

What groups of human beings believe and how they behave is called their culture. Ant colonies and elephant herds do not seem to have much variation or change in how they behave; they are programmed by nature. Human beings, however, choose their cultures and behavior\227and sometimes individuals within these cultures diverge from them. We call this free will, although scientists dispute that we are ever totally free of the cultures in which we are born.

Since the end of World War II, the United Nations, pushed by European and American values, has promoted democracy among cultures that are either authoritarian or dysfunctional. This is like cramming a large foot into a glass slipper: it doesn\22t fit. Cultures are not automatically transferable; they require a compatible soil in which to grow. Asian cultures, with their work ethic and Confucian values do better adapting the values of Western civilization (capitalism, democratic elections, and even our egalitarian human rights) than do the dysfunctional countries of the Muslim world. That should have been obvious to us when we foolishly thought that the Arab Spring and elections would end the dysfunction.

Yemen is the prime example of the disaster of trying to transplant a modern Western culture there. Its dysfunction rests on practices and beliefs utterly at odds with the developed world. The September 2012 issue of National Geographic says it all in a series of photos and some very dispiriting text:

\225 The Ali Abdullah Saleh Mosque, costing \$60 million dollars, a project of Saleh, t he late deposed dictator, who chose to build a grandiose mosque instead of a water system (which Yemen desperately needs).

\225 A funeral for a 15-year-old girl killed by a sniper in Aden during a March clash between gunmen and the government. The gunmen were Al Qaeda, which is at war with the government.

\225 No picture, but a description of an Al Qaeda operative, accused of spying for the Yemeni government, crucified by his colleagues. He hung there for three days as a warning.

\225 A street photo shows a man with an AK-47 and two men packaging qat, the Yemeni dr ug of choice and sole crop, which wastes 40 percent of Yemen\222s scarce water supply and keeps the majority of users stupid. Most of Yemen\222s food now needs to be imported.

\225 Generators keep lights on for a joint wedding celebration of grown men with a gro up of fearful \223brides,\224 8 or 9 year old girls. Pedophilia is honored in that society. The World Economic Forum declares Yemen dead-last in Global Gender Gap Report. The birth rate is horrific, making even worse the lack of water and food. Yemen\222s crisis is self-inflicted.

Pakistan is another sad case. It is difficult to imagine how Pakistan can ignore its most pressing issues: illiteracy, fundamentalist Islam, oppression of women, a killer birth rate, and internal conflict, and instead allow the arrest of a little epileptic Christian girl accused of burning pages of the Koran, a violation of their \223Blasphemy Law.\224 The child, who couldn\22t read, was the victim of a lying cleric who urged a lynching. Muslim neighbors were so incensed about this \223blasphemy\224 that they attack ed the girl\222s sister and mother and, for good measure, set fire to several Christian homes in the area. Christians are fleeing.

Last year, a Pakistani governor who criticized the Blasphemy Law was assassinated. With values like this, how can an election make things better? Look who\222s voting.

In Egypt, Muslim Brotherhood member, President Morsi, is busy grabbing power and consolidating it as his country grows ever poorer and its one industry, tourism, is biting the dust. When Morsi, who did little to protect the US Embassy from rampaging mobs, comes hat-in-hand to us for money, what will we do? He must swallow hard and be more pragmatic, that is, if he survives the demonstrations against him.

No Muslim state, including Saudi Arabia (which is closer to the brink that we might think), is a friend; but we are mutual partners in certain things. And with money, we can expect only compliance, not friendship. This is realpolitik.

684 words

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