

**This study was created for
The Center For Emerging Threats and Opportunities**

HIDDEN UNITIES

Alternative Strategic Divisions

By Ralph Peters

Note: The purpose of this study is to provoke innovative thought in readers, and to help strategists and planners consider the world from a fresh vantage point. It does not pretend to be definitive; rather, this paper is experimental and unconstrained, meant as a starting point for discussion and a foundation for further critical elaboration by others. It is intended to be challenged, rather than simply accepted, in the hope that doing so will force critics to examine their own long-standing views anew and to help uncover not only unsuspected threats, but previously-unnoticed opportunities, as well.

A More Unified World Than We Know

Perhaps the finest painting of a prize fight hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Titled “Both Members of the Club,” the work is by the American painter George Bellows. The painting shows two old-fashioned sluggers in poses of ferocious contact, figures that are nearly identical, pounding each other to a pulp. Both the painting and its title might serve as a perfect metaphor for the long enduring and now renewed violence between Muslim countries and those that are, by heredity, Christian or Jewish or Judeo-Christian.

Everybody in the fight is a member of the same club: The grand and hyper-violent club of monotheist cultures.

The vast territory between Ireland in the west and Afghanistan in the east, between Scandinavia in the north and the long transition zone of the southern Sahara, is one “club,” a single strategic zone (North America is an adjunct to it, but increasingly separate from this macro-region). The countless wars within those boundaries all have been family feuds within the dynamic and long-expansive domain of monotheism. Centered historically on the Eastern Mediterranean, this is a single civilization that has mutated, along its expanded frontiers, into a wide range of cultures that may claim, in some respects, to be civilizations in their own right. But the distinctive characteristic of this there-is-only-one-god strategic region has been its aggressiveness, both toward other “members of the club” and toward other civilizations.

This historical predisposition to conquer and convert shapes the behavior even of those members of this vast community who have turned their back on active religion, as is the case with the states of northern Europe. Europe’s superficial pacifism of the moment lacks only the right provocation, the right historical circumstance, to turn again to violence directed at non-Europeans. One of the worst mistakes today’s strategic analysts make is to assume that, since Europe is so piously anti-military and “soft” today, it will remain so tomorrow. This is the same assumption that the Japanese made about the United States six decades ago, and which Osama bin Laden made about America more recently.

Violence toward other cultures is deeply—ineradicably—embedded in the European branches of monotheist civilization. It is only a matter of when the violence will re-emerge, what form it will take, and whether that violence will prove antithetical to U.S. values and interests. The Europeans who pretend to the moral high ground today are the heirs of those Europeans who, in 1912, insisted that the continent’s nations were too civilized ever to make war on one another again.

The club rules

While we may recognize, at least in less-controversial historical terms, that both Christianity and Islam have been fierce, messianic, driven faiths, the long sweep of history has obscured the similar nature of the other great monotheist religion, Judaism. Long strategically dormant, Judaism has returned as a strategic factor with a vengeance in the Middle East, where, despite Israel’s veneer of secularization, the deeper struggle remains one between two monotheist faiths—which are, by their essential nature, incapable of peaceful co-existence. We tend to view Judaism as a passive faith suddenly converted to defensive violence by the Holocaust, but this is a short-sighted reading of history: All monotheist religions produce cultures that are furiously aggressive and missionary. Even after their societies secularize, the mindset lingers. Only the powerlessness of Jewish communities scattered in the Diaspora tempered their ingrained impulse to conquer and convert. Judaism hasn’t re-imagined itself in Israel; rather, it has rejoined the club from which centuries of powerlessness had excluded it.

Prior to the Roman destruction of the Jewish state, whenever Jewish political entities were not subjugated by intrusive empires, they behaved very aggressively, indeed, toward their neighbors—as Israel has done in our lifetimes (and, of course, as its monotheist, Islamic neighbors do toward Israel, less rationally and far more vindictively). Each of the three great monotheist religions has a history of atrocity, if one goes back far enough. It appears to be only a matter of who held power when.

Today, “Western” cultures, Christian, Judeo-Christian and Jewish, behave more humanely, as a rule, than do Muslim cultures. But that is, at least partly, because we are so powerful and wealthy we can afford this indulgence. Much of the Islamic world is in the throes of a complex, multi-layered, psychologically-devastating crisis. And, when in crisis, monotheist cultures default to collective violence toward non-believers, whether in their midst or abroad.

The United States (and Canada), with its uniquely inter-mingled society, is in the least danger of turning on its minorities. But any member of a religious or ethnic minority in Europe had best be doing all he or she can to prop up the wealth and social accord of the state and the rule of law. Europe does not, will not and cannot assimilate immigrant communities from other cultures. While we should not exaggerate the power of current rightward trends in the European political environment (the danger is not short-term, unless a very great provocation occurs, such as a cataclysmic terrorist act), in the long term, European societies may become, at best, cellular and informally segregated. At worst, we may see the rigorous, even violent, exclusion of unassimilated minorities and the establishment of a buffer zone, with puppet regimes that serve Europe’s security needs, along the Mediterranean littoral.

Without drawing any premature conclusions, Americans would be foolish not to recognize that Europe is far more volatile than those endless, soporific pronouncements from Brussels would have it.

Crusades without a god

All cultures generated by only-one-god religions—Christian, Muslim or Jewish—believe in one path to the truth. The debate—often bloody—is over which path is best, not over the equivalent value of alternate paths. These are all-or-nothing cultures. This “one true path” mentality compels them to inflict their vision of both religious and secular order on others.

Even now, when Europe is “de-religioned,” by and large, and the United States would find it inconceivable to launch an overt religious crusade, this our-way-is-the-only-way subconsciously informs our actions. We still want things our way, and cannot really accept that the differing ways of others have full validity; rather, we assume that they are only less-developed and must, eventually, learn our way of doing things and come to appreciate that our approach is the only right approach. Our desire to create democracies and market economies abroad, laudable though such systems may be, is an inheritance from 19th century missionaries yearning to convert the “heathen Chinese” or the African tribesman. Our most bellicose armchair strategists make much of supposed Chinese

aggressiveness, but, to date, no Chinese government has insisted that the United States or anyone else adopt Chinese behaviors, social views, governmental forms and business practices: Our way may, indeed, be for the good of all, but the alacrity with which we insist on it is unmistakably intolerant and close-minded missionary behavior. We are programmed to insist.

The all-or-nothing nature of our current, post-modern war against terrorism is masked by diplomatic manners, and that, in turn, obscures the fundamental and fateful division between Judeo-Christian culture and Islamic culture today: The historic break over the role of women in society. This is the one truly irreconcilable difference between “Western” societies and Middle-Eastern Islam. Although it may appear absurd to many a strategist, the current war against terror, and the recent fighting in Afghanistan, is, essentially, a war over women’s rights and women’s roles. The alteration in women’s roles in the West is the most profound advance in human social history—more revolutionary even than the advent of democracy—and the most unsettling change to traditional societies. A male in a traditional Islamic society can more easily accept a monstrous dictator above him than a wife who insists on standing beside him. Although Islam’s complaints about the West are couched in terms of sin and corruption, the real fear is of female freedom.

The battle for hegemony between the great monotheist religions—the imposition of social order, when not religious practice—will continue to be the defining struggle of our time. It will wear a variety of disguises. But it is a struggle between stubborn, self-righteous cultures, our own included. Our great advantage is that our own culture evolves constantly, and has not closed the door on change; still, we must be fair and note that no cultures except the monotheists are currently attempting to force their values on others beyond their borders, whether we speak of the terrorist’s brutal, oppressive version of Islam, or of our own belief in democracy and markets for all. I do not suggest we are wrong in our prejudices, only that we must recognize them as prejudices if we want to understand the hostile reactions our proselytizing elicits from much of the world. We imagine ourselves as a sort of strategic Santa Claus, bearing a sack full of better ways to do things, but much of the world sees a fire and brimstone preacher with a Big Mac in one hand and a precision-guided bomb in the other.

A little more on Europe

In the short through mid term, at least, violence will continue to erupt primarily from the self-destructive, humiliated Muslim territories, but, in the grand historical arc, it would be folly to imagine that today’s passive—when not pacifist—Europe will always remain so. Europe has turned inward before and it remained so through much of the Middle Ages, only to look outward with a vengeance during its five-hundred-year colonial phase. And even the introverted Middle Ages produced the Crusades--so startling because they were a sudden, expansionist aberration during a period of strategic introspection. Because Europe is passive today does not mean Europe will be passive against future threats—or even in the face of future opportunities. If we examine history objectively, Europe has been the least consistent, least predictable sub-region of the world, full of nasty surprises for everyone else. Europe is history’s manic-depressive.

Contrary to the popular wisdom, Europe is far less steady and dependable than the United States. While Europeans view themselves as the masters of the arts of civilization, their historical behavior has more closely resembled that of today's soccer hooligans.

The great, grim zone of monotheism

If we sweep our hand across the map, from the lands of the Celts to the extremes of Central Asia, we will not pass over a single people who have not, at one time or another, behaved with extreme aggression toward their neighbors and, in the European instance, toward the entire world.

In our anger at the savagery of Islamic terrorists and our disgust at the social orders in so many Middle Eastern states, we are best served by the cool-headed recognition that, for all its unacceptable brutality, Middle Eastern Islam is fighting a defensive battle against the overwhelming cultural superiority and practical power of the Judeo-Christian band of states and nations. This recognition does not excuse terrorism, but may help us better understand it. Islamic terrorism is the violence of extreme desperation, symptomatic of the startling failure of Middle Eastern Islamic culture to compete with "the West" on a single productive front. Their failure is not our fault, but it is certainly our problem.

For all their documented violence, the Crusades are a red herring when invoked by Muslims to explain away their contemporary failures. Compared to a thousand years of Muslim attacks against and occupation of Europe's borderlands, from the Iberian Peninsula to the gates of Vienna to the Crimean khanate—and the occupation of Greece, the "cradle" of Western civilization into the 19th century--the Crusades amounted to little more than a long weekend during which a loutish collection of European tourists behaved particularly badly. Of course, the role of the Crusades in Islamic myth is far more important than the historical reality, but the critical point, at a time when the word "crusade" is so geo-politically loaded, is that these three monotheist religions have all produced crusader cultures (and Israel's West Bank settlements should be viewed in this context), from Joshua leveling the walls of Jericho, to the early Muslims thrusting up into France, to British missionaries (and soldiers) in Africa, to Osama bin Laden.

Whatever our personal religious convictions, we would do well to recognize that, strategically, the exclusive nature of monotheist religions makes them particularly ferocious, messianic and...prone to crusading, no matter the name with which they cover it over.

Our current war against terror is a civil war on a very grand level, fought against irreconcilable brothers. In Cain and Abel country.

The bogus peril in Asia

As this paper proposes below, concerns about Asian superpowers and any Asian “will to conquest” beyond regional goals utterly misreads the relevant cultural and social dynamics. The violence of the coming decades will continue to be spawned primarily by monotheist cultures, between themselves and with others. The greatest danger from the *bete noir* of the last decade, China, is not from intercontinental ballistic missiles, but from the possibility that the spiritual vacuum left by the Communist interregnum may open the door to some new, contagious, messianic, monotheist cult. Again, we must lay our personal beliefs aside to recognize that the worst thing that could happen to this world, short or nuclear or natural cataclysm, would be the sudden rise of an aggressive new (or reinterpreted) monotheist religion in China, leading China to turn its back on thousands of years of introversion to become a religious crusader. While this remains, in 2002, only one remote possibility among many, it is the one about which we should worry most profoundly. When Beijing cracks down on Falun Gong, it is clearly an unacceptable violation of human rights. But it is also evidence that the old men in Beijing recognize far more clearly than do we that intense, exclusive belief is transformative.

And all monotheist religions begin their careers with bursts of violent conquest.

A World Divided By Three

For American purposes, the world beyond our home territories—the United States, Canada and the northern two-thirds of Mexico—can be divided into three strategic zones, each with its distinct character, challenges and opportunities:

--*The Monotheist Zone*, with its source in the eastern Mediterranean

--*The Sino-Vedic Zone*, with its bipolar powers, China and India

--*The Post-Colonial Zone*, encompassing Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America

Each of these zones will be described at greater length below. First, let us consider alternative ways to categorize states and their behavior.

Bridges and Barriers, Survivors, Sleepwalkers and Pioneers

There are many valid terms used to classify states, whether as democracies, dictatorships, market economies, theocracies, constitutional monarchies, failed states, and so on. But these are political terms that tell us largely of a state’s present condition and little or nothing of its purpose. The focus of this paper is on cultural affinities and functions, and on strategic roles. New, alternative terms will be introduced. They will not describe every state, but our focus is on key or exemplary states. While many more

categories might be devised, the following five classifications will be used to describe states of particular interest:

Bridge states connect two civilizations or two cultures within a civilization, allowing the passage of everything from ideas to armies. While their native cultures usually reflect a great deal of fusion, their core identity associates, at varying points in history, with one civilization or culture or another. They may be conquered and converted by a given side, but their geographic location or temperament tends to keep them open to outside influences and to keep caravans, cargo trucks or new concepts in transit across their territories. They may or may not be originators of new ideas, techniques or movements, but they always feel their impact. Our era of confrontations and sharply drawn lines is not an especially fertile one for bridge states, yet many of those territories which have served this function historically continue to do so today. Examples of traditional bridge states are the predecessor states that occupied the land composing today's Turkey, golden-age Persia, Poland, and perhaps the most important bridge states in history, 16th century Spain and Portugal (see below).

In the post-modern period, both Mexico and South Africa may evolve into crucial bridge states, with the process already well underway in Mexico; similarly, Brazil could prove to be an unexpected bridge state between the Americas and Africa in the out-years, as could the United States. Today's key bridge states are often smaller in scale (normal during a period of continental or global structural crisis): Singapore and the unofficial "city-states" of Miami--which has emerged as the media and financial capital of much of Latin America--and Hong Kong and Shanghai, with their unacknowledged degrees of practical autonomy. Bangalore and Hyderabad in India may be emerging as crucial "city states" that function as cultural bridges, although it is too early to judge whether their impact will remain local or expand regionally.

Of note, city-states and cities possessed of informal degrees of independence or particular power always seem to have served as cultural bridges, from ancient Alexandria and Ephesus, down through Venice, Toledo, late-Ottoman Istanbul, Mexico City, and Beirut, although the latter has plunged tragically backward, to modern-day Vancouver. Port cities and littoral countries are, of course, always most exposed to international movements of any kind; conversely, port cities and densely-populated littoral countries are evolutionary by nature and seem to suffer—or benefit from—a sort of cultural dilution that prevents them from generating new and powerful religious, philosophical or political movements.

The most powerful, as well as the most destructive, ideas tend to germinate and burst forth from inland areas where they can grow in the safety of relative isolation during their fragile infancy. The proximity to the sea, when measured by modern standards, of the lands that generated Judaism, then Christianity and Islam, obscures the relative poverty and isolation in which these violent faiths developed. While the cosmopolitan nature of the Roman Empire enabled the spread of Christianity, it had nothing to do with its creation, which was inherently anti-cosmopolitan, millenarian, and culturally reactionary in its original tenets. Likewise, deserts protected Islam in its infancy, while the relative openness and vast, indefensible borders of surrounding empires enabled its spread.

Bridge countries, at their best, temper the human impulse to exclusivity and devastating violence. In practical terms, there are fewer true bridge countries today than

there were a hundred years ago, in the waning decades of colonialism, when imperial forces kept their colonies open, at least to influences from the empire's homelands. Despite a great deal of nonsense spouted about the information age breaking down barriers, many countries are struggling to build their cultural barriers ever higher. They may not succeed in the long run, but a retreat to exclusivity is the trend in many of the least successful or most threatened regions of the world.

Barrier States are those which block either invading armies or invading ideas. There is a natural tendency to associate barrier states with forbidding mountain ranges, deserts or other physical obstacles, but ideological impenetrability is often a more effective wall of resistance—and it is certainly more dangerous in our time. Barrier states can either keep ideas from their own people, serve as a wall to the transmission of ideas beyond their territory, or both. Some states may serve as both barriers and bridges, simultaneously or at different points in history.

There have been, in fact, a surprising number of dual-function states. For example, Poland, a state crucial to European development—and a barrier state despite its lack of defensible borders—served alternately as a bridge state funneling European ideas eastward and a barrier that decisively thwarted threats to Europe from the east, from the defeat at Liegnitz that nonetheless turned back the Mongols, through the repeated deflections of Turkish and Tartar Islamic threats that culminated in King Jan Sobieski's rescue of Vienna, to the "Miracle on the Vistula" when a scraped-together Polish army defeated the Bolshevik invasion that aimed through Poland toward sympathetic millions in Germany. Again, today, Poland serves as a bridge between Europe and struggling Russia and Ukraine to the east—and, if the EU has its way, it will serve as a barrier against illegal immigration. To a remarkable extent, this country that disappeared from the map for over a century continues to play the role it did in the Europe of five hundred years ago.

Spain, too, served for centuries as a barrier to Muslim expansion northward into Europe, while serving as a bridge that allowed the passage of Muslim scholarship and the revived Greek classics northward, as the forces of Castille, Navarre and Aragon slowly rolled back the borders of Muslim Spain until, in 1492, the last Moors were expelled (along with Spain's Jews and much of the peninsula's cultural dynamism). Thereafter, Spain played a fateful, eccentric role first of transmitting European culture—and religion—to the New World, while, increasingly, serving as a barrier to later European cultural developments and keeping its empire (as did Portugal) frozen in cultural time. But more of Spain below...

An impressive number of the world's recent conflicts occurred in old barrier states and territories, such as Serbia and Croatia, Georgia and Armenia, Chechnya and Afghanistan. These all are or once served as frontier states between cultures or civilizations, and Samuel Huntington's description of the fault lines between civilizations applies, of course, to the frontiers of faith, above all. To a powerful extent, belief is the decisive factor in creating a civilization's identity, not only in the religious sense but in the broader sense of values and identities.

Religion is culture, and culture is fate.

Certainly, in speaking of modern barrier states, religion is the number one determinant within the monotheist world and on its frontiers. While those frontiers shift with historical reallocations of power, the most notable development is the recreation of an Arabic Islamic world that is erecting its barriers higher each day. The Arab territories had begun, in the 19th century, to open up to western influences, but the process over the last half century has been one of closing doors, of re-building the old walls of the Islamic world of a thousand years ago—though without the long-gone dynamism and power. A broad belt of states across North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula into the Levant and eastward to Mesopotamia has turned inward, refusing to accept the demands either of modernity or post-modernity. Even Lebanon, which seemed so promising a generation ago, has gone backward, and “liberal” Arab states, such as Jordan and Morocco, may be living on borrowed time. Egypt, once something of a bridge state, has become a barrier to outside ideas and has chosen repression and a marginal economy over openness and progress.

Of course, this belt of barrier states reaches even farther east, at present, through Iran, unsettled Afghanistan and into Pakistan, touching distant, undecided Bangladesh. Although, for now, Islam’s retreat from the modern world ends there, it is difficult to find many historical examples of so vast a region erecting barriers against the influence and ideas of the rest of the world. Only the Spanish Empire, from Phillip II until the occupation of Spain by Napoleon’s armies, came close. And the lesson of the Spanish attempt to hermetically seal a vast empire is that the results are deformed economies and stunted cultures. Latin America is still fighting that hermetic, colonial legacy. It is difficult, given the accelerated pace of global development, to see how Islam’s homelands will ever recover from their attempt at cultural secession.

Other barrier states—those which focused on protecting their own people from outside influences—include China and Japan through much of their histories, Russia between the lifting of the Mongol Yoke and the reign of Peter the Great (some would argue beyond him, as well), and the northern states of medieval India, whose complex behavior failed to save them from conquest, but preserved the integral Hindu states of southern, inland India from monotheist expansionism (other than some limited missionary successes). Curiously, France has made half-hearted attempts to become Europe’s barrier state against American power and influence, but lacks the will and wherewithal to do so successfully.

Successful barrier states must be willing to kill—and, above all, to kill their own people.

Survivor states, for the purposes of this study, are those which contain a people that has suffered attempted genocide, or that perceives itself as having been so threatened. While the first type deals with reality and the second largely with self-created myth, all survivor states are ferocious when they perceive themselves in danger; expansive where lost historical territory, *Lebensraum*, or the need for defensible borders are concerned; intolerant to the degree that they view neighboring populations as less fully human than themselves; and obsessed with the notion of a historical mission. While such states are almost always small (Russia offers the only partial, great exception to this rule), they are

disproportionately volatile and tend to spark larger conflicts than mere border wars. When survivor states are located next to one another, the situation is impossible to defuse completely and the maintenance of peace requires ceaseless external pressure or outright occupation.

In their do-anything-to-survive obsession, survivor states often will abrogate the rule of law, cut deals with criminals or even terrorists, and commit war crimes themselves—justifying their actions by all that their people have suffered in the past. Some survivor states may be democracies and have thriving economies, but most maintain a self-defeating siege mentality disproportionate to real and immediate threats. Wherever there is a survivor state on the map, planners can expect eventual trouble.

Obvious survivor states include Rwanda, Armenia and Israel, but the list becomes much longer when nascent states and those who have mythologized threats to themselves are added on. Then the list includes Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Greece (which behaves as though the Turkish occupation ended last week), Turkey (in a grand and peculiar sense, viewing itself as the battle-hardened remnant of the Ottoman Empire, forged in its own war of liberation against the Levantine Greeks, under Kemal Ataturk's near-messianic leadership), the non-state state of Kosova, and the Palestinian state-to-be. An eventual Kurdish state, perhaps created unintentionally with the fall, through whatever means, of Saddam Hussein, would certainly qualify, as might spin-off, ethnic states from a failed effort to re-unite Afghanistan. Paraguay, still suffering from the effects of a disastrous war over a century ago, also displays limited survivor-state characteristics. So might East Timor, if its democracy and economic development fail to take hold. Cambodia has the potential to become a classic survivor state, but here, too, the jury is still out. Chechnya, should it ever gain its independence, undoubtedly would behave as a survivor state. Perhaps the mildest form of survivor behavior is exemplified by South Korea, although its occupation by Japan remains a highly-charged issue. The war-ravaged states of West Africa might also have some potential to emerge as survivor states behaviorally, although this is unlikely, given the odds against internal unity, their poverty, and the bankruptcy of their cultures. Even so, we cannot judge the degree to which a survivor mentality, in some local mutation, may linger in Africa in the wake of its particularly severe colonial experience—this remains a great question mark on that undecided continent.

The volatility of survivor states and the dangers they pose must be obvious to anyone who simply reads the list of names above. But, again, plotting them on the map shows a clear concentration of these dangerous entities in the monotheist zone, especially where its internal cultures and the divergent branches of its civilization(s) collide. There is an almost uninterrupted belt of these survivor states stretching from Croatia around the eastern rim of the Mediterranean to Gaza, and northeastward to the Caucasus.

Watch this space.

Perhaps the greatest error well-intentioned diplomats and analysts make regarding the Middle East is to assume that the creation of a Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel might bring peace. The chances of two such embittered, bloodied survivor states getting along peaceably, while differing in religion and culture, and forced to live side by side, are close to zero.

Even where an uneasy peace prevails, between Armenia and Turkey, or between Turkey and Greece, the situation remains fragile and dangerous—even though the rest of the world sees clearly that the mundane cultures and even the cuisines are nearly

identical, and that cooperation—“burying the hatchet”—would profit everyone. The notion that states act rationally in their own self interest is a liberal fantasy. It would be entirely in the practical self-interest of each of these states to cooperate, however grudgingly, with one another. But they will not do so, and they continue to dream of burying the hatchet in each other’s heads.

States may, as noted above, display more than one identity at the same time, as in serving as both bridges and barriers. Likewise, bridge states, such as Turkey, may also interpret themselves as survivor states, and historical barrier states, such as Croatia or Armenia, are classic survivor states (their roles as barriers eventually caught up to them). But the most explosive combination of all is that of survivor state and pioneer state, which will be described below.

Sleepwalker States are those which, either content with or clinging to traditional beliefs and rigid structures of social organization, miss out on one of humankind’s social or technical leaps forward. When the future arrives, as it inevitably does, they react with graphic, but ineffectual violence that consistently fails to maintain the existing order, but which excites the aggressor or intruder state to even more ferocious violence in response, creating a crisis of confidence and the collapse of the governing order (a precise description of the war against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan). While sleepwalker states existed at least as long ago as the declining Hittite empire, and include historical examples as diverse as the Aztec empire and the late Mughal states of India, the most instructive state for us, historically, is China, while the obvious current sleepwalker states are—without exception—Islamic. Even Burma/Myanmar has realized it must open to outside influences and investments, although it remains uncertain how to proceed.

China, vast and populous, with its own powerful culture, was content for millenia to live within its own world. Border conquests and even the rare fleet sent on a voyage of discovery were only ephemeral events. China’s interests remained more exclusively internal than that of any other such power or state in history. Although a few technologies crept in, the arrival of Western gunboats on Chinese rivers awakened a remarkably introverted culture from a very deep slumber. Chinese responses to the appearance of technologically and organizationally superior intruders included, most spectacularly, waves of anti-foreign violence, from the disastrous Opium Wars, through local rebellions, to the messianic fervor of the Boxer Rebellion. Perhaps a longer historical perspective will allow us to see that Chinese Communism, too, was a millenarian phenomenon, messianic without a formal messiah (until Mao’s later elevation), and a fervent collective response to the failure of the old order to defend or redeem China—a religion without god. Now, with the decay of Communism to an empty shell, another wave of collective fervor may be in the cards. This may not happen soon—or at all—but the rise of a new, galvanizing, intoxicating religious movement in China would be the scenario most likely to turn China to aggression.

The immediate problem, however, arises from the sleepwalker states of Middle Eastern Islam, extended at least as far as the Indus River in the east. The rise of fundamentalist terrorism against the West and its influences are the Muslim version—on

a far grander scale—of the Boxer Rebellion, a movement born not of confidence, but of frustration and inchoate rage. The siege of the foreign legations in Peking, nowadays Beijing, prefigured the terrorist attacks on foreign bases and embassies in the Middle East and Africa. What all millenarian, messianic movements have in common is that, although they speak of inaugurating a golden age, they all desire to recapture the past, to return their societies to an imagined purity rid of foreign influences. And it simply cannot be done.

The windfall of oil wealth, and the subsequent Arab-internal aid, long allowed Muslim countries between North Africa and the Hindu Kush to drowse as much of the rest of the world, especially the West and the dynamos of East Asia, took off, developing new methods of social organization, of wealth distribution, of technological innovation and, above all, of greater human efficiency. Now, these Muslim states, and especially most Arab states, are so far behind developmentally—especially in the realm of human efficiency—that it is impossible for this author to see how they could begin to catch up and compete with societies that have raced generations, if not centuries, beyond them. A missionary, monotheist culture spanning continents has been thrust onto the defensive (through its own failures, we must repeat). And these sleepwalker states, as they begin to awaken to their true state, are exhibiting some of the worst survivor-state behaviors. We may be witnessing the development of the world's first survivor civilization, in the negative sense of the survivor state characteristics described above, but without their virtues. The states of the Arab Islamic world are already caught in a no-man's-land: They are strong enough to hate, but too weak to reform. It is a prescription for continued failure.

Whether we speak of awakened China in the 19th and 20th centuries, or of Islam today, sleepwalker states awake from their dreams of stasis to sudden disorientation, broad failure, and external influences. Violence is their natural response.

Pioneer States are the natural antagonists of sleepwalker states. Pioneer states lead human social, technical and organizational progress. In their developing phases and at their apogees, these states or cultures are open to new ideas, experimentation and change to a degree uncharacteristic of humankind (cultures tend to be conservative and closed, once developed). Pioneer states may arise at any time, but are most apt to appear and triumph during times of upheaval or decay in neighboring states and cultures. Pioneer states can be global or near-global in their reach (the Roman Empire; the Ottoman Empire for about two hundred years, down to the death of Suleiman the Magnificent; the British Empire; and today's United States), or regional in their impact (Israel, Singapore—which is also a bridge state, as noted above—and, perhaps in the out years, Indonesia, Iran and Australia/New Zealand, each of which possesses highly-eccentric characteristics that could lead to innovative social orders).

In considering history's most influential pioneer states, it is all too easy to see them first as military powers; however, with the exception of the Ottoman Empire, each of the global or near-global players mentioned above maintained peacetime military establishments that, while technologically advanced, superbly trained and disciplined,

were quite small in comparison to their far-ranging responsibilities. The real power of pioneer states is their development of new formulae for maximizing the potential of their populations, their openness to new possibilities, their extraordinary ambition, and their capacity for internal debate among the governing elites (the lack of the latter crippled the Ottoman Empire early on). Of note, when Rome lost its taste for internal dialog and began to rely more heavily on its military for the maintenance of metropolitan order, it began to decay. In their heydays, too, Rome, the British Empire, and even the Ottoman Empire, as well as today's United States, were open to talent from within or without, to new ideas, and to open regimes for determining the status of the individual. In today's America, of course, we can recreate ourselves several times in a lifetime, whether we use as examples Madonna's various career incarnations, actors turned politician, military retirees turned investment bankers, or the person who gains a college degree and a new profession in mid-life. Our picture of the British empire's class system tends to be skewed badly by novels and films, and we forget the relatively humble, or frankly disadvantaged, births of many of the great men of empire, from Robert Clive, conqueror of so much of India, to Benjamin Disraeli, Victorian-era Prime Minister and best-selling novelist, whose family lineage was Jewish. Certainly, there was snobbery and bigotry aplenty in the British Empire, but, especially on the empire's frontiers, there never was a dearth of self-made men. Even the Ottoman Empire, in its centuries of blazing greatness, employed Jews, Christians and just about any other talent that could be drawn to the Ottoman standard. The greatest mosques built by the Ottomans in Constantinople, Edirne and elsewhere were designed by Sinan, an Armenian Christian. Openness to the greater world—the bane of sleepwalker states—is the oxygen of pioneer states.

The Spanish empire is a great and obvious exception. Although rough men of relatively humble origins, from an Italian sailor to Hernando Cortez, explored and conquered the empire, the repressive, bigoted genius of Phillip II closed the door to further innovation and the influences of post-Renaissance culture, and quickly ran down his state bureaucracy until it functioned without creativity or integrity. A man of extreme religious self-righteousness whose character resembled that of Osama bin Laden (Friedrich Schiller's description of Phillip II could be applied directly to OBL), Phillip II personally destroyed the hope of competitive progress in Spain's dominions. While the empire nonetheless lasted four hundred years, Phillip II's forcible transformation of Spain from nascent pioneer state (and empire) to one of the great sleepwalker states of history, meant that Spain's dominions abroad existed in a near-hermetic time-capsule, corrupt and decrepit, and that the home country, in the early twentieth century, was less industrialized than Japan. Of course, the tale of Spanish cultural, economic and military failure is more complex than can be described here, but the salient feature for our purposes is that Phillip II and his emulative successors were inflexible—and committed to preserving their order, their empire and their faith, rather than developing these things. It is, perhaps, no mere coincidence that, after frontier Catholicism, the greatest influence that shaped the Spanish states was the long Moorish occupation of the Peninsula, during which, despite intermittent cultural flowerings, Islamic fundamentalist movements repeatedly crushed attempts at social and spiritual development. Imperial Spain thus had before it two prime examples of how to rule: the ferocity of its embattled faith, multiplied by the fervor of the Counter-Reformation, and the example of its Moorish enemies, in which more liberal, open regimes consistently fell prey to fundamentalist conquerors—who were the great

nemeses of the Spanish knights (when the Spanish were not fighting as mercenaries in Moorish pay). A state born in war and expanded through war, and confined within a fundamentalist religion, Spain never learned to value anything more than an uncompromising faith and a merciless sword.

It is also characteristic of pioneer states that, while they make war ferociously when they must, they consistently operate under a code of humane laws, written or customary. For example, our image of the Ottoman Empire is skewed by a sense of its Islamic otherness, and by its long, pathetic decline. But, in its heyday, it was the most open, dynamic, and tolerant of empires. The Jews driven from Spain found a refuge in Constantinople, where their descendents still live quietly. And when the “liberating” Christian armies of the Habsburgs retook Budapest at the end of the 17th century, the first thing the soldiers did was to massacre the Jews in the city’s thriving ghetto. Islam, once the most tolerant and dynamic monotheist faith, has simply traded places with yesterday’s Christians.

Collectible frontiers are a commodity requiring discussion in association with pioneer states. Monotheist civilizations and cultures are inherently expansive, missionary, proselytizing. They require frontiers that can be “collected” into the faith or the ideological fold. A particular reason for Islam’s calcification and violent dismay—in addition to its systemic failures—is that it is now blocked in and cannot “collect” any additional territory or populations. While we hear a great deal about Islamic expansion in places such as the Philippines or Indonesia, the fact is that Islam’s expansion reached its farthest extent centuries ago and, since then, has been battling either to hold the line or for incremental, local gains. No religion in recorded history expanded more swiftly than did Islam in its first few centuries. It possessed a stunning force, both ideologically and militarily. But, today, Islam’s only serious gains are internal—demographic increases which are anything but positive, as they produce ever more unemployed or under-employed young males in societies with insufficient resources to appease them.

Middle Eastern Islam feels enclosed, surrounded, and stunned by the success of Western pioneer states, especially the United States. And Arab governments are forced to divide up shrinking pies among ever more hungry mouths. Despite the frantic calls for Jihad, Islam isn’t going anywhere beyond its present borders—except in the forms of immigration or terrorism.

European and North American powers also have deep expansionist urges, so obviously manifested during the age of European colonialism. We now see Europe—and the U.S.—as averse to the old-fashioned conquest of others. In fact, we have simply developed new, more successful means for conquest, on the cultural and economic fronts. As I have noted in other writings, military conquest is ultimately expensive—sometimes, as in the Spanish case, to the point of bankrupting the conqueror. Physical occupation simply does not pay in the long run. To their enormous advantage, today’s Europeans and Americans have figured out the art of looting without shooting.

It would be a grave mistake not to take the mullahs and Islamic commentators seriously when *they* insist that Islam and the Judeo-Christian cultures are at war. They

recognize more clearly than do we that we are engaged in a new form of conquest, infiltrating their societies with seductive technologies, customs and behaviors that subvert the standing order. Islamic resistance is violent and vocal, so we foolishly imagine it is powerful. But, the events of September 11th 2001 notwithstanding, Islam's impact on the West in our lifetimes has been negligible, while our impact on the Islamic states has been profound, disruptive and shaming.

For the United States, much of the world remains a collectible frontier, though in terms of economic advantage, cultural infiltration and strategic influence, not religious conversion or physical occupation. And our efforts to spread our preferred behaviors do, indeed, amount to a crusade, if a well-intentioned and only intermittently-violent one. We fail to see that our entire mindset vis-à-vis the rest of the world is shaped by our religious traditions, every bit as much as are the less-successful prejudices of the Islamic world. Even the atheists among us are the children of Godfrey of Bouillon and Richard the Lionhearted...or of St. Francis Xavier and David Livingstone. Kentucky Fried Chicken, Nikes and pop stars may not seem much like aggressive missionary gospels to us, but to the most reactionary portions of the Islamic world, they are nothing less.

The media, with exuberant irresponsibility, repeatedly tell us of some young man in Houston converting to Islam, scare-mongering with the suggestion that Islam is taking over the world. In fact, the most rapidly-expanding religion in the world, in terms of converts and geographic spread, is not only Christianity, but specifically evangelical Protestant Christianity, with its injunction to believers to "spread the Good News." While the devout Christians among us may applaud this development, the strategists among us should be on high alert. As a number of articles and even a recent book have suggested, the spread of evangelical Christianity may prove an even greater source of instability and violence in the out years than the decay of Islamic cultures.

The Three Strategic Zones

North America, from Mexico City to Barrow, Alaska, constitutes a region apart—the home territories of human innovation in our time and the pioneer region containing the ultimate pioneer state, the United States. While some analysts may discount the inclusion of northern Mexico in this zone, it is this writer's belief that, while formal sovereignty and official borders will remain in place between successful states, the coming generations will see more innovation and relative progress on our southern border than on our northern border, and there will be greater integration across both borders. This does not suggest that Canada will lag, only that Canada is already highly-developed, with less margin for innovation and development, and that Canada will inevitably follow developments in the United States, complaining all the way. Mexico, with its greater problems, also has greater potential for innovative change and the pursuit of alternative solutions to social dilemmas. Per capita income in Mexico will continue to lag incomes to the north, but a richer, symbiotic relationship across our borders will develop than has been the case in the past. Far from overwhelming the U.S. with illegal immigrants, as some American ideologues suggest, Mexico will become ever more dependent upon and

integrated with the United States, economically, structurally, socially—and organizationally and ideologically. Mexico is only now casting off the crippling shell of its colonial legacy. The process will not be entirely smooth as it struggles toward new freedoms. But I personally have gone from being a pessimist on Mexico a decade ago to become a sober optimist.

Mexicans and Americans have gone much farther, much faster, in overcoming old, bitter legacies than any of us might have thought possible a generation ago. Today, despite serious, enduring problems, Mexico looks increasingly like an extremely useful neighbor, whose human power will help sustain U.S. development. It also serves as a key bridge state to Latin America.

In any case, the United States will continue, for the foreseeable future, to be the world's leading pioneer state, breaking down ever more barriers, while possessing wealth and power without precedent in history.

Want some salsa with that?

The Monotheist Zone

The frontiers of the Monotheist Zone, where Judaism, Christianity and Islam were born, matured, and continue to dominate the cultural landscape, have shifted back and forth over the centuries. On the eastern, Islamic frontier, the border has been pushed back across northern India toward the Indus River--after centuries of Islamic Mughal rule and the British interval. Although over 130 million Muslims still live in India, Hindu culture dominates today. On the Monotheist Zone's southern border, too, Islam has reached its limit and may begin to recede. In southern Sudan, where the borderlands shift into a hybrid Christianity, tracing east into Ethiopia and west through Nigeria (where Muslims still attempt to push their frontier southward) the most dynamic, if not always the most politically-powerful, faith is that of the "African Christ." The hybrid, localized Christianity of black Africa—in the post-colonial zone—is unfinished and vivid, with a dynamism lacking in the Sub-Saharan extremes of Islam. But this does not yet equal an extension of the Monotheist Zone. African Christianity is very much a work in progress, where the religion evolves almost daily, incorporating local traditions, beliefs and behaviors. It is not monolithic—and may not even turn out to be monotheist in the traditional sense. African Christianity, despite the advent of African cardinals and recognized churches, may develop into a unique, third-path Christianity, the tenets of which would be dramatically different from those of Catholicism or Protestantism, Sub-Saharan Africa's two parent forms of monotheism. In any case, for today's strategic purposes, the Monotheist Zone ends where African Christianity begins.

In the northeast, where Russia has spent centuries engaging in missionary conquest, first extending Orthodox Christianity, then Leninist Communism, the expansive phase clearly is over and the best Russians can do is to attempt to hold a slowly shriveling line. Given demographic disparities, it is difficult to see how Moscow will maintain its control over the eastern provinces of the Russian Federation across our new century. The only frontiers on which the Monotheist Zone is not shrinking are the largely post-religious

states of Europe (although monotheist mentalities and behaviors persist, and likely will for centuries to come). While recent events make the Islamic states of the Monotheist Zone appear far more powerful and threatening than they in fact are, pundits and analysts insist that Europe has lost its way and its will. Yet, Europe retains great wealth and residual power. If we have seen no major wars in Europe since 1945 (although there have been adventures enough beyond Europe, though nothing on the scale of the colonial era), it is because Europeans have not been galvanized by significant threats. We must beware making the same mistake the Japanese made before Pearl Harbor (and that Osama bin Laden made) in judging Americans, who were deemed morally weak and unwilling to fight or sacrifice. Given the right threat, Europe—or key parts of Europe—may prove every bit as ferocious as in past centuries. Certainly, it is hard to imagine this today. But it is always difficult to foresee the sudden changes that keep human history so painfully interesting.

While the aging of populations in Europe appear to be leading to states that lack the manpower to defend themselves, with lurid images of masses of immigrants, legal or illegal, swamping Italy, or France, or Spain, or Germany, it is every bit as possible that demographic threats from beyond could appear sufficiently threatening to trigger the rise of new, exclusive regimes in Europe that, while preserving democratic forms for citizens, behaves brutally on and beyond its borders. Difficult as this may be to imagine, it is far less difficult than imagining the Somme or Verdun was for Europeans in 1900. History doesn't really march—it lurches, staggers, plunges and smashes.

In the meantime, Muslim states in this zone will continue to struggle with issues of identity and modernity, and few give cause for optimism. The likeliest scenario isn't a dramatic, colossal confrontation between Islam and the West, but decades of intermittent terrorism, state breakdown, stalling on reforms, occasional revolutions, and occasional lesser wars and punitive expeditions.

Most European states remain pioneer states to some degree, open, however reluctantly, to innovation and reform—though not on the scale to which the United States is open. But every Muslim country in the Monotheist Zone has behaved as some variety of sleepwalker state—obviously, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen and their ilk, but also the Gulf States, where petrodollar lollipops cannot buy off history forever, and even Turkey, which holds Islam at bay, but forever disappoints on the development front. For its part, Turkey has much of the corruption of Islamic states but, fortunately, not the fanatic vision. If there is any strategically-crucial state in the Monotheist Zone, it is Turkey, America's regional “aircraft carrier,” but, more profoundly, the single bridge state anywhere near the Middle East.

The dark horse, developmentally and strategically, is Iran. Despite sensational headlines and tactical reverses, Iran is decades ahead of other Islamic states that still have not undergone their experiments with religious rule. The Iranian people have tried theocracy and it has not worked for them. Like alcoholics who needed to hit bottom before they could reform and begin building new lives, Iran has bottomed out and may be the first (hopefully not the only) Muslim-populated state to forge its way to a working compromise with the demands of the modern and post-modern worlds. Despite its flares of extremism, Iran—the population of which is Persian and Azeri Turk, not Arab—has never practiced a form of Islam as repressive and inhumane as the Saudi variant. Partly this has to do with Shi'ism and Sufi influences (and a lingering flame of Zoroastrianism,

which no regime has ever been able to exterminate), but it also has to do with the Persian confidence that comes from thousands of years of cultural achievement. Iran may prove the first successful market democracy in the Islamic portion of the Monotheist Zone. If so, it will have a fight on its hands, again, with its Arab neighbors. Iran, in essence, had been a sleepwalker, but may develop into Middle Asia's first pioneer state—while its neighbors continue to stumble backward.

Afghanistan long has been a frontier state, and its natural border is farther east, along the Indus River, which has been the natural dividing line between Middle Asia and the Indian sub-continent since Alexander crossed it. While we may wish Afghanistan well and hope for the best, its society is so conservative, so backward and now physically shattered, that the best result we can get may be a more peaceful, somewhat more equitable and just state that does not soon revert to overt oppression and terrorism. Certainly, efforts expended on Afghanistan are not wasted, since the region desperately needs a success story—but that success story is likeliest to come next door, in Iran, where a new model of Islamic society may emerge across the next generation. I believe it is only a matter of time before the United States and Iran are again strategic partners, and, while we now rely on the badly-failed state of Pakistan as our urgent proxy, the out-years may see Iran as our partner and local policeman once again. At present, we are needlessly in contention with Iran over the future of Afghanistan and other matters, but that is a function more of the bad will among an aging generation of leaders on both sides than it is a reflection of the future or genuine interests. Like India, Iran has not friends among its neighbors and must come, ultimately, to an accommodation with the United States.

Then comes Israel. Simultaneously a survivor state and a pioneer state—the most dynamic, aggressive combination—Israel is surround on three sides by sleepwalker states. As noted above, should a Palestinian state come into an independent existent, it, too, would perceive itself as a survivor state, virtually guaranteeing continued friction. But the danger is even greater (although, on moral grounds, the Palestinians are ultimately entitled to a state): First, the Palestinians are the most creative and innovative of the Arab peoples, a fact obscured by the public and media-enhanced roles of the old guard of terrorists and corrupt power brokers. In fact, the Palestinians are (relatively) highly educated, comparatively secular, and scattered in their own global diaspora. A Palestinian state that could shake off the corruption and authoritarianism of the Arafat model would attract a great deal of money from Palestinians abroad and a return to the homelands of many highly-skilled workers. This Palestinian state, too, could become something of a pioneer state. But no one in the region—especially the other Arab states—wants that to happen. Second, a Palestinian state with a survivor state mentality (and especially if it began to become a pioneer state, as well) would exert tremendous pressure on Jordan. Given the high proportion of Palestinians among Jordan's population, the Palestinian state might make its next priority “reunion” with Jordan, but a form of reunion that would not include the Hashemite dynasty.

Israel truly is a model pioneer society, even in the most literal sense of having pioneered the land and made it fertile. But it is the social, intellectual and organizational innovations that finally make it intolerable to the sleepwalker states surrounding it. Monotheist religions are very good haters, yet Israel's best chance for peaceful relations with its neighbors would be if it were a traditional, closed, hierarchical society, rather

than the open society it has been since its inception. Even Israel's stunning success would be more tolerable to its neighbors if Israel oppressed its women, censored its media, and mandated religious observance for all.

The only chance for peace in the long term in the ancient, Eastern Mediterranean homelands of the Monotheist Zone would be extraordinary upheavals in the short term that shattered regional hierarchies. It is extremely unlikely that this could occur without a great deal of bloodshed. And Arab Islam may be so trapped in its myths and regressive beliefs that change proves impossible.

The Monotheist Zone will continue to be both a cockpit of violence and an exporter of violence. While we Americans must focus on the troubled situation in the zone's Islamic states, the more interesting and surprising future may come in the zone's European region, which has been the greatest exporter of violence over the past five hundred years. While dire warnings certainly are not warranted, Europe may remain steelier and more vengeful than we sense, resembling the United States on the eve of December 7th, 1941. Major terrorist incidents may be Europe's Pearl Harbor. In the long term, it may be some utterly unforeseen, rather than the anticipated, results of aging populations and the determination to maintain its wealth that return Europe to its tradition of violent solutions to practical frustrations.

The Sino-Vedic Zone

In using the term Vedic (of the Vedas, India's ancient holy texts) instead of Hindu, I intentionally have chosen a term with ancient roots. We Americans, with our habit of obsessing on the crisis of the moment, often fail to identify root causes because we make no efforts to place events in a historical context. The Vedic period in India occurred roughly between 1500 and 500 BCE. After three thousand years, the same cultural river continues to flow through the sub-continent. Similarly, in China, enduring historical patterns—which Communism did *not* destroy—date to a similar period.

When we view contemporary India as shifty and truculent, or speak worriedly of Chinese missiles, we express immediate concerns but miss the salient factors behind India's noisome behavior and China's quest for arms.

Compared to the wars of conquest fought, endlessly, within the Monotheist Zone and then beyond it by monotheist powers, China and India appear almost miraculous in their lack of aggression toward each other or toward the greater world. While they certainly fought frequent wars internally, within their own cultures, or on disputed borders, these vast countries, during periods of relative unity, had the capacity to amass tremendous wealth and power for state purposes—despite the poverty of their general populations. Yet, neither thought it worthwhile to attempt to build an empire far beyond its cultural borders, and their few wars of conquest were limited to pacifying frontiers. While mountain and jungle barriers played their roles, it remains fascinating that China never tried to conquer India, or vice versa. Their most violent encounters were border skirmishes during the Cold War. Until the Communist reformation, when a foreign philosophy formulated in Europe by a monotheist culture was forced upon the Chinese

people—China’s most aggressive period occurred when Mongol khans ruled old Cathay. India’s farthest-reaching foreign adventures occurred when it was ruled by the British. While internal violence in both countries was sometimes ferocious, neither felt compelled to export Confucianism and ancestor worship by the sword or to impose Hinduism on foreign populations through military occupation. Buddhism, the closest thing to a missionary religion this zone produced, stressed non-violence and teaching by example. It subsumed and incorporated existing gods, rather than “breaking the idols.”

Certainly, the peoples of Southeast Asia fought wars of aggression against one another, yet these were ethnic, not religious, conflicts. Local “empires,” whether Khmer, Vietnamese, Siamese, Burman, Javanese, or any other, all sought security and wealth—power—but not to impose lifestyles or modes of belief. The territories that became Indonesia produced lengthy, bloody dynastic struggles, savage pirates, and bitter resistance to colonial conquest, but the existing cultural conditions were so deeply embedded that even the arrival of Islam turned few into crusaders for the faith. Today, Muslim monotheism may be the cause of, or the excuse for, a good bit of violence in the Indonesian archipelago, but independent Indonesia’s foreign wars since independence were fought over disputed territory, not religion. Indonesia has become something of a bellwether country, in which the world will see what modern Islam can make of itself, but, for now, the most impressive thing about this “Muslim” state is how secular it remains.

Indeed, India’s worst problems with invaders and border aggressors over the past thousand years have consistently been attacks from the West by monotheist warriors. First, Afghan and Central Asian Muslims established empires in Northern India, which were then superseded by the Islamic Mughals, who reigned, ever more feebly, until those other insatiable, self-righteous and fierce monotheists, the British, arrived. Today, India faces terrorist attacks and subversion in Kashmir from rigorously, intolerantly monotheist Pakistan.

China, in the modern era, also suffered partial conquest and successive humiliations at the hands of monotheist cultures from Europe (and the emperor-worshipping Japanese). The Chinese embrace of Communism has been read in many different ways, but it may also be viewed as an attempt to wield an equally powerful, intolerant “monotheist” belief system against China’s harassers.

Having fought the Chinese in Korea and experienced their mischief in Vietnam—while listening to swords rattling over Taiwan—we view the Chinese as aggressive. And the Chinese clearly do intend to control a regional sphere of influence, if they can. But what should astonish us is how narrow, how local, Chinese interests are. Chinese ships are not standing ready off America’s coast (or Australia’s or Indonesia’s coasts, for that matter), and China’s brief Cold War flirtation with exporting military elements—primarily advisers—to distant lands has largely withered. The Chinese are certainly glad to export arms, primarily for money, partly for influence. But, contrary to the nightmares of the 1950s, there is no indication that the Chinese have global aspirations—if anything, their desire for hegemony has shrunk markedly since its Communist apogee some decades ago. The Chinese want security and whatever useful authority they can gain over their neighbors, but we have no serious indications of greater aspirations on Beijing’s part. While we must remain wary of Chinese threats to our interests and allies,

we also must remember that, while we see our own interests on China's borders, the reverse is not true.

The greatest danger of eventual war between India and China will arise if China continues its quest for port facilities on the approaches to the Indian Ocean. Chinese involvement in Burma—in multiple spheres, from business to intelligence-gathering—has belatedly attracted India's attention. China, facing a de facto strategic blockade to the east, where U.S. allies and U.S. ships stand just off its coast, has been seeking alternative routes to the world to even the odds. Beijing sees the path south as the only useful direction in which China can move to extend its influence and lifelines without directly confronting U.S. military power, interests and allies. While China may, indeed, turn more aggressive than it has been historically—countries and cultures can and do change—for now, at least, China's slow-motion Burmese adventure looks more like an attempt to establish a back-up lifeline and to secure its flanks than like the beginning of a quest to dominate India's traditional sphere of influence.

As for Chinese "fifth columns" among the populations of Southeast Asia, the "overseas" Chinese residents are hated in Indonesia, integrated in Thailand (except for the old Kuomintang colonies in the north), distrusted—though valued—in Malaysia, and masters in Singapore—but Singapore, a monument to the genius of the Chinese character once freed of China's grip, certainly wants nothing to do with the regime in Beijing. Despite some nostalgia, the Chinese residents of Southeast Asia recognize that Beijing wishes to use them, but does not trust or truly support them. And the Chinese are entirely unwelcome in today's Vietnam.

China's most successful "conquests" consist of long-established business communities with only tenuous political ties to the old homeland. While Chinese culture is one of the strongest on earth, enduring, at times, for centuries in émigré communities, there is a great deal of suspicion among "overseas" Chinese about the Beijing government. Any scenario that includes a Chinese takeover of Southeast Asia, abetted by local Chinese residents, is nonsense.

Indeed, despite the forces of globalization, China may be entering another troubled, introverted period in which domestic challenges, discontents and requirements take precedence over foreign policy issues so decisively that China's armed forces will receive an ever-smaller percentage of GDP—perhaps even a great deal less in real terms—than they have in the past. China is proud, and frustrated at our presence so near to its borders, but its ambitions—except for trade—are entirely local. Forty years ago, the Chinese strategic presence abroad reached as far as the Congo. Today, military advisers have been replaced with cheap exports, and China's Communism amounts to no more than an old whore's insistence on her virginity.

We can have a war with China, if we want one. But we must recognize that both China and India were dealt losing hands historically, despite their contentment within their own borders, and were traumatized by contact with the Monotheist Zone—and, in China's case, by the Japanese, as well, whose imperialism mimicked, in the most brutal fashion possible, the conquests of the Western powers in the past. China and India have been struggling to find their balance again, to adjust to the relatively recent shocks of external power exerted against them, and to absorb the lessons and technologies they must if they are to compete in the 21st century. For Americans, the 1989 "massacre" of

Chinese students in Beijing is already ancient history. For the Chinese, the opium wars of the 1840s are yesterday.

Despite its greater poverty and slower progress on the economic front, India has long been absorptive, accepting foreign influences from successive waves of invaders and apostles, then Indian-izing them. In a sense, China faces a more difficult time of it psychologically, because it lacks the tradition of openness to foreign ideas and methods, and made a dogma of its cultural superiority for centuries—indeed, for millenia. China, despite its impressive gains in power since the Communist victory, still perceives itself as weak, wounded and threatened. Beijing's most militant statements are little more than the barking of a nervous dog. And now, after the latest series of displays of American military capabilities, the Chinese absolutely do not want to fight the United States. Nor could they afford to, given their economy's desperate reliance on China's trade surplus with the U.S. (and others). The Chinese economy is far more fragile than outsiders credit, essentially an automobile that keeps running with a nearly-empty tank, relying on the driver to keep adding another pint of gas just in time.

If we stand back just slightly, it becomes clear than every major war of conquest in Asia, at least since the strange eruption of the Mongols, was either initiated by or the result of actions by Monotheist Zone powers. From the Muslims sweeping into northern India over half a millennium ago, through the Western colonial phase, to Japan's imitation of Western imperialism, to the Communist takeover of China, every great war that reached across major cultural borders was either begun by Monotheist Zone powers or their actions, or inspired by Western ideologies and practices transplanted to Asia. Even during the Cold War, border fights resulted primarily from the often-arbitrary boundaries imposed by the old colonial powers and left behind for newly-independent states to manage. Both modern nationalism and Communism were Western creations. Today, we view Asia as the world's most dangerous powder-keg. If it is—and I do not believe that to be the case--it is because we filled it with powder. More importantly, this is a region that, while violent enough in local wars, never generated anything like the wars of conquest that took European empires around the globe—or even anything like the globe-spanning interests that steer U.S. Navy carriers through the waters off Taiwan.

Japan, particularly, is misunderstood—because of the horrific aberration of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere and Japanese wartime atrocities. In the West, we speak glibly of samurai and admire the battle ballets in Kurosawa's films. But traditional Japanese warfare, within Japan, appears to have resembled the ritual, rules-laden battles of pre-Columbian America more closely than it did the fluid, merciless warfare pioneered in monotheist domains. In both China and Japan, ritual, in many spheres, became substance in and of itself, defusing or dissipating aggressive tendencies and preserving social order. Japan went wild because it misread the lessons of Western colonialism, perceiving an absence of rules where the rules were only very complex and profoundly different from those prevailing locally.

When speaking of the “inhumanity of the East,” we would do well to recall that China's greatest military classic, Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, is startlingly humane in its admonitions, while the West's' dominant work of military theory, Clausewitz's *On War*, constructed a theoretical model of wars of annihilation that soon enough became real. The fundamental difference in temperament between Clausewitz and Sun Tzu is that the Chinese author never forgot his sense of humanity, while Clausewitz saw humanity's

foibles as an impediment to ideal war-making. We know of no Chinese general setting out to conquer the world. There never was a far-flung Chinese empire that spanned oceans and foreign continents. No Napoleon. No Hitler. No Philip II. No Umayyad or Abassid caliphs. Not even a Mussolini.

We are reading our own history onto the Chinese.

Yes, but...

Of course, we cannot know the future with certainty. Population pressures, crises of various descriptions, unexpected cataclysms...many things could turn the Sino-Vedic Zone outward, making would-be conquerors out of history's homebodies. But we must beware relying only upon our most recent experiences for indications of what the future holds. Even our own Indochina wars were fought against indigenous enemies inspired by European philosophical systems—Communism, nationalism, or an amalgam of both. And we went there, they didn't come here.

The Sino-Vedic Zone has long held the greatest concentration of sleepwalker states—in benign form—in history. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, those states began to awaken. But the Sino-Vedic Zone's sleepwalker states rarely behaved as violently as those of the Monotheist Zone, and when they did it was to cast off foreign occupations. This zone has not generated any global terrorist threats—except for the participation of the zone's Muslims, to a limited degree, in terrorist schemes that originated elsewhere. And, of course, Islam is as much an import, if an older one, to the region as is Communism. Japanese extremists are imitative and overwhelmingly focused on Japan. Where enduring civil strife exists in this zone, it is consistently either between monotheist and old-religion factions, as in India, or between two imported monotheist faiths, Christianity and Islam, as in the Philippines and Indonesia. Naturally, when we look at Asia, we see the technologies we have “given” them. But, if we are honest about everything else we have exported to them—the colonial experience, monotheism, nationalism, Communism...it doesn't look as if the Sino-Vedic Zone has gotten a very good deal.

In classifying the region's states, a sample gives the flavor of the whole. China, of course, has served for thousands of years as a barrier state, blocking foreign influences from its own population and, for many a century, isolating Korea and Japan, as well. Today, the rulers in Beijing wish to maintain their old barriers, but cannot. The greatest dangers that could appear in China are the rise of a galvanizing, messianic cult religion to replace Communism, or the continued trend in China to perceive itself as a survivor state, harmed in the past and threatened in the present. A virulent explosion of Chinese nationalism, fortified by a new, dynamic religious cult, would be much more worthy of our fear than the shabby, phony Communism preached, but no longer really practiced.

India is so complex it defies easy categorization, but in one curious—and hopeful—respect it resembles the United States more than it does any major Asian country: India is absorptive, able to ingest, transmute and use an endless stream of foreign concepts and ideas. The plague of nationalism, which excited an uncharacteristic, post-colonial

xenophobia, damaged this tradition in the twentieth century, but there are hopeful signs that, in the new century, India (or parts of India) may make much greater progress than in the past. India might be categorized as a bridge state—but it is, and always has been—a bridge from the world to itself.

Overwhelmingly, the Sino-Vedic Zone is an area in which the violence attempts to resolve local issues. Except for a still-limited amount of Islamic terrorism, it does not export violence to the rest of the world. That remains the job of the Monotheist Zone, in which militant Islam is the current multinational consortium of violence.

Australia and New Zealand are, geographically but not culturally, part of the Sino-Vedic Zone. Curiously, these two former colonies of a great monotheist power have altered their hereditary identities and have no interests in conquest or the export of violence (except the violence employed, reluctantly, by peacemakers and peacekeepers). In both cases, plentiful territory and small populations are certainly factors in the nation's contentment, as are the unique colonial experiences of both. But if they are unlikely to wage aggressive wars (New Zealand, at least for now, has no capacity to do so), they also need not fear military aggression from neighboring states—although they will continue to have plentiful problems with neighboring populations, immigrants, etc., and regional states are glad to look the other way if they can export their own problems to their neighbors. But the searing experience of Japanese aggression, as noted above, was a historical anomaly. Nothing is certain, given humankind's capacity for mischief, but colossal wars in Asia in the 21st century are unlikely to develop *within* the Sino-Vedic Zone—and much likelier to develop *between* zones. As I write, India and Pakistan, two border countries at the eastern and western ends of the Monotheist and Sino-Vedic Zones are in danger of a nuclear exchange. Samuel Huntington's thesis regarding the clash of civilizations may have been dead right (no pun intended) in theory, but he drew the lines in the wrong places.

The 21st century may (or may not) be a Pacific Century, but it is unlikely to be a Pacific Military Century. The portion of the globe which so focuses the attention of American strategists today may prove to be the least threatening in coming decades. The key variable isn't China's external ambitions, but its internal condition.

The Post-Colonial Zone

This zone includes Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America as far north as Cuba and Mexico's southernmost states (Chiapas, Oaxaca, etc.). This is the zone to which U.S. strategists, planners and analysts pay the least attention, since it appears to offer no serious threats to our security. Yet, this is an area of tremendous unrecognized potential. If it is largely poor and frequently appears chaotic (which we automatically ascribe, in whispers, to "backwardness"), it is because the Post-Colonial Zone is an area still struggling to find a healthy form after centuries of occupation. It cannot go back, but it is unsure how to go forward. Crises as diverse as the current economic chaos in "developed" Argentina and the recent butchery in Sierra Leone are parts of the same puzzle: How do these countries resolve their internal contradictions and move forward

after long periods of European domination--or even their creation and population by European immigrants? Despite the age of some of its societies, especially in Africa, the Post-Colonial Zone remains unshaped clay in the strategic sense. It is humankind's last great laboratory, where alternative futures are under development. And it is the last great collectible frontier.

I term this zone "Post-Colonial" simply because, from Peru to Tanzania, its societies are still struggling, sometimes desperately, to make sense of themselves in the aftermath of the age of European colonialism. They have fundamental problems of identity, although for very different reasons in Africa and Latin America. This is where colonialism hit hardest, or created the most profound disruptions to indigenous cultures (when it did not simply annihilate them). While colonialism certainly was active elsewhere, it had less impact: China was humiliated, but never fully occupied, and Chinese culture is so robust it never lost its sense of identity; likewise, India, though occupied, never much doubted its Indian-ness or the quality and value of its traditions. Sino-Vedic Zone populations simply wanted the colonial powers to go. Even Indonesia, with its old, complex, layered culture, changed less under colonial rule than the states of the Post-Colonial zone. Africa and Latin America, however, are still fighting—sometimes literally--to overcome their colonial legacies. There is no end in sight to this struggle, but there are a number of reasons to hope.

The undecided future

For Sub-Saharan Africa, colonialism was almost entirely a tragedy, crushing fragile societies and creating artificial identities, whether social hierarchies foreign to the indigenous systems or simply the entire notion of Western-style states. Africa continues to suffer recurrent bouts of bloodshed because of the colonial legacy of dysfunctional borders that either force tribes together that do not want to be together, or divide tribes and peoples between multiple states, although they believe they belong together. The European-drawn map of Africa simply doesn't work as designed, and the old colonial powers left those borders intact as a curse; meanwhile, Africa's independent, artificial states are struggling to function the way the Western model insists they should. But Western states—and old states elsewhere—grew organically, over long centuries, and developed their identities slowly...or, more correctly put, their identities slowly congealed. At independence, virtually every African state was nothing but a pretense, with unprepared locals occupying the offices just vacated by Europeans, but without a deep grasp of what those offices must do. Understandably, the new rulers concentrated on the outward forms, which they could more easily emulate, and neglected the inner substance of government, with which they had little or no experience. Newly-independent Africa never had a chance. Now, painfully, Africans are trying to create chances, against daunting odds. Not every country will survive, and we must expect a great deal of turmoil as this region attempts to fix itself after being massively damaged by external forces.

Certainly, Africa has had—and continues to have—more than its share of horror stories—massacres, man-made famines, pointless wars. But given the brutality of the European colonialists in so many of the states, the lack of preparation of an educated local class suited for government, the foreign nature of the rules of statehood and the practices of the world community, and the real or relative poverty of so much of the continent, perhaps we should be less shocked than we affect to be. While we must not paint pre-colonial Africa in false, romantic colors as an ideal society (wars, slaving, conquest and massacres are old African traditions—just as they are old human traditions just about everywhere else, as well), we will never know how the region might have developed—or failed to develop--left to its own devices. When we see country X's strongman abuse his own subordinates and treat his people callously, he simply is behaving as Europeans did before him when dealing with the native population. This is the way the powerful man believes "real" leaders behave, that showing disdain for inferiors is simply the way things are done. This is beginning to change, as the generation of leaders who knew the European governors and bureaucracies first-hand leaves the stage. But the question of identity remains—not the old leftist silliness about what it means to be black and African, but the more meaningful, if less gratifying, question of what it means to be a citizen of a state. Africa's dilemmas have less to do with what color makes of a man than with what states make of their constituents. To suggest otherwise is nothing but leftist racism and paternalism.

Viewed objectively, the current struggles we see in Africa—the near or complete anarchy in shattered West African states; the inner formlessness and sputtering warfare of Congo; the furious disappointment of Zimbabwe; the ethnic and religious divisions, as well as the crippling corruption, in Nigeria; the recent slaughters in Rwanda and Burundi—amount to a continent trying to find its way out of a swamp into which others led it. Countries of more immediate promise, such as South Africa and Senegal, have plentiful issues of their own to resolve, and no country is fully safe from the temptations of factionalism and selfishness. But just as we may suspect that Africa's internal strife will not end overnight, we also may fairly assume that it will not last forever. The fundamental question, despite the obscurant horrors of AIDS, dictatorship and violent atrocity, is: What might come out of all this? What might the Africa of the future look like? Or will it be Africas, in the plural, perhaps with social progress and the development of regional power in South Africa and in East Africa, with regressive social and government structures (or the lack thereof) elsewhere? Will we see a rich Africa and a poor one? What will the region's deep cultural differences bring about? Which qualities will prove strongest, blood ties, belief, or allegiance to the state? At present, the trend is for African states to differentiate themselves from one another as regards progress, but the events of a decade are fragile indicators of the long-term future. Will Africa force the world to redefine success, on lower but far broader terms?

The safest bet is, indeed, that Africa's future will not be uniform, that the process of differentiation between successful states and the failed will continue. Perhaps no continent faces so many negative factors, or has so many variables at work. But when Africa begins to wake from its often-nightmarish sleep to look for alternative bonds of community, it will not look north, where it is bounded by implacable, age-old enemies who simply have put on velvet gloves. Nor can it look east, where it faces the most

ferocious prejudices. When Africa finally turns its face to the world, it will look across the Atlantic, to the Americas.

The Three Non-Amigos

Latin America, the other half of the post-colonial zone, presents three distinct cultures to the world, none of which has integrated deeply with the others. Some countries, such as Peru or Brazil, exhibit two competing cultures within their borders, while others, such as Argentina or Chile, are dominated by a single culture. Bolivia contains two parallel, but weirdly-separate cultures (and a number of odd sub-cultures). A very few countries, most notably Cuba, have moved toward a genuine fusion culture (in this regard, Mexico is promising over the long term). But for most Latin American countries of varied ethnic and cultural composition, integration is often superficial—constitutionally enshrined, but disregarded in practice--and more about socio-political claims than about genuine fusion (most obviously, in Brazil). Latin America remains a region of “soft apartheid.”

The three basic cultures of Latin American are:

--Latin (European in origin)

--African

--Indian (indigenous)

None of these cultures are “pure” today. Each has mutated over the centuries (or, in the case of Iberian populations transplanted to Latin American, failed to develop psychologically from a colonial mentality). Today’s ethnic Europeans are not only profoundly different from the contemporary populations of their ancestral countries, behind which they lag in terms of social development, but differ widely within the region. African culture, too, incorporated local influences. Perhaps the least changed are the indigenous populations, wherever they have survived in sufficient density to maintain autonomous cultures—as in Bolivia and much of Peru, but even in remote areas of Mexico, Venezuela or in upper-Amazon Brazil (although eco-tourism likely will destroy the integrity of local tribes in ways that European conquerors failed to do).

Unable to blend constructively over the centuries, each culture has stagnated. While we may admire the music or dance of Brazil or Argentina, with their fusion of influences, sambas and tangos do not build healthy post-modern societies by themselves.

Yet, there is more cause for hope today than there ever has been for Latin America. While the current cliché of the triumph of democracy, does, indeed, have its positive aspects, the most important factor changing Latin America is the rise of a new generation of leaders, largely educated in the United States, who are not content with the bad habits of centuries. Democracy doesn’t make men, men make democracy—although some Washington pundits imagine democracy as some sort of political miracle of loaves and

fishes of which men and women are but the passive recipients. The second most important factor is the rise of a global information culture. Though it has yet to affect the lower classes and the underclass to a meaningful degree, it is making a tremendous difference in the awareness, ambitions and attitudes of the middle classes and skilled members of the working class. The third factor is demographic growth, which is forcing change by itself. Finally, the wild card is the spread (as in Africa) of charismatic Protestant Christianity, which, while empowering to individuals and entire classes, may have the capacity, in the long term, to release uncontrollable social energies. While the world watches Asia, the most innovative and surprising futures—and, potentially, the unexpected dangers—may be brewing up slowly in the Post-Colonial Zone of Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

This largely-ignored region has the greatest capacity for building alternative futures of any portion of the globe.

Equality? In principle, of course...

Most of Latin America maintains a “soft” apartheid system in which ethnic Europeans continue to dominate the political, economic, cultural and social scene. In countries such as Argentina, where the indigenous population was virtually exterminated (quite late, in the 19th century, from the southern pampas to Patagonia) and slaves were few, this hardly matters—the population is Latin, primarily ethnic Italian, then Spanish, with a broad monotheist admixture below those two primary groups (from Welsh to Lebanese). Argentina is something of a dream country for leftists to study, since its fundamental structural problem is its class system, with an extravagant, shamelessly corrupt ruling class, a servile middle class (servile at least until now), and a yearning, politically-vigorous proletariat that historically has been susceptible to demagogues, from Rosas through Peron to Menem, the latter a man who could sell you the same bottle of snake oil several times over.

Yet, Argentina has proved that leftist solutions do not work, foundering on simple greed. Today’s Argentina, with its aspirations to first-world status, has simply been living beyond its means far too long. It is the state equivalent of an individual who grabbed every credit card offer that ever arrived in the mail, then maxed out the cards immediately. Even before its current financial crisis, Argentina had the highest rate of citizens undergoing psychoanalysis in the world, as well as a high suicide rate (just listen to a few good tangos—they’re suicide soundtracks). If Argentina were a single human being, we would recognize the personality type immediately: The sort who always looks for the easy way out, the angle, the quick fix, the high-liver who doesn’t worry about paying his bills. Today, there is an especially-sharp edge to the social divisions in Argentina, with the population divided anew into those few who could hoard dollars offshore and the majority of the population, which relied on its salaries and passbook savings to survive. The fact that a majority of the population is suffering to some degree would make Argentina ripe for another round of authoritarianism, were it not for the fecklessness of the political class and the overall sense of being defeated.

Argentines know they need serious reforms, but they do not want them to interfere with their lifestyles. The country looks played out. Of course, so did Germany in 1932. I do not suggest that the rise of an extreme right-wing movement is on the horizon—another round of empty populism is more likely—but that no one yet knows which path Argentina will follow as it tries to marshal its energies to move forward again. What does a relatively-developed (and almost-hysterically vain) country do when its leaders have bankrupted it and there are no appealing options left?

The Post-Colonial Zone truly is humankind's biggest laboratory.

In Brazil, a country of profound ethnic complexity, national propaganda has long held that society is integrated—yet, with few exceptions, the rich are white, mixed-race citizens are in the middle, the blacks are the poorest of the poor, and the Indians of the interior are regarded as curiosities beyond the pale—as pet martians valued by space travelers from Europe and North America. Yet, in a disconnect of the sort that isn't supposed to happen, according to development theory, Brazil's popular culture is perhaps the best-integrated and most mature in the entire zone: The music is African combined with Portuguese to create a distinctive new form that is as light and flirty as the best Argentine music is brooding and self-dramatizing (although I must confess I prefer the Argentine tangos of Piazzolla—real wrist-slasher, it's-been-raining-for-a-month-and-my-baby's-long-gone stuff). Likewise, Brazilian social mores are unique and, if anything, behaviorally anti-Catholic (whereas, in Mexico, the local hybrid of Catholicism, an admixture of Spanish medievalism and Indian traditions, remains extraordinarily powerful, despite decades of ruthless government attempts to destroy organized religion in the wake of the Mexican Revolution). An academic analyst looking only at the statistics of poverty, exclusion and inequity, but not knowing the name of the country, would predict that Brazil was over-ripe for a revolution. But national character trumps theory. Brazil, despite intervals of authoritarianism, has been remarkably stable by comparison with many of its neighbors. Brazil is an extremely violent country, but the violence is personal, not collective or purposeful.

In Peru, recent elections constituted a genuine upheaval, with Alejandro Toledo, an ethnic Indian (albeit with a North American wife), elected to the presidency. In the Latin American context, this is a far greater jolt than the election of an American of African ancestry to the Presidency would be in the United States. While I am not espousing Marxist solutions to anything (because they just don't work), analysis of the class system remains the best initial approach to understanding Latin America's persistent problems—and that class system is based primarily upon race, secondarily upon wealth and culture.

There are a few hopeful exceptions: Mexico, where genuine and powerful changes are underway at last, despite deep remaining problems; Chile, where a modern society appears to be solidifying itself, though ultra-conservative elements remain influential; and Cuba, whose government we may despise, but whose genuine integration and limited meritocracy (restricted by political, not social barriers), provides one of the few inspiring models for a workable fusion of society in Latin America. In the post-Castro years, Cuba has a very good chance at becoming a model democratic, market-economy state, without significant racial divisions—but it will not become a “model” for others (talk of Cuban models—except the sort who walk down a runway—will die with Castro). Social models don't work. Countries do not imitate when it comes to social systems. They may imitate forms of government or economy, but populations grow into their own organic forms of

social organization. Attempts to force deep and broad social changes on a population never succeed, no matter how many are killed to clear the way, as the last century proved all too painfully. You can, in a successful, rule-of-law state, force through one reasoned change at a time, as the United States did with court-ordered school integration. But you cannot force human beings of different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds to harmonize until they are ready.

The current turmoil in Venezuela, too, is essentially an ethnically-based class struggle, pitting the least-successful mixed-race citizens and Indians, led by their savior of the moment, President Hugo Chavez, against a white and pale-mestizo traditional ruling class. Colonial rule is gone, but colonial class distinctions persist to an astonishing degree. While leftist revolutionaries, from Guevara to Allende, had no workable solutions, we must admit that they were correct that Latin American societies were—and remain—brutally unfair. And race continues to trump every other factor, even in (or especially in) countries where the overwhelming majority of the population are non-white. Even in the most promising countries, when any family has a blue-eyed, blond-haired male child, that child will be treated as the family's great hope and may expect social deference.

Except for countries with high levels of ethnic homogeneity, such as Chile, the most hopeful countries in Latin America are the northernmost—Mexico and Cuba—adjacent to the U.S. and subject to its magnetic pull. They are not the richest countries (especially not Cuba), but their emerging social orders are setting them up for future success, whereas we should worry about potential stagnation in Argentina and even Brazil, countries which so often have looked so irresistibly inviting to so many analysts and investors. Whether modern (and post-modern) values can triumph over the *prevailing feudalism* of Latin American society in the coming decades is the primary issue confronting the vast region between Tierra del Fuego and the Rio Grande..

The last preserve of feudalism

I term this region—Africa and Latin America—the Post-Colonial Zone because it is that portion of the earth where, even two hundred years after independence (in Latin America's case), the pernicious legacies of colonialism endure most powerfully. We tend to think of colonialism as a formal mechanism, such as the rule of a given territory by a distant state imposed in order to extract benefits from the colony. But colonialism is also a matter of culture and mentality. In this regard, Latin America is still very much a collection of colonies. Two centuries after Bolivar, O'Higgins and San Martin, the spirit of the *conquistadores* of five centuries ago, their public behavior and social values, persists, from the barrios of Los Angeles to the Rio de la Plata.

An in-depth study of the formation of 16th century Spanish culture and its export is far beyond the scope of this paper (although this is a topic of immediate relevance to understanding today's Latin America), and what follows is only a very short summary of influences and connections that usually go ignored by strategists or theorists of international diplomacy. And all this is predicated upon the conviction, based upon extensive first-hand observation of the world, that you cannot get close to meaningful

insights unless you are willing to examine current problems in a deep historical context. Just as a psychologist will ask about a troubled human being's childhood, we must ask about the troubled childhood of nations, if we wish to understand them.

The first thing any student of Latin America must grasp is the origin of today's Latin American male values and the lingering ideal of the strong-man, or *caudillo*, with his dual nature of tyrant and dispenser of gifts—even where he is officially gone from the political scene (President Menem of Argentina was nothing more than a modernized “big man,” one who ruled with bribes rather than bullets). The real origin of the Latin American strong-man, obsessed with public honor and personal authority, goes even beyond the Spain of the early 16th century, with its ruthless knights, so mighty of sword arm, but utterly lacking in personal restraint...all the way back to the Moorish occupation of Spain. The political strong-man, but also the dominant family head in a Brazilian *favela* or a shack across the river from El Paso, the brutal drug-lord, and the teenage assassin who kills from greed and vanity, can each be traced to the intolerant Islamic culture of North Africa—which gutted the rich, creative culture of Iberian Islam centuries before the end of the Spanish *reconquista* in 1492 made a formal end of the Muslim presence.

In late-medieval Spain, the two dominant monotheist forces of the age, Islam and Catholicism, did battle. The fanaticism on one side inspired greater fanaticism on the other, inspiring, in turn, yet more fanaticism (the Spanish Inquisition, which we associate with hunting witches, had far more to do with uncovering false conversions among Muslims and Jews, and with maintaining religious militancy). Despite the attempts of revisionist historians to paint late Moorish Spain as something of a dreamy Atlantis destroyed by nasty Christians, by the closing centuries of the Moorish presence both sides had hardened ideologically. Yes, Christian knights sometimes fought as mercenaries under Muslim banners—not least Rodrigo Diaz, “El Cid,” whose nickname has Islamic origins: *al sayyid*, the big man, chief or lord—and feudal states crossed religious lines for their advantage. But, ultimately, this became a bitter struggle between two aggressive, expansionist faiths. At first, Christianity was on the defensive, then Islam found itself on the ropes—across eight centuries of struggle, a period of turbulence that could not help but shape the Spanish character.

Indeed, both sides learned from one another—with the Christians getting the advantage of the lingering traces of Islamic scholarship and thought left over from the true golden centuries of Muslim Cordoban culture toward the close of the first millennium. But the *conquistadores* who came to the New World, men such as Cortez and Pizarro, were an amalgam of European feudal knights and Islamic warriors, combining, along with their exemplary bravery, the most callous, intolerant and brutal qualities of both cultures. A true man despised the importance of life, although he generally preferred to illustrate the principle on others. And the centuries of religious warfare in Spain had taught even men for whom religion was a mere formality to regard their enemies as less than human. Slaughtering Aztecs or Incas came naturally to these conquerors, especially when local practices appeared repellent and opaque to Spanish logic. The persistent Latin male values of personal honor requiring the respect of others; physical prowess (or, at least, the ability to enforce physical domination); empowering wealth as the ultimate worldly attainment and the association of land, or at least turf, with wealth; control of females and an emphasis on female “virtue” within the family, but on the “conquest” of

females without; the low priority assigned to education; the lack of personal self-restraint; the sudden lurches into piety; and the emphasis on building, through largesse and favors, a web of personal allegiances and obligations, are each fundamentally anti-modern qualities. It is only a slight exaggeration to claim that, behaviorally, Latin males are medieval Muslims crossed with a Spanish Catholic knight of the waning Middle Ages.

Another related contribution to the persistence of feudal social forms, even in the face of liberal constitutions, is the emphasis on the extended family as society's organizing principle in Latin America. This obviously inhibits the development of a meritocracy, but it also tends to consolidate assets in land and foreign accounts, starving societies of investment capital—and of the psychological investment necessary for development and a sense of civic responsibility. Colombia, today, remains very much a feudal society, where no one much wants to fight for the state (we may hope that this will change), but where families will do all they can to maintain their own power. A rich Colombian will readily pay a kidnapper's ransom demands, but will go to great lengths to avoid paying his taxes.

The United States had many advantages in its cultural development, but two are of immediate consequence: The U.S. attracted a wide range of immigrants from different cultures, and, from the beginning, multiple interpretations of religious faith existed—and thrived. Citizens of the thirteen colonies and then the United States had to build cooperative relationships across familial, national-origin and religious lines. Latin America, on the other hand, suffered from an iron uniformity from the beginning, and family-centered, rather than corporate behavior became the fundamental organizing principle of both society and politics. We find it unthinkable that a modern politician would provide plum jobs for all of his relatives, but the traditional Latin American politician would find it incomprehensible not to do so. This has begun to change at the top, but, in building a modern society, the local level is decisive.

When you study the political alignments in most of Latin America, the U.S. political system is a guide of little value. Study the factions of 15th century Spain and how allegiances were built—or, better still, the history plays of Shakespeare—all the “Henry” plays, and Richard II, Richard III and King John. Coalitions are still built upon families, secondarily upon ideologies or laws. Latin America is still very much a medieval society—with skyscrapers, corporate jets and Mercedes limos.

Like Islam, Latin America skipped the Renaissance.

The hermetically-sealed empire

If you lived in Buenos Aires in the 18th century and wished to order a book from Europe—and if the book were not forbidden by church or crown—your position on a great river feeding into the Atlantic Ocean was irrelevant. Because Spain maintained careful control over trade and movement, long employing only a few approved ports (all in the Caribbean) for an entire continent's trade with the world, your order traveled by mule westward over the Andes to Lima, Peru. Then your order sailed north to Panama, crossed the isthmus on another mule, and boarded a ship for Spain. The book then

retraced the same route to your hands (I am resisting jokes about the original Amazon.com).

This mercantile lunacy had several effects, none of them good. First, it sealed a continent from external influences, which Spain judged wise, but which meant that ecclesiastical painting in 18th century South America looked like 16th century painting in Europe. Societies were closed, in-bred, ordered closely by church and state, and isolated. Lacking exposure to wave after wave of European intellectual social dynamism (by the end of the 17th century, Spain itself had become a backwater, so Latin America was the distant backwater of a backwater), societies followed a different developmental path, preserving social structures, strictures and patterns of behavior that elsewhere had died away. By the 19th century, the duel over a point of honor was outlawed in most European states, but it still occurs in the Latin American world, as far north as Los Angeles—although it is altogether a less formal affair these days.

When the colonial yoke was thrown off by the Spanish colonies in the first decades of the 19th century, it made surprisingly little difference. Travel opportunities abroad increased for the upper classes, but internal travel became even more dangerous as rural order broke down. The rich could buy a wider range of products. And taxes, when they could be collected, were stolen locally, instead of in Madrid. But the revolutions, and the near-endless coups and revolutions that followed those revolutions, had something of the nature of wild, bloody parties, a letting off of steam, after which little changed and long hangovers had to be endured. The true believers fared worst, and Simon Bolivar died of a broken heart.

Globalized information is finally having an impact upon Latin America, waking broad swathes of the population to new possibilities and providing foreign comparisons for local conditions. Perhaps the most profound effect of the information explosion in Latin America is that it works against fatalism, suggesting that things do not have to be the way they are now and always have been. We will not know the results for at least a generation—perhaps longer--but the proliferation of citizens' organizations is one hopeful indicator. And it is harder for any leader to tell great lies and have them believed.

These days, the books arrive much more quickly.

A note on Mexico

Personally, I have changed my thinking—if cautiously—on Mexico. The election of Vicente Fox was certainly good news, though not irreversibly good. But the crucial factor that reshaped my thinking was that, finally, in the 1990s, the Mexican establishment began to get over its tradition of defining Mexico in the negative, as the anti-United States. Fewer and fewer Mexican intellectuals blame the U.S. for all of Mexico's problems, and ever more Mexicans are anxious to examine their home-grown ills. The system remains far too closed—and the military remains untouchable, by and large—but Mexico is experiencing a new political maturity...as well as a renaissance in the popular arts, from music to film. Far from the sleepy cliché of old films, Mexico may

become Latin America's most vibrant, perhaps most successful large country. The relationship with the United States is key, troubled though it may have been in the past. The famous immigration "problems" have benefited both countries, providing critical labor for the U.S., while providing a safety valve for Mexico's surplus population, providing funds for impoverished small towns and villages through remittances (self-help aid), and, again, showing Mexicans first-hand that there are alternative models. Right-wing extremists in the U.S. rant that Mexican immigrants are turning our cities into little Mexicos. The truth is that those workers, who travel back and forth across the border (often at great and unreasonable risk), want to turn Mexico's cities into little Americas. The American Dream about which we all have heard so much remains an incredibly powerful, galvanizing model.

And if that model applies to the working classes, it applies even more powerfully to the new generation of the Mexican elite, with its degrees from Stanford, Harvard and MIT. There is no secret plot to take back the Southwest. But there is a great desire to extend the economic and social successes of the American Southwest still farther to the south.

The United States and Mexico long have had an unacknowledged symbiotic relationship. Every indicator suggests that the relationship is at the beginning of a new take-off phase. For all its problems, Mexico is beginning to look like a country of the future, and NAFTA looks less like a final goal attained and more like a first step in the intensification of relations between our two countries.

The Mighty Fallen

It is easy to forget that Portugal initiated the age of European colonialism. Not only was tiny Portugal once a great imperial power, but its empire quietly lingered on long after others had faded away. This "Lusitanian Empire" once stretched from Brazil, along the African coast, to Goa in India, and beyond to East Timor. And that empire, though impoverished and threadbare, ended less than three decades ago. It was the longest-lasting European empire. When the last Portuguese troops left Mozambique and Angola, and the Indonesians grabbed East Timor, it marked the end of five hundred years of foreign adventures for Lisbon. As with the influence of eight hundred years of Moorish Islamic occupation on Spain, so Portugal influenced much of the world far more than we realize today. And the empire continues to strike back. Mariza, one of the two greatest fado singers of our time (fado is the haunting, ravishing national style of song in Portugal) is black, with roots in Mozambique, and Cesaria Evora, a Cape Verdean who sings in Portuguese, has become a world-music star. Of course, Brazilian music is sung in Portuguese, as well, as is a surprising amount of new music from Africa. Ms. Evora is especially interesting, because her music, from her island home set well off the West African coast, blends African, Brazilian and Portuguese strains until they are something new and inseparable. Perhaps she is simply a singer among many—but I wonder if she is a cultural harbinger of a re-ordered world.

There are two important influences we miss in assessing Latin America. The first is the Portuguese influence, which ties that continent-within-a-continent, Brazil, not only to Europe (a fading tie), but to so much of Africa. Slavery only ended in Brazil a few years after the American Civil War (and de facto slavery lingered much longer). Integration within Brazilian society, though professed, is in many ways less accomplished than it is in the United States. Yet, the influence of Africa on Brazilian society is profound, and Brazil, with its historical, cultural, ethnic and linguistic ties, could function as an important bridge country to Africa in the future. Because of the way we compartmentalize, we overlook the existence of a centuries-old tie between Africa and Latin America.

Nor is that tie limited to Portuguese-speaking countries. Spanish-language countries of the slave belt, from Brazil northward through the Guyanas, Venezuela and lowland Colombia into Panama, then across so much of the Caribbean, all have cultures that, to greater or lesser degrees, have digested African influences, brought by slaves. Even English- and French-speaking islands, from Haiti to Jamaica, bind Africa to the New World—and the New World to Africa. “Afro-American” culture isn’t something limited to our own black citizens. It is one way of describing our entire culture.

While there is one important difference between the former Portuguese and Spanish colonies—Portuguese influence crossed the Atlantic in both directions, while Spanish influence was largely a one-way affair, making Brazil’s ties to Africa much richer in their potential—the African influence on Latin America, and the search for common ground between these two elements of the Post-Colonial Zone could prove a very productive line of inquiry.

Of course, this writer is not the first to notice that Africa’s influence upon Latin America could be turned around into Latin American influence on Africa. As soon as the Portuguese left Angola, Fidel Castro dispatched Cuban troops to assist in the “liberation struggle.” We saw it as World Communism on the march. But it was really a canny recognition of natural affinities. Ultimately, the Cubans lacked the resources to hang on in Africa (although the parties they backed won, and ours lost, more often than not). But the United States has almost inexhaustible resources. Should we be clever enough to learn from Castro’s failed vision?

Consider the strategic neglect of the entire Post-Colonial Zone. Europe sends aid to Africa, but even the French presence is much diminished. There is little current sense of the continent’s potential, only of its liabilities. In Latin America, some countries have complex European ties, from the tragicomic Argentine love for things British (despite the Falklands War) to Madrid’s attempts to keep a trans-Atlantic political bridge in reasonably good repair. But Latin America has long been a graveyard for European ambitions (and empires), and the neglect with which it is regarded as a strategic factor is curious, amounting to a surrender to the Monroe Doctrine in an expanded form and to U.S. hegemony. The only missing piece is that the U.S. doesn’t bother to be much of a hegemon.

Are we looking in the wrong places for strategic advantage? Or at least not looking in enough different places?

Unexpected opportunities

Certainly, we will need to pay attention to the Islamic world for many years to come. And China is far too great to ignore, whatever behavior we expect from Beijing. But consider just a few ways in which the traditional wisdom—or just plain habit—might be turned on its head. This study finally comes down to three alternative lines of strategic thought that, as a minimum, merit consideration:

--We see Europe as safe and benign, assuming it will always remain so. Yet, if attacked or sufficiently threatened, Europe may turn again to the export of violence. The United States need not worry overmuch, but other states sharing the Monotheist Zone with Europe had best be careful—especially Islamic states whose citizens might initiate campaigns of terror against Europe, imagining Europeans to be weak-willed.

--We see Asia as the region of the greatest future potential when, in fact, North America is the area of the greatest continuing potential. Asia, while it may grow wealthier, is less likely to innovate new social and governmental forms. Asian development will be evolutionary, not revolutionary, and some countries may stagnate for decades in a cultural strait-jacket, as Japan is in danger of doing. For alternative futures, we must look to areas we have ignored.

--When we look at Africa and, to a lesser degree, Latin America, we see only problems. Given the unfinished nature of these societies, this may be the last human frontier, the zone in which the 21st century will see the most dramatic—and perhaps positive—changes. We are foolish if we refuse even to consider the potential in front of us, especially since Africa's and Latin America's natural strategic partner is North America. Ours is the society with cultural ties to both continents, we have done them the least harm, and we provide the most attractive model for the future. We have an appeal as irresistible as our wealth and power are great. Natural affinities are there, right in front of our faces, but our attention is fixed elsewhere. With exclusive, competitive societies in Asia and introverted societies in Europe, our natural sphere of influence lies southward. Africa, especially, may not seem very appealing to American strategic thinkers at present, but that is because we think in short stretches when we think about the future—we run strategic sprints when the greatest power in history is a natural for the marathon. If we truly were adept, the 21st century might end with a cultural and economic triangle (and, frankly, a new, benign form of American empire) encompassing North America, Latin America and much of Africa. Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa may be our last “collectible frontiers.” If you want to expand your power and influence, “go where they ain't.”

What if the 21st century turns out to be an Atlantic, not a Pacific century, based on a huge Afro-Latino-American triangle of strategic power and resources, with aging Fortress Europe looking on?

The future likely will turn out far differently than any of us can imagine, but that does not mean we can afford not to imagine it.

In conclusion

This is, of course, a brief and superficial overview of the strategic environment. To some, it may appear marginally relevant, at best, given the immediacy of our struggle with terrorism. But that is a struggle we are bound to win, although we likely will suffer painful wounds along the way. I argue, instead, that this is exactly the time to devote at least a fraction of our attention and resources to the out years, to alternatives, to (in CETO's own language) both "threats *and* opportunities."

The 20th century conditioned us to think about the threats. Thus, we may be missing some of the greatest opportunities in history. Beyond all the speculation in this paper about the effects of different forms of religion, the power of culture, the patterns of history, and issues of wealth and might, we may, without embarrassment, acknowledge that the United States has one distinguishing gift that sets it apart: We are able to see the potential in others. The vast Post-Colonial Zone, spanning two continents, is waiting for us to notice its potential.

This is not necessarily an argument for more aid (although, in the case of Africa, effectively targeted, tough-love aid might work wonders) or for a flood of investment (a bucket poured well, here and there, might be preferable). And it is certainly not a recommendation for military exploits or political bullying. In the end, I only suggest that those who live in poverty and powerlessness in disordered societies today need not always be poor and weak. How might we make today's victims tomorrow's allies?

Cuba sent arms to Africa, but it also sent doctors. Castro's vision failed, but he *had* a vision, for exactly those continents under discussion here. He saw the hidden unity. Surely, the United States can do better than an old, cigar-chomping revolutionary in Havana. If he could see the potential a quarter century ago, how on earth have we missed it?

14 June 2002