RELIGION AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF CIVILIZATIONS: A CRITICAL APPROACH OF HUNTINGTON THESIS

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Abstract

This paper will analyze the connection between religion and the geopolitics of civilizations. We will use a critical theoretical approach of the Huntington thesis, and a qualitative comparative methodology. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Huntington, in his seminal work about the "Clash of Civilizations", has argued that the future conflicts of the world will have increasingly cultural dimensions, transforming traditional state-centered geopolitics into geopolitics of civilizations. The eventuality that terrorism is legitimized on religious grounds will have much more deadly consequences. It will be a result of major conflicts of the future between different cultures, because all major religions contribute in the cultural identification of the world's most dominant cultures. While the clashes between cultures are not rigorously religious, different religious values have come to identify the different civilizations and cultures of the world. These differences have been the focus of Islamic extremist rhetoric, claiming that Islamic values exceed and/or overpower western ideas and political philosophy. This contention has been built on a number of conflict cases during of the last decades, where religious elements can be seen in regions where two or more civilizations (or cultural realms) have clashed or competed: the Bosnian case (between Muslim and Orthodox civilizations); the Arab-Israeli conflicts; the clashes between Muslim and other religious groups in Nigeria and Sudan; or the conflicts in the Indian sub-continent (between Hindus and Muslims). On the other hand, we have increasing evidences that religious terrorism has developed in accordance with Huntington's thesis that clashes between civilizations will most probably produce massive violence.

Keywords: *Huntington thesis, civilization fault lines, religious extremism, geopolitics of terror*