africa's Most Effective Choice?**

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### **Introduction**

We tend to believe that civilizations are positive and that what is civilized is not coarse or pedestrian. Civilizations empower and ennoble human beings, because a civilized social or political environment is a reflection of an enlightened mind. Civilizations can be seen as higher levels of a harmonized state of affairs (Targowski, A. 2009: 85-89).

However, if there is any drama to be demonstrated at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is the absence of any meaningful transformation of the world to a higher level of civilization than was the case in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is particularly so with respect to the underdevelopment into which many Third World states have fallen.

Civilizations are judged by their capacities to create enduring legacies from which other societies can learn to elevate themselves. In medieval Europe, divine rule reduced the rights of citizenship to a subservient status. The words of the ruler constituted unquestioned law; opinions of citizens were immaterial, and decisions of the ruler were arbitrary and capricious while the liberties and rights of the citizens were crushed beneath the heel of the ruler's ambitions.

But European civilization travelled a long distance as it has evolved into the current democratic culture where citizens reign supreme. Today, the state occupies its loftier space at the behest of the citizenry, and rulers arise from the conciliatory consensus of the citizenry. Tyranny is in retreat as European states inch toward democratization.

Why did some civilizations, such as that of Egypt, assume specific qualities and develop as they did? What are the inherent characteristics that made them evolve and flourish into awe-inspiring civilizations? The answers to these questions may be found in the character and historical experiences of the regions within which specific civilizations arose. The challenge for scholars is to craft methodological and theoretical approaches that are free from cultural biases and provincial prejudices.

Even primitive societies are not created in a void. They began by creating means for securing existence and finding effective ways to solve problems. And in the process of solving challenges, societies create differentiation of labor, consistent rules, routinized approaches to conflict resolution, and institutions of varying capacities to ensure their continuity. Scholars have argued these are important characteristics in the stages of civilizations.

Theorists of political development take their cue from Aristotle. They believe in the organic metaphor of the stages of civilizations. They argue that civilizations begin with conception and progress to birth, growth, and maturity, and they then reach a terminal decay. Scholars group civilizations according to the cultural, political, linguistic, and aesthetic legacies that they mustered in their time (Toynbee, 1946; Quigley, 1979; Sorokin 1959; Modelski, G. 1972). The organic metaphor process is clearly described by Quigley as involving seven phases of civilization: these he characterizes as mixture, gestation, expansion, age of conflict, universal empire, decay and invasion (Quigley, C., 1979: 146). Historians and sociologists also subscribe to the organic metaphor analogy.

Targowski identifies eight civilizations, with 16 subcategories. These parallel those identified by Quigley, but Targowski is a globalist who shares the idealist school's temperament. He counts on human "wisdom" assisted by the skillful manipulation of information technology to generate endless possibilities for a peaceful global civilization. This article will defer the definition of civilization in favor of an analytical approach that focuses on the behavior of societies as expressed in their domestic and global political aims as indicators of their civilizations.

The central task of this work is to consider what civilization is best for Africa to consider today. The thesis is that past civilizations have been influenced by the political systems that penetrated and directed their organic and natural heritage.

To understand civilizations we should first identify *factors of civilization* that have triggered the rise of civilizations. The term is used here to mean the societal and environmental circumstances that brought peoples, communities, and societies together. Factors of civilization include the capacity of specific communities that evolved into interactive processes enabling the integration of social, psychological, political and economic intents and habits that are normalized as literary, scientific, artistic, legal, and administrative components for an orderly pattern of developing and progressing as a civilization.

Thus, factors of civilization refer to the scientific, socio-political and cultural ingredients that launch a specific civilization. In attempting to understand the rise and decline of civilizations, it is also critical to observe the political methods of the societies, and the level of effectiveness and efficiency of political centralization.

The political and social values that inspire citizens to the articulation of their civilization arise directly from their political system. Ideology as a political belief also plays an integral role in determining the birth, growth, and maturity of civilizations. Institutional legitimacy, capacity in governance and societal coherence within the borders of a sovereign state are essential for the creation of a civilizational identity.

Historical narratives supported by detailed analytical interpretations integrating the culture, language, and artistic expression of the society, as well as the challenges and experiences of governing institutions, are aspects of the factors of civilization. They indicate the broad spectrum of the civilization's trajectories.

For the purpose of this work, those areas where political scientists have crafted their debates to explain possible avenues for global peace and conflict resolutions seem to fit nicely with the theoretical constructs of historians.

### **Civilizations through the Lens of Political Theory**

Let us first consider political science approaches that are regarded as impartial and replicable in their analytical perspectives. As we study areas such as cultural commonalities, political ideology, and the democratic values of freedoms that are essential for harmonizing the values of civilizations, political theory seems to be more amenable to the theoretical and methodological positions fruitful for civilizational analysis.

Within the field of international relations theory, the realists and the idealists stand out as sharing common perspectives with historians, sociologists, and anthropologists in their characterization of civilizations. The perspectives of both the realist and idealist schools can contribute to the analysis of civilizations. Which approach proves most useful for societies that may seek to emulate thriving civilizations?

Realism envisions a global atmosphere of restlessness. Restlessness is a harbinger of "the Anarchic Society" (Bull, H. 1966). At the same time, it can create a balance of power where peace is maintained by states that can defend themselves but cannot hope to be dominant enough to initiate hostilities. It buys time for a civilization with sound cultural attributes to flourish and for those civilizations that may be toxic and detrimental to freedom, equality, and universal justice to be exposed for their anti-human rights values.

The world of realism is a world of "uneasy" peace and a testing ground for civilizations to be sorted out on the basis of their compatibility with Natural Rights. The realist-idealist perspective is further categorized into low and high politics.

- Low politics deals with domestic politics and the workings of the political system where members of civil society interact with the state to generate policy inputs.

Aspects of low politics include the formulation and implementation of public policies, their impact on society, and the ideological and cultural basis that sustain political participation from the grassroots level to the national stage.

Values, beliefs, ideas, and attitudes -- elements of political culture -- form the factors of civilization and civilized societies are measured by the virtues of their political culture and the visuals of their accomplishments.

- Taking the analysis further, the capacity of the political environment to permit and tolerate democratic practices based on individual and collective choices is a reflection of low politics. The more democratic a society is, the more its domestic politics will reflect the civilizational values aspired to by those who lack them.

Civilizations are dynamic. They evolve and progress driven by the strength and creativity of their societies. The inner strengths of civilizations are visible in the political and cultural foundations that originally spawn the civilization's beginning.

The establishment of governance with political and socio-economic rules and laws are the ultimate indicators of great civilizations. These requisites affect the nuclear family, the village, the community, and the administrative and associational routines that had established the identity of the society. They, among many other variables, form the components of low politics.

Low politics are directly related to civilizational characteristics of societies. More than to high political capacities, the qualitative aspects of civilization are expressed in low politics including, but not limited to, the management of such domestic affairs as political culture, socialization, constitutional provisions, contestation politics, balancing multiparty party systems, and pluralist interest group politics. By contradistinction, high politics offers the testing grounds for the state's capacity to survive in the competitive arena of the realist game of one-upmanship.

The challenges of war, peace, diplomacy, alliances, balance of power and deterrence, and global economic relations are areas of high politics for which the state must maintain credible diplomatic resources to navigate successfully.

Comparing the realist and idealist perspectives, the realists are more vocal and aggressive in the promotion of their civilization without surrendering ground in the realms of low politics. Realists are provincial and isolationist on matters of low politics and expansionist on matters of high politics. This is critical in the sense that the postulate stands the test of objectivity at the positions where realists of diverse ideological faiths converge and markedly contrast to the cosmopolitan, liberal, and inclusive posture of idealists.

Communists, Nazi fascists, capitalist imperialists, and Islamic jihadists are starkly clear as they seek to dominate areas beyond their borders. All of them are realists, but they differ in the sense that, at least until recent years, Islamic jihadists were restrained by political Islam in its secular applications by such Middle Eastern Republicans as Kemal Ataturk and Gamal Abdel Nasser (Bill, J and Springborg, R. 1999).

The realist perspective is flexible and may be applied in many parts of the globe. It defines rigid and conservative ideologies in the liberal Judeo-Christian tradition as well as in those civilizations that do not share common political, historical, and social background. Both are rightists, both are traditionalists, both are hegemonic and expansionist.

Ideologically-driven civilizations such as Islam look at the world from a universalistic perspective and aim to expand their influence on the basis the civilizational factors created from their own beliefs. Similarly, communists express their factors of civilization in dogmatic exclusionary manner. Liberalism, Islam, and communism: which bears the prospects for alleviating the broad maladies of the Third World in general and Africa in particular?

### **Realism**

The realist and idealist schools stand as protagonists when they consider human behavior as a catalyst for war or peace. The realists are particularly vocal and assertive on several fronts. In the first place, they are traditionalists. In their high mindedness with respect to the defense of the state, the realists are rigidly dedicated to tradition as an authentic factor of civilization. They resist changes that they consider to be deviations from the original factors of civilization that witnessed the birth of their civilization. Their resistance to change is due to the prospects of imminent cultural decay that are bound to ensue if and when low politics are infiltrated with ideologies, beliefs, or cultural attitudes that are not based on the first principles that brought the liberal state to its lofty democratic heights.

Additionally, the realists as traditionalists are uncompromising and dogmatic. They stand firmly as immovable defenders and bastions of the state in its classical, traditional, and sacred characteristics. They view the state as a macrocosm of their whole civilization. The rise or decline of their civilization is contingent on the vitality and survival capability of the state. In a global setting where each state is a master of its own destiny, a state must “necessarily seek safety by relying on its own power and viewing with alarm the power of its neighbors” (Dougherty, J. E. and Pfaltzgraff, Jr. 1981: 87). Accumulation of power and tailoring diplomatic and geostrategic goals for the protection of the state in order to protect the civilization is the declared commitment of the realist tradition.

Another area where the realist school is distinctive is in the area of law and order. Realism is traditional and conservative in the application of legal, statutory, and religious rules and practices. It aims for the empowerment of a heroic and valiant state, but also one that upholds a tempered culture of democratic tolerance as well as a “world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved.” To ardent realists, the preservation of the “first principles” is considered as the best safeguard for the preservation of traditional civilization, because civilizations atrophy when their branches are not nurtured by their roots. Essential to upholding traditional tenets is the realization that administrative and legal innovations are better safeguarded by a state that can exploit scientific and technology breakthroughs and innovations to ensure the survival of its civilization.

Ever since the end of the dark ages, realists in the Western tradition have always been eager and willing to embrace technological innovation. Civilizations thrive on their merit in the global competition for technological innovation and scientific breakthroughs that could serve as resource input for the survival and sustenance of the civilization. Technology adds values and leverage to civilization. The state at the top of the global hierarchy where order and cohesive global aims are unpredictable, yet needing the assertive stand of a confident and dominant civilization complemented by the rich outputs of science and technology will survive. It will stand as a torch bearer of the type of civilization it deems is its own to uphold and, on realist terms, convinced that its civilization embodies the ultimate truth.

## **Idealism**

Let us now turn to idealism.

The idealists in global politics are utopians, the optimists of the global political environment. They are partakers, forward looking, cosmopolitan and well meaning. They advocate for a state whose diplomats and statesmen are willing to maintain harmonious relationship without second-guessing the motivation of their interlocutors. They argue for the peaceful settlement of disputes without worrying about the stigma of being accused of pacifism or regarded as permissive by real or potential adversaries.

Arnold Toynbee was a prominent idealist. He suffered criticism for faulting Western Civilization on its realist rigidities, for putting its ideals forward as a panacea for global ills. He objected to the militancy of the realists when he condemned their theory as a “cardinal sin.”

Even though Toynbee may have been reticent in exceptionalizing Western Civilization, it is doubtful that he refrained from crediting it for its dedication to Natural Rights. It appears, based on his stated misgivings about Western Civilization, that he may have been displeased by the realist tendencies of mixing the defense of the state’s mundane

deeds of colonialism with the defense of civilization. To him, the state is a regimented entity always braced to do battle when battle must be enjoined, but it also must keep peace as a priority and opt for diplomatic options when prudence demands it, according to Alfred Milner in his “reminiscence” of Toynbee.

Idealism such as his, he always felt, could only justify its existence by energetic devotion to the good of mankind. . . . Nothing was more abhorrent to him than apathetic mysticism. He would have repudiated the name of mystic. His faith, however transcendental, was a rational faith and he would prove it by being as sober, as practical and as effective as any rationalist Utilitarian.

Quincy Wright was another idealist. He recommended a prudent and low-key state unmoved by the prospects of hostilities as long as skillful diplomats and statesmen diligently sought peace. According to Wright,

Conflict, as noted, may be physical, biological, or philosophical, as well as social. International conflict may exhibit all of these characteristics. War is fought on the military, economic, propaganda, legal, and political fronts. Armies, like physical entities moving toward one another, seek to occupy the same place at the same time, each attempting to annihilate or capture the other. Generals, like game players, seek to devise and carry out strategies which will out-calculate the enemy’s response with a minimum of cost and risk of defeat and a maximum probability of victory.

Wright pointed out that the realist’s single-minded preoccupation with the task of mobilization is a reflection of geopolitical developments that were allowed to escalate. Lack of diplomatic commitment, misperceptions, and miscalculation of events often lead to piecemeal escalation of hostilities. Invariably, hostilities are indicators of diplomatic incompetence or political recklessness.

### **Realism and High Politics in Geopolitical Perspective**

Realists who utilize the theory of international relations are vigilantes and in the vanguard at the same time. They are perpetually preoccupied with high politics as they envision a world of hostilities where power and might determine the survival of states.

In the world of the realists:

[I]nternational behavior is totally self-regarding. Considerations of expediency alone determine policy. No rights whatever are attributed to other members of international society. Moral scruples have no admissibility at all. The assertion of self-interest by means of the instrumentalities of power is wholly untrammelled. At the other pole lies an absolute idealism. Here all policy is

directed to self-abnegation and the subordination of all self-regarding claims totally to the claims of theirs” (Taylor, T. 1979: 29).

This approach places the realists at the center of the global arena not necessarily to aggress and foment crisis, but to prevent aggression and disruption to the first principles of a civilization.

According to Hans J. Morgenthau, the primary focus of the realist school is the promotion and defense of national interests. National interests are subject to threats of potential adversaries. The uncertainties of the “security dilemma” force states to envision an ever-present danger which they must be ready to confront.

Robert Jarvis’s analysis makes the security dilemma clearer in its historical contexts of colonialism. He observed:

In order to protect themselves, states seek to control, or at least to neutralize, areas on their borders. But attempts to establish a buffer zone can alarm others who have stakes there, who fear that undesirable precedents will be set or who believe their own vulnerability will be increased. When buffers are sought in an area empty of great powers, expansion tends to feed on itself in order to protect what is acquired, as was often noted by those who oppose colonial expansion.

The central focus of the security dilemma is lack of trust. States do not have faith in each other. They must increase their security, because their adversaries will also be prompted to increase theirs. This leads to enhanced defense expenditures on all sides. It results in the security dilemma -- a vicious cycle of uncertainty perpetuated by fear. Fear takes hold of the state of mind of the governing elites.

### **Is There A Practical, Edificatory Scale Measuring the Value of Civilizations?**

The realist school in the United States was tested during the Cold War. The precarious balance under the bipolar system between NATO and the Warsaw Pact was capable of sparking nuclear holocaust. Mutual assured destruction preserved the balance of power under the security dilemma. British and Western European scholars opposed totalitarianism and braced for a joint affirmation of Western Civilization’s resilience but equally aggrieved Eastern European scholars responded with their own sense of history and political experience.

In Eastern Europe, the rampages and the onslaught caused by totalitarianism and fascism drove prominent scholars away from Eastern Europe, forcing them to settle in American and British universities and research institutions.

Amongst the outstanding modern scholars of the realist school, whose ideas garnered widespread acceptance among policy makers during the Cold War years, were Hannah Arendt, Reinhold Niebuhr, E. H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, George F. Kennan, and Raymond Aron. They conducted outstanding research, invigorated NATO's scientific aptitude in negotiations with their theories of deterrence, and preached realist paradigms in the defense of Western civilization. Intellectuals such as Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski served as outstanding advocates for a strong American power and they defended Western civilization.

These scholars represented authoritative voices of the realist school at the critical period when the balance of terror was at its most precarious hours. They expanded the analytical horizon of international relations theory, enriching the field in its technical capacities, but also wedding the ideology of liberalism to the realities of realism. They brought liberalism and realism together as tools for the analysis of global alliances, international law, the balance of power, deterrence, decision-making, diplomacy and negotiations.

The totalitarian states -- and their intellectuals -- stood in stark contrast. They exhibited sanctimonious attitudes and violent intolerance against opponents at home and dogmatic allegiance to the fascist and communist lines. Totalitarian systems rely on blind allegiance and deadly fanaticism to compensate for the glaring weaknesses of their systems. The totalitarianism of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao each had their own scholars, intellectuals who apparently felt at home in the thick of the totalitarian onslaught. Hitler even brought to the fore scholars who rationalized the Nazi plan of exterminating whole races and groups based on irrational and racist postulates.

As millions of their fellow citizens perished, Russian, Chinese, and other communist scholars abdicated their intellectual responsibility. They chose to endorse the worst human rights abuses, perpetrated to strengthen a "civilization" that would reveal itself in a totalitarian and supremacist world. The ideological fervor of these scholars was superficial, but the theoretical rationalization that had been put forward to justify the systemic and sweeping abuses of human rights were described as ways for introducing "a new man" and a new civilization.

Unfortunately, similar tendencies prevail today in many parts of the world.

## **Two Contending Civilizations and Their Implications for Africa and the Third World**

What civilizations offer models for Africa and the Third World today? Western and Islamic civilizations are both extrovert civilizations. Given the idealist-realist differences noted above, both are realist. Yet both foresee different and competing outcomes. In their diplomatic pursuits, they will reach out to other states if they

calculate the endeavor will elevate their strength. Extrovert civilizations breach diplomatic and general interests of the status quo in order to conquer and spread their civilization.

Liberal realists expect a global system hospitable to the ideals of individual freedom. They believe any civilization that does not give utmost regard, respect, protection, and priority to the will and conscience of the individual is far short of being called a civilization. Civilizations are not only the general image, culture, behavior, and deeds of a society; they are also expressions of civilized behaviors far removed from the tendencies to barbarism. Individual freedom of conscience, action, and untrammelled liberty for the citizen are virtues of civilizations.

Advocates of the Islamic Civilization, however, do not separate secular from sacred. They assert that Islam is supernatural, complete, and perfected in its ancient text. The laws and the examples set by its founder, the Prophet Mohammad, would work, they believe, if only societies would embrace the faith and accept its communitarian edicts while abandoning individual autonomy and freedom (Allawi, A., 2009).

Which of these two options constitutes the best choice for Africa and the Third World? Which will equip them to recover and extol their own civilizations?

### **The Islamic Option**

Islamic realism struggles for a universal Islamic state. It is the Caliphate to which all inhabitants of the earth are to submit. It favors a totalitarian state guided by religious texts and by the testimonials and character witnesses of its founder's disciples.

This is in stark contrast to the liberal tradition. The liberal realists of Western Civilization yearn for the predominance of Natural Rights. Islamic realism does not subscribe to Natural Rights; it deems Natural Rights as antagonist to Quranic and Sharia law. Islam means submissive to a unitary authority that will dictate quietude and abnegation of individual rights before the collective state.

Islam is hegemonic. As a faith it seeks a single global community, one that is to be governed by a global government. Based on its authoritative texts, Islam sees a global governing state, an Islamic state. With the *Umma*, the global community of believers, we arrive at the religious supra-state. Every believer of the Islamic faith in all corners of the world, regardless of nationality or ethnicity, is obliged to belong. As to the rights of full citizenship, only the community of Muslim believers is acceptable.

The ultimate fulfillment of Islam's divine purpose would be the caliphate. It symbolizes Allah's purpose of an Islamized universe. It is defined functionally as the *dar al Islam*, meaning the abode of Islam, the abode of peace. It is also a fighting force battling non-

Muslims everywhere in order to bring them to the Islamic fold. It is a valiant warrior, always armed to do battle against the *dar al Harb*, the war zone inhabited by unbelievers or infidels.

Further, all those who do not believe in Islam are type-caste as unbelievers. The calling of every Muslim is to undertake active and passive jihad to expand Islam by converting followers from the dar al Harb. Even Christians and Jews are regarded as unbelievers, although they are to be treated with tolerance.

The state of Islam, according to the interpretation of Islamic scholars, is a state of peace. To maintain its strength and guarantee its eternal survival, Islam must wage relentless struggle, seeking to expand its writs and its territorial reach by breaching the borders of the non-Muslims. Bernard Lewis describes authentic Islam as it is envisioned by its fundamentalist followers. According to him:

As the Muslim fundamentalists see it, the community of Islam has been led into error by foreign infidels and Muslim apostates, the latter being the more dangerous and destructive. Under their guidance or constraint Muslims abandoned the laws and principles of their faith and instead adopted secular—that is to say, pagan—laws and values.

All the foreign ideologies—liberalism, socialism, even nationalism—that set Muslim against Muslim are evil, and the Muslim world is now suffering the inevitable consequences of forsaking the God-given law and way of life that were vouchsafed to it.

The answer is the old Muslim obligation of jihad: to wage holy war first at home, against the pseudo-Muslim apostates who rule, and then, having ousted them and re-Islamized society, to resume the greater role of Islam in the world.

The return to roots, to authenticity, will always be attractive. It will be doubly appealing to those who daily suffer the consequences of the failed foreign innovations that were foisted on them.

Just as a Christian fundamentalist would look for a hegemonic Christian state that would exert its dominance over the world in accordance with the teachings of Christ, the fundamentalist Muslim yearns for an Islamic state of the type established by the Prophet Mohammed and his successors. These were the first born of the faith, the Caliphs, otherwise known as the Rightly Guided.

Whereas Christianity no longer represses the secular world totally and is now generally removed from acting as a state on political and spiritual matters, Islam in its orthodoxy

is at unity with the state. True Muslims are fulfilled when there is a caliphate state and the orthodox and authentic teachings of Islam are elevated as governing laws and rules. Transforming earthly ways of life to replicate heavenly visions here on earth is a daunting task, particularly when aspects of the texts may prove to be impractical or irrational, due to man's inability to measure Allah's intent. Establishing ordered, civilized, and harmonious living in societies where the elites claim to read Allah's mind and to speak on His behalf encourages cultism. Cults rely on earthly means to hoodwink and beguile their followers into false hopes and delusional aspirations.

### **Justifications for Institutional and Civilization Legitimacy of Islamic Civilization and Western Civilization**

Western and Islamic civilizations both consider of their own values superior to those of the competition. They both use ideology to justify the legitimacy of their civilizations. In the end, both Western and Islamic civilization exhibit attitudes that are self-centered, and both are unafraid to take risks in order to maximize their power and influence. They are both convinced of the rightness of their ideals, of the correctness of their actions, and of the superiority of their cultural and civilizational foundations.

### **Islamic Justification and Legitimacy**

Islamic Civilization is dynamic in the sense that it exhibits an assimilative and hegemonic character when it demands unconditional submission to Islam and rejection of other civilizations with all of their values. The justifications used to validate the Islamic Civilization are scriptural. They are based on the Quran, with a hint of the Talmudic laws and rules. The inviolable rights of the individual in the Islamic civilization are subject to the ordinances, limits, and guidelines of the Quran and the supportive anecdotal narratives, such as the Sharia and the Hadith.

Islam in its scriptures observes universal equality of all Muslims with two exceptions: non-Muslims and women. In practical terms, the Islamic Civilization is hierarchical.

In historical fact, however, Islam has had to equivocate in the process of integrating the variegated ethnic groups, sects, and doctrinal differences the faith has confronted. Thus, Islam has failed to consolidate its various ethno-linguistic components, as is visible in the Middle East where the Arabs foster nationalist sentiments which no amount of scriptural injunction is able to cure. The Egyptian, Saudi, Yemeni, Gulf, Syrian, Iraqi, North African Arab and Maghreb Muslims have a lot of scriptural commonalities that could have brought them together as one Umma, one people united in faith and entrenched in Islamic politics. But in a practical sense, they are far from united as Arabs, Muslims or both.

The Arabs of Mecca and Medina, as the founders of the faith, have implicitly assumed a position of seniority relative to other converts to Islam. The first followers or converts from Mecca, the Prophet's birthplace, were known as the Muhajirun: companions or fellow sojourners. The Muhajirun were those who undertook the initial struggles that overcame persecution, who demonstrated valor in frequent battles, and who came out victorious to rule over Arabia and far beyond. They were the first converts to Islam, the first persecuted, the first to preach the Prophet's teachings, and the first to sacrifice their lives on the mission of spreading the message. They were the firstborn of Islam with special privileges that were not available to those converts who joined the community of believers at subsequent periods.

The converts of Medina were known as the *Ansars* – helpers, facilitators, welcoming hosts of the persecuted Prophet and his Muhajirun/companions. Before their conversion to Islam, they were tightly knit Jewish clans who practiced Old Testament and Orthodox Judaism. Through pressure, persecution, and maneuvers by the Prophet himself and his followers, they were converted to Islam. The manner of their conversion and integration to the fold of the Muhajirun was traumatic and humiliating. As new converts to Islam, the Ansar were equal in faith but junior in governance of secular and religious affairs.

The same is true for other converts. All believers that are not from the inner circle, who are outside the Prophet's community of origin, remain outsiders. The status of Muhajirun was an exclusive birthright for those who began the revolution and began spreading the faith.

Thus, in keeping with the Prophet's example and tradition of living and teaching, the traditional precedence of the Arab's undeclared implied prestige prevails today, even though the overt verbal, assertion about the message is the professed commonality and equality of all believers under the umbrella of the faith.

Similarly, women fall under a separate category. Scripturally, the Islamic text is equivocating. At times the scripture implies a subordinate status for women. On the other hand, it is equally implied that women are scripturally categorized as a special class of Muslims. Their role is purely feminine, uniquely designed by Allah on the basis of gender attributes that may appear unequal, but fit for a role that is scripturally ordered and defined. This classification of women's spiritual identity is translated into political inequality. There are legal, social, and political differences; women fare worse than men. Since this inequality is scripturally sanctioned, Islam sees no reason to equalize the extant inequalities women face.

## **Institutionalization and Islam**

Islam as a panacea for civilizational decay, as a solution that can bring civility, unity, equality and justice, may be inferred from its history and from the institutional practices of its administrative functions. Islamic history is replete with internal and regional wars. Any Third World or African region adapting Islamic practices in order to establish political, religious, ethno-linguistic and social harmony is bound to encounter the same rough and restless trajectories that Islam has encountered throughout its history. Its embedded legal and religious foundations are unbending, unable to adapt to political and religious circumstances where equality of faith and citizenship in the community of the Umma is extended to all regardless of confessional or ideological differences.

The pattern of dividing followers into class and gender categories is an aspect of Islam that was absorbed throughout its activist and extroverted history. At times, the inequality between the Muhajirun, the Ansar and non-Arab Muslims boiled to the surface. This was particularly so while dividing and allocating war spoils. The precedence of establishing social and political hierarchy yet maintaining religious unity became an historical and continuing source of crisis for Islam.

It was intensified during the succession dispute when Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, wanted to democratize and equalize the divisive practices. He was murdered by the founders of the Umayyad Dynasty (661-750 A.D.) from Mecca, the birthplace of the Muhajirun. The Umayyad and the Abbasid (750-1519 A.D.) dynasties were the first global caliphate empires. They emerged at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and were defeated by the Mongol and Ottoman invasions (Kennedy, p. 82-- 199).

The political division that had surfaced after the Prophet Mohammed's death was never settled. Its effect was a violent legacy where conflicts are resolved by explosive outbursts of violence and bloodletting. Three of the Prophet's immediate successors, "the Rightly Guided" or Caliphs, were murdered in succession disputes. All of the Arab states in the Middle East today share the same language, the same ethnicity, the same history, and the same religion. The hierarchy that is embedded in the founding of the Islamic Civilization at its beginning prevails today to preclude the emergence of a united Arab or an Islamic state. Thus, Islam as a civilization combining religion, politics, and military affairs has not found the means to balance the administrative aspects of its claim.

## **Western Justification and Legitimacy**

Like Islam, originally Western Civilization and Western democracy did not tolerate equality. Over time, Western Civilization's rigidity with respect to race or gender inequality was weakened by relentless revolutionary campaigns for "liberty, equality

and fraternity.” In this sense, what Western Civilization offers in its liberal realist expressions offers more hope to Third World and African societies than the tumultuous prospects that can be expected from the embrace of Islam.

Western Civilization’s aspirations are derived from the principles of Natural Rights. The inviolable rights of the individual and the universal equality of all human beings is the fundamental teaching of Natural Rights. Even though the meandering path to universal equality traverses rough terrain, the aspiration for universal freedom must be fulfilled in order for Western Civilization to maintain its integrity as a democratic one. The irony of the realist-idealist dichotomy is that, in the final analysis, the aspiration of Western Civilization, over time, can be transformed into an idealist trend. At the highest reach of its internal and practical maturity, Western Civilization will be egalitarian. Its low politics are tolerant, because its key institutions are designed for the maintenance and promotion of universal equality and justice.

The core values of Natural Rights on which Western Civilization is founded are the practical and ideational elements of liberalism. Western democracies made claims to these core values ever since the philosophies of Adam Smith, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and Rousseau were translated into a functional system of government by Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison in their founding of the American Republic. It was stillborn in the destructive turns and diversions of the French Revolution of 1789. French political culture oscillated between Voltaire’s advocacy for popular tyranny and Bonaparte monarchism that had roots neither in royal blood nor in the sanctity of popular will.

At its most ardent state of realism, the psychological state of mind of Western Civilization is combative, territorial, and militant in order to preserve and to safeguard democratic rights. Orthodoxy and steadfastness are seen as means to democratic ends by which the citizen is empowered in a political environment of civility. More than the idealists, the realists will reflect the orthodoxy of liberalism in its purest form while the idealists will tend to attenuate democratic values when they extend their tolerance even to anti-democratic forces. The problem is that it is the realists who struggle to guide and steer Western Civilization to the utmost reach of its maturity: they are dead-set to use power and aggression to reach the zenith of undisputed power.

When faced with an equally determined adversary with a different ideology or religious-political belief, realists will resort to power and abandon all idealist dreams. Realists entertain a dogmatic attitude, believing that Western Civilization with its principles rooted in Natural Rights constitutes the only way to sound governance and an equitable role of citizenship irrespective of socio-linguistic, religious, or economic differences.

In Western civilization, orthodox adherence to natural rights overrides orthodoxy in faith. Even though Biblical scriptures are used to justify the legitimacy of natural rights,

Biblical orthodoxy to entrench undemocratic religious rules is never condoned in liberal states. This has opened up wide the pathways to democratization, human rights, abolition of slavery and women's rights. The virtues of a faith, in this case, Christianity, are modified, interpreted, and rendered adaptable for the ingrained spirit of progressivism.

Traditional realists express their ideology as an element of Judeo-Christianity. It is argued that Western Civilization supports a progressive and evolving faith that enables societies to outgrow their shortfalls and to curtail the destructive effects of life unanchored in tradition. It has enabled individuals to channel their aspirations via measures that aim for the maximization of a fair, just, equitable, and peaceful political system.

During the medieval era, European societies internalized into their consciousness, the liberating spirit of Christianity. According to Fredric Cheyette:

Christianity and the remains of classical learning reached everywhere, touching the poor and illiterate, as well as kings and prelates. To villagers, these two influences eventually provided the lever for prying a modicum of independence from their lords. To the inhabitants of the fast-growing towns, they provided the "civic spirit" whose origin and influence (offered) a justification for a life that was neither clerical nor knightly" (Cheyette, F. L., 1968: 9).

This illustrates the enlightening and the liberating values of the liberal tradition and also reveals the secularization of the sacred basis of the liberal tradition. The liberal revolutions such as the 1688 revolution in Great Britain and in subsequent decades in the United States and in France contributed to abandoning spiritual rule in favor of the secular political state. The liberation of the mind was delegated to the secular political sphere while the religious and spiritual nature was left up to the individual.

In the seventeenth century, the prospects for democratization and quests for human liberties became tangible through the writings of Locke, Hobbes, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and the ultra-secular atheist, Voltaire. Democratic systems began to appear with the rise of economic growth and industrialization. The more industrialization progressed, the more freedom, liberty, and economic well-being expanded. These developments were spinoffs of the tenets of democratic culture that had put the individual at the forefront within the writ of a democratic state (Voeglin, E. 1997:205-207).

With the widespread endorsement of democratic philosophies, liberal states reflecting popular will thrived in pluralist and contested political environments. They maximized

the factors of civilization by leaving the door open for debates where differences of opinions and policy disagreements could be discussed and debated democratically.

Liberal systems are not perfect. Their histories are not without human rights infractions and they cannot be exonerated when their legacy of colonialism and slavery is recalled. Nonetheless, even when slavery, gender discrimination against women, and colonialism were manifestly practiced, the liberal tradition foresaw eventual democratization, and the development of democratic routines always aimed at the most equitable political systems where the lines of ethnic, religious, and sectional differences would be erased.

### **So, Which Option for Africa?**

The substantive and ideological contrast between Western Civilization and Islamic Civilizations is stark: there are differing ultimate visions. They share some commonalities in their aspirations, even though the results they anticipate are vastly different. Both are activist and transformative, with built-in rules to spread their influence as vigorously and widely as possible.

But they do differ. African totalitarianism, Chinese mercantilist imperialism and Islamic centralism without individual freedom reflect the difficulties facing African civilization.

African civilization is a multifaceted expression of unique identity that has been overlooked ever since the beginning of colonialism. Before colonialism, moreover, Africa's history and civilization was not clearly understood by Western scholars.

To begin with, European explorers arrived in Africa after African civilizations such as those of Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia and the Northern African "Bible Belt" of St. Augustine's parishes had all expired into antiquity.

Second, the passivity of Africa is like no other continent in the catalogue of civilizations. Asian civilizations can boast of the factors of civilization represented in the technological and industrial transformations of Asian societies. They possess the educational infrastructure to safeguard their civilizations and integrate their ancient traditions with the modernized aspects of their current national characteristics. Africa is as old as Asia and Europe, older, but its requisite resources that would articulate African civilizations are anemic.

### **The Best Choice and the Rationale:**

In the long run, civilizations evolve ideologies. These become guides for national action and driving forces of factors of civilizations. The ideological trend that is emerging to influence African societies is a competition: totalitarianism or liberalism.

The totalitarian ideology is represented in Islamic universalism and in Chinese communism. Nearly all totalitarian ideologies in their dogmatic features exhibit sanctimonious attitudes and intolerance. Taken to the level of blind fanaticism, they can be barbaric and self-aggrandizing with nothing to contribute to the democratization of societies or to the enshrining of systems of universal equality and justice.

Hitler's Fascism and Stalin and Mao's totalitarianism shared such characteristics. They justified their systemic and sweeping abuses of human rights as ways of introducing "a new man" and a new civilization.

Unfortunately, in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, the spirit of totalitarianism has been persistent since the early 1960s, when decolonization was still ongoing. It is now being reinforced by Chinese ventures for resources accumulation. The Chinese used to accuse the West of exploiting the Third World but they are now exploiting Africa in far more extensive and debilitating ways. As they do so, they provide economic rationalization for African dictators to refrain from the liberal ideology, because, they argue, democratization is a fiction that has no basis in reality.

This antidemocratic line of ideological reasoning arises even amongst homegrown political elites; they badmouth democratic institutions designed to protect human rights. It is never for any lofty deeds and superior accomplishments that they disparage Western Civilization. It is often out of frustration. The inferiority of the totalitarian ideology and ideals is obvious to all. They criticize democratic civilizations now, ignoring, as President Kennedy said, that "those who foolishly seek power by riding on the back of the tiger, end up inside."

If Chinese totalitarianism and the political culture of tyranny are bound to undermine African civilization, the Islamic inspiration does not have any visible testimonial either. What about Islam is adaptable or provides a hopeful vehicle for rejuvenating African civilization? Islam does not neglect civilization in those areas that it conquers. Islam actively works to remove it and replace it with its own symbols. Islam is an activist and extrovert civilization that demands total devotion by abandoning the elements of all preceding civilizations, doctrines, or cultural artifacts.

Any civilization that does not agree with Islam does not have the legitimating claims to exist. If and when there are civilizations and cultural artifacts that may complement or

support Islam, they are not needed, because Islam is all-sufficient, a complete order of heavenly and earthly life.

Western economic imperialism and the misdeeds of colonialism did inflict damage on Africa and the rest of the Third World during colonial times. Those abuses were subjected to the corrective and restorative virtues of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This is a testimonial to a civilization that has looked back at its history and made amends and vowed to not repeat its transgressions. Often, totalitarian systems would rather look at the past centuries and simply vituperate against liberal democracy to justify themselves. They consider the secular ventures of colonialism as well as the missionary campaigns that accompanied colonialism, as collaborative, damaging acts of Christianity and colonialism.

But it was far from collaboration. A careful review of history tends to show that most missionaries were prohibited from evangelizing and proselytizing by the colonial powers, particularly in Islamic societies. Even today, European, Australian, and North American societies restrain their religious institutions from proselytizing.

## **Conclusion**

Western Civilization constitutes an evolving identity of cultural, political, and social factors that have built-in capacity to adapt to the highest forms of democratization. Clearly, it stands out as a best option for African societies to adapt in order to rejuvenate their civilizations. The difficulties that they are bound to experience as they attempt to rediscover their civilizations are those which threaten the vital sinews of the Western civilization itself.

From the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution forward, Western civilization has utilized science to rationalize politics and religion. The result has been phenomenal industrialization, economic prosperity, and democratization. Industrialization appears to be phasing out and a “post industrial” phase is creating new challenges.

The ability of the Western industrialized societies to progress and to correct socio-economic and political ills must be credited to their civilization. We can look at their stellar achievements in material riches as well as at the decay and the toxicity they may experience when their commitment to the principles that catapulted them to the heights diminishes.

Scholars foretell of societies decaying when they become negligent, reckless in their devotion to their civilizational heritages and legacies. Oswald Spengler asserted that “Immense superiority . . . is enjoyed for generations . . . by those states which manage a tradition longer than others.”

This is particularly true of the liberal democracies whose good intention to correct gender and racial inequalities have created ripple effects, arousing anti-traditional value, anti-family, and anti-nationalist convictions and shaking the very foundations that support the edifices of Western Civilization.

One of the significant characteristics of civilizations is their transferability. The influences they can project onto other societies that possess their own unique civilizations are immense. This is particularly evident on matters of low politics. Political participation, individual rights, community freedoms, social and religious tolerances all flourish in environments of liberal traditions. Accountability, rule of law, and predictable institutional functions as factors of civilization enhance national wellbeing.

Africa -- of all the options available today, look to Western Civilization. Countries which need inspiration, that desire to rejuvenate vital attributes, make the best choice when they opt for the democratizing values of Western Civilization. Remove totalitarian tyranny and introduce universal freedom for all of African societies, now!

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