

A Civilization for Peace

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Contribution to Panel 3 under the banner theme: “A Vision for World Peace: The Interpersonal vis-à-vis the Political and Economic Dimensions of Peace”

The latter half of the twentieth century opened the way to a serious academic study of the many dimensions of peace. This panel brings together academics and international civil servants who share their views on dimensions of conflict resolution and reconciliation that are not automatically factored into regional, inter-state, and multilateral relations.

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Addressing the Political and Economic Dimensions of Peace, let me start by quoting Samuel Huntington’s final conclusion of the debate on his book *The Clash of Civilizations* that was published in 1993. Indeed, the “paradigms of the post-cold war world” and the analyses of the Eaton Professor and Director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University might help us find some answers to the questions linked to the actual political situation of the global world. The author’s reply to his critics in “The Debate” concludes with a question: “If not civilizations, then what?” and its final paragraph is the following:

“History has not ended. The world is not one. Civilizations unite and divide humankind. The forces making for clashes between civilizations can be contained only if they are recognized. In a world of different civilizations, each will have to learn to coexist with the others. What ultimately counts for people is not political ideology or economic interest. Faith and family, blood and belief, are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for. And that is why the clash of civilizations is replacing the Cold War as the central phenomenon of global politics and why a civilizational paradigm provides, better than any alternative, a useful starting point for understanding and coping with the changes going on in the world.”

Looking at the changes that happened since the publication of Huntington's thesis, one major change is the global impact of the digital revolution. Governance of society is submitted to the World Wide Web. Information is omnipresent, its comprehension depends however on the capacities of understanding of the individuals, as well as their interpretation of all kinds of information, tweets and pictures and fake news. Addressing the interpersonal:

Educating people is of the utmost importance

Some member states of the EU celebrated last year the end of the Second World War. My country, Luxembourg, was severely damaged by the very last attack of the German troops by Rundstedt in November 1944 and more than 8,000 American soldiers died for our liberation, while the war was already lost for the Germans. Such memories remind us of the tribute to pay in armed conflicts.

The fall of the Berlin wall 30 years ago was one more occasion to look back at the history of the end of the Cold War, and the dismantling of the Soviet Union later on.

In the meantime, new walls are built in the US, the Middle East and even in Europe, facing the immigration of refugees and migrants. Addressing the political I say:

Walls are not a solution for solving conflicts

The European Union is not a homogenous gathering of 27 Nation States, nevertheless 70 years of peace are the result of the Union. Three years of debate about Brexit could not convince the British Members of Parliament to reject it. Is this the beginning of the dismantling of the EU, while this long period of peace and economic growth was an incentive for new member states to step in? Actually, new enlargements of the Union have no majority; the political situation in some member states is in rather bad shape at this moment. Antisemitism is rising in Germany and elsewhere. Extreme right political parties are flourishing; their speeches remind us of those before the Second World War.

Trust between people and their leaders has vanished

The economy is dominating political decisions and its possible crash in the foreseeable future stimulates selfishness and egocentrism. Facing the increase of poverty and migration, as well as the effects of climate change, the behavior of the individual will have a very great impact on our common future. The worldwide dependence of industries is shaped by an overwhelming concern for low costs, with a total disregard for the issue of transportation or the poor conditions of workers in the producing countries. This might produce a serious crisis if any of the systems collapse. The EU is totally dependent on this flow of goods, such as energy, oil and gas, and raw materials.

Whereas culture, such as it was defined by UNESCO in 1982, or civilization, as mentioned by Huntington, is not really addressed in the political and public debate, cultural diversity in the EU demonstrates how great is its influence on the behavior of people.

At this very moment, some conflicts based on this diversity are at the origin of a possible further dismantling of the European project after the Brexit. The challenge of a better knowledge of the history and the culture, the language, the music and the religion of the neighbor is preliminary to understanding the attitudes in the 27 Nation States.

Here are some questions of crucial importance, which I leave unanswered:

What is it however that makes people stay together, what provides identity and roots?

What is a nation and what is a nationality?

Let me quote Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks who gave a great speech in the European Parliament in 2009 and said the following:

“You can have a society without a state – that has happened at various times in history – but can you have a state without a society, without anything to hold people together? I do not know. You can hold people together in many different ways: by force, by fear, by suppressing cultural differences, by expecting everyone to conform. But when you choose to respect the integrity of many cultures, when you honor what I call ‘the dignity of difference’, when you honor that, then to create a society you need a covenant. A contract is about interest, a covenant is about identity. Covenant restores the language of cooperation to a world of competition. It focuses on responsibilities, not just on rights. Rights are essential,

but rights create conflicts that rights cannot resolve: Rights without responsibilities are the subprime mortgages of the moral.

— We must respect others if we expect others to respect us;

— We must honor the freedom of others if they are to honor ours.

Europe needs a new covenant and the time to begin it is now.”

Rabbi Sacks went on to tell a story that I will repeat to you:

“The Prophet Isaiah foresaw a day when the lion and the lamb would live together. It has not happened yet. Although there was a zoo where a lion and a lamb lived together in the same cage and a visitor asked the zookeeper: ‘How do you manage that?’ The zookeeper said: ‘Easy, you just need a new lamb every day!’”

And to conclude Lord Jonathan Sacks said:

There was a time when the lion and the lamb did live together. Where was that? In Noah's Ark. And why was that? It was not because they had reached Utopia, but because they knew that otherwise they would both drown. This is what Rabbi Jonathan Sacks said:

I dare ask today, who is the lion, who is the lamb and where is the zookeeper? Is the boat which we are in still safe, or has it some leaks? The Tower of Babel collapsed because people no longer understood each other's language.

Aren't we together on Noah's Boat?

Of course, those who ignore the story from the Bible will not understand its message. Why should we save the planet if we have not learned how to live peacefully together?

And I quote Winston Churchill who said: “The empires of the future will be empires of the mind.”

This is what we need today, educating the minds.

The European Union can be credited with a great achievement in settling the rights of each individual in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, agreed by all the Member States. Alas though, while any member of the E.U. can now assert his rights at the European Court of Justice, what about his duties, as an individual? The duty to respect the rights of the individual, the planet and nature. Educating people to enhance the common duty of all citizens worldwide needs a shift of democracies, to yield governments that should no longer serve the power of some

individuals and big companies ruling the economy, but serve the common goal that is to fight poverty and enable the education of each citizen and mainly women.

This will be one common challenge for the future made possible by the capacities of the digital, which has to be ruled by truth and respect.

Epilogue

Facing at this time, some weeks only after our gathering, a major worldwide crisis enhanced by the coronavirus (COVID-19), our system is in fact collapsing. The reactions concerning the handling and prevention measures of the disease are a testimony to the helplessness of a society no longer built on long-term perspectives, but on egoism and easy money-making. The lack of equipment in the healthcare systems and insufficient stocks of basic needs are a consequence of short-term thinking and acting. Solidarity has vanished, as well as efficient prevention, such as that introduced by South Korea.

The lessons to be learned are perhaps an opportunity to change the attitudes of the politicians, responsible for the protection of the whole population. I daresay that we are really on Noah's Ark or boat and have to look ahead all together, not only for the purpose of combating this disease, but also for the sake of changing our economic systems as a whole.