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Trends. Some Alternatives to the Clash of Civilizations.

Editor

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Abstract: This Trends article discusses the concept of cultural narratives in world of globalization from a political psychological perspective.

One recurring theme of public discourse since the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States (US) and the US Government-led military intervention against the Saddam Hussein government is that of the clash of civilizations. This theme commonly denotes a coming or ongoing war between political actors with the contestation over ideas and a way of life as opposed to over treasure, land, or traditional national sovereignty.

Many discourse participants assume that there are only two possibilities when representatives of two different cultures have contact. That is, people will either get along or they won't. Still others posit that there are 4 possibilities. That is--given a more dominant and less dominant culture--a representative of the less dominant culture may favor either the dominant culture, or one's own minority culture, or both, or neither. However, as parsed by Rudmin (2003), there are actually 16 possibilities that may occur when two cultures come into contact. This parsing recognizes that a representative of the dominant culture may change or not change in ways congruent with a corresponding member of a less dominant culture.

In a world of globalization, recognizing the disparate possibilities when novel contacts are made may be quite useful for policy planners and informed citizenry. Recognizing the possibilities may lead to a mastery of the possibilities--a serendipitous phenomenon in a world wherein conflict can breed extremely lethal intent among more and more political actors who can implement their lethality with the aid of fewer and fewer accomplices.

(See Rudmin, F. W. (2003). Critical history of the acculturation psychology of assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Review of General Psychology, , 3–37; Rodermund, E.-S., & Silbereisen, R. K. (1999). Determinants of differential acculturation of developmental timetables among adolescent immigrants to Germany. International Journal of Psychology, 34, 219-233; Shin, K. R., & Shin, C. (1999). The lived experience of Korean immigrant women acculturating into the United States. Health Care for Women International, 20, 603-617; Snauwaert, B., Soenens, B., Vanbeselaere, N., & Boen, F. (2003). When integration does not necessarily imply integration: Different conceptualizations of acculturation orientations lead to different classifications. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 34, 231-239.)
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