

## **SAMUEL HUNTINGTON REVISITED: A WAKE-UP CALL FOR THE WEST\***

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There is an increasing divergence rather than convergence between European and Turkish values – at least, those imposed on Turkey by its current government.

Samuel Huntington in his famous 1993 essay on the clash of civilizations believed that the next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations. Quoting the Indian Muslim author M. J. Akbar, he also stated that the West's next confrontation is definitely going to come from the Muslim world. With 9/11, the Madrid train bombings, the London bombings in 2005 and the Paris massacre as well as other terrorist attacks in mind, he was undoubtedly right.

With reference to the 1,300-year conflict between Western and Islamic civilizations, Huntington defines this clash as the historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, which – again to quote Akbar, will herald the struggle for a new world order. In turn, this is entirely on a line with Turkey's agenda, at least, the half of Turkey that supports President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his AK (Justice and Development) Party.

Huntington also considers various countries, such as Mexico, Russia and Turkey, as divided over whether their society belongs to one civilization or another, and regards Turkey as the most obvious and prototypical example of a torn country. This is borne out by developments in Turkey since 2002, when the AKP came to power, and the election results in November, when it once again received support from half the electorate.

Turkey has under Erdogan and the AKP clearly turned its back on the westward-leaning policy inspired by Mustafa Kemal since the foundation of the republic in 1923, and has set out to reverse some of its gains, for example, regarding the status of women. According to Huntington, Western ideas of liberal democracy often have little resonance in, for example, Islamic culture, and efforts to propagate such ideas produce a reaction and a reaffirmation of indigenous values.

This is clearly reflected in the views put forward by Ahmet Davutoglu, now prime minister but previously Erdogan's foreign policy adviser and foreign minister. In a policy which has been dubbed "neo-Ottoman," Davutoglu

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has dismissed the republican era as “a parenthesis” and spoken of creating a new world order, including the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East, with Turkey at its center.

Another adviser, Ibrahim Kalin, in a keynote speech at the Istanbul Forum three years ago, rejected the European model of secular politics, democracy and pluralism in favor of what he termed a “value-based” (read: Islamist) foreign policy.

However, in the light of subsequent events, Turkish professor and columnist Nuray Mert has concluded: “The curious mixture of neo-Ottomanism and Islamism or Islamist neo-Ottomanism was based on dreams of the glorious past, overestimation of Turkey’s present power and underestimation of the complexity of regional and international politics.”

Turkey’s plans five years ago to create a free-trade zone together with visa-free travel for Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan were undermined by the outbreak of civil war in Syria, where Turkey took sides and supported the Sunni opposition in an attempt to overthrow Bashar Assad’s Alawite regime. The situation has been further complicated by the active roles played by Iran and Russia, and the threat to Turkey of the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish region not only in Syria but also in Turkey. Now Turkey has downed a Russian aircraft, further demonstrating its support for the anti-Assad opposition.

The US has been caught in the middle, needing Turkey’s Incirlik airbase for its sorties against Islamic State but on the other hand dependent on Kurdish fighters for its offensives in Iraq and Syria.

Turkey has also put the squeeze on the EU. The EU needs Turkey to stem the flow of refugees and migrants from the Middle East, but there is no doubt Turkey will demand its pound of flesh. Huntington makes clear that economic regionalism may only succeed when it is rooted in a common civilization, adding that the European community rests on the shared foundation of European culture and Western Christianity.

But, as the EU Commission’s latest report on Turkey makes clear, there is an increasing divergence rather than convergence between European and Turkish values – at least, those imposed on Turkey by its current government.

At the same time, there is in European circles some disagreement as to what constitutes European identity. For example, at a conference on Islam in Europe in June Federica Mogherini, the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, rejected any idea of a clash between Islam and the West. Furthermore, she not only stated that Islam belongs in Europe but categorically claimed that political Islam should be part of the picture.

Perhaps the victims of the Paris massacre and other atrocities might beg to differ.