

*Full Length Research*

# A 'NON WESTERN' READING OF THE 'CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS' THEORY: Through the Eyes of 'The Rest'

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The Clash of Civilizations theory is thoroughly rooted in its context, which makes it a post Cold War paradigm vindicating post Cold War American foreign policy. Huntington's thought falls exactly in line with the repertoire of Orientalist discourse in the West. His assumptions are drawn from secondary sources, are reductionist and simplistic. The real agenda underlying the thesis presented by Huntington is perpetuating Western dominance and hegemony on the globe through the creation of a new enemy and the generation of fear and hatred against it in the public mind. The 'Clash' theory fits well with the growing needs of America's powerful and expansive military-industrial complex defined by its Capitalist ideology. The rhetoric of the Clash of Civilizations works well to disguise the geopolitical and strategic interests of the West in the Muslim world. 'The West and the Rest' is an artificial construct based on historical fallacies and sharpening cleavages in order to maintain a 'wartime status' in the Western mind. Western policy and rhetoric after September 11 seems to have officially adopted the Clash of Civilizations theory. Islamophobia in the West has gone mainstream and has generated an understandably militant response from the Muslim world. This creates a vicious cycle of hostility breeding conflict. If the trend continues, the Clash of Civilizations might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Both the Orient and the West need to actively pursue ways to prevent such a disastrous eventuality.

**Key words:** Clash of Civilizations, Orientalism, Alliance of Civilizations, Dialogue between Islam and the West

## INTRODUCTION

The Cold War that had overshadowed the world scene for over half a century faded away, political scientists, theorists and writers began to surmise, speculate and conjecture about the course future conflict would take. The two political discourses which were perhaps the most intriguing and significant for the attention they received and the debate they stirred were Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History", followed soon after by Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis. The former, striking as it was for its newness, was rather short-lived, as its claim of mankind having reached the end of its

history with the triumph and universalization of Western democracy fizzled out almost as soon as a new wave of ethno-religious unrest gripped the Balkans in the 1990s. The lukewarm response of the West over relentless genocide of a minority in its midst raised many questions about the 'Western values' Fukuyama had celebrated the triumph of. The humungous tragedy of Bosnia that unfolded in the heart of Europe was enough to end the facile optimism of Fukuyama and his ilk.

Huntington rose to refute the neo-liberal optimists whose simplistic euphoria was all too soon. Conflict was

not anywhere near the 'end of its history', but was taking on a new shape\_ and, as Huntington warned, it was an altogether virulent, irredeemable, monstrous nature of conflict that drew upon irreconcilable distinctions of culture and civilization that would hulk on the horizons of mankind's future.

Huntington's contention brought diverse reaction and response\_ it was shocking, appalling, bleak, pessimistic, ultraconservatist; it was dissected, analyzed, criticized, accepted, rejected, attacked, derided. It stirred up controversy perhaps more than any other political proposition. Regardless of the merits and demerits of the theory, since then the thesis has gone mainstream, owing in large part to the tremendous attention the 1993 'Foreign Affairs' article by Huntington has since then received.

To many, 9/11 seemed to verify and prove true what critics had found highly debateable and contentious in Huntington. The theory seemed to have been exonerated, established as fact. On the other hand, however, the wave of criticism intensified as hard critics were outraged over the supposed 'vindication' of the theory after 9/11. If civilizations were meant to clash, 9/11 was but inevitable; the subsequent polarization of the world was only natural and predictable; the rhetoric of Terrorists from another culture attacking a 'Way of Life' was, then, an accurate explanation of what was happening out there.

What is interesting and important to note, however, is the fact that both theories offering paradigms to understand and define the world order after the Cold War emerged in the West: while the former was facile Western triumphalism for what Fukuyama believed was the universalization of Western values of secular-liberal democracy, the latter drew a wedge between the 'Western' and 'non Western' civilizations, showing the Western civilization to be eternally pitted against an increasingly restive 'non West' in a battle over values, religion, culture and civilization. The West vs. Non-West schism presented by Huntington was not a new phenomenon considering the Orientalist discourse embedded in Western thought, but it was, perhaps, the most virulent and precarious form the traditional pattern took\_ for the influence it wielded over policy-making and opinion leadership in the West, and the overwhelming attention it received the world over.

The theory seemed to lend strength to the course U.S foreign policy chose to take, backed by Europe and the 'Western' nations. Hostilities took cover under the 'Clash of civilizations' theory, and once again, the bifurcation of 'us' and 'them' dominated thinking of peoples all over the world. Quite tellingly, Huntington's 'question mark' on the title of his 1993 essay vanished in the title of his book "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order" published three years later.

Huntington's 'The Rest' belonging to all but the Western civilization, are the 'everybody else' of a different colour, religion, culture and civilization who, in Huntingtonian imagination, pose a threat to all that the West is about. The brunt of the Clash of Civilizations thesis, however, falls particularly on the Islamic civilization and the Muslim world, in which Huntington recognizes the most potent threat to the West's ascendancy. In collusion with its kindred Confucian civilization, it stands up to challenge, defy, reject and resist the West's cultural sway, economic prowess and political influence. The widespread underdevelopment, autocratic governance, socio-economic regression and despondency in non Western and particularly Muslim societies create rising levels of frustration that lead to anger and resentment against the West which is increasingly seen as the malevolent force out to marginalize and dominate the Muslim world. This is presented as the explanation for the contemporary wave of terrorism going global, to combat which the West possesses well-founded justification through the logic of pre-emptive self-defence.

Knowledge is closely bound to power. The powerful monopolize intellectual scholarship and place themselves in the role of the definers. The Clash of Civilizations is an influential discourse emanating from the West, embedded in Western thought and rooted in Western perception. It cannot pretend to universalism or even objectivity. It is important, therefore, to highlight the strain of Orientalist thought in the theory to be able to understand that the 'glasses' through which Huntington views the world belong to a Western viewpoint and colour the world in distinctly Western perception.

#### **RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH AND IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK:**

It is also important, on the other side, to 'give a say' to that marginalized 'Other'; to bring out, in response, the 'counterpoint' presented by the 'non West' on the subject. The need to facilitate a transitional metamorphosis of the non West from a 'subject' to the 'object' of discourse is the rationale of this research work. The *raison de etre* is to lend voice to the non West and present responses to the Clash of Civilizations theory from non Western communities in order to lead to a more balanced, judicious and comprehensive understanding of the 'clash'\_ its nature, credibility and impact.

Sickened by prophets of doom talking of clashing civilizations and 'bloody borders', mankind stands at the crossroads mapping out the way ahead, seeking a panacea beyond the Clash of Civilizations. To ensure a better tomorrow that gives peace a chance, the human race needs to look beyond this, to look for elements of

commonality, identify the sameness of human natures beneath the trappings of skin and learn to rise above distinctions, towards plurality and multiculturalism.

The strong need to understand whether there really is bound to be a clash of civilizations, the need to look for a way beyond a foredoomed clash and the need to 'set the record straight' regarding the nature and essence of non Western and particularly Muslim civilizations is the rationale for undertaking this work. Not only that, it also examines the intellectual underpinnings of the theory to be able to understand why exactly the thesis was presented, and at that particular time. The paper attempts to understand and explore responses to the fundamental questions posed by the ensuing debate around this much-talked of theory, arising from 'non Western' parts of the globe as diverse as Africa, the China, the Middle East, Central, West, South and South East Asia. The Islamic perspective on the theory is particularly highlighted as a refutation of Orientalist discourse embedded in the theory.

Following from the Introduction and Literature review, the third section puts the theory in the context of history and brings out the significance of the 'timing' of Huntington's master work vis a vis the end of the Cold War and the onset of the 'War Against Terrorism.' In the fourth part, Orientalism is highlighted as a definitive element in the thesis, and the continuity of the Orientalist strain from the medieval times right up to Huntington is traced in the light of Edward Said's monumental work on Orientalism. The fifth section presents the division between 'The West' and 'the Rest' as an artificial construct and examines the motives behind creating such schisms as well as the impact of creating cleavages between the Orient and the Occident. The sixth section explores and exposes underlying agendas that motivate the adoption and mainstreaming of Huntington's theory. The seventh section analyzes the impact of the theory on American foreign policy after 9/11 as well as the rhetoric adopted by Western leaders in the so-called War on Terror. In the eighth section the 'Counter Point' from the Oriental world, bringing together responses to the thesis from Africa, the Middle East and Asia; from Confucian, pagan-animist, Hindu and Muslim societies. The voice from the Muslim world is particularly highlighted as Islam and Muslim culture receives specific and singular attention in a sizeable section of Huntington's work. Representative voices from the Muslim world have been included through interviews of Muslim opinion leaders. Edward Said as the most prominent critic takes the lead in criticism of the theory, and hence his work is used as a major point of reference. The last (ninth) section indicates ways and means to traverse the gulf created by the theory to be able to move towards greater intercultural collaboration and understanding by seeking commonalities and living with differences. The solutions

and recommendations presented by non Western scholars, academicians and opinion leaders are particularly highlighted.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The paper explores answers to the following fundamental queries:

- In what ways can the 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis be characterized as 'Western' in its orientation and content?
- What are the strains of Orientalism embedded in the thesis presented by Huntington?
- How does the Clash of Civilizations thesis become a vindication and basis for post-Cold War U.S foreign policy goals and strategies?
- How does Huntington's association with U.S policy making circles affect the objectivity and undermine the credibility of his work?
- What are the prime responses to the theory of the Clash of Civilizations from the non Western world?
- What is the 'counter point' to Huntington's argument presented by non Western and particularly Muslim societies?
- How do scholars, thinkers, writers and intellectuals in the Muslim world refute Huntington's thesis and what alternatives do they present?
- Is a Clash of Civilizations inevitable?
- How has the acceptance of this thesis influenced policy and society in the West?
- How can mankind move beyond a clash towards the communion and alliance of civilizations? Is this viable?

## METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The research, owing to its fundamental orientation and content, incorporates the Analytical research method, studying Huntington's work to identify Orientalist strains and essentially subjective observations that undermine its credibility. It also brings into use the exploratory method, exploring and bringing out non Western voices refuting the Huntingtonian assertion. The Descriptive approach is utilized in the discussion of both the salient points of Huntington's stance and the key aspects of the large body of criticism of it emerging from the non Western world.

Verbatim quotations both from published and unpublished sources\_ interviews and opinion surveys conducted by the writer are cited aplenty to lend greater credibility to the research and its findings.

### **Both primary and secondary sources have been used to substantiate the research.**

As far as the primary sources are concerned, Huntington's Foreign Affairs article and his subsequent book on the Clash of Civilizations have been exhaustively studied and analyzed. Francis Fukuyama's monumental work preceding Huntington has been studied and referred to as a prime influence. Other than that, Bernard Lewis's 'Roots of Muslim Rage' as well as other work on Islam has been read and used in this work to highlight Orientalist underpinnings of Huntington have thought. Edward Said's 'Magnum Opus' on 'Orientalism' is cited in the paper as a point of reference to highlight Orientalist strands of thought in Huntington. Excerpts from Said's interviews, lectures and debates have also been frequently quoted as Said champions and spearhead the substantial body of criticism against Huntington's theory. Texts of speeches by successive presidents of the USA particularly by George W Bush right after 9/11 have been cited to demonstrate the impact of Huntington's ideas on U.S foreign policy. The speech of president Barack Obama addressed to the Muslim world in which he rejected the Clash of Civilizations hypothesis has also been quoted and discussed at length. Former Iranian President Khatami's ideas on the Alliance between civilizations, and statements of human rights groups, United Nations officials, veteran leaders and intellectuals have also been used as primary sources for the research work.

The writer has also recorded views of contemporary Muslim intellectuals and thinkers either through direct interviews or through e-mail in order to present latest emerging trends of thought regarding this issue. For a better understanding into the subject, academicians and writers having expertise on the issues at hand were also interviewed through electronic mail.

The Secondary sources include journals, articles and essays available on the internet as well as in local libraries. A wide range of critical reviews of Huntington's theory are currently available. Most, if not all of this material\_ both from Western and non Western/Muslim writers\_ has been studied in order to provide a solid backing for formulating opinions. While some of these sources have actually been quoted, others have been indirectly referred to, or simply read up for a wider, diversified awareness and understanding.

As the topic of the research paper refers to a non Western reading of the theory, most if not all of the sources used belong to non Western nations and civilizations, with Muslim sources forming a substantial mass of the resource material incorporated. Western sources are used at times for comparative analysis, though non Western and Muslim sources form the greater substance of this work.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There exists a substantive amount of literature on the subject of the Clash of Civilizations\_ books, articles and audio visual resources originating from both Western and Oriental-Muslim sources. As this paper offers a primarily 'non Western' perspective, therefore other than the primary sources, critical material on the topic comes predominantly from 'non Western' sources, although analyses by Western writers have also been used.

As far as the primary sources are concerned, the text most basic to this paper is Samuel P. Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations?," Foreign Affairs Journal, Summer 1993. This monumental article put forward the theory that the nature of conflict would change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century so that conflicts would take place between the eight civilizations the world was divided into according to Huntington. This shape conflict could take would make conflicts more pernicious and pervasive. The article warned the West of the likely Islamic-Confucian connection and ended with recommendations for Western foreign policy to create greater integration within the Western civilization and its allied civilizations and exploit the weaknesses on the other side of the conflict. The article presented a highly contentious and controversial thesis which since then has been much discussed and debated all over the world.

Perhaps because of the response the article had invited, Huntington expanded it in the form of a book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel P. Huntington, New York, Touchstone, 1996. It expands on the fundamental contentions presented by Huntington in his 1993 article. The book elaborates on themes and ideas the article had touched upon\_ the concept of 'civilization', the concept of a 'universal civilization', shifting balances of power between civilizations, cultural indigenization in non Western societies, Western universalism and Muslim militancy and the emerging power of China. It explores in greater detail the concept of faultlines between civilizations, and, in a marked contrast to the article, highlights the possibility of finding common grounds and gives recommendations to prevent an approaching Clash of Civilizations, implying that such a clash in fact is not inevitable. However, the primary assumptions of the article remain intact and are lengthily elaborated upon, with particular focus on what Huntington had called the 'bloody borders' of Islam.

Equally important as a primary source is Samuel P. Huntington's "The Age of Muslim Wars", Newsweek, December 2001 in which Huntington makes some significant revisions of his earlier thesis\_ in that a Clash is not inevitable, and that political policy more than cultural difference leads to conflict. To many, this implies Huntington's rejection of his own earlier argument and utterly discredits it. The article deserves to be given as

much attention as the former article on the Clash of Civilizations received when it was first published in 1993.

Another primary source allied to the above was Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, The Free Press, 1992. The book predates Huntington's article and is a strong influence on his work. Like *The Clash of Civilizations*, it gives a paradigm for the future course of global politics. However, Fukuyama suggests that following the demise of Communism, Western liberal democracy had triumphed and was proven to be a universally ascendant system. Mankind had reached the end of his socio-political evolution and what remained to be done was to universally apply the triumphant system of the West. Fukuyama stands for universalizing Western democracy and gives in his book policy prescriptions to make that possible, and to 'export' liberal democracy to non-Western societies. Fukuyama concludes that conflicts in future will be over the universalization of Western liberal democracy, and that the West must resolutely carry out this mission.

Another primary source analyzed in this paper is Bernard Lewis's "The Roots of Muslim Rage: Why So Many Muslims Deeply Resent the West, and Why Their Bitterness Will Not Be Easily Mollified", *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 266, No.3, September 1990. The influential article explains the reasons for hostility against the U.S and the West in the Muslim world. The prime reasons, according to Lewis, other than the violent interpretation of Islamic texts in the Muslims world, are rage and ire over the secular West's development and progress as opposed to the Muslim world that is struggling with underdevelopment, poverty, illiteracy, autocracy and overpopulation.

Benjamin R. Barber, in *Jihad vs. McWorld*, London: Corgi, 2003, understands contemporary politics in the light of power dynamics between the world's most powerful opposing structures: the commercial, consumerist free market economy in the West\_ the interests of which set the direction of Western policies, as opposed to resistance and militancy from Islamic fundamentalism that uses violence to challenge and defeat the West's system, and establish its brand of Islam globally. The struggle between the two is all about wresting power and establishing global hegemony. The fanaticism to universalize values\_ whether of the consumerist West or of fundamentalist Islam is what breeds conflict and, eventually, clash.

Under the title 'Anonymous', Michael Scheuer, in "Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror", New York: Brassey's, Inc, 2004, brings into focus the West's flawed perception of the enemy it fights\_ radical Islam. He maintains that the 'Clash of Civilizations' theory is a distraction which has led the West to believe that the ongoing conflict with the Muslim

world is over civilizational differences. The fact of the matter which the West has ignored, is that militant Islam is a reactive sentiment over Western policies in the Middle East. Scheuer, being a former CIA Al Qaeda expert, gives an incisive and insightful analysis of the ideology, goals, structure and operation of Al Qaeda and suggests understanding the true causes of friction with the Muslim world to be able to deal with this threat more realistically. In the same vein, Michael Scheuer also wrote *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, And The Future Of America*, Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2002, with the purpose to create a clearer understanding and recognition of the enemy in the Western mind. Scheuer attributes the failures of the Western powers in the ongoing 'War on Terror' to the West's inability to understand its enemy without bias, and due to its 'imperial hubris' over the superiority of its civilization.

Jason Burke, in *Al-Qaeda: The True Story Of Radical Islam*, London: Penguin, 2004, makes a similar attempt at exploring the genesis and evolution of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and focuses on the role and responsibility of the West in creating this new danger. The West needs to take the responsibility of this and re-evaluate its counter terrorism policies.

Elizabeth Poole and John E. Richardson, in *Muslims and the News Media*, London, I.B Tauris, 2006, take an insightful look at the image of Islam and the Muslims presented by the Western media, particularly in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001. Stereotyping of Muslims, inherent bias in news coverage and Islamophobic rhetoric has been made a subject of analysis. The role and responsibility of the media in the mainstreaming of the rhetoric of the 'Clash of Civilizations' in the ongoing 'War on Terror' has been highlighted.

Karen Armstrong's *The Crusades and their Impact on Today's World*, New York, Random House, 2001, is a fresh, unbiased and insightful look at the history of the Crusades for a Western audience, highlighting the role of religious fanaticism in generating conflict, and bringing to the fore the responsibility of the Christian West in the atrocities of the Crusades. The analysis of the West's 'Crusade complex' leading to its confrontationalist posture vis a vis the Muslim world is instrumental in developing a comprehensive understanding of the Clash of Civilizations thesis.

In Jonathan Fox's *The Multiple Impacts of Religion on International Relations: Perceptions and Reality*, London, Routledge, 2006, the importance of the religious dimension of international affairs is effectively brought out. The role of religion in both conflict and conciliation is highlighted through indepth analyses and case studies, and ways to bring the conciliatory potential of religion into use for conflict resolution are discussed in detail.

Will Durant's *Our Oriental Heritage*, is the first volume of the encyclopaedic series 'Story of Civilization', New York, Simon and Schuster, 1954. It gives a detailed survey of Oriental civilizations, religions and cultures which have made lasting contributions and left permanent imprints on the Western civilization. In its introduction, the book gives a holistic definition and understanding of the nature and characteristics of civilization and concludes with a call to the West of acknowledging its debt to the Orient for a better understanding of its own ethos. The book helps bring out the commonalities and interconnectedness of Oriental and Western civilizations.

Dieter Senghaas, in *The Clash Within Civilizations*, London, Routledge, 2002, challenges the notion of the world being divided into rigid, monolithic civilizations by focussing on the internal dynamics within civilizations arising out of the compulsions of modernization and development. Senghaas discusses the concepts of pluralism, multiculturalism and tolerance, and explores the possibilities and scope of dialogue and co operation between civilizations. He points out the necessary conditions for an effective and fruitful dialogue and profoundly challenges the fundamental assumptions of both Huntington and Fukuyama.

Under the editorship of Chibueze C. Udeani, *Communication Across Cultures: The Hermeneutics of Cultures and Religions in a Global Age*, Washington, Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2008, a number of non Western scholars have worked together to come up with a comprehensive treatise on intercultural communication\_ its requisites, components and scope. It discusses the roles of culture and religion in the development of personal and communal identity and explores prospects for development without extricating traditional values. It highlights cultural commonalities and makes them the basis of intercultural communication. The book incisively examines the ethos of world cultures and civilizations, with a special focus on Afro-Asian, Chinese and Islamic cultures. The book also discusses the issues of secularization of societies as well as the counter currents of desecularization, and the effects of the two trends on society and politics in the West.

*South Asian Responses to the Clash of Civilizations Theory*, Salim Rashid (Ed.), Dhaka, Oxford Publishers, 1997 brings together the work of prominent writers, intellectuals, academicians and scholars from South, South East, Central and West Asia as well as Africa on the Clash of Civilizations theory. It consists of a collection of eight articles from writers belonging to China, India, Bangladesh, Iran, Pakistan, Korea and Nigeria, each representing his regional culture and religion and putting forward indigenous counter narratives to the West-centric Clash of Civilizations thesis. With a diverse range of views and sizeable commonalities embedded within, the book leaves one with a holistic 'non Western' view of the

Clash thesis.

Prominent Palestinian scholar Edward Said, in his monumental work *Orientalism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, Great Britain, 1978, takes a penetrating look at the phenomenon of Orientalism in the West. He traces the history and evolution of the phenomenon and then presents its traits as well as its traces and influences in contemporary Western thought. Said explores the stereotypes, biases and inaccuracies in the presentation of Arab-Muslims by the West and challenges them with irrefutable empirical evidence and keen, insightful\_ at times scathing\_ analysis. Orientalism is indispensable reading for any scholar writing on the East and Islam. In the same tradition, Maryam Jameelah, in *Islam and Orientalism*, Lahore, M. Yusuf Khan and Sons, 1981, traces the history and the prime assumptions of Western Orientalism and then gives a substantive, thoroughly researched refutation of the West's deeply embedded prejudices about Islam.

Dr. Osman Bakar in *Islam and Civilizational Dialogue*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, 1997, presents the extraordinary potential of Islam as an arbiter between civilizations given its egalitarian ethos and its divinely ordained status as a 'middle nation.' Dr. Bakar explores the possibilities of fostering a world civilization through the universality of Islam and its basic principles of justice and equality. Dr. Bakar also discusses Confucianism and its kinship with Islam, as well as the propensity of both Islamic and Confucian traditions to foster peace. Dr. Bakar discusses the conditions for a fruitful interfaith and intercultural dialogue between civilizations and religions and powerfully refutes Huntington's warnings of an impending Clash of Civilizations. Similarly, Iqbal S. Hussain, in *Islam and the Clash of Civilizations*, Lahore, Meraj Printers, 2005, presents historical proof of Islam's coexistence with other civilizations and attributes it to the Islamic principles of pluralism and tolerance as well as the sanctity for human rights. He refutes Huntington by exemplifying the peacemaking role of Islam and the necessity of Islamic spiritual and ethical values in order to engender a global culture of equality, justice and peace.

Edward W. Said's article "The Clash of Ignorance", *The Nation*, October 22, 2001 attacks Huntington's thesis for its superficial presumptions showing a lack of understanding of the non West. The article also brings out the flaws in Huntington's justification for predicting a civilizational clash as well as his inaccurate categorization of civilizations. Said points out Huntington's selective citation from history and his overlooking of instances of coexistence and conciliation. It brings out the true motives behind this work with reference to the background and context of the theory as well as Huntington's influence in policymaking circles.

Eqbal Ahmed, in "Roots of the Muslim Right", *DAWN*

Newspaper, March 1999 analyzes fanaticism and militancy in the Muslim world and attributes it to Western policy in the Middle East as well as narrow interpretation of religion by Muslims.

Muhammad Asadi's article, "The Clash of Civilizations Thesis: A Critique", [www.chowk.com](http://www.chowk.com) gives a penetrating insight into the real agendas behind the clash of Civilizations thesis. He focuses on the compulsions of Capitalism and the growing demands of a powerful military-industrial complex in the United States which necessitates expansionism and institutionalizes warfare. Asadi highlights patterns of exploitation of the resources of the Third World by the West and mounts a scathing attack on American foreign policy and Huntington's flawed world-view.

In Richard Crockatt's paper, "anti Americanism and the Clash of Civilizations", [www.kb.osu.edu.pdf](http://www.kb.osu.edu.pdf), the writer digs into the roots of anti Americanism in the Muslim world and holds American jingoism, exclusivism and interventionism responsible for hostility towards the United States in the world. He critically examines the evolution and course of American foreign policy and rhetoric and attacks the Clash of Civilizations thesis for deflecting attention away from the real factors which lead to the non Western world's conflict with the West. Similar to this is Michael Dunn's 'The Clash of Civilizations and the War on Terror', 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel, Vol.20 (Winter 2006-2007), [www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk.pdf](http://www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk.pdf). Dunn examines both how the Clash thesis has led to the polarization of the world into the 'West and the Rest'— a schism on which the 'War on Terror' is built, which has also deeply influenced American foreign policy choices in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001.

Turkish professor Ahmet Davutoglu's research titled "The Clash of Interests: An Explanation of World Disorder", *Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Dec 1997 to Feb 1998, Vol II, no.4 gives a whole new dimension to the critique against Clash of Civilizations thesis by focussing on the geopolitical and strategic interests at the heart of Huntington's work. Davutoglu discusses the theorizing pattern in the West that has always justified control of resources of the 'Heartland' through colonial conquest of neo-colonialist control. Davutoglu believes the Clash of Civilizations is the newest in the line of this pattern to supply a new paradigm after the Cold War for vindicating the perpetuation of dominance over the Muslim lands.

Turkish academic Engin I. Erdem, in "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited After September 11", *Alternatives Journal of International Relations*, Vol.1, no.2, Summer 2002, presents a comprehensive critique of the Clash of Civilizations thesis— not only its flawed theoretical basis but also its application and implementation in the American foreign policy after September 11, 2001. Erdem's article is well-referenced with quotations from a variety of Western and non Western critics of

Huntington's thesis.

Marc Gopin, in his paper titled "Religion and International Relations at the Crossroads", *International Studies Review*, Vol III issue III, Fall 2001, focuses on the religious dimension of the conflict between the West and the Muslim world, and how religion is used to stir up hostility and hatred while the real issues at the base of conflict are of a political-strategic nature. Gopin maintains that religion does not have to be conflictual, and that the peacemaking role of religion must be recognized and put to use for conflict resolution.

Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, in their report titled "The True Clash of Civilizations", *Foreign Policy*, March-April 2003, have made an interesting case to refute the assumption that the fundamental difference between Western and Muslim societies is over democracy. Through a series of surveys, the researchers prove that democracy is the most popular form of rule in Muslim societies, regardless of whether such societies may actually be living under a democratic system. The article shows how despite the West's bid to promote democracy in the world, it pursues policies that do just the opposite by supporting pro Western autocrats and dictators in the Muslim world. Instead, the real 'clash' between the West and Islam is over social values— precisely, the role of women— an issue over which highly conservative views exist in the Muslim world. The West needs to recognize this 'true Clash of Civilizations' and promote women's rights and liberation in non Western societies.

Sato Seizaburo is an accomplished Japanese scholar who, in his work "An Critical Approach Towards Clash of civilizations", Tokyo University publishers, "Asia Pacific Review", October 1997, not only criticizes Huntington's thesis for its flawed premise of civilizations as monoliths, but also gives an alternative paradigm for conflict. He maintains that conflict arises out of the dilemmas of the modernization process, over economic deprivation and financial inequities. He redraws the cartography of conflict along the lines of developed and underdeveloped societies as the basis of a clash. In this article, Seizaburo deeply studies the nature and evolution of human civilizations and presents the interconnectedness and commonalities between them. He particularly highlights the influence of Oriental civilizations on the West.

Eminent Indian writer Amartya Sen, in "What Clash of Civilizations?", *Slate Magazine*, March 29, 2006, 6:02 a.m [www.slatemagazine.com](http://www.slatemagazine.com) rejects Huntington's thesis for its false assumptions that emphasize the separateness of civilizations. Sen not only highlights commonalities and prospects for further exploring common grounds, but also discusses the achievement of a truly global culture that respects difference and emphasizes the singular human identity all share. Sen holds the West's attempts to divide the world into 'the West and the Rest' responsible for rising hostility to and

militancy against the West. She also criticizes Muslim fanaticism as another divisive attempt that emphasizes religious identity above all others and ignores the pluralistic heritage of Islam.

Robert Wright, in his article "Highbrow Tribalism", *Slate Magazine*, Saturday, Nov. 2, 1996, takes aim at Huntington's thesis as the outcrop of a prejudiced, tribalist mentality in modern jargon. He terms Huntington's arbitrary division of the world into rigid civilizations as inaccurate and erroneous and brings to the fore the real agendas of global hegemony and monopolization of resources which the Clash thesis justifies. Wright terms Huntington's thesis arrogant and dangerous. Similar to this is Said Shirazi's "Your New Enemies" *Dissident Voice*, November 3, 2002, [www.dissidentvoice.org](http://www.dissidentvoice.org). Shirazi scathingly criticizes Huntington's thesis as being a post Cold War attempt to present a new enemy to the West and instil fear and hatred of the enemy figure in the Western mind. Shirazi discredits Huntington's thesis as prejudiced and calls for going beyond a clash towards communication across cultures.

## BACKDROP AND CONTEXT OF THE THEORY OF THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

The dominant paradigm of international politics during the years of the Cold War was the simplistic bloc-politics formula of a world divided along the lines of Communist and Capitalist spheres of influence. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, a whole world order fell apart, and with that, a whole way of viewing and understanding the world. There was, subsequently, the search for new paradigms and hence a new, vital role for thinkers, policy makers and strategists in laying down the scheme for a new order of things. This redefinition of world order after the Cold War led to what has been described as the proliferation of 'contending images of world politics'.<sup>1</sup>

The primary ones among these which caught the most attention internationally were 'The End of History' by Francis Fukuyama and 'The Clash of Civilizations' by Samuel Huntington. The influence of the two, particularly the latter on subsequent international affairs is comparable to the influence of George F. Kennan's 1947 article in the *Foreign Affairs* journal which spearheaded the 'containment' policy of the United States vis a vis the Soviet Union, and dominated world politics for the next half a century. After the Cold War, as we know, there were numerous attempts to map the future of world politics. Other than Francis Fukuyama's 'End of History', there was the Senior Bush administration's "New World

Order" and the contributions of Paul Kennedy, Robert Kaplan and Benjamin Barber\_ all of which deal with the future of conflict.

At the onset of this new phase in world politics, a number of pressing queries faced analysts and political scientists about the nature and characteristics of the new global order. The change necessitated a rethink by U.S foreign policy making circles about how U.S foreign policy should be re-formulated according to the changing nature of world politics by the end of the Cold War? How should the United States re-define its 'national interests' and re-assess its strategic priorities?<sup>2</sup>

Interesting comparisons can be drawn between Fukuyama's and Huntington's contending paradigms which are both strikingly similar and strikingly dissimilar. For one, both of the theses, although responses to a changed global scenario, do not really offer a perspective entirely 'new.' They are both, at a deeper look, status-quo oriented ideological formulations in order to justify the foreign policy direction the United States should most likely take in order to maintain its preponderant role in the international arena.

Fukuyama triumphantly declared the victory of secular-liberal democracy when he stated, "this may constitute the end of mankind's ideological evolution and the final form of human government and as such continue the end of history."<sup>3</sup> He derives his idea from the Hegelian dialectic of the evolution of history. The achievement of liberal democracy was the 'synthesis' effectively putting an end to man's eon-old struggle for the perfect system. What remained to be done was to universalize this system, which too was naturally predetermined owing to its intrinsic superiority over all other values and systems. Fukuyama held an unshakable belief in the moral superiority and ultimately predestined ascendancy of Western values of liberalism and democracy. He believed that the Western civilization, owing to its superior values, had in fact triumphed above other civilizations. Fukuyama's proposition is that liberal democracy, which first developed in the cradle of Western civilization, is a universally acceptable concept, and that the world is now moving decisively towards embracing it. Resistance to this universal establishment of Western democracy could come from resistant cultures rejecting values fundamental to democracy. Hence this had to be effectively countered by sponsoring a universal democratic crusade in defence of Western values. At the heart of this high moral rhetoric, however, was the gusto for achieving its strategic objectives to gain control over

<sup>1</sup> Greg Fry and Jacinta O'Hagan, *Contending Images of World Politics*, New York, St.Martin's Press, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Engin I. Erdem, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited After September 11", *Alternatives Journal of International Relations*, Vol.1, no.2, Summer 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, The Free Press, 1992.

resource-rich areas of the non West and be able to direct and influence policy to safeguard U.S interests globally.

Fukuyama made some sense amidst the early euphoria of the post Soviet era. Western institutions had triumphed after all, and the period of stability before the onset of the Bosnian crisis and the rise of ethnic conflict globally seemed to augur well. However, the war in Bosnia with its shocking death toll, the inability of the international community to stem the bloody tide and the rather delayed response of Western powers to the crisis raised serious doubts over whether this really was the 'end of history'. There were a number of cracks and loopholes in the system: "The lack of consensus among European countries over Bosnia became the end of the premature slogans, as the basic principles of international law had been defeated in Bosnia by a wanton pragmatism and by the medieval prejudices of Europe."<sup>4</sup> Huntington rose to refute the neo-liberal optimists whose simplistic euphoria was all too soon. Conflict was not anywhere near the 'end of its history', but was taking on a new shape\_ and, as Huntington warned, it was an altogether virulent, irredeemable, monstrous nature of conflict that drew upon irreconcilable distinctions of culture and civilization that would hulk on the horizons of mankind's future. The static nature of Fukuyama's placid global order was unreal, fantastical. No wonder Edward Said comments that Fukuyama's 'End of History' was actually the 'End of Fukuyama.'<sup>5</sup>

Huntington makes more sense in the post-Bosnia context. He takes a more realistic stance and perhaps one that fits in more with post-Cold War U.S foreign policy orientation by identifying potential areas of conflict along civilizational lines. Despite the differences in approach, the two theses are logically sequenced and interlinked. The close kinship between the two apparently disparate theories has been highlighted insightfully by Professor Ahmet Davutoglu:

"These two contradicting approaches related to the role of civilizations in political affairs\_ the one Fukuyama's, which he is identifying Western civilization with the fate of the human race or human history, overemphasizes the role of this civilization. Whereas Huntington's, which absolves Western civilization from generating conflicts and crises\_ are actually parts of the same picture. Huntington completes the picture drawn by Fukuyama by providing the hegemonic powers with a theoretical justification for the overall political and military strategies

<sup>4</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, "The Clash of Interests: An Explanation of World Disorder", *Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Dec 1997 to Feb 1998, Vol II, no.4.

<sup>5</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America.

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

required to control and reshape the international system: Western values and political structures have an intrinsic and irresistible universality (Fukuyama), and it is other civilizations which are responsible for the political crises and clashes (Huntington). Huntington's 'The West versus the Rest' polarization is the political reflection of this picture...Whereas Fukuyama emphasizes the unavoidable and irresistible universalization of Western values, Huntington attempts to explain the alternative processes of civilization which mobilize the masses into political action and confrontation. The ambitious and idealistic rhetoric of Fukuyama makes way for Huntington's realistic and cautious one. The changed rhetoric reflects the changes which have occurred in the international political arena in the post Cold War era which have shown that the declaration of the 'end of history' was premature."<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to state-centric realist theory and system-oriented neo-realist model, Huntington primarily focuses on cultural-religious-civilizational factors. He calls forth a paradigmatic shift to understand the post-Cold War global politics.<sup>7</sup> He talks of a civilizational clash of seismic proportions along the 'faultlines' of tectonic civilizational blocs the planet is divided into, as Huntington sees it. The 'paradigm' shift, the apocalyptic vision of entire civilizations on the verge of an enormous clash became, perhaps, the reason why Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations?" in the Summer 1993 issue of *Foreign Affairs* immediately attracted massive attention and invited passionate reaction. Edward Said comments,

"Because the article was intended to supply Americans with an original thesis about "a new phase" in world politics after the end of the cold war, Huntington's terms of argument seemed compellingly large, bold, even visionary. He very clearly had his eye on rivals in the policy-making ranks, theorists such as Francis Fukuyama and his "end of history" ideas, as well as the legions who had celebrated the onset of globalism, tribalism and the dissipation of the state. But they, he allowed, had understood only some aspects of this new period. He was about to announce the "crucial, indeed a central, aspect" of what "global politics is likely to be in the coming years." Unhesitatingly he pressed on."<sup>8</sup>

Huntington's search for a new definition of post-Cold War conflict was actually a search for a 'successor

<sup>6</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, "The Clash of Interests: An Explanation of World Disorder", *Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Dec 1997 to Feb 1998, Vol II, no.4.

<sup>7</sup> Engin I. Erdem, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited after September 11", *Alternatives Journal*, Summer 2002, Vol.1, no.2.

<sup>8</sup> Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance", *The Nation*, October 22, 2001.

paradigm' to the bipolar ideological conflict of the Cold War. The Cold War theory of an ideological conflict between Communism and Capitalism that were inherently irreconcilable was an over-simplification of the actual dynamics of conflict. Like this simple thesis forwarded by Kennan that led to the 'containment policy', Huntington seeks a simple, all-encompassing, reductive paradigm in his post Cold War hypothesis. This paradigm fits very well with the neo Realist school of thought that dominates U.S foreign policy making machinery. Importantly, however, Huntington is not merely a neorealist theorist. He goes beyond to offer "past the neorealist, neoliberal and the general or common pluralist theories about the international order to propose a very distinctive, radical theory about irreducible cultural identities. He asserts that underneath political, economic and cultural interests lie civilization-based identities which are significantly more difficult to accommodate to one another."<sup>9</sup>

It is a simplified hypothesis easy to sell to American foreign policy making elite who sought a new paradigm after the Cold War order collapsed. Edward Said comments that at the core of this theory is the fact that its true importance derives from its timing. Huntington's idea of an unceasing clash 'slides effortlessly into the political space vacated by the unremitting War of Ideas in the Cold War, of which Huntington was a great theorist. Huntington's work is addressed to policy makers, and is a recycling of the Cold War paradigm that conflicts in tomorrow's world will be civilizational, not political or economic. One of these civilizations will be the West\_ a locus around which all other civilizations turn. It is an expansion of the Cold War 'by other means.' It perpetuates a wartime status by talking of conflict between cultures and offers a prescription for what the West must do to continue winning'.<sup>10</sup>

In this sense, Huntington's idea is not really a new proposition, but in fact an extension of Cold War policy. Said Shirazi comments, "*He offers not a narrative or a specific analysis but a paradigm, a deliberate over simplification, an effort to find some facts to fit a pattern rather than finding the patterns in a wider range of facts. He warns about a conflict with China, for example, which is hardly a replacement for the Cold War mentality; it is nothing more than an extension of it. Essentially Huntington has written a disposable policy book about the coming war*

<sup>9</sup> Paul Y. Hammond, "Culture Versus Civilization", Asian Responses to the Clash of Civilizations, Salim Rashid (Ed.), Dhaka, Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). (Accessed May 2, 2009)

*with the East, a work of fortune-telling...."*<sup>11</sup>

The timing of Huntington's thesis is also relevant because with the end of the Cold War, other parts of the world that had been marginalized and eclipsed by half a century of bloc politics began to raise their head and make their presence felt. The independent and self-sufficient assertion of the Non Aligned Third World countries radiated a spirit of rejection of Western universalism which presented a challenge to the West that aspired to establish its system globally after the Communist hurdle had been done away with. The Huntingtonian argument allows the United States to 'extend the mindset of the Cold War into a different time and before a new audience.'<sup>12</sup> Chantal Mouffe reminds us that "not long ago we were being told to the accompaniment of much fanfare, that liberal democracy had won and history had ended. However, instead of the heralded New World Order, the victory of 'post conventional' identities, we are witnessing an explosion of particularisms and an increasing challenge to Western universalism."<sup>13</sup>

The demise of the Cold War ushered in the rise of 'Tokyo, Hong Kong, Seoul, Taipei and Singapore as resurgent powers on the Pacific Rim as well as the break down of the Cold War master narrative of bipolar superpowers that once legitimated the American military presence across the Pacific. It has resulted in an ongoing de-centring of power beyond the hegemonic control and cartographic sublimations of the US State Department and US Pacific Command.'<sup>14</sup>

The West confronts nowadays numerous problems of slow economic growth, stagnating populations, unemployment, huge government deficits, low savings rates, social degeneration, drugs and crime. Thus, economic power is shifting to Asia. Asia and Islam have been the active civilizations of the last quarter century. China is likely to have the world's largest economy early in the 21st century. In addition, Asia is expected to have seven of the ten largest economies by 2020.<sup>15</sup>

In view of this fact which presented a brazen challenge to

<sup>11</sup> Shirazi, Said, "Your New Enemies" Dissident Voice, November 3, 2002, [www.dissidentvoice.org](http://www.dissidentvoice.org) (Accessed May 9, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Professor Edward Said in a series of interviews on the subject of Orientalism conducted in 1998, video recordings of which are available under the title 'Orientalism' on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) as well as [www.voobys.com](http://www.voobys.com). (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Chantal Mouffe, The Return of the Political, London, 1993.

<sup>14</sup> Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik, "Introduction: Asia-Pacific as a Space of Cultural Production", Boundary, vol.21, no.1, Spring 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Herzfeld, "Anthropology and the politics of significance," Social Analysis, 1997, 4(3). pp.107-138.

Western aspirations to global ascendancy after Communism, there was a general anxiety and chagrin among Western policy makers. This prevailing mood in the West is exactly what Huntington reflects in his thesis: "Huntington's approach actually reflects a general state of unease in the West caused by growing economic disparities, changing economic patterns and the inability to enforce its vision of a new world order."<sup>16</sup>

Another insight into the theory\_ and an important one\_ comes from the understanding that just like 'clashing ideologies' was a mere smokescreen for deeper political and economic dynamics during the Cold War, 'clashing civilizations' too was a smokescreen to clothe the real foreign policy objectives of the USA after the Cold War, which were geared towards the preservation of hegemony and global dominance. Paul Hammond opines, "Huntington writes of the Cold War as ideological and seeks in his theory about civilizations a successor theory or paradigm, at once simple and encompassing, like the theory that the Cold War was a conflict between Communism and Capitalism."<sup>17</sup> The pattern is continuous. The presentation of the world in a certain way legitimizes certain politics. Interventionist and aggressive, the concept of civilizational clash is aimed at maintaining a war time status in the minds of the West.<sup>18</sup>

What must be noticed, for a fuller understanding of Huntington in context, is the connection Huntington establishes between his theoretical analysis of civilizational clash and his strategic recommendations to Western policy makers. What must not be disregarded are the geopolitical underpinnings of the Clash of Civilizations theory\_ according to Professor Ahmet Davutoglu\_ the 'geopolitical prioritization, the trade war to control international political economy.' The Professor gives an alternative analysis of the political instabilities in the post Cold War era in geopolitical and geoeconomic terms as outlined in the Mackinderian Heartland theory. The Muslim world is composed of the most strategic parts of the Rimland and Heartland Mackinder talked about. This has not only brought advantages but also risks to the Muslim world.

*"This provides the Muslim world with a geographical location which is very suitable to the development of a continental and maritime strategy at the same time. The basic weakness of the hegemonic powers in the previous*

<sup>16</sup> Amit Gupta, "Are We Really Seeing the Clash of Civilizations?", Asian Responses to the Clash of Civilizations, Salim Rashid (Ed.), Dhaka, Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Y. Hammond, "Culture Versus Civilization", Asian Responses to the Clash of Civilizations, Salim Rashid (Ed.), Dhaka, Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance", The Nation, October 22, 2001.

*two centuries was in having only such geographical capacity as allowed the development of either a continental or maritime strategy. For example, Britain and the US applied a basically maritime strategy while Germany and Russia had to concentrate on a continental strategy based on land power. This created a geostrategic balance and internal conflict among the hegemonic powers over the Muslim lands."*<sup>19</sup> Davutoglu points towards the fact that the collapse of the Soviet system strengthened the strategic position of the Muslim in the following ways:

- The core and southern part of the Heartland (Central Asia) consisting of the Muslim majority states became independent;
- The control and influence of the Muslim world over the passes from the Heartland to the coasts of the Rimland increased, especially through the Caucasus and Afghanistan;
- The geographical link of the Muslim communities in the Balkans became a significant regional access for Muslims to reach Europe;
- The geo-economics of the Muslim world was strengthened by the resources of the new Muslim independent states, especially oil and natural gas resources in Central Asia.
- An independent Muslim country having nuclear power\_ Kazakhstan\_ came into being.<sup>20</sup>

These developments in the post Cold War era attracted 'intra systemic competition' over these geopolitically core regions. This accounts for the unstable international position of the Muslim world as the victim of strategic competition.

"The bloody borders of Islam are not merely due to historical hostilities or civilizational clashes; Huntington's theory... neglects the intra-systemic conflicts among the hegemonic powers, which is the most decisive factor in international relations..."

The presentation of the Muslim world as a potential enemy... encourages oppressive political tendencies in the Muslim world as Western powers which promote democratic values in other parts of the world, support dictatorial regimes in Muslim countries because democracy might get radical Islamic groups voted into power. Western strategic interests in preserving undemocratic political systems have caused instability and provided hegemonic powers with an opportunity to manipulate internal conflicts for their own strategic aims. It also leads to the toleration of oppression of Muslim

<sup>19</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, "The Clash of Interests: An Explanation of World Disorder", Journal of Foreign Affairs, Dec 1997 to Feb 1998, Vol II, no.4.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

minorities as internal affairs of those countries. It has resulted in the creation of international coalitions against a possible Islamic threat... Strategic analysts try to prove that the belt of Muslim countries stretching from Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan across five former Soviet republics might turn to fundamentalism. It is interesting that the same Islamic belt was encouraged by the U.S during the Cold War era as a guarantee for US strategic interests against the expansion of the USSR."<sup>21</sup>

It is telling, therefore, that Huntington, having started his hypothesis with historical analysis and civilizational faultlines, ends on a note of strategic pragmatism with a set of strategic goals outlined for Western policy makers. Without mincing words, he proclaims that the West, in order to maintain its sway, must manipulate and provoke clashes in order to pursue its strategic interests. It must 'exploit differences and conflicts among Confucian and Islamic states; to support in other civilizations groups sympathetic to Western values and interests; to strengthen international institutions that reflect and legitimate Western interests and values and to promote the involvement of non Western states in those institutions.'<sup>22</sup> Other than that, it should work towards 'maintaining economic and military power necessary to protect its interests in relation to these civilizations.'<sup>23</sup>

To fully understand how the Huntingtonian thesis is central to U.S foreign policy agenda, it is important to understand both the background and the influences on the writing of the article. According to Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia, before his monumental 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis, Huntington had written about the dangers of foreign immigration to the U.S and the necessity of U.S military intervention in the Third World. In an influential 1968 article he advocated the concentration of the rural population of South Vietnam as a means of isolating the Viet Cong. During 1977 and 1978, in the administration of Jimmy Carter, he was the White House Coordinator of Security Planning for the National Security Council. In 1986, after a paper he presented at an international conference, Huntington was widely accused of misusing mathematics and engaging in pseudo-science. "It was claimed that Huntington distorted the historical record and used pseudo-mathematics to make his conclusions appear convincing."<sup>24</sup> His influential 1993 article on the Clash of Civilizations thesis was written in his capacity as a consultant to the U.S. Department of State. According to independent analyst James L Secor, "The most

important point to consider, that no one seems to have taken into account, is that Huntington wrote from the American Enterprise Institute, a neo-liberal think tank. So, there is an underlying bias right from the beginning. I think it is politically motivated. I think that it comes from The American Enterprise Institute is perhaps the most important aspect of the book yet it is the aspect not even considered."<sup>25</sup>

## THE ORIENTALIST LEGACY IN HUNTINGTON

A fundamental question at the heart of intercultural communication is how strangers who look and behave differently from oneself can be understood. Why is it that people have preconceived notions about those different from them\_ questions that are not objective but coloured by subjectivity and often tainted with prejudice and bias? Each culture defines those outside of it as enemies who threaten it from without as 'Others' to be despised and fought. Although this is a general human failing, it is most pronounced and obvious in the case of the perception by the West of what is called the Orient or the world East of the Occident. Orientalism, then, is the lens through which the West has viewed the East or the Orient traditionally and historically, and continues to do so. It is the West's framework to understand an unfamiliar people and their culture, often making them look different and threatening through a repertoire of Orientalist images and stereotypes.

Edward Said's Magnum Opus on Orientalism by the same name can rightfully be called a masterwork in revealing the dimensions and vicissitudes of Orientalism. In his book, he defines Orientalism as consisting of "a body of ideas, beliefs, clichés or learning about the East at large in Western society."<sup>26</sup> It is in his words

"a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European or Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe. It is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "A Clash of Civilizations?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. 72, No. 3, (Summer 1993), p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia, "Samuel P Huntington." [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com) (Accessed May 9, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> As told to the writer by Dr. James L Secor, in response to a query by this writer regarding the importance of Huntington's thesis today. The response was received by this writer on e-mail on May 9, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Said, Orientalism, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, Great Britain, 1978. P. 205.

Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles."<sup>27</sup>

Orientalism accorded certain fundamental, invariable characteristic traits to the Orient. Gradually the Orient, in the Western mindset, began to be identified with these accorded characteristics. The large body of Orientalist literature that came to the fore in the nineteenth century with the decadent Ottoman empire battling for survival against a rapidly mechanizing and voraciously expansionist Europe identified the prime characteristics of the Orient to be 'sensuality, despotism, aberrant mentality, inaccuracy, backwardness' as well as its 'separateness, eccentricity, silent indifference, feminine penetrability, supine malleability';<sup>28</sup> This was considered to be objective, valid and empirically inviolable.

All these traits considered intrinsically 'Oriental' make it obvious that the nature and status of the Oriental world, its values, culture and people, was little more than that of a passive subject to be studied, analyzed, perceived and interpreted. Said writes, "Every writer on the Orient... saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption. The Orient existed as a place isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts and commerce."<sup>29</sup>

This Western lens to view the East tainted the Western perception of the people of the Orient, who were consequently 'othered' and alienated, and perceived as exotic curiosities to be studied by the superior post-Enlightenment Western mind:

"Alongwith all other peoples variously designated as backward, degenerate, uncivilized and retarded, the Orientals were viewed... having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or taken over... Since the Oriental was a member of the subject race, he had to be subjected: it was that simple."<sup>30</sup>

A repertoire of images of the East as a mysterious place

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., Introduction, pp1-2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 205-206.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.207.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

full of 'marvels and monsters'<sup>31</sup> abounded in the literature of the nineteenth century which had little to do with direct, firsthand experience. Even Orientalist 'experts' fell victim to this tendency to present the Orient as a fantastical curiosity outside of History that was unvarying and stagnant.

One of the most strikingly invariable features of Orientalism through the ages is the Orientalist consensus on the predominant religion of the Orient: Islam. The 'consensus' is of inferiority, degeneracy and imposture. It runs as a constant underlying theme throughout Orientalist tradition with exceptions being few and far between. The roots of this trend fundamental to Orientalist scholarship go far back in time to the genesis of Islam itself.

From the very outset, Islam, under the leadership of the Prophet (PBUH) established a dynamic outreach across communities, religious groups and cultures. Islam fomented deep connections through interaction and contact with both Jews and Christians. The Prophet (PBUH)'s correspondence and interaction with the Roman monarch as well as profound association and connection with the Abyssinian king Negus is well documented, as is the religious freedom officially accorded by him to the Christians of Najran in the outlying regions of the Arabian peninsula. The first documented response from the Christian world to the Call of Islam, however, came as early as 50 A.H (672 C.E), from St. John of Damascus who wrote a refutation of Islam in the Greek language titled 'Discussion between a Christian and a Saracen.' In this St. John maintained that 'the Ishmaelites had been led to idolatry by a false prophet taking his ideas from an Aryan monk.'<sup>32</sup> Following St. John, numerous other eminent Christian saints and scholars wrote critiques of Islam which form the core and the ethos of Orientalism. Among these saints are St. Thomas Aquinas who wrote the 'Summary of the Doctrines of the Gentiles' in which he attacked Islam and its followers as irrational, false and barbaric.<sup>33</sup> Both the saints and their classical, foundational texts set the tenor for the future course of Orientalism. Today the West has an established 'canon' about Islam that has been standardized. This Orientalist 'canon' to interpret Islam has been called the West's "Crusade Complex" by Sheikh Ali Tamimi. If one may generalize, there are, very broadly speaking, six primary fundamental suppositions

<sup>31</sup> Stated by Professor Sut Jhally of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA in his video presentation 'Orientalism' available at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Quoted by Sheikh Ali al Tamimi in his recorded audio lecture 'Crusade Complex', available at [www.aswatalislam.com](http://www.aswatalislam.com) (Accessed December 27, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

about Islam contained in Orientalism. Briefly put, these are:

- Islam as a falsehood and a deliberate perversion of the truth.
- Islam as a religion of violence and the sword spread through persecution and destruction.
- Islam as self-indulgent, celebrating physical pleasures.
- The Prophet (PBUH) of Islam as unbefitting of spiritual leadership. A vast amount of literature attacking the person of the Prophet (PBUH) exists in the West's Orientalist tradition.
- Islam as inflexible, regressive, monolithic.
- Islam as an expansionist political programme threatening the West.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Orientalist scholarship was grounded in the purely theological basis of Christian dogma. However, gradually with the rise of materialism following the Industrial Revolution and the zenith of the West's temporal power manifesting itself in the Colonialist mission, Orientalism took on a more secular colour. Edward Said holds that Orientalism is created by an historical, institutional context and its present day form is embedded in the history of imperial conquest. In this sense, Orientalism becomes a ploy for military and ideological conquest of the Orient by the Occident. The question that harks at the heart of Orientalism is 'How do we understand the natives we conquer so we can subdue them easier?' The process to 'explain people who are different' has gone on for a long time, and Orientalism formalizes it dangerously in that it represents itself as objective knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

The first modern imperial expedition is important in the evolution of Orientalism. This was the conquest of Egypt undertaken by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. It is interesting and important to note that Napoleon took along with his soldiers a number of artists, scientists, researchers, philologists and historians to 'record' Egypt in every conceivable way and to produce a 'scientific survey' of Egypt to be consumed by a European audience. These scholars produced volumes of Orientalist work which loudly bespeak the power and prestige of Europe on the doorstep of modernity, and use knowledge of the subject to subdue him and let it be known that 'France can do to the Egyptians what the

Egyptians cannot do to France.'<sup>35</sup>

Following this, there developed a profound relationship between Orientalism and power politics. The doctrine of Orientalism ('latent Orientalism') lent strength to the Orientalist experience of Western dominance of Eastern territories ('manifest Orientalism'). Orientalists had a special and a very important role to play as advisors to governments and became 'special agents of Western power as it attempted policy vis a vis the Orient.'<sup>36</sup>

Orientalism underwent an important secular transition following the Second World War. Maryam Jameelah writes, "Prior to the nineteenth century, the bulk of Western literature attacked Islam. Since the end of the World War, the Orientalists' Christian pretence has been almost entirely discarded in favour of pure, unadulterated materialism. Islam is no longer condemned because of its rejection of the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ or the dogma of the Original Sin."<sup>37</sup> This inaugurated modern Orientalism. A significant feature of Orientalism since World War II is the tremendously increased attention to the Arab-Muslim figure as well as to Islam. This went on as a steady stream until 9/11, but the spectacular fall of the Twin Towers made it step down from the domain of the intellectual elite and enter into public discourse and street talk. It is this subject today that is the media's favourite theme.

Despite the evolution Orientalism has undergone, however, the polemics of Orientalism have varied little: "Books and articles are regularly published on Islam and the Arabs that represent absolutely no change over the virulent anti Islamic polemics of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance."<sup>38</sup> Malaysian Professor Osman Bakar points out that the West has perpetuated its misconceptions and myths about Islam.<sup>39</sup>

"Ever since they watched it (i.e Islam) appear on the world stage, Christians never cease to insult and slander it in order to find justifications for waging war on it. It has been subjected to grotesque distortions, the traces of which lie still in the European mind. Even today there are many Westerners for whom Islam can be reduced to three ideas: fanaticism, fatalism and polygamy."<sup>40</sup>

The modern transition of Orientalism involved the transference of the disseminating authority from the

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978.p.223.

<sup>37</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Islam and Orientalism*, Lahore, M. Yusuf Khan and Sons, 1981, pp19-20.

<sup>38</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978. p.287.

<sup>39</sup> Osman Bakar, *Islam and Civilizational Dialogue*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, 1997, p.37.

<sup>40</sup> Roger du Pasquier, *Unveiling Islam*, United Kingdom, Cambridge Islamic Texts Society, 1992.

<sup>34</sup> Stated by Professor Edward Said in a series of interviews on the subject of Orientalism conducted in 1998, video recordings of which are available under the title 'Orientalism' on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) as well as [www.voobys.com](http://www.voobys.com). (Accessed May 2, 2009.)

former European colonial powers to the United States. While Britain and France had had direct experience of the Orient in their colonies, this could not be said about America. American Orientalism therefore, is based not on experience but largely on abstraction. It is also heavily politicized owing to the United States' deep-seated interests in the Middle East as well as its massive support and firm alliance with Israel which serves and safeguards US interests in the region.<sup>41</sup> This has had profound influences on Orientalism in America. American Orientalism has assumed a more virulent 'Us and Them' character that views Muslims as Enemies. U.S definitions in the context of the so-called War on Terror have been standardized as a global paradigm which consists of the ancient, core stereotypes of Islam prevalent in Orientalist discourse. This new framework to view the world has gradually acquired strength so that 'even the unusual becomes routinised as new events are forced into existing frames of reference. Hence Muslims are 'othered' in a mediated world where simplistic notions of good and evil peoples finds currency.'<sup>42</sup>

The impact that this has had on the news media and the representation of Muslims is immense:

"Islam and the activities of certain Muslims are very newsworthy subjects. Indeed, very few of the more significant news stories of the past few years have not included Muslims in some form or the other while very few of the stories 'about Muslims' over this same period have been about anything other than the War on Terror.' It is in its climate of threat, fear and misunderstanding that the reporting of Islam and the Muslims is currently situated."<sup>43</sup>

This can particularly be noticed in the coverage and understanding of the Middle East-Palestine issue which is lamentably lopsided:

"No attention is paid to the fact that the occupation of West Bank and Gaza has been going on for forty years, and is the longest ever military occupation in modern history. The public is made to believe as if the only problem is Hamas terrorism that threatens Israel's security. No attention is paid to the hundreds of thousands who suffer due to military occupation. It is no more possible for an American to know the truth about the Middle

East... A lot else is going on in the Middle East that is not seen or understood by the West. The result of the media's focus on one aspect alone presents Muslims as only one thing: Terrorists. When we see anyone fitting that description, we think of fanatics, extremists, fundamentalists and terrorists. This takes away the humanity and diversity of millions of human beings who live normal, decent lives."<sup>44</sup>

Predominant images in the news media regarding Muslims other than those of terrorism, are, according to Elizabeth Poole, those of 'illegitimacy, criminality, violence, extremism, fanaticism, aggression and disloyalty. Religion is often given as an explanatory factor for behaviour and overall an official hegemonic viewpoint dominates.'<sup>45</sup>

It is important here to analyze the representation of Islam in modern Orientalism as 'Islamic civilization' happens to be Huntington's predominant concern in his milestone 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.' Maryam Jameelah sums up the prime assumptions about Islam that define modern Orientalism. Orientalists believe about Islam:

"That the Holy Quran is the work of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), that the hadith literature is forged; that Islam is a mere politico-economic outburst by impoverished Bedouins rather than a religious movement, that Islam stifled the artistic creativity of the people it conquered; that Islam is nothing but the current practices of its present people; that it is superstitious, fatalistic, unscientific, unmodern and opposed to developed; that it stands in need of the same reformation Christianity underwent: that the best in Islam is Sufism with its individualism, anti-Shariah emphasis on the fallenness of man and his need for a master saviour, and the repudiation of the warlike and exclusivist Sunnism; and above all, that Islam stands on an inferior moral with its materialistic conceptions of paradise and low status of women, that its prohibition of interest is anti-industrialization, its puritanical and anti-alcohol ethic is against urbanization and modern liberalism, its dogmatism is anti progressive, and it drives its

<sup>41</sup> Professor Edward Said in a series of interviews on the subject of Orientalism conducted in 1998, video recordings of which are available under the title 'Orientalism' on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) as well as [www.voobys.com](http://www.voobys.com). (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Poole and John E. Richardson, *Muslims and the News Media*, London, I.B Tauris, 2006, p.6.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

<sup>44</sup> Professor Edward Said in a series of interviews on the subject of Orientalism conducted in 1998, video recordings of which are available under the title 'Orientalism' on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) as well as [www.voobys.com](http://www.voobys.com). (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Poole and John E. Richardson, *Muslims and the News Media*, London, I.B Tauris, 2006, p.5.

miserable and vanquished people into psychosis by teaching them that God is on their side and that He is the author of history\_ all these falsehoods are current in practically every Western presentation of the religion, culture, history and civilization of Islam.”<sup>46</sup>

Modern Orientalism establishes a vital link between Orientalist discourse and political policy making. Hence the influence of Orientalism in Western policy-making elite cannot be ignored. The Clash of Civilizations is a classic example here, because, owing to Huntington’s influence in the Pentagon, his hypothesis with all its baggage of Orientalism is fundamental to American foreign policy, as will become subsequently clear. The onus in Huntington’s work falls overwhelmingly on Islam. For his viewpoint on Islam, Huntington, in a classical Orientalist gesture, borrows from Bernard Lewis who embodies in his work the essence of modern Orientalism. Quoting Said again,

“the conflict between Islam and the West, gets the lion’s share of Huntington’s attention. In this belligerent kind of thought, he relies heavily on a 1990 article by the veteran Orientalist Bernard Lewis, whose ideological colors are manifest in its title, “The Roots of Muslim Rage.” In both articles, the personification of enormous entities called “the West” and “Islam” is recklessly affirmed, as if hugely complicated matters like identity and culture existed in a cartoonlike world where Popeye and Bluto bash each other mercilessly, with one always more virtuous pugilist getting the upper hand over his adversary. Certainly neither Huntington nor Lewis has much time to spare for... the unattractive possibility that a great deal of demagoguery and downright ignorance is involved in presuming to speak for a whole religion or civilization.”<sup>47</sup>

The very title of Huntington’s book is borrowed from Lewis’s “Roots of Muslim Rage” in which he tellingly remarked,

“It should by now clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations\_ the perhaps irrational but surely

historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but equally irrational reaction against that rival.”<sup>48</sup>

Three years after Bernard Lewis’s Atlantic Monthly article, Samuel P. Huntington came up with a similar argument stating:

“It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.”<sup>49</sup>

While writing on the ‘faultlines between civilizations’, Huntington quotes the preceding extract from Bernard Lewis in order to substantiate the claim that a clash between Islam and the West is historical, permanent, irreconcilable and perhaps the greatest danger facing ‘our’ civilization rooted in ‘Judeo-Christian values’.

Bernard Lewis’s perception of Islam through characteristically Orientalist lenses is self-evident when he writes in his book marginalizing Muslims into a people who, “when the deeper passions are stirred, their dignity and courtesy toward others can give way to an explosive mixture of rage and hatred which impels even the government...to espouse kidnapping and assassination, and try to find, in the life of their Prophet, approval and indeed precedent for such actions”.

Clearly, Huntington picks from Lewis his idea that civilizations are monolithic and built on the duality of ‘us and them’. Lewis sees the clash as the inherent human “way of distinguishing between themselves and others: insider and outsider, in-group and out-group, kinsman or neighbor and foreigner.”<sup>50</sup> Lewis embodies in his work the essential traits of Orientalist tradition. As Huntington’s prime influence, Lewis’s Orientalism lies at the heart of the ‘Clash of Civilizations’ rhetoric. Edward Said writes,

<sup>48</sup> Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage: Why So Many Muslims Deeply Resent the West, and Why Their Bitterness Will Not Be Easily Mollified”, *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 266, No.3, September 1990, pp. 47-58

<sup>49</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, (Summer 1993), p. 22

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Islam and Orientalism*, Lahore, M. Yusuf Khan and Sons, 1981, pp 23-24.

<sup>47</sup> Edward W. Said, “The Clash of Ignorance”, *The Nation*, October 22, 2001.

“Lewis’s polemic is that of Islam not merely as anti Semitic but also an irrational herd or mass phenomenon ruling Muslims by passions, instincts and unreflecting hatreds. The whole point of his exposition is to frighten his audience and not let them yield an inch to Islam. Lewis tries to give the impression that Islam never modernized, nor did the Muslims. According to Lewis, Islam does not develop, and neither do Muslims; they merely are, and are to be watched, on account of the pure essence of theirs, which happens to include a long-standing hatred of Christians and Jews.”<sup>51</sup>

Lewis’s influence cannot be dismissed as insignificant or slight. Said goes on,

“Lewis is an interesting case to examine further because his standing in the political world of the Anglo American Middle East establishment is that of the learned Orientalist, and everything he writes is steeped in the ‘authority’ of his field. Yet for at least a decade and a half his work in the main has been aggressively ideological, despite his various attempts at subtlety and irony. His work purports to be liberal objective scholarship but is in reality very close to being propaganda against the subject material. This, however, should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the history of Orientalism; it is only the latest\_ and in the West the most uncriticized\_ of the scandals of ‘scholarship.’”<sup>52</sup>

Borrowing heavily from both Lewis and the whole repertoire of Orientalist literature on Islam, Huntington devotes a whole section to Islam having ‘bloody borders’ in his book. Through citing facts and figures of wars both historical and contemporary, he proves violence to be intrinsic to Islam in order to substantiate his earlier\_ and much criticized\_ claim that Islam had ‘bloody borders’:

“The relations between Muslims and peoples of other civilizations have generally been antagonistic; most of these relations have been violent at some point in the past, and many have been violent in the 1990s. Wherever one looks along the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peaceably with their neighbours. The question naturally arises as to whether this pattern of late-twentieth century conflict between Muslim and non Muslim groups is equally true of relations between groups from other civilizations. In fact, it is not.

<sup>51</sup> Edward Said, Orientalism, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978. p.317.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p 316.

Muslims make up about one-fifth of the world’s population but in the 1990s they have been far more involved in inter-group violence than the people of any other civilization. The evidence is overwhelming... In the early 1990s Muslims were engaged in more inter-group violence than non Muslims, and two-thirds to three-quarters of intercivilizational wars were between Muslims and non Muslims. Islam’s borders are bloody, and so are its innards.”<sup>53</sup>

It is also clearly in line with Bernard Lewis that religion is inherently conflictual and irreconcilable. Huntington emphatically states this hence: “Millennia of human history have shown that religion is not a ‘small difference’, but possibly the most profound difference that can exist between people. The frequency, intensity and violence of fault line wars are greatly enhanced by beliefs in different gods.”<sup>54</sup> Huntington also borrows from Lewis and other Orientalist influences his conviction that Muslim societies are backward, regressive and underdeveloped due to the fixity and primitive nature of the religious values of the Muslims. While Lewis seems to imply that Muslims all over the world are ‘in a rage over the West’s development’,<sup>55</sup> Huntington believes the Western legacy of the French Revolution, Renaissance and Enlightenment gives it values that are in some way superior to peoples living under Ottoman or Czarist monarchies at that point in time.<sup>56</sup> “The antiquated way of life of traditional Islamic society is held responsible for the weakness of the Muslim countries today with their poverty, ignorance, disease, apathy and backwardness. Therefore, the Orientalists conclude, the only road to progress is an uncritical adoption of Western materialism.”<sup>57</sup> This engenders the belief in the superiority of Western civilization, a belief Huntington strongly adheres to, as exemplified by Dieter Senghaas:

“Thorough interpretations of civilizations are not given by Huntington, with one major exception. According to Huntington the essence of Western civilization is based on Greek rationalism, Roman law, Catholicism and Protestantism, the variety of European languages, the

<sup>53</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, Touchstone, New York, 1996, p.258.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.254.

<sup>55</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled “The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations” at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), (accessed may 9, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” Foreign Affairs, Vol. 72, No. 3, (Summer 1993), pp. 21-22.

<sup>57</sup> Maryam Jameelah, Islam and Orientalism, Lahore, M. Yusuf Khan and Sons, 1981, p 22.

division of church and state power, rule of law, social pluralism, representative public bodies and individualism. With slight exaggeration he even argues that these characteristics are Western but not modern in the Western world. The essential characteristics of the West are much older.”<sup>58</sup>

Bernard Lewis believes that there are inherent qualities of Islam that cannot be reconciled with the West. Tabitha Basa-Ong has made an interesting comparison of Lewis and Huntington with Osama bin Laden, all proponents of a clash between civilizations:

“To Lewis, it is just a clash between these two civilizations and he supports his argument using history and ideology: from the beginning, Western cultures separated Church and State, which is an indispensable, indelible difference between Islam and the West. However, Huntington recognizes a clash, but complicates it to clashes between various civilizations, including “Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African” civilizations. I also think that Huntington’s other strength is that he recognizes the process of globalization, as the world becomes smaller and different civilizations increase interaction. Bin Laden was surprisingly convincing, and I found his strengths to be that he strongly believed in God and what he thought, that he was incredibly knowledgeable about the world (even if his opinion was one-sided), and that he, like Lewis and Huntington, uses history for support as well, “*the people of Islam have been afflicted with oppression, hostility, and injustice by the Judeo-Christian alliance and its supporters.*” He also brings up situations in Palestine, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, when addressing Americans, letting us know that he is avenging his people. In the end, he makes Muslims the victim, saying that the West is so bad because we have done so many things, and that he is only attacking out of defense. From his rhetoric, he dislikes the West so much because the West has constantly attacked them in the past. The most obvious weakness in the “clash” argument is that each of these authors disregards nuances within a civilization. Not everyone in the Islamic world is the same, just as not everyone in the West is the same. Lewis and Huntington cannot assume that every Muslim wants to attack the West because they are so backward, and the West is so developed. Bin Laden cannot assume that the “American army is part of the American people...”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Dieter Senghaas, The Clash Within Civilizations, London, Routledge, 2002., pp. 71-72.

<sup>59</sup> Tabitha Basa-Ong, “What Clash of Civilizations?”, New York University, September 29, 2008, [www.nyu.blogs.com](http://www.nyu.blogs.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

Both Huntington and Lewis, with all their views, were personalities extremely ‘listened to’ at the Council of Foreign Relations. “Lewis has been especially sought after in Washington since September 11th. Karl Rove invited him to speak at the White House. Richard Perle and Dick Cheney are among his admirers ... And his bestselling book ‘What Went Wrong?’ about the decline of Muslim civilization, is regarded in some circles as a kind of handbook in the war against Islamist terrorism.”<sup>60</sup> In 2004, *Time* included Lewis in its list of 100 most influential scientists and thinkers,<sup>61</sup> and Edward Said suggested that, “What made Lewis’s work so appalling in its effects was the fact that without any other views to counter his, American policy-makers...fell for them.”<sup>62</sup> This is what draws the connection between Orientalist discourse spearheaded by the two writers and U.S foreign policy. Orientalist think tanks generate opinions and opinion leaders that are profoundly influential and have a say in U.S policy-making circles. There exist dozens of periodicals, most of them financed by state authorities, devoted entirely to the study of Islam, the Muslims and the Middle East that are essentially Orientalist in outlook and steer the course of U.S policy. Some of these are ‘The Muslim World’ (Hartford, Connecticut), Middle East Studies (New York), The Middle East Journal (Washington D.C), Journal of the Oriental Society (New Haven, Connecticut) and American Near Eastern Studies (Chicago).<sup>63</sup> The impact of this politicization and mainstreaming of Orientalism on Western society has been immense. It has encouraged pre-emptive policies of Western nations towards Muslim countries, ‘racial profiling, restrictions on immigration, illegal detention of Muslims without trial, validating current imperialist adventures of the US-UK and further excluding and disenfranchising Muslim communities.’<sup>64</sup>

Ironically, however, despite the pervasive and deep influence of Orientalism in Western policy making and scholarship, the fact remains that Orientalist perceptions are not backed by any sound, real evidence and hence do not qualify as authentic scholarship at all. It is observable to a keen eye that

<sup>60</sup> Ian Buruma, “Lost In Translation,” The New Yorker, June 7, 2004:  
[http://www.newyorker.com/printables/critics/040614crbo\\_book\\_s](http://www.newyorker.com/printables/critics/040614crbo_book_s) (accessed 27/9/2006).

<sup>61</sup> Elliott, “Bernard Lewis: Seeking The Roots Of Muslim Rage” , Time 163, no. 17, 26/4/2004.

<sup>62</sup> Edward W. Said, From Oslo To Iraq And The Roadmap, London: Bloomsbury, 2004, p. 263.

<sup>63</sup> Maryam Jameelah, Islam and Orientalism, Lahore, M. Yusuf Khan and Sons, 1981, p 22.

<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Poole and John E. Richardson, Muslims and the News Media, London, I.B Tauris, 2006, p.2.

"one of the striking aspects of the new American attention to the Orient is its regular avoidance of literature. You can read through reams of expert writing on the modern Near East and never encounter a single reference to Literature. What seems to matter far more to the regional experts are 'facts'... the net effect of this remarkable omission in modern American awareness of the Arab or Islamic Orient is to keep the region and its people conceptually emasculated, reduced to 'attitude', 'trends', 'statistics': in short, dehumanized."<sup>65</sup>

Years later after Nine Eleven intensified the Orientalist sway, Said wrote:

"The difference between today's pseudoscholarship and expert jargon about terrorism and the literature about Third World national liberation guerrillas two decades ago is interesting. Most of the earlier material was subject to the slower and therefore more careful procedures of print; to produce a piece of scholarship you had to go through the motions of exploring history, citing books, using footnotes--actually attempting to prove a point by developing an argument. Today's discourse on terrorism is an altogether streamlined thing. Its scholarship is yesterday's newspaper or today's CNN bulletin. Its gurus are journalists with obscure, even ambiguous, backgrounds. Most writing about terrorism is brief, pithy, totally devoid of the scholarly armature of evidence, proof, argument. Its paradigm is the television interview, the spot news announcement, the instant gratification one associates with the Reagan White House's "reality time," the evening news."<sup>66</sup>

The single greatest failing of Western scholarship, of which Huntington is a part, is the legacy of Orientalism central to it. Orientalism has utterly failed to lend objectivity to research, which is essential to make any piece of work credible. It is almost tragic that

"the principal dogmas of Orientalism exist in their purest form today in the studies of the Arabs and Islam, i.e., of the absolute, systemic difference between the West which is rational, developed, humane and superior to the Orient which is aberrant, underdeveloped, inferior. Second, that abstractions about the Orient are always preferable to direct evidence from Oriental realities. Third, that the Orient is incapable of defining itself and hence a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically 'objective.' Fourth, that the Orient is at bottom something to be feared or controlled by pacification, research and development or outright occupation, whenever possible."<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978. P.291.

<sup>66</sup> Edward Said, 'The Essential Terrorist', *The Nation*, 1986.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978. pp 300-301.

Said laments the fact that in the West, Islam is rarely studied, rarely researched and rarely known,<sup>68</sup> which is painfully obvious in Huntington's work whose assertions on Islam being violent, conflictual and irreconcilable are rejected everywhere by mainstream Muslim scholars and religious authorities.

The influence of Orientalism in the work of both Lewis and Huntington takes away objectivity and credibility from their work:

"Like Bernard Lewis, Huntington does not write objective and neutral prose, but is a polemicist whose rhetoric not only depends on a prior argument about a war of all against all but in effect perpetuates it. Far from being an arbiter between civilizations which Huntington wishes to be, Huntington is a partisan\_ an advocate of one civilization above all others. He defines Islamic civilization reductively, as if all that matters about it is its anti Westernism, as if the other Muslims have nothing else to do but think of the West with hatred; all they think about is how to destroy the West and bomb it."<sup>69</sup>

Orientalism in Huntington and elsewhere, keeping in mind its tremendous repercussions on society and politics, has deeper, underlying motivations that need to be studied for a fuller picture. Maryam Jameelah, from a spiritual-philosophical standpoint, explains that the reason why Islam and Muslims have always been targeted in Orientalist discourse is because Islam 'vehemently rejects moral relativity and staunchly continues to uphold the transcendent ideal. Contemporary materialism, on the other hand, assumes that moral and aesthetic values are limited to time, place and circumstance and continually subject to change in the course of human evolutionary progress.'<sup>70</sup>

Edward Said, on the other hand, believes that "Orientalism is a construction fabricated to whip up feelings of hostility and antipathy against that part of the world that happens to be of strategic importance due to its oil, its threatening adjacency to Christianity and history of competition with the West. This is totally different from what to a Muslim living in its domain, Islam really is."<sup>71</sup> A number of other critics and commentators also subscribe to the same view that Orientalism has helped resurrect

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>70</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Islam and Orientalism*, Lahore, M. Yusuf Khan and Sons, 1981, p 20.

<sup>71</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), (Accessed May 2, 2009).

age old stereotypes of Islam for geo-political motives of the West in the Muslim world. The theory of the Clash of Civilizations has helped create a foe in the Western mind to replace the Communist arch-enemy after the Cold War. This is a foe that is rather familiar and easy to sell to the Western public because of the history of Orientalist stereotypes of Islam that abound in Western tradition. The West continues to employ an arsenal of images of 'masses of people waving their fists, of utmost evil, frightening people conspiring to kill Americans',<sup>72</sup> and Huntington's influential thesis officialises it, injects it into political policy. The purpose it serves is the same as stated by a newscaster commenting on the World Trade Centre bombings: 'the threat of Muslims is an ongoing danger...'<sup>73</sup> Orientalism and its manifestation in the Clash of Civilizations theory uses Islam as a 'convenient foreign demon to turn attention away from the West's own iniquities',<sup>74</sup> and to justify the foreign policy direction that can best fulfil the national interests of powerful actors at the helm.

Eqbal Ahmed writes of the "mutilations of Islam by absolutists and fanatical tyrants who present the religion reduced to a penal code, stripped of its humanism, aesthetics, intellectual quests, and spiritual devotion." And this "entails an absolute assertion of one, generally de-contextualized, aspect of religion and a total disregard of another. The phenomenon distorts religion, debases tradition, and twists the political process wherever it unfolds."<sup>75</sup> Ahmed proceeds to present the rich, complex, pluralist meaning of the word *jihad* and shows that in the word's current confinement to indiscriminate war against presumed enemies, it is impossible "to recognize the Islamic--religion, society, culture, history or politics--as lived and experienced by Muslims through the ages."<sup>76</sup> This is what the West as a whole and the theory of Huntington in particular has failed to do.

The West fails to acknowledge the debt it owes to Islam, the centrality of Islamic values in the heritage of Europe and the essential commonalities between the two. Said writes, "The West drew on the humanism, science, philosophy, sociology and historiography of Islam, which had already interposed itself between Charlemagne's world and classical antiquity. Islam is inside from the start..."<sup>77</sup> So are values which the West claims to be uniquely its own, part of Muslim societies. Quoting from Chandra Muzaffar, "Today, some of the

leading ideas and institutions which have gained currency in the Muslim world whether in politics or economics are imports from the West. Similarly, Islam impacted law and architecture, literature and culture..."<sup>78</sup> It is an established fact that Western Renaissance from which the West traces its 'enlightened' ethos, was brought about in large part as a result of renewed contact between Islam and the West after the Crusades. Contact with Islam compelled Europeans to reconsider their values, ushering in free thinking and ending the suffocating absolutism of the Church. Values celebrated as 'Western' are in fact deeply intertwined into the ethos of human civilization\_ a common heritage of mankind.

"That different civilizations are not inherently prone to conflict is borne out by another salient feature which Huntington fails to highlight. Civilizations embody many similar values and ideals. At the philosophical level at least, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism among other world religions share certain common perspectives on the relationship between the human being and his environment, the integrity of the community, the importance of the family, the significance of moral leadership and indeed the meaning and purpose of life."<sup>79</sup>

Huntington's assertion that Islam has 'bloody borders' seems to imply that Islamic civilization is intrinsically and perpetually in violent conflict with all other civilizations. He expands upon his contentious statement in his book in the following words:

"The relations between Muslims and peoples of other civilizations\_ Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Hindu, Chinese, Buddhist, Jewish\_ have been generally antagonistic; in fact, most of these relationships have been violent in the past as well as in the modern times. Wherever one looks along the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peaceably with their neighbours. The question naturally arises as to whether this pattern of late twentieth century conflict between Muslim and non Muslim groups is equally true of relations between groups from other civilizations. In fact, it is not. Muslims make up about one-fifths of the world's population, but in the 1990s they have been far more involved in intergroup violence than the people of any other civilization. The evidence is overwhelming... Islam's borders are bloody, and so are its innards."<sup>80</sup>

This thesis is objectionable on many counts. For one, it is

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Eqbal Ahmed, "Roots of the Muslim Right", DAWN Newspaper, March 1999.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance", The Nation, October 22, 2001

<sup>78</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, "The Clash of Civilizations or Camouflaging Dominance?" South Asian Responses to the Clash of Civilizations Theory, Dhaka, Oxford Publishers, 1997.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Huntington, Samuel F., "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order", Touchstone, New York, 1997, pp 255-258.

simplistic and inaccurate, as a type of desperate defence of his insistence on Islam being 'bloody.' It is generalized and suggests that the reason Muslim societies find themselves in conflicts is not because of any other factors but that Islam itself is the problem. Besides, it seems to create an image of a sword-wielding barbaric, monolithic Muslim civilization bent upon the destruction of all and sundry, while the West and its allies cower with bated breath. This is far from reality and needs to be effectively refuted.

As for Islam being intrinsically bloody, it is enlightening to read what the basic sources and fundamental texts of Islam have to say on the matter:

In 628 C.E. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) granted a Charter of Privileges to the monks of St. Catherine Monastery in Mt. Sinai. It consisted of several clauses covering all aspects of human rights including such topics as the protection of Christians, freedom of worship and movement, freedom to appoint their own judges and to own and maintain their property, exemption from military service, and the right to protection in war.

An English translation of that document is presented here:

*This is a message from Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them.*

*Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because*

*Christians are my citizens; and by Allah! I hold out against anything that displeases them.*

*No compulsion is to be on them.*

*Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries.*

*No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims' houses.*

*Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate.*

*No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them.*

*If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray.*

*Their churches are to be respected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants.*

*No one of the nation (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world)<sup>81</sup>. (Rendered into English in 'Muslim History 570-1950', Dr. A. Zahur and A.Z Haq.)*

In the second Khalifah's time (Umar R.A), when Christian areas fell to the Muslims, Umar (R.A) wrote a public declaration:

*The Covenant of Omar*

*In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate*

*This is an assurance of peace and protection given by the servant of Allah Omar, Commander of the Believers to the people of Illia' [Jerusalem]. He gave them an assurance of protection for their lives, property, church and crosses as well as the sick and healthy and all its religious community.*

*Their churches shall not be occupied, demolished nor taken away wholly or in part. None of their crosses nor property shall be seized. They shall not be coerced in their religion nor shall any of them be injured. None of the Jews shall reside with them in Illia'.*

*The people of Illia shall pay Jizia tax as inhabitants of cities do. They shall evict all robbers and thieves.*

*He whoever gets out shall be guaranteed safety for his life and property until he reach his safe haven. He whoever stays shall be also safe, in which case he shall pay as much tax as the people of Illia' do. Should any of*

*the people of Illia wish to move together with his property along with the Romans and to clear out of their churches and crosses, they shall be safe for their lives, churches and crosses, until they have reached their safe haven. He whoever chooses to stay he may do so and he shall pay*

*as much tax as the people of Illia' do. He whoever wishes to move along with the Roman, may do so, and whoever wishes to return back home to his kinsfolk, may do so.*

*Nothing shall be taken from them, their crops have been harvested. To the contents of this convent here are given the Covenant of Allah, the guarantees of His Messenger, the Caliphs and the Believers, provided they pay their due Jizia tax.*

*Witnesses hereto are:*

*Khalid Ibn al-Waleed Amr Ibn al-Aas Abdul-Rahman Ibn'Auf Mu'awiya Ibn abi-Sifian Made and executed in the year 15 AH. (Source: Tabri, 'Tarikh Al umam wal Malouk'<sup>82</sup>)*

A.K Brohi writes,

"As the Muslims fanned out of Arabia into Byzantium, Persia and India, large numbers of Jews Christians and Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists came under their dominion. The same recognition granted to the Jews and Christians by the Prophet (SAW) personally was granted to every non Muslim religious community on the one condition of their keeping the peace. The case of Jerusalem was the typos of this Muslim tolerance and goodwill on the religious level as well as on the social and

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Setting the Record Straight: A Rejoinder, Memoona Sajjad (Ed.), EPIC Publications, Lahore, 2008. P. 29.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

cultural”<sup>83</sup>.

Thomas Arnold writes:

“Of any organised attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non Muslim population, or of any systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout which no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions. So that the very survival of these Churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of the Muhammadan government towards them”.<sup>84</sup>

Brohi continues:

“Compared with the histories of other religions, the history of Islam is categorically white as far as toleration of other religions is concerned. Fortunately, we have on record many witnesses from those days of Muslim conquest to whom we should be grateful for clearing this matter once and for all. Michael the Elder, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, wrote in the second half of the twelfth century: ‘This is why the God of vengeance... beholding the wickedness of the Romans who, throughout their dominions, cruelly plundered our churches and our monasteries and condemned us without pity\_ brought from the region of the south the sons of Ishmael, to deliver us through them from the hands of the Romans.’

“Barhebreus is the author of an equally powerful witness in the favour of Islam. Ricoldus de Mone Crucis, a Dominican monk from Florence who visited the Muslim East about 1300 AD, gave an equally eloquent witness of tolerance with the Christians. And yet, if the Muslims were so tolerant, the Christian persistently asks, why did their co-religionists flock to Islam by the millions? Of these co-religionists the Arabs were the smallest minority. The rest were Hellenes, Persians, Egyptians, Cyrenaicans, Berbers, Cypriots and Caucasians. Canon Taylor explained it beautifully at a Church Congress held at Wolverhampton. He said: ‘It is easy to understand why this reformed Judaism swept so swiftly over Asia and Africa. The African and Syrian doctors had substituted abstruse metaphysical dogmas for the religion of Christ: they tried to combat the licentiousness of the age by

setting forth the celestial merit of celibacy and the angelic excellence of virginity\_ seclusion from the world was the road of holiness, dirt was the characteristic of monkish sanctity\_ the people were practically polytheists, worshipping a crowd of martyrs, saints and angels; the upper classes were effeminate and corrupt, the middle classes oppressed by taxation, the slaves without hope for the present or the future. As with the besom of God, Islam swept away this mass of corruption and superstition. It was a revolt against empty theological polemics; it was a masculine protest against the exaltation of celibacy as a crown of piety. It brought out the fundamental dogmas of religion\_ the unity and greatness of God, that He is merciful and righteous, that He claims obedience to His will, resignation and faith. It proclaimed the responsibility of man, a future life, a day of judgement, and stern retribution to fall upon the wicked; and enforced the duties of prayer, almsgiving, fasting and benevolence. It thrust aside the artificial virtues, the religious frauds and follies, the perverted moral sentiments, and the verbal subtleties of theological disputants. It replaced monkishness by manliness. It gave hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition to the fundamental facts of human nature.”<sup>85</sup>

#### **‘THE WEST VERSUS THE REST’: CREATING AND PERPETUATING SCHISMS**

The preceding section dealt with Huntington’s understanding of non Western cultures\_ particularly Islam\_ as based upon Orientalist scholarship in which non Western cultures and Islam are distinctly ‘the Other’. This ‘Other’ is not just an alien but a threatening foe and dangerous enemy to the West. Orientalism becomes the basis for the West-Non West rift Huntington makes much of in his work. It also fosters and justifies negative images and stereotypes of Islam and Muslims as ‘violent, terroristic, backward, and immoral’. This too is one of the ways which make Huntington’s theory typically ‘Western’, and rather steeped in an overweening sense of Western superiority. This orientation generates negative stereotypes and takes away objectivity from Huntington’s work which cannot pretend to have been written in a neutral perspective: “The negative stereotypes eventually distract the West from the search for critical understanding and dialogue with Islam/the Muslim World. In this respect, Huntington’s perspective of Islam is considerably parallel to Orientalist scholarship’s story of conflict rather than dialogue or at least peaceful coexist-

<sup>83</sup> Quoted by Altaf Gauhar, The Challenge of Islam, London, Islamic Council of Europe, 1978.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Setting the Record Straight: A Rejoinder, Memoona Sajjad (Ed.), Lahore, EPIC Publications, 2008. p.31

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, pp 31-32.

ence between the two worlds.”<sup>86</sup>

Originating and being immersed in the West, the theory of Classical Realism lies at the core of the Clash of Civilizations thesis. The conclusions Huntington leaves the West to accept as policy guidelines are thoroughly Realist, and, as Engin I. Erdem writing in the *Alternatives Journal* asserts, even ‘Machiavellian’ in the sense that they perpetuate conflict and construct a paradigm of clash and competing civilizations vying for dominance in the international arena.

Huntington defines ‘civilization’ as ‘the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have, short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined both by common objective elements such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions and by the subjective self-identification of people.’<sup>87</sup> These are immutable identities, classified by Huntington between ‘seven or eight major civilizations: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization.’<sup>88</sup> While Huntington clearly mentions the seven or eight civilizations of his own construction, he later groups them into a broader configuration of two opposing civilizations: the West and the Rest. “With the end of the Cold War, international politics moves out of its Western phase, and its centrepiece becomes the interaction between the West and non Western civilizations.”<sup>89</sup>

The reasons for predicting such a clash are many.

- The differences between these civilizations are basic, fundamental and irreconcilable by their very nature. The people belonging to these civilizations have ‘different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy.’<sup>90</sup> These differences have developed over centuries of human history. They have always been there and generated conflict, but their relevance in today’s world and in the future, has greatly intensified. Hence a ‘clash of civilizations.’
- As civilizational interaction increases with better communication, civilizational consciousness and

<sup>86</sup> Engin I. Erdem, “The Clash of Civilizations Revisited after September 11”, *Alternatives Journal*, Summer 2002, Vol.1, no.2.

<sup>87</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations”, *Foreign Affairs Journal*, Summer 1993, p24.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p 25.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p.25.

awareness of differences between civilizations also increases.

- The process of economic modernization and social change weakens national identity, and religion moves in to fill up the ‘vacuum’ created by it. The world is gradually being ‘de-secularized’ and fundamentalist tendencies are developing within practitioners of almost all religions. This revival of religion ‘transcends boundaries’ and makes civilizations integrate through the bond of religion.

- As a reaction to the West’s dominance in the world, non Western societies wish to disassociate themselves from Western culture and civilization and ‘return to the roots’ to rediscover and adhere to their own identity. A ‘de-Westernization and indigenization of elites’ is occurring in non Western societies.<sup>91</sup>

- Differences in culture and identity by their very nature are irreconcilable as compared to the more mutable differences in ideologies or nationality. While the key question in ordinary conflicts is ‘What side are you on?’ the question in a civilizational conflict becomes, ‘Who are you?’<sup>92</sup>

- Forces of regionalism weaken national boundaries and make different regions of the world integrate on the basis of common culture and common interests.

Due to all these factors the polarization between ‘us and them’ is increasing in the world. The West’s bid to ‘promote Western values’ through dominance and neo-colonialist tactics in order to advance its military and economic interests generates the desire to rally together on the basis of civilizational identity by non Western peoples. Engin I Erdem elaborates,

“Of seven or eight major civilizations, he claims, Islamic and Western civilizations are likely to clash because Islam is the only civilization that aspires universalist values and poses a significant challenge to the West. On the other hand, Huntington talks about an Islamic-Confucian connection against the Western civilization. In doing so, he recommends that the West should limit expansion of Islamic-Confucian states’ military and economic power and the West should exploit differences between the two civilizations.

Besides, Huntington is highly concerned with de-Westernization and indigenization of elites as well as non-Western modernization in many non-Western countries. The West and the United States especially, Huntington argues, should be cautious about this development. In this regard, the West should control immigration and assimilate immigrants in order to

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, p.26

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, p.27

preserve and reify civilizational homogeneity. As he extensively concerns with the status of Western power and unity, Huntington also calls for improvement of Western unity. In this respect, he recommends empowerment of the Atlantic partnership between the US and Europe. In order to realize civilizational homogeneity of the West he attributes NATO a 'civilizational mission'.<sup>93</sup>

While this stands as Huntington's clearly stated contention in his landmark work, it is a widely contested claim.

The most vociferous of Huntington's critics, Edward Said, takes on Huntington's strident 'West-centredness' and ascribes to it a sort of intellectual arrogance of an Ideologist for the West:

"The challenge for Western policy-makers, says Huntington, is to make sure that the West gets stronger and fends off all the others, Islam in particular. More troubling is Huntington's assumption that his perspective, which is to survey the entire world from a perch outside all ordinary attachments and hidden loyalties, is the correct one, as if everyone else were scurrying around looking for the answers that he has already found. In fact, Huntington is an ideologist, someone who wants to make "civilizations" and "identities" into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and countercurrents that animate human history, and that over centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing. This far less visible history is ignored in the rush to highlight the ludicrously compressed and constricted warfare that "the clash of civilizations" argues is the reality."<sup>94</sup>

This strident 'Westernism', Said continues, is strewn with 'vocabulary of gigantism and apocalypse, each use of which is plainly designed not to edify but to inflame the reader's indignant passion as a member of the "West," and what we need to do. Churchillian rhetoric is used inappropriately by self-appointed combatants in the West's, and especially America's, war against its haters, despoilers, destroyers.<sup>95</sup>

Such kind of a disposition carries within it a disregard and a lack of attention to the complex histories that challenge a Western-unilateralist understanding of civilizations and human affairs: "This is the problem with unedifying labels like Islam and the West: They mislead and confuse the mind, which is trying to make sense of a disorderly reality that won't be pigeonholed or strapped

down as easily as all that."<sup>96</sup> What such an overwhelming 'West-centredness' serves to do, perhaps, is to 'make bellicose statements for the purpose of mobilizing collective passions'<sup>97</sup> to get them to rally behind the West's adventurist, aggressive and aggrandizing foreign policies and to discourage independent thinking that could lead to reflection and examination to help one realize that one is dealing with innumerable inter-connected lives, "ours" as well as "theirs."<sup>98</sup>

This overweening sense puts the West at the centre of Huntington's universe. It gives the West a sort of 'entrenched position' of 'We are at the centre of the world', a position that Said describes as 'monotheistic'.<sup>99</sup> On the basis of this 'monotheistic' position, Huntington arbitrarily divides the world into 'seven or eight'<sup>100</sup> civilizations, not being sure whether Africa qualifies as a 'civilization':

"He divides the world into "seven or eight" major civilizations, the ambiguity being one of the book's few charming moments until you learn it's because he can't make up his mind whether Africa has any real civilization of its own or is simply half Islamic and half post-colonial. The seven others are Western, Latin American, "Orthodox" (Russian), Islamic, Hindu, "Sinic" (Chinese) and Japanese. Jewish and Buddhist civilization are considered to be separate entities but are dismissed because they don't control large territories."<sup>101</sup>

While it certainly is illuminating to understand conflict through the dynamics of culture, religion and civilizational identity, yet Huntington moves beyond to lump together diverse human communities in order to fit them into his rigid categorization of 'seven or eight' civilizations.

What needs to be examined is the fact that while Huntington arbitrarily divides the world into civilizational 'tectonic plates', he does not justify and validate this arbitrary division by highlighting the essential traits of these civilizations, with the exception of the 'Western civilization.' There is a noticeable absence of necessary analysis for making such a categorization in absolute

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Professor Edward Said in a series of interviews on the subject of Orientalism conducted in 1998, video recordings of which are available under the title 'Orientalism' on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) as well as [www.voobys.com](http://www.voobys.com). (accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>100</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations", *Foreign Affairs Journal*, Summer 1993, p25.

<sup>101</sup> Said Shirazi, "Your New Enemies" *Dissident Voice*, November 3, 2002, [www.dissidentvoice.org](http://www.dissidentvoice.org)

<sup>93</sup> Engin I Erdem, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited after September 11", *Alternatives Journal*, Summer 2002, Vol.1, no.2.

<sup>94</sup> Edward Said, "The Clash of Ignorance", *The Nation*, October 22, 2001.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

terms.

"Thorough interpretations of these civilizations are not given by Huntington, with one major exception... Western individuality. He argues that these characteristics are Western but not modern in the Western world. The modern age and modernization (industrialization, urbanization, literacy, education, prosperity and social mobility as well as complex and diversified professional structures) are of a more recent design, the essential characteristics of the West being much older. Only incidental notes can be found about the Sinic civilization, especially about the Confucian ethos which is taken for granted in many Asian societies... Asian people, moreover, according to Huntington, tend to consider the evolution of their societies over long periods, over centuries or even millennia. These attitudes form a contrast to those of the American people: the primacy given to liberty, equality, democracy and individualism as well as to their tendency to oppose authority, to strengthen a system of checks and balances, to declare human rights sacred, and to concentrate on the maximization of profits in the immediate present."<sup>102</sup>

This ignorance of the 'essence of civilizations' is particularly noticeable in the case of the 'Islamic civilization', which, according to Dieter Senghaas, has been 'left out entirely'. Huntington, like Bernard Lewis, regards Islam itself to be the problem, and emphasizes the fact that it is exclusivist and incapable of peaceful coexistence: "Huntington emphasizes that Muslim societies and states located at the cultural faultlines of the world have been shown to be excessively violent: he argues that Muslim war enthusiasm and readiness to use violence cannot now be denied either by Muslims or non Muslims. An obvious conclusion would therefore be that Islam per se has a violent character."<sup>103</sup> The problem as Huntington identifies it, is with the fact that certain civilizations\_ particularly Islamic\_ are inextricably entangled with religion, and obligate their members to be guided by religious belief. Religious conviction and zeal makes relations with other communities conflictual, and this is particularly so with Islam, which in Huntington's assertion, has 'bloody borders':

"This poses the question whether Muslims have a special problem with order. At least for many Muslims, the relationship between faith and government, or the role of the government's relation to Islam\_ mainly whether government should be secular or Muslim\_ is unresolved or in conflict. Such civilizations require governments to enforce religious practice and do not tolerate non-

conformity..."<sup>104</sup> making it impossible for secular, democratic values to thrive. Hence they are incompatible with the very basis of Western civilization, intensifying the prospects for a 'clash.' The problem therefore lies with religion and its pertinence and presence within the body-politic of civilizations. The West, celebrating secularism, has traditionally believed this, as Marc Gopin writes, "We in the West have had a tendency in the modern period to view religion as only the problem in the human relations of civil society, never part of solutions."<sup>105</sup>

Huntington and his Orientalist predecessors have ignored the fact that it is also religion that 'leads thousands of people to a passionate devotion to human rights, social justice, conflict resolution and deeper forms of reconciliation between enemies.'<sup>106</sup> Discourses and narratives of reconciliation are not rare in the doctrine and history of Islam. The neglect and ignorance of the role of religion is a blind spot in Western International Relations theory. Western I.R theorists upon whom Huntington draws strongly have made the classic error of considering modernity to mean the demise of religion. Ironically, this makes International Relations the most 'Western' of social science disciplines. This is the case because, in the words of Jonathan Fox,

"The core of Western I.R theory evolved from national security theories which focussed on... centuries of Western historical experience relating to material power, rationalist and economic factors which reinforced that religion was not relevant. As a result, major I.R theories, ideas and trends include an anti-religious bias... Yet, just because religion was rarely noticed does not mean it was not there."<sup>107</sup> Non Western communities especially the Muslims who have had a long and deep historical interaction with the West have a different perception of history:

"For many Muslims, the religious war with the Christian West did not end in 1683. For Muslims, this year marked the beginning of centuries of defeat and humiliation at Christian hands. Russia's conquest of Muslim Central Asia, European colonialism's success in controlling large parts of Muslim South Asia and North Africa, and the conquering of the Muslim Balkans by Greece, Bulgaria

<sup>104</sup> Paul Y. Hammond, "Culture Versus Civilization", *Asian Responses to the Clash of Civilizations*, Salim Rashid (Ed.), Dhaka, Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>105</sup> Marc Gopin, "Religion and International Relations at the Crossroads", *International Studies Review*, Vol III issue III, Fall 2001.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Jonathan Fox, *The Multiple Impacts of Religion on International Relations: Perceptions and Reality*, London, Routledge, 2006.

<sup>102</sup> Senghaas, Dieter, "The Clash Within Civilizations", Routledge, London, 2002, p.72.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

and Serbia were all seen as part of this religious war. The continuing influence of Western Christian states in the Muslim world, including several recent military interventions like those in Iraq and Somalia, underscore this humiliation of Muslims at Christian hands. The Christian states viewed all of this as part of power politics... Western powers projected their secular nationalism on these conflicts and assumed that any counter attacks were motivated by nationalism rather than religion. Thus Al Qaeda sees its campaign against the West as part of a centuries-old confrontation...<sup>108</sup>

Huntington, interpreted by Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, states something to the effect that 'the Muslim world lacks the core political values that gave birth to representative democracy in Western civilization: separation of religious and secular authority, rule of law and social pluralism, parliamentary institutions of representative government, and protection of individual rights and civil liberties as the buffer between citizens and the power of the state. This claim seems all too plausible given the failure of electoral democracy to take root throughout the Middle East and North Africa.'<sup>109</sup>

However, the two writers refute this claim on the basis of empirical evidence gathered through surveys on the popularity of democracy in Muslim countries:

"Despite Huntington's claim of a clash of civilizations between the West and the rest, surveys reveal that, at this point in history, democracy has an overwhelmingly positive image throughout the world. In country after country, a clear majority of the population describes having a democratic political system as either good or very good. These results represent a dramatic change from the 1930s and 1940s, when fascist regimes won overwhelming mass approval in many societies; and for many decades, Communist regimes had widespread support. But in the last decade, democracy became virtually the only political model with global appeal, no matter what the culture. With the exception of Pakistan, most of the Muslim countries surveyed think highly of democracy: In Albania, Egypt, Bangladesh, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Morocco, and Turkey, 92 to 99 percent of the public endorsed democratic institutions\_ a higher proportion than in the United States (89 percent)!"<sup>110</sup>

Ironically, if Huntington's rigid categorization is applied, Italy or Germany, living under Fascist and Nazi systems

<sup>108</sup> J. Miles, "Religion and American Foreign Policy", Survival, volume 46, issue 1, 2004.

<sup>109</sup> Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, "The True Clash of Civilizations", Foreign Policy, March-April 2003.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

respectively, would not really be part of the 'Western civilization' until after the Second World War, lacking as they were in democracy. Besides, the European Union's incorporation of Orthodox states into the European Community with singular democratic-liberal values after the Cold War threatens Huntington's thesis too by blurring the line between 'Orthodox' and 'Western' civilizations. Huntington's logic wears thin.

Huntington's West-centric standpoint is also emphasized by the fact that he couples together Judaic and Christian civilizations ignoring their historic differences and inherent conflicts as a single 'Western' civilization, in line with Christian Zionism which is a dominant influence in U.S foreign policy-making. This gives his work a characteristic 'religiosity' for all things Western, and explains the hostility and unwillingness to understand both the Confucian and Islamic civilizations that is present in his work. Professor Sid Ahmed writing in Ahram Weekly, points towards the fact that from his hostility to both Islam and Confucianism, Huntington gradually narrows down the focus exclusively to Arabs and Muslims:

"When Huntington came forward with his theory a decade ago, he spoke of a Chinese- Arab (or Confucian-Islamic) rapprochement against the West. Now that China has acquired an ever-more important international stature and is acting more and more as an independent actor on the global stage, this rapprochement is mentioned less and less. The downplaying of the Chinese component can also be explained by the desire to underscore the Islamic dimension of contemporary Arab civilisation. Describing the Arab Middle East as a Greater Middle East, is a way to highlight that the region the West has to confront is not only composed of Arabs, but also of non-Arab Muslims. The new reading of the theory does not place the Chinese and the Arabs in the same basket, but Muslims and Arabs in particular. This is a clear attempt to attribute terrorism to Islam, not to Arabs alone, and not to blur attributing terrorism to Islam by relating Arabs to Chinese as the case was in Huntington's original version of his theory."<sup>111</sup>

What Huntington does is arbitrarily divide the world on religious lines in a hardened divisiveness, creating rigid boxes of 'worlds within a world.'<sup>112</sup> Such kind of a categorization overlooks the fact that as human beings we have commonalities that are above and beyond civilizational differences. It imposes on us a rigid,

<sup>111</sup> Mohammed Sid-Ahmed, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited", Al Ahram Weekly, 15 - 21 April 2004 Issue No. 686

<sup>112</sup> Amartya Sen, "What Clash of Civilizations?", Slate Magazine, March 29, 2006, 6:02 a.m [www.slatemagazine.com](http://www.slatemagazine.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

irreconcilable, exclusivist identity that is opposed to everything and everyone else. When Huntington chooses to incorporate this overweeningly West-centric approach, he undermines the merit of his own work: "The weakest part of the Clash of Civilizations theory is the rigid separation assumed between civilizations despite the overwhelming evidence that in fact today's world is a world of traversing boundaries."<sup>113</sup>

This is a pattern of political discourse typically present in foreign policies of Western nations which seem to believe that 'we in Europe and the West should maintain our civilization in the West by holding everybody else hostage and increasing the rifts to prolong the dominance of the West.'<sup>114</sup> Thinkers and analysts in the West work towards this by their lengthy discourses at defining for us the 'right kind' of Islam: "In confronting what is called "Islamic terrorism" in the muddled vocabulary of contemporary global politics, the intellectual force of Western policy is aimed quite substantially at trying to define—or redefine—Islam."<sup>115</sup> The definitions of 'moderate' 'liberal' 'conservative' and 'fundamentalist' 'Islams' are tailor-made in the Orientalist vein in order to 'give Islam a totally different interpretation and launch an organized movement for its reconstruction from within.'<sup>116</sup>

In order to proclaim a civilization to be inherently conflictual, violent, aggressive and intolerant, one has to undertake a thorough and deep analysis of its essence or its 'soul'. Huntington does not undertake that, 'thus changing his paradigm at the macro level into a pipe-dream without foundation.'<sup>117</sup> Although in his definition of civilization Huntington characterizes them as variable and evolving, his presentation of the world cut into hostile civilizational blocs implies rigid, unadaptive continuity. Anyone vaguely familiar with the nature of civilizations knows this is not so.

Huntington, in making these arbitrary divisions, performs a sort of 'intellectual surgery' that is rooted in Western parochialism.<sup>118</sup> The reality is that existing 'antipathies'

<sup>113</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America.

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), accessed May 2, 2009.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Amartya Sen, "What Clash of Civilizations?," *Slate Magazine*, March 29, 2006, 6:02 a.m

<sup>116</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Islam and Orientalism*, Lahore, M. Yusuf Khan and Sons, 1981, p 26.

<sup>117</sup> Dieter Senghaas, *The Clash Within Civilizations*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 73.

<sup>118</sup> Amartya Sen, letter to Robert Kagan, "Is there a Clash of Civilizations?" *Slate Magazine*, Posted Friday, May 5, 2006, at 11:52 PM

(real or imagined) are neither insurmountable nor ingrained. This conclusion is reached through the realization that civilizations after all do not operate as monoliths, and there is not a neat divide between them. In fact, there exist overlapping interests and areas of mutually beneficial interaction between civilizations which Huntington has utterly ignored.<sup>119</sup> Huntington, according to Edward Said, uses both reduction and exaggeration in coming up with his civilizational construct. He confines cultures to 'official representatives' and 'self-claimed mouthpieces' both in the West and in non Western civilizations. This 'official culture' consists of 'priests, politicians and state officials' and is rooted in jingoistic patriotism, loyalty, belonging and claims to speak for the whole.<sup>120</sup> What is totally and significantly absent from the Clash of Civilizations theory is a reference to those 'unofficial' elements of culture that exist among the people, their everyday lives and interactions within and with other communities. Huntington refuses to accord them a voice as he makes his rigid categorization. Edward Said writes,

"The challenge for Western policy-makers, says Huntington, is to make sure that the West gets stronger and fends off all the others, Islam in particular. More troubling is Huntington's assumption that his perspective, which is to survey the entire world from a perch outside all ordinary attachments and hidden loyalties, is the correct one, as if everyone else were scurrying around looking for the answers that he has already found. In fact, Huntington is an ideologist, someone who wants to make "civilizations" and "identities" into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and countercurrents that animate human history, and that over centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing. This far less visible history is ignored in the rush to highlight the ludicrously compressed and constricted warfare that "the clash of civilizations" argues is the reality."<sup>121</sup>

"Huntington's invocation of cultural differences is as the definitive feature of conflict, in the words of Dieter Senghaas, a 'superficial analysis.' This is because he does not recognize the importance of socio economic

<sup>119</sup> "Clash of Civilizations or Clash of Perceptions?" *The Center for Dialogues: Islamic World - U.S. - The West*, 2006.

<sup>120</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America.

<sup>121</sup> Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance", *The Nation*, October 22, 2001.

problems at the base of ethno-religious conflicts: "In most such cases, long-standing and frustrating social and economic discrimination is involved."<sup>122</sup> This scenario is typical of developing societies striving to industrialize and modernize. It is the marginalization of minorities in modernizing societies that leads them to counteract for the provision of their socio-economic demands. Conflicts arising out of such situations are highly virulent politically and they develop a dynamic of hate as discrimination grows. Senghaas continues,

"The cultural factors in these conflicts are generally not very significant at the beginning of the conflict, which is incited by socio-economic factors. Only as a result of escalation can they later become independent factors... Religion gains momentum and becomes a rallying point, a resource in desperation, only when promising life perspectives do not emerge otherwise. In the latter case, a distribution conflict becomes a conflict of identity, but in its very core it remains still a conflict of distribution."<sup>123</sup>

Western scholars hold an unshakable conviction of their uniqueness which Senghaas terms 'profile essentialism', which is the belief that 'the West is assumed to have certain distinctive, inherent or 'eternal' features'.<sup>124</sup> In saying this, Huntington toes the line of traditional Western scholarship.

"'Civilization' is one of those words bequeathed to us by the Enlightenment, though the idea goes back much further, having roots in any situation in which one society claimed superiority over 'savages' or 'barbarians'.<sup>125</sup> Huntington's usage of the word 'civilization' means different things in different contexts. While 'civilization' is a neutral, scientific term indicating a certain kind of society or stage of growth which a society has reached; it is employed in the main by historians and historical sociologists as a means of categorizing various forms of social organization. At the other end of the spectrum civilization is a highly politicised or ideological term conveying a partial and self-interested notion of what constitutes civilization. As Huntington himself observed, 'every civilization sees itself as the centre of the world and writes its history as the central drama of human history'.<sup>126</sup> To the extent that the West is dominant in today's world, there is always the suspicion among non-

Westerners that the West equates 'civilization' with 'western civilization'.<sup>127</sup>

Huntington asserts that such institutions as democracy, checks and balances on power, and the rule of law are all products, as well as components, of Western civilization. It is true that these were first articulated in Western Europe, but today many of these values and institutions have taken root in a number of non-Western regions of the world, while many countries included in the Western bloc have not, or not until recently, incorporated these "fruits of Western civilization" into their societies. These concepts should be seen rather as the products of modern industrial civilization, not of Western civilization. It might also be noted here that, if the birthplace of concepts or ideas is the issue, it should be remembered that Christianity was not born in the West, nor was Classical Greek civilization of 'Western' origin. If, as Huntington states, democracy, liberalism and secular pluralism are indeed 'Western' values, one fails to explain 'the extensive history of wars in Europe, or the colonial and imperial aggression and violence of Europe in its relation to the rest of the world'.<sup>128</sup>

In his book, Huntington writes of the division of the world along tribal lines thus: "Civilizations are the ultimate human tribes, and the clash of civilizations is tribal conflict on a global scale. Relations between nations from different civilizations will be almost never close and often hostile--trust and friendship will be rare. Wars will tend to break out along civilizational "fault lines" and will tend to expand along the same lines." Robert Wright terms this Huntington's 'Highbrow Tribalism': "Huntington carries this idea to new heights of theoretical elaboration. Surely tribalism has never sounded so cerebral. But it's one thing to analyze a phenomenon and another thing to encourage it. Huntington crosses the line so easily as to make you wonder: How different, really, are the lowbrow and highbrow expressions of the vogue for tribalism?"<sup>129</sup>

Wright goes on to say that

"Huntington claims not to be a cultural supremacist: He is defending the integrity of all cultures, theirs and ours. Indeed, he sounds almost like a lefty relativist when he says we must accept "global multiculturalism" and discard the "linear" view of history, which sees Western values as the inexorable fate of humankind. But of course, that's just another way of saying that liberal democracy--a value Huntington surely ranks above the alternatives morally--may never fit some peoples as naturally as it fits us. In

<sup>122</sup> Dieter Senghaas, The Clash Within Civilizations, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 74.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p.75.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p.107.

<sup>125</sup> Raymond Williams, Keywords, London, Fontana, 1976, pp 48-50.

<sup>126</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, New York, Touchstone, pp. 54-55.

<sup>127</sup> Richard Crockatt, "anti Americanism and the Clash of Civilizations", [www.kb.osu.edu.pdf](http://www.kb.osu.edu.pdf) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Robert Wright, "Highbrow Tribalism", Slate Magazine, Saturday, Nov. 2, 1996, at 3:30 AM

this light the meaning of his call to "maintain the multicivilizational character of global politics" seems clear: separate but equal. You let one alien nation move into your trade bloc, and pretty soon the whole neighborhood goes downhill. (And already, Huntington worries, the West is suffering "decline" and "decay.") The Barbarians, in short, are at the gate—and conspiring against us. The future, Huntington says, may boil down to "the West against the rest." Raise the drawbridges!"<sup>130</sup>

Quite simply, Huntington overestimates differences and underestimates both commonalities and grounds for interaction, as well as the tremendous power the West continues to exercise on non Western societies that stir resistance and resentment. Cracks appear in the theory also because while we see several non Western communities rapidly progressing and developing stable political systems, we also see numerous Western nations facing political crises and challenges to democracy. Some say that the idea of 'The West' has undergone a considerable transformation at the turn of the 21st century, and the actual clash will happen not between the West and the rest, as Huntington predicted, but it will arise between pro-Western conservatives and post-Western liberal multiculturalists in the US-West World.

Huntington is also criticized for methodological flaws, and overgeneralizations in his thesis. To prove his proposition, Huntington 'selects' from history whatever fits his paradigm. For example, Robert Marks points that Huntington chiefly uses secondary sources in his book, and his research on Islam, China and Japan is rather weak<sup>131</sup>. He proposes that Huntington's speculation is methodologically flawed because of his frequent overgeneralizations in the examination of civilizations.

If Huntington's civilizational paradigm is flawed, how really can one understand civilizations? Such an understanding is possible only if the history and evolution of civilizations is thoroughly, incisively and insightfully understood. The six major civilizations, as depicted by Huntington, are all classical and associated with a major world religion. Japanese scholar Sato Seizaburo gives an insightful overview of the origins and evolution of civilizations. As he explains it, over the period from roughly the sixth century BC to the sixth century AD emerged the great religions- in chronological sequence these were - Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. Each of these was differentiated from the tribal religions of the past by a vastly superior appeal and outreach and each served as a force to integrate various peoples through common values and social orders. The classic empires arose when these great religions were harnessed in the service of specific

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Robert Marks, "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order" (Book Review).

political authorities of the times. By the same token, it was through becoming entwined with secular political authority that the capacity of the great religions to survive was greatly enhanced. The pre-modern empires which were not closely combined with great religions collapsed relatively easily, as was the case with the Yuan dynasty of China, while major religions which lost the protection of secular authorities also tended to wane, as did Zoroastrianism in Persia. This is also why Buddhism, which has the longest history among the great religions and at one time had an established position in both India and China, lost ground in both countries, only surviving until today in regions such as Japan, the Indochinese peninsula, Tibet, Mongolia, Bhutan, Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, all in the peripheries of the Chinese and Indian civilizations. Neo-Confucianism and Hinduism developed intimate ties with the ruling authorities in China and India respectively, and in the central parts of both these civilizational spheres Buddhism lost the political protection it needed to survive. The exceptions among the existing six major civilizational groups identified by Huntington were Japan and Western Europe (after the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire), for in neither was religion entwined with political authority in the same way as in other pre-modern civilizations. Outside the Eurasian continent there have been some indications of cultural civilizations germinating in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, but these incipient civilizations were too isolated from the rest of the world to develop a sufficient degree of universality.<sup>132</sup>

One serious fault of Huntington's analysis is that he ignores the possibility that while different civilizations that come into contact may clash with each other, they can also learn from each other, and may thereby revitalize themselves. Even in the case of encounters between the classic civilizations of the pre-modern era, there have been "divergent outcomes and different consequences for history, depending on the levels of maturity of the cultures in question as well as the intensity of the encounters."<sup>133</sup> Generally speaking, conflicts based on cultural encounters can be grouped into three categories, as Seizaburo explains:

"The first type of conflict is when an incipient culture comes in contact with a mature classic civilization: the incipient culture will either be fully absorbed or be wiped out by the overwhelming superiority of the mature civilization. In either case, rapid extinction is the rule. In contrast, the second type of conflict covers encounters between a mature classic civilization and another culture

<sup>132</sup> Sato Seizaburo: An Critical Approach Towards Clash of civilizations, Tokyo university publishers. pp116,117

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

which has already reached a considerable level of development of its own. While the former remain unchanged, the latter are not infrequently stimulated by the former and launch a spectacular process of change. Especially when such encounters are not accompanied by military conquest, so the intensity of the encounter remains relatively low, it is quite likely to spur the development of new features in that civilization that are quite different from what prevailed formerly. The rise of the Japanese civilization, which is known for its deeply entrenched indigenous culture, is a typical case in point. As an island nation, divided from the Eurasian continent by the Japan Sea, Japan was able to nurture and develop its own unique culture, absorbing elements of Chinese civilization over an extended period of time. In the case of China, neither the resurgence of Confucianism as orthodox learning, nor the literary exaltations of the Tang and Sung cultural renaissance would have been possible without the external influence of the mature Indian and Hellenistic civilizations on the younger Chinese civilization. In the West, the Renaissance, which was the initial spark for the development of modern Western civilization, would not have occurred had it not been for the West's contact with Islamic civilization. The third category covers contact between mature classic civilizations; ordinarily this has resulted in either deadly confrontation or mutual repulsion. A typical example of the former is the encounter between Islamic civilization as represented by the Ottoman Empire and Western Christian civilization rallying around Catholicism during the Crusades. Thus, it cannot be said that encounters between different cultures inevitably result in a head-on clash."<sup>134</sup>

In the West, by the end of the seventeenth century an entirely new political system composed of sovereign states had emerged. As the people's sense of identity with and loyalty to the sovereign state increased, these evolved into nation-states. The emergence of sovereign states and later nation-states prompted the global expansion of the Western world. This expansion was greatly stimulated by the Industrial Revolution, markedly extending man's capacity to systematically control his environment. However, industrialization also caused gaps in national strength, between those countries which had succeeded in industrializing and those others which had not. The gap gradually widened, and this brought in the dilemmas of modernization which conflict in the modern age is attributable to.

It is on this basis that Akihiko Tanaka presents a paradigm grouping the countries of the world into three "spheres,": The first sphere, or Neo-Medieval Sphere, consists of the countries in which industrialization has already given rise to affluent societies. The second

sphere, or Modern Sphere, comprises those countries that have embarked on the road to modernization but which still live in the world of power politics of the nineteenth century (most of the developing countries and the countries of the former Soviet sphere of influence). The third sphere, or Chaotic Sphere, is made up of all other countries, which have failed to become nation-states and remain to a greater or lesser degree in a chaotic condition.<sup>135</sup>

Sato Seizaburo believes Huntington's theory to be based on a misunderstanding:

"What Huntington calls the "clash of civilizations" is in fact neither a clash between classic civilizations, nor between classic civilization and modern civilization. The conflicts that exist have, rather, arisen as a result of the diffusion worldwide of industrial civilization. To use the divisions proposed by Akihiko Tanaka, it is a confrontation between the less developed and the highly developed for an egalitarian distribution of resources and finances. Such radicalism often takes the form of religious fundamentalism of one kind or another, and is therefore liable to be mistaken for confrontation between classic and modern civilizations."<sup>136</sup>

Instead, Seizaburo gives a new interpretation to the 'clash':

"The most serious type of inter-civilizational clash manifests itself today in the form of an identity crisis deep inside an individual's own mind. Huntington claims that over the last century ordinary people have shifted away from their identification with and loyalty to the nation-state, first toward various ideologies, and now toward particular civilizations, but the situation is not as simple as it appears on the surface. Modern industrial civilization, which is characterized by anthropocentricism, an overblown expectation that mankind will apply its rational abilities in dealing with the world, and a denial of spiritual matters, cannot give positive meaning to life, nor can it fully quench man's spiritual thirst."<sup>137</sup>

As far as this division based on levels of development is concerned, the ideas of 'negative' and 'positive' development and its link with conflict has been exemplified by Dieter Senghaas. Where development is 'negative' in that it creates polarization of privilege, upsets social balance and leads to unbearable injustice, disputes will arise, gradually involving cultural sloganeering. Positive development, in the long term, however, leads to pluralism. This also intensifies the question of identity, which, in fact, is a needful

<sup>135</sup> Akihiko Tanaka, *Atarashii Chusei [New Middle Ages]*, Tokyo, Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1996

<sup>136</sup> Sato Seizaburo: *An Critical Approach Towards Clash of Civilizations*, Tokyo University publishers.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

development requiring constant self-reflection.

What becomes clear in the process is that Huntington is on the search to bring forth a paradigm to 'control people'<sup>138</sup> by implying that the reason why the world is going wrong is ethnic-religious conflict based in cultural differences. Before accepting such a thesis, important questions need to be asked about why, if the Clash of Civilizations is a post Cold War phenomenon, huge ethnic conflicts have continued to plague Africa, never claiming much attention? The fact is that the factual basis for Huntington's theory is indeed very thin. How, for example, can the theory be defended considering the fact that the West has financed and supported, and fomented alliances with the worst tyrants in the non Western world for its own economic interests? How can it be explained that the West supports Saudi Arabia because of its vast oil reserves and a dictatorship that ensures that the revenues keep flowing into Western capitals? However, while presenting the 'others' as the 'bad guys', Huntington seems to imply that 'we are wonderful people'<sup>139</sup> and that everybody else is out there to destroy 'us.'

Not surprisingly, Huntington concludes his essay with a survey about what the West must do to maintain its civilization, be strong and keep its opponents weak and fragmented.<sup>140</sup> Huntington, therefore, writes as a 'crisis manager' and not as a reconciler between civilizations. The recommendations Huntington leaves us with are extremely significant as a guideline for American foreign policy, and become dangerous in this regard:

"Finally, one of the most interesting and remarkable parts of Huntington's clash thesis is his presentation of several policy recommendations. This advice is primarily related to American politics and US foreign policy. Of especially critical importance are the recommendations which are as follow:

#### For Domestic Politics

- Tightening immigration and assimilating immigrants and minorities in order to increase the civilizational coherence. Otherwise the US would be a 'cleft country'.
- Instead of multiculturalism, pursuing the policy of

<sup>138</sup> Stated by Noam Chomsky in his video recording on 'The Clash of Civilizations' available at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed may 2, 2009).

Americanization.

For the US Foreign and Security Policy

- Maintaining Western technological and military superiority over other civilizations.
- Enhancing Western unity by means of pursuing Atlanticist policy.

Hence, the US should empower trans-Atlantic cooperation

- Limiting the expansion of Islamic-Confucian states' military and economic power and exploiting differences between these states.
- Avoiding universalist aspiration since the West is unique not universalist.
- Not to intervene in the affairs of other civilizations.
- In case of a World War III, which civilizational differences are highly likely to cause, the United States should get Japan, Latin American states and Russia in her side against potential Islamic-Confucian cooperation. These policy recommendations, which are tremendously provocative, have generated a great amount of attention in both the United States/West and the rest of the world. Henceforth, it has drawn several criticisms."<sup>141</sup>

These policy recommendations arising from the Clash thesis are laden with Western imperial hubris, and cannot be ignored given Huntington's background and role as an advisor to the Pentagon.

"Huntington's policy recommendations are rooted in the basis of his interpretation of post-Cold War global politics. Critics question Huntington's 'enemy' discourse, in which Islamic and Confucian civilizations are perceived as a threat to the West. They contend that Huntington looks for new enemies, which replace the adversary of the Cold War, the Soviet Union. Others argue that Huntington's theory is an ideological and strategic theory that aims at influencing the US foreign and defense policy. In this regard, Hans Kung pinpoints the fact that Huntington was an advisor to Pentagon in 1994 while his thesis has become so popular in all over the world. Kung also suggests that Huntington's scenario of World War III that stems from clash of civilizations interestingly fits best into military and representatives of arms industry."<sup>142</sup>

John Ikenberry maintains that Huntington's vision originates from bloc mentality and his approach is significantly dangerous for the United States and international peace. He further states says that

<sup>141</sup> Engin I. Erdem, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited", *Alternatives Journal* of International Relations, Vol.1, No.2, Summer 2002

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

Huntington's thesis is a civilizational equivalent of 'security dilemma', in which misperceptions about the other eventually increases the tension and then leads to conflict. He also suggests 'if ideas by prominent thinkers have any impact on the real world' the clash thesis is potentially dangerous.<sup>143</sup>

Clearly, Huntington invokes a 'civilization consciousness' which, in the context of American foreign policy, generates what Richard Crockatt has termed 'American exceptionalism'.<sup>144</sup> This is the doctrine that America is a unique, exclusive civilization in itself endowed with the right to leadership.

"America is a special kind of nation, granted a special destiny stemming from its uniquely fortunate situation, with claims to be a civilization on its own terms, whether or not the word itself is used. As George W. Bush put it in his 2004 State of the Union address, 'America is a nation with a mission, and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs.'<sup>145</sup> Civilization-consciousness at one level is thus America's peculiar version of nationalism. It expresses claims both to uniqueness and universalism of values, the argument that America contains within itself all the world's possibilities because it contains elements of all the world's populations and because of the nature of its founding revolution which was at once unique and exemplary. This posture is at once inclusive and exclusive, outward-looking and deeply chauvinist, internationalist and nationalist."<sup>146</sup>

The concept naturally has had profound repercussions on American foreign policy which reflects American exceptionalism. It asserts American identity and patriotism in American politics and policy. Championing the civilized world, America has the right, perhaps to intervene in other parts of the world in the interests of civilization. This also explains the ambivalence of American public opinion on the issue of international intervention, which is considered as an incursion into sovereignty in other parts of the world. It was the years after the end of the Cold War, however, that made the continuity of America's leadership fraught with the challenges of a rising non West, complicating the prospects for America's global leadership which it had aspired to after defeating Communism. The Clash of

<sup>143</sup> G. John Ikenberry, "Just Like the Rest", pp.162-163

<sup>144</sup> Richard Crockatt, "Anti Americanism and the Clash of Civilizations", [www.kb.osu.edu.pdf](http://www.kb.osu.edu.pdf) (Accessed May 2, 2009)

<sup>145</sup> State of the Union Address, January 20, 2004, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/> (accessed 22/1/2004).

<sup>146</sup> Richard Crockatt, "Anti Americanism and the Clash of Civilizations", [www.kb.osu.edu.pdf](http://www.kb.osu.edu.pdf) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

Civilizations theory, presented in 1993, was well-timed to alert the U.S administration to the dangers of a hostile, threatening non West which it must deal with in order to fulfil its post-Cold War bid for global dominance.

Given the Huntingtonian cartography of a world divided into hostile civilizational blocs, Edward Said leaves us with questions to ponder over:

"Is it wise to produce a simplified map of the world and then hand it over to law-makers and generals as a prescription for first comprehending and then acting? Does this not prolong and deepen the conflict? Do we want the Clash of Civilizations? Does it not mobilize nationalist passions and nationalist murderousness? Should we not ask why must one be doing this sort of thing\_ to understand or to act; to mitigate or to aggravate conflict?"<sup>147</sup>

### **THE IMPACT OF THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS THEORY ON WESTERN POLICY AND THE RHETORIC OF THE 'WAR ON TERROR'**

The significance of Huntington's work is such that it would not be an overstatement to say that it is absolutely vital to our understanding of future conflicts and the nature of international diplomacy. Erroneous or valid, Huntington's assumptions have had profound effects on international relations. James Michael Wilson states,

"It is important to highlight the fundamentally erroneous assumptions of modern day diplomacy made in his article immortalised in that issue of the Foreign Affairs journal. Seemingly it is not possible to fully argue for or against the thesis Huntington set forth, hence the apparently perpetual debate. The dispute is a deeply interesting point to discuss, and one feels it important to stir up the hornets' nest once again."<sup>148</sup>

Huntington's single greatest contribution is perhaps how his work has stirred up a rich debate and returned the relevance of religion and culture to the domain of international politics\_ a phenomenon termed the 'desecularization' of I.R theory. Jonathan Fox observes

<sup>147</sup> Stated by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), May 2, 2009.

<sup>148</sup> James Michael Wilson, "How the West and the Rest and Permanently Intertwined", [www.e-ir.info](http://www.e-ir.info), May 25, 2009 – 10:06 am

the revived interest in the religious aspects of international affairs: "It is also becoming clear that it is not possible to really understand world events without taking religion into account. Some like Samuel Huntington have tried to explain the growing evidence that religion remains relevant by arguing that 'the late twentieth century has seen a global resurgence of religion.'"<sup>149</sup>

Huntington has, clearly, created a paradigm shift in I.R theory. This paradigm shift received assertion and vindication\_ or so it seems\_ through the events of September 11, 2001. As the Clash of Civilizations thesis entered the discourse, the Islam-West debate was widened and intensified. It received greater attention in the media, as Engin I Erdem writes, "Not unexpectedly, the Western media looked at 'Islamic roots' of the terrible attacks. Thereafter, 'Islam', 'Islamism', 'political Islam' and 'Islamic fundamentalism' became the most frequently used terms in the media."<sup>150</sup> The Palestine issue, owing to its centrality to relations between Islam and the West, attracted renewed interest and attention. Both in the West and the Muslim world, the Clash of Civilizations theory has not only been received with interest but also at times enthusiasm as hostilities and prejudices have re emerged on both sides of the divide.

When the Twin Towers fell on the morning of September 11 2001, the much contended 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis seemed to have won instantaneous acceptance. The falling towers seemed to be 'clashing civilizations materialized.' Huntington was considered almost prescient as his thesis fell right into place, vindicated. Instantly, the jargon of 'us and them', was between 'our way of life and theirs' went mainstream.

The pervasive influence of the theory and its centrality to White House discourse becomes evident through the fact that the rhetoric in the wake of the War on Terror has become almost an 'officialized' refrain built on Huntingtonian political discourse. 9/11 was not only extraordinarily theatrical terrorism but also the onset of an unconventional 'war' against the same, fought with a sense of moral righteousness and jingoistic fervour. The fatal day marked a paradigm shift in international politics on the one hand and domestic policy in the US on the other. Fear and insecurity were on an all-time high following the attacks and rhetoric built around Huntington's prospect of 'Clashing Civilizations' fit exactly into place.

"Since 9/11, political and cultural climate has become increasingly febrile as governments and their agencies

<sup>149</sup> Jonathan Fox, The Multiple Impacts of Religion on International Relations: Perceptions and Reality, London, Routledge, 2006, p.11.

<sup>150</sup> Engin I. Erdem, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited", Alternatives: Journal of International Relations, Vol.1, No.2, Summer 2002. ( Accessed May 2, 2009.)

ramp up their rhetoric on terrorism with devastating social and inter-subjective consequences. Terrorism hence becomes a strategic device deployed by a range of actors and entities to manipulate and undermine the 'Western Way of Life.' The rhetoric of terrorism is designed to propagate the politics of fear and anxiety. Our task is not to be cowed down by terrorism's relentless assault on our intellects and sensibilities."<sup>151</sup>

Edward Said points out that the true value of the Clash of Civilizations thesis in post September 11 U.S foreign policy is the fact that it helps create a "wartime status in the minds of the West. It argues in favour of the Pentagon officials, defence experts and owners of the armed industry. Having 'lost their jobs' after the Cold War, they needed something interesting to do."<sup>152</sup> Muhammad Asadi, in the same vein, calls the Clash of Civilizations an 'official mythology prepping the public for funds and manpower.' He writes, "Legitimation is achieved by generating an 'us versus them' climate of fear and paranoia, or by scaring the hell out of the American people."<sup>153</sup> The American foreign policy elite\_ both the military and diplomacy\_ have been described by C. Wright Mills when he wrote: "What the main drift of the 20th century revealed is that the military has become enlarged and decisive to the shape of the entire economic structure; and moreover the economic and the military have become structurally and deeply interrelated, as the economy has become a seemingly permanent war economy."<sup>154</sup> Considering this role and might of America's military-industrial complex, it remains in need of labels to deflect attention from the real issue of the pursuit of power and wealth. The prospect of clashing civilizations provides such a label.

The phenomenon of Terrorism that has assumed predominance in international relations has largely not been understood, as is obvious by the fact that no single universally applicable and acceptable definition for it exists as of yet. Huntington's thesis, by presenting Terrorism as a manifestation of an inevitable Clash of Civilizations, has helped deflect attention from the critically important factors and causes that lie at its base. Engin Erdem contends that the world after 9/11 does not validate the Clash of Civilizations thesis. This is because there exists a broad consensus across civilizations on the reprehensible nature of terrorism. This said, it must also

<sup>151</sup> Kim Walker, "The Rhetoric of Terrorism and Life After 9/11." [www.thirdworldtraveler.com](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com) (Accessed January 3, 2009).

<sup>152</sup> Stated by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America.

<sup>153</sup> Muhammad Asadi, "The Clash of Civilizations Thesis: A Critique", [www.chowk.com](http://www.chowk.com). (Accessed May 2, 2009.)

<sup>154</sup> C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York, 1956)

be brought out that rising 'anti Americanism' which the U.S feels threatened by is not so much out of hatred of 'American values' as it is due to American policies. Due to interference and intervention of the U.S in the Middle East owing to its centrality to American strategic interests, censure of American policy emanating from the Muslim world is substantive. Ironically, however, a number of European states, belonging to the 'Western civilization' have also strongly and bitterly criticized American policies vis a vis Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East. The 'Clash of Civilizations', therefore, does not figure here.<sup>155</sup> What exists, instead, as also pointed out by Shireen T Hunter, is a 'clash of interests'. Huntington, in many conflicts he mentions in his book, overlooks the clashing interests involved: "Moreover, Huntington has a selective perception in choosing cases in order to enforce his argument. For instance, he probably should know that the Gulf War is dealt with 'clash of interests', yet he exemplifies the War as a case for 'clash of civilizations'."<sup>156</sup> What is seen as civilizational bloc politics is in fact about national interests and relative gains pursued by sovereign states trapped in a security dilemma.

Rising Anti Americanism post 9/11 is not about civilizational values but primarily about the U.S's Mideast policy. The United States is criticized especially for its alleged un-balanced, pro-Israeli policy in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and because of its cooperation with authoritarian-repressive regimes of the Middle East.<sup>157</sup> According to Graham Fuller,

"Under such conditions, it should not be surprising that these frustrated populations perceive the current war against terrorism as functionally a war against Islam. Muslim countries are the chief target, they contend, Muslims everywhere are singled out for censure and police attention, and U.S power works its will across the region with little regard for deeper Muslim concerns."<sup>158</sup>

The Palestine issue is a significant test-case of the malevolence of the belief in inevitably embattled civilizations intertwined with political policy. Edward Said explains that

"the Zionist thinking pattern is of 'We are the Chosen Ones' having the right to the Promised Land. Everyone else is a second rate citizen. Palestinians on the other hand understand that they have been asked to pay the price for what was done to the Jews in Europe, although

<sup>155</sup> Engin I. Erdem, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited", *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol.1, No.2, Summer 2002.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "The Future of Political Islam", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2002, p.54

it was a Christian-European catastrophe in which Muslims had no part. They are the victims of victims. But should the Palestinians be thrown out because the Jews were? Co existence is essential for Jews, Muslims and Christians to live together in a polity requiring creativity and invention."<sup>159</sup>

The hurdle in the way, however, is the notion that 'somehow we should protect ourselves against the infiltrations of the Other. This is the most dangerous idea. Unless we find ways to do this without shortcuts, there will be violence.'<sup>160</sup> In order to do this, the Clash of Civilizations must be trespassed.

At the heart of the 'Clash' thesis is the idea that religion is divisive and conflictual. It is ignored that religion has played an equally important role in human patterns of reconciliation.<sup>161</sup> Besides, while there exist religious factors in certain kinds of violence, the same is also true of psychological factors, 'such as deep injuries of many ethnic groups that get translated into religious dogma.'<sup>162</sup> At a deeper and more insightful level, the 'militant rage' is, 'in a more generalized sense, about the injustices inherent in a Western dominated social order.'<sup>163</sup> The Clash of Civilizations theory does not take this into account in any significant measure.

Another aspect rather eclipsed by the theory is the importance of economic factors. Huntington seems to imply that economics have a nominal role in conflict. On the other hand, a global economic crisis is more pervasive and real than a clash of civilizations.<sup>164</sup> Global issues transcend national borders regardless of and without discrimination of culture, religion or civilization. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon said during the G20 meeting in London; "There is a thin line between failing banks and failing countries. We cross it at our peril."<sup>165</sup> The Secretary General goes on to illuminate, "What began as a financial crisis has become a global economic crisis. I fear worse to come: a full-blown political crisis defined by growing social unrest, weakened governments and angry publics who have lost all faith in their leaders and their own future."<sup>166</sup> Again,

<sup>159</sup> Shirazi, Said, "Your New Enemies" *Dissident Voice*, November 3, 2002, [www.dissidentvoice.org](http://www.dissidentvoice.org)

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Marc Gopin, "Religion and International Relations at the Crossroads", *International Studies Review*, vol. 3 issue 3, Fall 2001.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, p.3

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, p.1

<sup>164</sup> James Michael Wilson, "How the West and the Rest and Permanently Intertwined", [www.e-ir.info](http://www.e-ir.info), May 25, 2009 – 10:06 am

<sup>165</sup> Ban Ki-Moon. "I fear a looming catastrophe" *The Guardian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

civilizations do not figure here.

In an interesting parallel, Said Sherazi has compared Huntington's thesis to the 'Bush Doctrine' that enunciated the idea of pre-emption as it validates the offensive posture of American foreign policy, perceiving the United States to be pitted against hostile and malevolent enemies. This is exactly the same image conjured up by Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' theory. Interestingly, while former U.S. president George W. Bush rejected Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis in his National Security Strategy of 2002, most of his rhetoric following that only asserts it. Since September 11 George W. Bush has repeatedly declared with reference to the 'War on terror' that 'this is the world's fight. This is a civilization's fight.' 'The civilized world,' he observed in a speech to the Congress on September 20 2001, 'is rallying to America's side.' In his 2002 State of the Union address he declared that 'the civilized world faces unprecedented dangers.' In his introductory statement to the National Security Strategy, issued in September 2002, Bush noted that 'the allies of terror are the enemies of civilization.'<sup>167</sup> President Bush stated in his 9/11 speech in Washington that "our way of life and our very freedom" has come under attack. "Today, our nation saw evil\_ the worst of human nature\_ and we responded with the best of America. We stand together to win the War against Terrorism. We go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world."<sup>168</sup> On September 20, 2001, the President made another address: "We have been called to defend freedom. On September the eleventh, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country... freedom itself was under attack." He spoke of the perpetrators as "the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century" and reiterated that Terrorism was a "threat to our way of life... we are in a fight for our principles... this is a fight of all those who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom." When he announced the U.S. air strikes against Afghanistan, President Bush said, "We're a peaceful nation. This is the calling of the United States of America, the most free nation in the world, a nation built on fundamental values, that rejects hate, rejects violence, rejects murderers, rejects evil. And we will not tire."<sup>169</sup>

The language employed by the White House emphasized a clash of States of America, presented as

<sup>167</sup> State of the Union Address, January 29, 2002, [National Security Strategy of the United States](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/).

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/>

<sup>168</sup> Speech by President Bush at the Oval Office, Washington D.C on the evening of September 11, 2001.

[www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com) (Accessed January 3, 2009).

<sup>169</sup> Speech by President Bush in the Joint Session of the Congress on September 20, 2001. [www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com)

the champion of Western civilization believing in democracy, freedom and peace seemed to be pitted against an evil civilization determined to destroy all that. It presented America's strategic designs to fight the 'war on terror' as a mission embarked upon to save the Western Way of Life. What is interesting to note is the constant recurrence of the refrain 'evil' as opposed to 'good' in the rhetoric emanating from the White House. The media picked up the rhetoric readily. A classic example is quoted by Arundhati Roy in 'The Algebra of Infinite Justice, September 2001, when an American newscaster said, "Good and evil rarely manifest themselves as clearly as they did (on 9/11). People who we don't know massacred people who we do. And they did so with contemptuous glee." The Rhetoric of Terrorism institutionalizes the Clash of Civilizations thesis and keep the public in a constant state of fear and insecurity: "Any threat to its interests, whether oil in the Middle East or its geostrategic interests elsewhere is labelled as 'terrorism'... terrorism is magnified and blown up to insensate proportions... this focus obscures the enormous damage done by the U.S. militarily, environmentally, economically on a world scale which far dwarfs anything terrorism might do."<sup>170</sup>

Not only that, the unquestioning acceptance, after 9/11, of the 'Clash of civilizations' thesis has revived the Crusade mentality of jingoism and religiosity, prejudice, bias and discrimination on the basis of civilizational differences. It has led to the stereotyping of Islam and Muslims all over the globe as Muslims begin to be seen increasingly as the 'Other' and the 'Enemy.' The rhetoric of clashing civilizations has worked hard to deflect sympathy from victims of the West's wars since decades. It has divided the world into Huntington's 'The West and the Rest'. Kyle Fedler says, "When we demonize our enemies we see ourselves as totally righteous and the abstract enemy as totally evil."<sup>171</sup>

The impact of Huntington's thesis has been hard-hitting indeed, especially on Muslim societies. It has increased polarization and given justification to the West's policies towards the Muslim world. The effect of the theory in the world after 9/11 has been stark, and has been captured by Said hence:

"The basic paradigm of West versus the rest... has persisted, often insidiously and implicitly, in discussion since the terrible events of September 11. The carefully planned and horrendous, pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged

<sup>170</sup>Said, Edward, 'They Call All Resistance Terrorism,' International Socialist Review, September 2001

<sup>171</sup> Kyle Fedler, "On the Rhetoric of a War on Terror", September 2001, [www.thirdworldtraveller.com](http://www.thirdworldtraveller.com) (Accessed January 3, 2009).

militants has been turned into proof of Huntington's thesis. Instead of seeing it for what it is--the capture of big ideas (I use the word loosely) by a tiny band of crazed fanatics--international luminaries from former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi have pontificated about Islam's troubles, and in the latter's case have used Huntington's ideas to rant on about the West's superiority, how "we" have Mozart and Michelangelo and they don't."<sup>172</sup>

Prejudice and misinformed bigotry against Islam in the West's secular polity have reached manic proportions. Fear and hatred of the Muslim stereotype instilled by the media is palpable in Western society. Michael Savage, a popular talk-show host in America remarked on his show: "When I see a woman walking around with a burqa, I see a Nazi. That's what I see. How do you like that? A hateful Nazi who would like to cut your throat and kill your children. When a woman wears a burqa, she's doing it to spit in your face. She's saying, 'you white moron, you, I'm gonna kill you if I can.'"<sup>173</sup>

All over Europe and America, Muslim populations face all kinds of discrimination and even victimization, which has put Muslims everywhere on the defensive, increasingly insecure in trying to practise their faith. Western society grows more exclusivist and supremacist by the day under the battlecry of the 'Clash of Civilizations'. Dennis Rahkonen writes in 'Ugly American needs a Makeover', "Our insufferable arrogance and foreign policy excesses are garnering us record levels of international opprobrium...Washington tries to thrust its wayward will on understandably resistant mankind."<sup>174</sup> The occurrence of September 11 in the United States heightened what Huntington calls 'civilization consciousness' in America. In the American context, this means patriotism and pride in 'American values'. This reflects in, for example, the intense jingoism of the 'Patriot Act' and ambivalence of public opinion in the face of U.S military interventionism. And it is precisely this which, on the contrary, generates anti-American sentiment in the world of the 'Rest'. This is elaborated by Richard Crockatt who wrote,

"The international conditions of the post-cold war world in general and the post-September 11 world in particular have inclined many Americans to accentuate their 'Americanness', to enhance and even exaggerate their sense of the nation as unique and exceptional. The times

have reinforced a reassertion of America's core values and a heightened sense of the nation's distinctive destiny and global role. The anti-Americanism which we see around the world is in part a response to this heightened 'civilization-consciousness' and the political and military actions which are prompted by it. Events have, in short, served to reinforce the argument Huntington put forward: that cultural conflict is a major and increasing source of global conflict."<sup>175</sup>

Hence Huntington's thesis stands vindicated. According to Graham Fuller, Terrorism is a reactive phenomenon, and in turn leads to fear and hostility in Western societies as well as pre-emptive policies\_ all together making a vicious cycle: "A vicious circle exists: dissatisfaction leads to anti-regime action, which leads to repression, which in turn leads to terrorism, U.S military intervention, and finally further dissatisfaction. Samuel Huntington's theory of a "clash of civilizations" is seemingly vindicated before the world's eyes."<sup>176</sup>

It is clear therefore that the motivation behind the events of September 11 was not so much of a 'civilizational clash' as it was reaction to policy\_ both in its financial and military manifestations. America's global hegemony, its intervention in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, as well as the failure to resolve the ongoing crisis in the Middle East exacerbates this reactive sentiment. Cultural elements do not figure prominently, yet we find that American rhetoric is loaded culturally, because the U.S has chosen to identify the enemy in cultural-religious terms\_ hence the terms 'Islamist terrorism', 'Islamofascism' which reek of religious prejudice.

The use of rhetoric along these lines has helped the 'ideologization' of the War on Terror. This has eclipsed the true ground realities and the actual root causes of the conflict, turning attention away from them. Particularly regrettable is the inability to understand terrorism as a desperate reaction by the socially outcast, economically deprived and politically oppressed. Terrorism, in fact, is a tactic used by disaffected individuals and communities, not an ideology. The U.S government, however, has preferred to use highly charged ideologically loaded rhetoric. The New York Times reported on July 25, 2005, "The Bush administration is... pushing the idea that the long-term struggle is as much an ideological battle as a military mission."

In his historic speech of 20<sup>th</sup> September 2001, President Bush explained why the United States is hated: "They

<sup>172</sup> Said, Edward W, "The Clash of Ignorance", *The Nation*, October 22, 2001

<sup>173</sup> Quoted by Maryam Sakeenah, "The Secular Ism", *The Nation on Sunday*, February 6, 2008.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Richard Crockatt, "Anti Americanism and the Clash of Civilizations", [www.kb.osu.edu.pdf](http://www.kb.osu.edu.pdf) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>176</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "The Future of Political Islam", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2002

hate our freedoms\_ our freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other... the terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life... Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of freedom depends on us."<sup>177</sup> This rhetoric of 'they hate us for our freedom' became a theme in the mainstream media. Paul Bremer, while on the Homeland Security Task Force stated that,

"There's no point in addressing the so-called root causes of Bin Laden's despair with us. We are the root causes of his terrorism. He doesn't like America. He doesn't like our society. He doesn't like what we stand for. He doesn't like our values. And short of the United States going out of existence, there's no way to deal with the root cause of his terrorism," clearly implying that our "society", our "values" and "what we stand for" are the cause of other's terrorism.<sup>178</sup>

In fact, the motives are quite the opposite. The U.S is not hated for what it is, but for what it has done. The smokescreen of rhetoric, however, keeps a dispassionate analysis of the real grievances of America's 'enemies' at bay. Roy said in a speech commending Noam Chomsky: "If people in the United States want a real answer to the question of 'why do they hate us?'(as opposed to the ones in the Idiot's Guide to Anti-Americanism, that is: "Because they're jealous of us," "Because they hate freedom," "Because they're losers," "Because we're good and they're evil"), I'd say, read Chomsky on U.S. military interventions in Indochina, Latin America, Iraq, Bosnia, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. If ordinary people in the United States read Chomsky, perhaps their questions would be framed a little differently. Perhaps it would be: "Why don't they hate us more than they do?" or "Isn't it surprising that September 11 didn't happen earlier?"<sup>179</sup>

Michael Scheuer, the former CIA expert on Osama bin Laden calls the robotic repetition of 'they hate our freedom' "errant and potentially fatal nonsense." He states: "There is no record of a Muslim urging to wage jihad to destroy democracy or credit unions, or universities. What the US does in formulating and implementing policies affecting the Muslim world is

<sup>177</sup> Speech by President Bush in the Joint Session of the Congress on September 20, 2001. [www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com) (Accessed January 3, 2009).

<sup>178</sup> Michael Dunn, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the War on Terror', *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*, Vol.20 (Winter 2006-2007), [www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk.pdf](http://www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk.pdf) (accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>179</sup> Arundhati Roy, "The Algebra of Infinite Justice," *The Guardian*, September 29, 2001.

infinitely more inflammatory."<sup>180</sup>

There emerges, quite clearly, a close kinship between Western rhetoric in the 'War on Terror' and the rhetoric from the current crop of leadership of the anti-American front of militant fighters. Osama bin Laden was asked in an interview with Al Jazeera:

*Interviewer:* What is your opinion about what is being said concerning your analogies and the 'Clash of Civilizations'? Your constant use and repetition of the word 'Crusade' and 'Crusader' show that you uphold this saying, the 'Clash of Civilizations'.

*Osama bin Laden:* I say there is no doubt about this. This is a very clear matter...<sup>181</sup>

Ironically, the 'Clash of Civilizations' is a conviction strongly adhered to both by the leadership in the West as well as Al Qaeda's militant leadership. The elites on both sides of the ongoing conflict use the rhetoric of the Clash of Civilizations. The 'clash' talked about arises, therefore, at the macro level through grandiose proclamations by policy making elites. In this sense, it can be said that 'War on Terror' is more of a conflict between two powerful elites who claim to represent their respective communities. Michael Dunn maintains that Huntington's categorization of civilizations has influenced and shaped the rhetoric of the War on Terror: "Huntington's article is part of the theoretical underpinnings for U.S policy makers who make distinctions between civilized nations and rogue states."<sup>182</sup>

Michael Scheuer says that the Clash of Civilizations is 'deeply ingrained in the Western civilization.'<sup>183</sup> Statements celebrating the superiority of Western civilization over all others and its precarious state of vulnerability in the face of 'threatening barbarisms' of the non West are not rare. Shortly after 9/11, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi notoriously referred to the "superiority of our civilization," over Islam.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>180</sup> Anonymous, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*, New York: Brassey's, Inc, 2004.

<sup>181</sup> Al-Jazeera interview with Osama bin Laden, October 2001. Cited in Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages To The World: The Statements Of Osama Bin Laden*, London: Verso, 2005, p.124.

<sup>182</sup> Michael Dunn, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the War on Terror', *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*, Vol.20 (Winter 2006-2007), [www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk.pdf](http://www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk.pdf)

<sup>183</sup> Michael Scheuer ('Anonymous'), *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, And The Future Of America*, Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2002, p. 261.

<sup>184</sup> BBC News, "EU Deplores 'Dangerous' Islam Jibe," September 27, 2001:

This ignores two important points: one, that militancy in the Muslim world is a reaction to the victimization of Muslims by Western countries, which the West needs to face squarely: "One could take issue with Huntington's argument here – it seems grossly unfair to suggest that regional conflicts such as those in Bosnia, Palestine or Kashmir are all the fault of Muslims, where Muslims are sometimes the minority and often face discrimination."<sup>185</sup> This makes the West evade responsibility for its policies and actions vis a vis the Muslim world. Second, it ignores the fact that militancy in the Muslim world has clear political/strategic aims which have been put in black and white by the Al Qaeda leadership\_ namely, the withdrawal of U.S troops from Muslim lands, the liberation of Palestine and cessation of support for unpopular dictators in Muslim countries who serve Western interests. The British journalist Jason Burke adds that, "Bin Laden is an activist with a very clear sense of what he wants and how he hopes to achieve it ... his agenda is basically a political one, though it is couched, of course, in religious language and imagery."<sup>186</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum, the 'Us vs. Them' construct and rhetoric increases cleavages, intensifies hostilities and increases militant tendencies in the non Western world. Michael Dunn makes an interesting observation that despite the inherent Orientalist undertones, Huntington is a well-loved authority in militant anti-American circles and groups throughout the non Western world. The Clash of Civilizations has become a convenient discourse on both sides of the divide as it serves to keep hostilities and hatreds rife. Huntington's book is a bestseller in the Middle East, "no doubt one of the most widely available of the Western works translated into Arabic." The al-Qaeda network's militants "adore" Huntington, "for he brings grist to their mill." Huntington's work, in fact, "is the top reference for all Islamist militants, thrilled by the cultural rift that gives credence to their confrontationalist ideology."<sup>187</sup> So it is apparent that the rhetoric of a 'clash of civilizations' can be found within the upper echelons of al-Qaeda, too. It is the elites of the two powerful structures at war\_ the West's military-industrial complex and Al Qaeda's militancy\_ that stand to gain by presenting real-world socio-political dynamics as a simplified clash between

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/1565664.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1565664.stm)

(Accessed May 9, 2009).

<sup>185</sup> Michael Dunn, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the War on Terror', *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*, Vol.20 (Winter 2006-2007),

[www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk/pdf](http://www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk/pdf)

<sup>186</sup> Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story Of Radical Islam*, London: Penguin, 2004, p.23.

<sup>187</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Bad Moon Rising: A Chronicle Of The Middle East Today*, London: Saqi, 2003, p.74.

opposing cultures. Discussing the al-Qaeda attack on the US in September 2001, and the US attack on Afghanistan in October 2001, Noam Chomsky suggested that,

"in both cases the crimes are considered right and just, even noble, within the doctrinal framework of the perpetrators; and in fact are justified in almost the same words. It is the general public who are peering into the abyss of the future, while those at the centre of power relentlessly pursue their own agendas, understanding that they can exploit the fears and anguish of the moment. They may even institute measures that deepen the abyss and may march resolutely toward it, if that advances the goals of power and privilege."<sup>188</sup>

It is, in the process, the ordinary non combatant who is victimized as self-professed representatives and elites on both sides talk the talk of a 'Clash of Civilizations': Benjamin Barber writes:

"Hyperbolic commentators such as Samuel Huntington have described

the current divide in the world as a global clash of civilizations, and warn of a cultural war between democracy and Islam, perhaps even between 'the West and the rest'. But this is to ape the messianic rhetoric of Osama bin Laden, who has called for precisely such a war. The difference between bin Laden's terrorists and the poverty-stricken third-world constituents he tries to call to arms, however, is the difference between radical fundamentalists and ordinary men and women concerned to feed their children and nurture their religious communities."<sup>189</sup>

#### **'NON WESTERN COUNTER POINT: PERSPECTIVES ON THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS THEORY FROM THE NON WEST'**

Huntington's theory has been heavily debated all over the world, and a voluminous discourse on the theory exists, both from Western and non Western sources. Interestingly, there are similar themes in the criticism emerging both from Western and non Western sources\_ an aspect which in itself stands to refute the rigid, hard differentiation that the 'Clash of Civilizations' wedge compartmentalizes the planet into. However, owing to the inherent Orientalism and West-centric strain in Huntington which makes the Orient a passive subject laid out limply on the study-table, it is important to assert the

<sup>188</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony Or Survival: American's Quest For Global Dominance* London: Penguin, 2004, p.217.

<sup>189</sup> Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, London: Corgi, 2003, Introduction, p.xv.

vociferous, vital rebuttal that comes from the Orient. This can help 'set the record straight' by overturning Huntington's presumptions vis a vis non Western societies and nations that are based primarily on secondary sources which reek strongly of manifest Orientalism.

Besides, criticism from Western sources primarily focuses on neoconservative agendas to perpetuate hegemony and pursuit of strategic interests underlying the Clash of Civilizations theory, and how these justify post-Cold War American policies. It is the voices emerging from the Orient, on the other hand, that target Huntington's inaccurate presumptions about non Western civilizations with an authenticity possible only for a non Western representation that is not coloured by the Orientalist world-view.

In this section, perspectives on the Clash of Civilizations theory are presented from South and South East Asia, Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Far East. Excerpts from interviews conducted by the writer with academicians, scholars, writers and opinion leaders in Pakistan are also included as a primary source for a comprehensive understanding.

It is, indubitably, Professor Edward Said who takes the lead in spearheading critique of the Clash of Civilizations thesis from the non Western world. His Palestinian roots and Western experience along with erudite scholarship gives him a unique insight into the subject, and an ideal position as an arbiter between cultures. According to the late professor, Huntington's theory is misleading because it depends largely on 'second and third hand opinions'<sup>190</sup> and hence shows no real understanding of how cultures work and how they can be grasped. His main sources, according to Said, are 'Journalism and Demagoguery', and not serious scholarship, something that lends to his work a 'latent bellicosity'.<sup>191</sup>

Said points out Huntington's flawed understanding of culture. Huntington and his ilk, according to him, have erred in that they consider the 'official' culture patronised by governments and represented by 'priests, politicians and the State' to be the sole representatives of culture. This totally eclipses the 'unofficial' counter culture. Said states,

"What is totally absent from the Clash of civilizations theory is that in addition to the official culture, there are dissenting, alternative, unorthodox, heterodox cultural strands carrying anti authoritarian elements challenging official

<sup>190</sup> Stated by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America.

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

culture. This is a counter-culture\_ an ensemble of practices influenced by 'outsiders'\_ the poor, immigrants, workers, rebels. No culture is complete without this... To assume that there is complete homogeneity between culture and identity is to miss what is vital and fertile in culture."<sup>192</sup>

Based on this distinction between official and unofficial culture, Said emphasizes the fact that cultures and civilizations are not monoliths, and to view them as such is dangerous:

"No society or culture is 'one thing.' Sizeable minorities within communities like North Africans in France and South Asians in Britain dispute the idea that civilizations that prided themselves in being homogeneous can continue to do so. There are no insulated cultures and civilizations, and any attempt to portray them as water-tight compartments alleged by Huntington and his ilk does damage to their variety, diversity and complexity. The more insistent we are about the separation of cultures, the more inaccurate we are about ourselves."<sup>193</sup>

This is proven by diversity within both the Muslim world and the West. In American society, for example, 'slaves, workers, labourers and poor immigrants play an important but yet unacknowledged role.'<sup>194</sup> In the Muslim world, 'like any other world culture, there is an astounding variety of currents and counter currents.'<sup>195</sup> In the United States, the narratives of marginalized groups are 'silenced by the discourses from the investment bankers from New York; but the dissenters have come to interrupt the unruffled serenity of the official story. They ask questions, interject the experience of the socially unfortunate, and make the claims of the 'lesser people' Asians, Africans, women and other ethnic minorities.'<sup>196</sup> Huntington, on the other hand, chooses to talk of the Muslim world 'as if one billion people spread all across the world was really one person, and the world was no more complicated than a simple declarative phrase of the Clash of Civilizations.'<sup>197</sup>

In his critique on the Clash of Civilizations, Said asserts that in history, the height of European civilization through intellectual achievement has always coincided with

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

Europe's most barbarous practices.<sup>198</sup> That is to say, Western civilization has never really stayed the hand of barbaric brute-force, but has only given it a guise. The age of Colonialism was just that, as European powers competed for territory in Africa and Asia:

"In the battle for the empty spaces of the so-called dark Continent, the colonial powers resorted not only to force, but a whole slew of theories and rhetoric for justifying plunder\_ the notion of the 'civilizing mission'\_ the idea that some races and cultures have a higher aim than others. This gives the more powerful and the more civilized the right to colonize others not through brute-force or plunder (both of which are standard components of the exercise), but in the name of a noble ideal."<sup>199</sup>

Throughout history, occupying, expansionist powers have always invented theories to justify such practices. The U.S had the theory of Manifest Destiny in the 1800s: "Such 'redeeming ideas' dignify the practice of competition and clash whose real purpose is self-aggrandizement, power and unrestrained self-pride."<sup>200</sup> In this sense, therefore, the Clash of Civilizations theory did not really present an entirely new paradigm. It was a traditional pattern, to which Huntington supplied a new post-Cold War jargon.

Edward Said takes up the case for Islam and Muslims as being insufficiently understood and 'othered.' He maintains that the interaction and influence of Islam in the West is deep and historical, and that Islam in Europe has not been at the fringes, but at the very heart, central to the European ethos and identity. Unfortunately, however, this has largely been unacknowledged: "Islam is no longer on the fringes of the West but at its centre. But what is so threatening about that presence? What the West left out, alas, is that the West drew on the humanism, science, philosophy, sociology and historiography of Islam... Islam is inside from the start."<sup>201</sup> Arabs and Muslims\_ Said documents\_ travelled into the world and made great discoveries long before the Europeans Marco Polo and Columbus did. However, he points out, Huntington does not bother with this fact, which is why his thesis is erroneous as the world comes

<sup>198</sup> Said, Edward W, "The Clash of Ignorance", The Nation, October 22, 2001

<sup>199</sup> Stated by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America.

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Said, Edward W, "The Clash of Ignorance", The Nation, October 22, 2001

together again with the rise of pressing global issues of the environment, poverty, economic crises, weapons proliferation and human rights\_ issues common to all, overruling civilizational distinctions:

"But we are all swimming in those waters, Westerners and Muslims and others alike. And since the waters are part of the ocean of history, trying to plow or divide them with barriers is futile. These are tense times, but it is better to think in terms of powerful and powerless communities, of reason and ignorance, and universal principles of justice and injustice, than to wander off in search of vast abstractions that may give momentary satisfaction but little self-knowledge or informed analysis. The Clash of Civilizations thesis is a gimmick like 'The War of the Worlds,' better for reinforcing defensive self-pride than for critical understanding of the bewildering interdependence of our time."<sup>202</sup>

Ahmet Davutoglu, a professor of International Relations at Istanbul University in his deeply perceptive paper on 'The Clash of Interests' presents the Clash of Civilizations theory in line with the Mackinderian theory of the Heartland as well as Nicholas Spykman's Rimland theory in order to highlight the geopolitical interests underlying Western policies towards the Muslim world. Mackinder's theory of the control of the Central Asian landmass (Heartland) and its resources has been a guideline for U.S foreign policymakers since decades. Spykman's Rimland theory argued that the real power lay in the 'Inner Marginal Crescent' of Asia, and guided the U.S's policies vis a vis the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War. It is not coincidental, Davutoglu argues, that 'a vast percentage of the military and political crises in the post Cold War era are in this zone where the passes from the Heartland to the Rimland (i.e the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia) and the choke points of the coasts of the Rimland (i.e the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea) meet."<sup>203</sup>

The clash of interests of a geopolitical nature, Davutoglu believes, defines conflict in this century:

"The chaotic atmosphere in this region was intensified after the emergence of geopolitical vacuum following the Cold War. The purported cultural and civilizational clashes are very minor reasons for this chaotic atmosphere because this region is an integral part of the same Islamic civilization, with the exceptions of Georgia and Armenia... Cultural differences and historical

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Davutoglu, Ahmet, "The Clash of Interests: An Explanation of World Disorder", Journal of Foreign Affairs, Dec 1997 to Feb 1998, Vol II, no.4.

prejudices which were revived after the collapse of the ideological identities of the Cold War era, however, are being used to justify this strategic competition. The Muslim world, which became the intersectional arena of the two phenomena of civilizational revival and strategic competition, becomes the focal point in international relations."<sup>204</sup>

Hence the Clash of Civilizations argument, which vindicates this renewed interest in and harnessing of defences against the Muslim world. This is why Huntington, although he starts his article with civilizational analyses, concludes very differently, with a set of strategic goals for Western policy makers, and an enticement to 'manipulate and sometimes provoke these clashes in order to secure the strategic interests of the Western civilization."<sup>205</sup>

A Clash of Civilizations, Davutoglu maintains, is not attested by the pattern of history. Conflict has always arisen over interests, not civilizational differences, although such rhetoric has often been used to disguise the real facts:

"The history of civilizations is not composed only of clashes. We have many examples of dynamic and peaceful co operation and interaction among civilizations. A pluralistic civilizational co existence was achieved in Muslim Spain, Eastern Europe and India under Islam throughout the centuries until Western strategic interests started to function. A clash is not the only inter civilizational mode of relationship. A clash starts when this civilizational difference is utilized for strategic objectives."<sup>206</sup>

Said Shirazi, an Iranian immigrant settled in New York, is a bitter critic of Huntington's theory. In one of his critiques, Shirazi refutes the theory by pointing out several instances of conflicts between groups belonging to the same civilization. The Clash theory fails to explain that. He opines that Huntington uses 'Clash of Civilizations' as his trademark symbol, beneath which there is ignorance of the intricacies of civilizations and culture. He displays ignorance of both Islamic and Confucian civilizations:

"Coupled with the designation of various countries as belonging to different civilizations is a total lack of interest in what precisely those civilizations are. Sifting through his mountain of statistics, Huntington shows little evidence of having opened Confucius or the Koran. He

merely repeats the key term "civilizations" over and over until it empties of all meaning and you half-expect to see a trademark symbol follow it."<sup>207</sup>

Shirazi acknowledges the fact that Huntington in his book does criticize Western attempts to universalize their civilization, as well as Western amnesia over the fact that the West has committed organized violence against non Western communities in history. However, Shirazi dismisses these merely as 'gratuitous kicks' at the West because

'speaking of the West forgetting facts of its own history, Huntington seems to temporarily forget the Spanish Inquisition, the forced conversions of Jews, Aztecs, Mayans, American Indians and the continuing work of Christian and Mormon missionaries everywhere, including China. Third, after all that he audaciously tries to tie up his inanity in a neat bow by attributing it to another civilization gap between East and West, thus proving his thesis again in miniature.'<sup>208</sup>

Shirazi, in his incisive analysis, digs out evidence of Huntington's enthusiasm for Eugenics rooted in Social Darwinist Racism when he laments rising populations in non Western communities and among immigrants in the West as opposed to the European races:

"Much of the book is spent in hand-wringing over reproductive rates in the Muslim world. The specter of population growth is a time-honored racist fear, because the concern is not simply that there will be more people around but rather that the poor and reckless countries will expand and spill out of control, while the sexually inhibited and fiscally responsible West dies out. Huntington panics over the relative growth of poorer countries...Huntington suffers from an alarmist and cruel tendency to interpret the improvement of living conditions elsewhere in the world as a decline of the West, a loss of advantage. He sees reduced military spending the same way, as part of our decline. Again his analysis is relative and purely statistical, ignoring the question of our actual defense needs and the effect of excessive militarism on our national pursuit of happiness."<sup>209</sup>

He also points out Huntington's skewed-up use of facts and statistics to prove his point, though it leaves the reader only with vague generalizations.<sup>210</sup>

Shirazi laments what Huntington's work strikingly makes clear as a piece of Orientalist literature\_ the West's

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Shirazi, Said, "Your New Enemies" *Dissident Voice*, November 3, 2002, [www.dissidentvoice.org](http://www.dissidentvoice.org) (Accessed May 9, 2009)

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

unwillingness to acknowledge its debt to Islam, interaction with which helped Europe emerge out of the Dark Ages. Besides, Huntington like other Orientalists, believes freedom to be a 'Western' value, although, considering the intricate patterns of interaction and exchange between civilizations, these values are in essence universal, like peace: 'freedom is not merely a Western value, it is a universal good, like peace and general prosperity.'<sup>211</sup> Owing to the loopholes indicated, Shirazi vituperatively rejects the thesis:

"Huntington is not a historian or an economist: he traffics in buzzwords and speaking engagements, the Washington equivalent of a corporate motivational speaker, a Tony Robbins of political power. He offers not a narrative or a specific analysis but a paradigm, a deliberate oversimplification, an effort to find some facts to fit a pattern rather than finding the patterns in a wider range of facts. The problem is even with a decent paradigm, you wouldn't know when it applies and when it doesn't. His work's success is partly owed to being a book of fancy-talk that has the virtue of telling the hardheaded what they think they already know; it gains much by not being read. His secret seems to be that he predicts things that are already happening: warning about a conflict with China, for example, which is hardly a replacement for the Cold War mentality; it is nothing more than an extension of it. Essentially Huntington has written another perennially disposable policy book about the coming war with the East, a work of fortune-telling that will seem prescient at times depending on how things turn out and is pernicious to the extent that it can blind us or limit our expectations."<sup>212</sup>

In Muhammad Asadi's monumental critique on Huntington, he links the War on Terror to the Clash of Civilizations theory which fuels the West's bid to perpetuate and globalize its hegemony both through military and economic means. He maintains that the United States' political-military and economic infrastructure is a war machinery which needs the rhetoric of conflict and clash, fear and threat to fuel it and keep it going. This, in fact, has been a traditional pattern in the U.S since its abandonment of the isolationist policy: 'The Clash of Civilizations too is a new Cold War re-branded for maximum impact. It is a contrived clash that the United States has pursued for several decades.'<sup>213</sup>

War for the United States, Asadi contends, is a lucrative trade:

"When war becomes a rescuer of global capitalism from collapse, an averter of economic crisis, a distraction

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Muhammad Asadi, "The Clash of Civilizations Thesis: A Critique", [www.chowk.com](http://www.chowk.com) (accessed: May 2, 2009)

from pressing domestic and international issues, when war related expenses predominate the national budgets, and military and related industries dominate the corporate sector, when war becomes an easy escape from responsibility for the ruling elite and a major stimulus for a sagging economy, then the foundation is set for it to become institutionalized in a social structure as the feeder of the status quo, or in other words as an automatic default position in times of crisis: peace in these circumstances is dealt a mortal blow. Post World War 2 this has happened in the US, and the developing world unfortunately, has been at the receiving end."<sup>214</sup>

The Clash of Civilizations theory and its accompanying rhetoric is an attempt to justify the 'perpetual war' which is part of the American political economy.

The 'Us vs. Them' rhetoric built around the Clash of Civilizations reflected in statements like 'You are with us or with the terrorists.' It builds up pressure on the Third World nations which, serving international goals to fight proxy wars and safeguarding Western strategic interests, cripple the democratic process at home with increased predominance of the military.<sup>215</sup> With the simultaneous rhetoric of the Western mission to promote democracy, the inherent hypocrisy is exposed. Asadi believes this institutionalized hypocrisy needs to be rejected and resisted by truly empowering the public to counterbalance the preponderant power of the powerful Western military-industrial complex infringing into developing countries:

"If people reject the definition of reality pushed upon them by the U.S. elite, their authority will disappear. When their authority disappears, their ability to conduct warfare, and assign labels that distort and alter lives of people and nations will end and the institutional structure of the developing world with an abnormally developed military institution that interferes with the political, designed to serve just such a contrived reality, will inevitably atrophy. Thus, the real war that is to be fought, is between the people and these elite, it is a war over definitions of reality."<sup>216</sup>

Engin I. Erdem, a Turkish academic, writes a comprehensive critique on the Clash of Civilizations in which he brings out evidence of reductionism in Huntington's work through over-simplification and selectivity that is unbecoming of a scholar.<sup>217</sup> As a refutation of his simplistic analysis, Erdem mentions the ongoing conflict between the Kurds and the Turks, Iran's ambivalence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict involving Shiite Azerbaijan as examples refuting Huntington, and

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Erdem, Engin I., "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited after September 11", *Alternatives Journal*, Summer 2002, Vol.1, no.2.

which he does not explain.

Erdem further unearths Orientalist strands of thought that alienate Muslims as the 'Other'. The implications of the Clash of Civilizations thesis re-create a sort of 'iron curtain' of misperceptions between Islam and the West which closes the avenue for constructive dialogue and gives a pessimistic orientation to International Relations discourse.<sup>218</sup> Erdem brings out the fact that militancy and terrorism against the West is a reaction to U.S hegemonic policy and neo colonialism:

"Huntington ignores the role of Western colonialism and hegemony in Muslim anxiety towards the West. However, as James Scott rightly suggests that 'wherever there is domination one also finds resistance'. US action is very crucial for the future of Islam-the West relations. As the world's only superpower, the United States should be cautious about Muslim concerns in related to both Palestinian-Israeli conflict and democratization process in the Middle East. The Muslim peoples have a conviction that the West/U.S pursues double standards when democracy and human rights deal with the Muslim World. The U.S should not enforce this belief in the Muslim World by ignoring people's democratic demands for the sake of stability of its "strategic interests".<sup>219</sup>

Manochehrr Dorraj brings Huntington under fire by highlighting how his insistence on Islam being a violent creed and Muslims being incapable of peaceful coexistence works to dehumanize Muslims and step up fear of and hatred against Muslims in the West, keeping Islamophobia at an all-time high.<sup>220</sup> Fouad Ajami opines that while Huntington's theory overemphasizes cultural difference, it underemphasizes and ignores the role and responsibility of U.S foreign policy in instigating violent resistance and Anti-American sentiment.<sup>221</sup> Shireen T. Hunter views the Clash of Civilizations theory as a cover for a Clash of Interests. She argues that problematic relations between the West and the Muslim World are hardly stemmed from civilizational differences, but rather from structural-political and economic inequalities between the economically privileged and the

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Manochehr Dorraj, "In The Throes of Civilizational Conflict", *Peace Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4, (December 1998), pp. 633-637

<sup>221</sup> Fouad Ajami, M.E Ahrari, "The Clash of Civilizations: An Old Story or New Truth?", *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (June-August 2000)

underprivileged.<sup>222</sup>

Amartya Sen, a prolific Indian writer based in the United States believes that Huntington errs when he accords an 'extremist Islamist identity' to the Muslim civilization regardless of diversity, variation and crosscurrents. She explains the rise of militancy in the Muslim world as a consequence of both 'Push' and 'Pull' factors\_ the 'push' of distancing from the West and the 'pull' of militant religious revivalism which is fundamentally reactive.<sup>223</sup> She holds that extremism\_ whether coming from Muslims or from the West\_ is essentially akin. Western parochialism ignores the vibrant history of Islam and its myriad contributions to the sciences and arts. She believes that the great Islamic heritage is fundamental to world civilization and must not be ignored or pigeon-holed:

"the broad identities of Muslim people, linked with their commitment to science, mathematics, architecture, engineering, culture, language, and literature, allowed them to play such a leading role in world civilization over more than a thousand years. That capacious understanding has, of course, been challenged over the centuries by those who have advocated undermining all those achievements through the unique prioritization of a sectarian—and often belligerent extremist identity. Sometimes the advocates of narrowness have won for a while, but the broader understanding has been a living presence in the flourishing of Islamic culture and in the richness of Muslim contributions to global civilization. If the broader understanding is under severe challenge today (as it certainly is), that narrowing is being fed not only by the "pull" of resurgent religious revivalism but also by the "push" of distancing coming from the West."<sup>224</sup>

In fact, the nature of civilizations is such that they overlap, interact, share, grow and evolve, while Huntington presents them to be monolithic, fixed and impervious to influences.

Professor Sato Seizaburo of the Tokyo University terms Huntington's cartographic division of humanity into rigid civilizational compartments as simplistic, inaccurate and dangerous:

"Huntington is not only inaccurate or wrong in some of the historical facts he presents in his analysis, but his

<sup>222</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, "The Future of Islam and the West: Clash of Civilizations or Peaceful Coexistence?", *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (June-August 2000).

<sup>223</sup> Amartya Sen, "If Not Civilizations, What?", *Slate Magazine*, March 29, 2006, 6:02 a.m [www.slatemagazine.com](http://www.slatemagazine.com)

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

thesis has the potential to be extremely dangerous if taken as a prescription for making policy. If the leadership of a major power--particularly of the United States, the only remaining superpower--were to accept this world-view and systematically adopt and implement policies based upon it, countries belonging to other civilizational spheres would be forced to take counter-measures, and this would in turn cause a series of interactions that would turn Huntington's propositions into self-fulfilled reality."<sup>225</sup>

He proceeds to bring forth a brief history of the evolution of civilization, highlighting not only essential traits but also commonalities, influences, interaction and intercultural exchange. Besides, Seizaburo puts forward an alternative paradigm based not on cultural-religious differences but on levels of development, as elaborated by Japanese scholar Akihiko Tanaka.<sup>226</sup> He maintains that socio economic factors and not civilizational difference lies at the base of conflict.

Ali A. Mazrui, an eminent Nigerian scholar has studied the Clash of Civilizations theory as a racist treatise that falls in line with racist paradigms employed by the West with regard to the East, particularly Africa: "The West has often been inspired by a racial paradigm. The true picture is that the West has been a cultural aggressor against other civilizations for hundreds of years. This has been a norm rather than an exception."<sup>227</sup> Mazrui then enumerates instances of the manifestation of this racist paradigm throughout history: destruction of native American settlers by white settlers, the trans-Atlantic slave trade involving Black Africans, imperialism and colonization "forcefully modifying among subject peoples their perceptions, standards of judgement, springs of motivation, bases of stratification, modes of communication, their very identities as well as their means of production and patterns of consumption."<sup>228</sup>

To refute Huntington, Mazrui shows that the longest and deadliest wars in history have been not within a single civilization but between members of different civilizations: "The First World War was a civil war within the Western civilization, as was the Second World War. The next intra-civilizational war was the Cold War which was 'a conflict between primarily white countries whose populations were brought up primarily in the Euro-

<sup>225</sup> Sato Seizaburo: An Critical Approach Towards Clash of civilizations ; Tokyo university publishers , "Asia Pacific Review", October 1997.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ali. A. Mazrui, "Racial Conflict or Clash of Civilizations?" The Clash of Civilizations: Asian Responses (Ed.) Salim Rashid, Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 29.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid, p.30.

Christian tradition."<sup>229</sup>

Mazrui contends the claim that Terrorism is the greatest threat to the Western civilization by explaining the relative nature of the term which changes according to its context, as one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist, depending on which lens one views it from. Nor is violence the exclusive trademark of non Western societies. Rather, conventional warfare that the West has always indulged in, kills many more civilians than does terrorism.<sup>230</sup> Mazrui refutes the widespread supposition reinforced by Huntington that Muslims are a threat to law-abiding non Muslims:

"In fact, if the matter is examined globally, for every non Muslim killed by a Muslim, there may be dozens of Muslims killed by non Muslims. Intracivilizationally, Muslims kill their own people in internal conflicts much more than they kill Non Muslims. To keep things in perspective, let us remember that when the West was engaged in intra civilizational conflict in the 1930s and 2940s, millions of Jews were killed... Intra civilizational conflicts in the Muslim world pale by comparison."<sup>231</sup>

Abul Kalam is a professor of International Relations at the Dhaka University, Bangladesh. He writes that "Behind the apparent concern for world order and stability, Huntington actually conceives an hegemonic system in which power, race and culture are destined to play the major role. Such a systemic projection has been proven faulty in the past and his current paradigm is not relevant to the real world and may be equally damaging, as he has a misperceived notion of the enemy, prescribes short-sighted and negative approaches to confront it, and his analysis defies intellectual vision and scientific reasoning."<sup>232</sup>

Huntington, considering his background and the prescriptions for foreign policy he gives, encourages militarism in the West and promotes the 'Judaic-Christian crusade against what he perceives the Islamic-Confucian connection against his projected Western hegemony.'<sup>233</sup> To do so, he overstates and exaggerates differences to suit his paradigm, ignoring the positive aspects of culture that unify. He depicts the 'distinctive quality of American culture in its extraordinary emphasis placed upon information and the spread of knowledge, exposure and

<sup>229</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Abul Kalam, "Huntington and the World Order: Systemic Concern or Hegemonic Vision?", The Clash of Civilizations: Asian Responses (Ed.) Salim Rashid, Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 40.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

publicity, cosmopolitanism and the power of absorption or adaptation\_ elements that make contemporary culture different from any other culture.<sup>234</sup>

On the other hand, he perceives a sort of international conspiracy against the West by the Islamic and Confucian states who are out to 'acquire nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them.'<sup>235</sup> Yet he shows a complete lack of appreciation of the eastern cultures he feels the West is threatened by: "In the garb of paradigm-building, he seeks to project Islam as a new global threat and places himself in the category of those searching for 'Muslim monsters.' This could influence the Western public mind and filter deep into policy making, embroiling Washington into a New Cold War."<sup>236</sup> This fear of Islam he generates overlooks the simple rule of thumb that 'when people are threatened as in dark times with political or even physical extinction, being human souls, they cannot but be forced to take position and commit to the defence of the helpless, to do everything within your power to protect and fight against enemies.'<sup>237</sup>

Huntington, Abul Kalam highlights, is self-contradictory when, on the one hand he claims that he does not wish to advocate the desirability of conflicts between civilizations but merely to project what the future will be like<sup>238</sup>, "but, one may ask, why does he require the West to maintain the economic and military power necessary to project its interests in relation to the non Western civilizations?"<sup>239</sup>

Amit Gupta questions Huntington's presentation of Islamic civilization as monolithic by highlighting how Huntington 'ignores the important South Asian Indo Islamic subdivision that aggregates nearly 300 million Muslims.'<sup>240</sup> His thesis is also refuted by the deep alliances of co operation fomented between Arab-Muslim countries and the United States. Gupta points out Huntington's inaccuracy when he calls India home to the 'Hindu civilization':

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid, p.51.

<sup>235</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, New York: Touchstone, 1996, p.187.

<sup>236</sup> Abul Kalam, "Huntington and the World Order: Systemic Concern or Hegemonic Vision?", The Clash of Civilizations: Asian Responses (Ed.) Salim Rashid, Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 52.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "A Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, (Summer 1993), p. 49.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Amit Gupta, "Are We Really Seeing the Clash of Civilizations?" The Clash of Civilizations: Asian Responses (Ed.) Salim Rashid, Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1997, p.67.

"Huntington makes the mistake of mixing religious bigotry with ideas of nationhood and civilization. India does not have a Hindu civilization but one created by Hindu, Muslim and British influences. India is also home to a 100 million Muslims(sic) and to consider such a group an insignificant minority and therefore not a force in shaping the social and cultural fabric of India is ridiculous... There can be no doubt that Indian culture, language and social norms are heavily influenced by Islam."<sup>241</sup>

Huntington is also extremely inaccurate in his definition and categorization of civilizations because he does not deal with the fact that 'civilizational affinity neither automatically excludes minority groups nor does it automatically include one's co-religionists. In the predominantly Arab and Muslim Middle East, Jews and Arabs were able to live together peacefully for centuries. On the other hand, it was in Christian Europe that the Holocaust was carried out.'<sup>242</sup>

Gupta gives a new dimension to the Clash theory by adding that the conflict is between heavily militarized nations:

"In the context of military build-ups leading to civilizational clashes, it is necessary to also discuss the potential nuclear threat posed by other civilizations to the West. Huntington argues that even while the U.S and other former Soviet states are going through a deep reduction in the nuclear arsenals other civilizations are building up their nuclear capabilities. Despite such reductions, however, the West's nuclear capability continues to surpass the rest of the world."<sup>243</sup>

He goes on to show that it is not Confucian China but actually the United States that is the biggest weapons supplier to the entire Arab world and Israel. The ulterior motive in creating fear of violent non Wests threatening 'our' civilization becomes clear: "The real threat is that the West will no longer be able to easily intervene in regional conflicts in the Third World since the costs of such an intervention would be raised by nuclear proliferation... obviously, this is unacceptable to Western security planners. After all, it is difficult to tell a nation 'do not build nuclear weapons because it makes it difficult to invade you.'<sup>244</sup>

Gupta accuses Huntington of disguised Racism underlying his thesis, as the idea of 'Us vs. Them' is based on the idea of being 'White and Christian.' Civilization-consciousness invoked by Huntington is a 'thinly veiled cover for racial bigotry.' This racial

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid, p.69.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid, p.70.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

exclusiveness makes the achievement of an international society nebulous.

Chandra Muzaffar, also from India, assents adding another dimension to expose the superficiality of the Clash of Civilizations thesis. He maintains that the underlying causes of conflict are unjust power structures and Western hegemonic designs: "It is the United States and Western dominance of the planet, and not a Clash of Civilizations which is the root cause of global conflict."<sup>245</sup> By talking of clashing civilizations, Huntington tries not only to divert attention from the real issues, but also to "preserve, protect and perpetuate Western dominance. By invoking the fear of a Confucian-Islamic connection, he hopes to persuade the Western public, buffeted by unemployment and recession, to acquiesce with huge military budgets in the post Cold War era."<sup>246</sup> Huntington eclipses the fact that the Muslim world's rising militancy is not about a Clash of Civilizations but resistance to Western domination and control; that Islamic movements do not 'hate the west for its values' but are opposed to

"the annexation and occupation of their lands, the usurpation of their rights over their own natural resources by the powerful force of Western imperialism abetted by local elites... Muslim resistance is portrayed as an 'Islamic threat.' The violence that those who resist are sometimes forced to resort to in order to protect their integrity is equated with the violence of the aggressor who annexes land and massacres people. The victim is put on the same plane as the victimizer... The implication is that in all these instances it is Islam and the Muslims who are responsible for the spilling of blood. And yet anyone who has even elementary knowledge of the various conflict Huntington mentions will readily admit that more often than not it is the Muslims who have been bullied, bludgeoned and butchered."<sup>247</sup>

Huntington's thesis ignores the creative and constructive interaction and engagement between civilizations, which is a pattern of history: "Nearly every civilization which Huntington mentions in his analysis has engaged, most of the time, in peaceful intercourse\_ rather than violent confrontation\_ with other civilizations. Islam, for instance, through centuries of exchange with the West, laid the foundations for the growth of mathematics, science, medicine, agriculture,

<sup>245</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, "The Clash of Civilizations or Camouflaging Dominance?", The Clash of Civilizations: Asian Responses (Ed.) Salim Rashid, Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1997, p.104.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid, p.107.

industry, architecture in medieval Europe."<sup>248</sup> Besides, even when differences exist, commonality of interests\_ which is growing with rapid globalization and emergence of common global issues\_ is quite capable of forging deeper ties and co operative connections.

Chaibong Hahm from the Seoul University has given the 'Confucian Perspective' on the Clash of Civilizations thesis. He opines that Racism in the West is very much 'alive and kicking', and 'culture' as Huntington uses the term, is a modern-day reincarnation of race. Although the term culture in itself is neutral, its usage in Huntingtonian context is tainted with racism.<sup>249</sup> He resents the invocation to Confucianism in East Asia as an ethnocentric battlecry and believes that such 'politics of culture' are in tune with Huntington's theory and must be rejected. However, he believes, an insightful understanding of the essence of Confucian philosophy which Huntington has not bothered with, helps communities searching for identity replace 'politics of culture' with 'politics of practice'\_ 'meaning a politics in which one is judged based on what one does rather than on what one is.'<sup>250</sup> This is because, as Hahm interprets Confucius, "for Confucius, culture is not some vague trait such as temperament or character of a people."<sup>251</sup> Instead, culture is "the concrete set of institutions and practices of the past which... is based upon tangible, empirical knowledge of a society in which the ideal human institutions and practices are actualized."<sup>252</sup>

As opposed to Huntington, Confucianism, like Islam, believes that the only distinction between people is nobility of action\_ which is what makes one 'cultured' in Confucian terms, and 'righteous' in Islamic lexicon. Hence assimilation into such a 'culture' of personal morality, according to both Confucianism and Islam, is 'a matter of practice, not of racial character.'<sup>253</sup> According to Hahm, this essence of Confucianism which it shares with Islam is the way out of the cultural stereotyping and divisive 'politics of identity' of Huntington and the dissection of human society on cultural lines:

<sup>248</sup> Ibid, p.102

<sup>249</sup> Chaibong Hahm, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited: A Confucian Perspective", The Clash of Civilizations: Asian Responses (Ed.) Salim Rashid, Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1997, p.115.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, p.110.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>252</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, The World of Thought in Ancient China, Massachusetts: Harvard Publications, 1985, p.64.

<sup>253</sup> Chaibong Hahm, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited: A Confucian Perspective", The Clash of Civilizations: Asian Responses (Ed.) Salim Rashid, Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1997, p.123.

“The only way to overcome identity politics is by understanding that people should not be judged on what they are, but on what they do. Confucianism which distinguishes human beings only in terms of their actual practices, morality as manifested through concrete forms of behaviour or ‘propriety’ is one way in which one can avoid the pitfalls of identity politics and avert the Clash of Civilizations.”<sup>254</sup>

Dr. Mehdi Hassan, an erudite Pakistani scholar, prolific writer and journalist presently the Dean of Media and Communications Studies at a local university, in his interview with this writer, opined that the phrase ‘Clash of Civilizations’ is used to convey different meanings depending on who uses it, and in what context. While rejecting the presence of a pervasive clash between civilizations on a global scale, he stated that the ongoing ‘clash’ is between two powerful, fanatical groups convinced of the correctness of their ideologies and claiming to represent the ‘civilizations’ they belong to\_ precisely, the Taliban and the political-military leadership in the West. Both of these opposing groups have an imperialistic approach and overweening ambitions for global dominance. Religion, although prominent in the rhetoric, is not the issue at all. It is merely exploited. He drew attention to the roots of the current conflict between Muslims and Western nations, that the United States itself promoted Jihad in Afghanistan using religious slogans when Soviet troops had occupied Afghanistan. After the Cold War ended, American policy changed, but the emboldened mujahideen, having defeated one superpower, wanted to fulfil the mission and establish the Islamic Emirate. This emerged as the new threat and the USA modified its policy to deal with the new enemy, using vindicating theories like the Clash of Civilizations.<sup>255</sup>

Dr. Razi Abidi, former Professor of English Literature and a prominent academician in Lahore believes that ‘Clash of Civilizations’ is a euphemism for a real clash of interests motivated by economic advantages and political gains. It is little more than a buzzword for the media to create intense fear of Islam and Muslims in the West. Geopolitical and geoeconomic factors have always impelled and defined the West’s foreign policy manoeuvres throughout history, but the guise of religion is used. He believes that Huntington’s theory is not affirmed by history, and is built on an erroneous confusion between culture and religion. He distinguishes cultural and religious identity and maintains that it is

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, p.125.

<sup>255</sup> As told to the writer by Dr. Mehdi Hasan, interviewed on July 13, 2009 at the School of Media Studies, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore.

always the cultural identity that supercedes the religious identity. The easier association and commonalities between Hindu Indians and Muslim Pakistanis than between Arab and Pakistani Muslims proves this point. This also falsifies the notion Huntington has about civilizations being monolithic units. Dr. Abidi believes that Huntington’s theory has not really ‘influenced’ politics as it is a continuity of the West’s hegemonic and racist policies that go far back in time. The West has always raised the cry to ‘civilize the savages’ either through colonialism or neo-colonialism or globalization. This is a theme running throughout Western literature, a particular example being of black Othello brutalizing his white wife in Shakespeare’s famous tragedy. He resents the fact that non Western communities have failed to effectively and resoundingly put forth a counter narrative to encounter this intellectual affront by the West. What we fail to realize when we lend credence to the Clash of Civilizations theory is that human differences need not lead inevitably to clash and conflict, and that life is beautiful through human diversity. A clash can be prevented through increased interaction and interdependence between civilizations through co operation in areas like the environment, human rights, trade etc. Dr. Abidi linked the Clash of Civilizations theory to the West’s predominant Capitalist ideology, which cannot survive but through imperialism as extra production for profit maximization leads to the search for bigger markets. Theories like Huntington’s are engineered in order to justify this inherent expansionism and imperialism of the Capitalistic ideology. Lastly, Dr. Abidi warned of the fact that the Clash of Civilizations could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Although it is fundamentally flawed, believing in it and focussing on it can create such a nightmarish clash in real. Therefore, the theory should be dismissed as utterly false and ludicrous.<sup>256</sup>

A Senior Research Scholar at the Punjab University, Lahore, requesting anonymity explained that the ‘bloody borders’ ascribed to Islam by Huntington was a sweeping statement showing ignorance of the facts. The reason why Muslim nations have histories of violence is not due to the nature of Islam or Muslims, but due to Western policies in the Muslim world which have always victimized Muslims calling it ‘collateral damage’ while relentlessly pursuing their interests\_ Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine are clear examples in this regard. On the other hand, we find that Islam’s interaction with the West has not only been generally peaceful but has also enriched, diversified

<sup>256</sup> As told to the writer by Professor Dr. Razi Abidi, former Head of the Department of English language and Literature, Punjab University, Lahore, in an interview dated July 13, 2009 at the university campus.

and developed Western civilization. The history of Muslim Spain where multireligious communities lived in peace and harmony under Muslim rule and which became a centre for intellectual enlightenment the world over is a radiant example. The West, therefore, is indebted to Islam, but 'bites the hand that fed it' by seeking to weaken and divide the Muslim world.

The interviewee said that civilizations do not clash when they meet and interact with each other. Instead, they evolve and develop through influences from other civilizations. Each civilization has its own 'ethos' but Huntington shows no understanding of that.

Commenting on the rising militancy in the Muslim world, the interviewee questioned the right of Al Qaeda and Taliban leadership to represent and speak for Islam, saying that their authority stems from no credible source. The Muslim community must flush out such elements and engage in self-criticism and self development in the light of the pristine ideals of Islam. Muslims need to look beyond 'State sponsored Islams' and strive to bring about the true rule of Islam to Muslim lands.<sup>257</sup>

According to Dr. Javed Iqbal<sup>258</sup>, "'Clash of Civilizations' is a big distraction which is likely to consume Muslim energies in giving explanation for something which has no bearing on reality. 'Culture' and 'civilization' are two different terms and have distinct meanings in different contexts and ideological frames of reference. Generally the meanings we accord to these terms come from Western Secular-Materialist post-Enlightenment thought. Civilization comprises of: i) Specific elements which are developed and based upon a specific viewpoint in life. ii) General elements which are dissociated from any particular ideology.

Islam expects Muslims to distinguish between the two elements and draw from other civilizations only elements belonging to the second category."

"It is important to know that there have never been clashes between civilizations in history in the sense that Huntington means it. Clashes and conflicts have always occurred over material aspects, and may or may not involve cultural and religious loyalties."

"Islam is an Ideology and not a civilization. The Islamic ideology

<sup>257</sup> As told to the writer by the interviewee requesting anonymity, on July 14, 2009.

<sup>258</sup> Faculty Member at the Department of Pharmacology, Allama Iqbal Medical College, Lahore, with a deep interest in Sociology and Political Science and the Islamic perspective on both\_ and a prolific writer on Current Affairs.

creates a whole Way of Life encompassing all aspects of human nature and life. It is fundamentally opposed to Secular Materialism and its accompanying ideologies of Capitalism and Communism. In the years of the Cold War, Communism and Capitalism were engaged in a clash but Islam remained dormant, recovering from the throes of colonialism and battling the vicious cycles of oppression and occupation. After the collapse of Communism Islam remained the only vital opposing ideology which could pose a serious threat to the secular West. One of the objectives of American foreign policy today is to stop the re-emergence of Islam as a political reality. Secular Materialism and Islam are diametrically opposed to each other, and both aim to expand their influence globally. Capitalism has become dominant globally and Muslims all over the world are rediscovering their Muslim identity. A clash may come about in the coming years. Oppression in Muslim lands by the West only speeds up the process."<sup>259</sup>

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed Arshad lectures in Islamic Studies at the Institute of Leadership and Management, Lahore, and is associated with a vibrant, popular non violent movement for the re establishment of Islam in Muslim society. In response to queries regarding the Clash of Civilizations by the writer, he wrote that "the Clash of Civilizations is inevitable at this point in time because the ideological foundations of world civilizations have been powerfully challenged. The seeds of such a clash lie in the conflicting worldviews in different civilizations. The Muslim ideology is based on the belief in the Hereafter which defines its worldview. On the other hand non Muslim civilizations are singly focussed on and concerned with the temporal and are strongly self-assured in this orientation."

"The advent of Islam created the ideological formulations for a new civilization which are now assuming a tangible reality. The aim of Islam at the very outset was to separate Truth from Falsehood in order to navigate the direction for the process of the establishment of the Truth. Huntington's thesis has had overwhelming impact on international politics and is assuming reality on a global scale. It has also sharpened cleavages within Muslim societies between Westernized elites and the masses for whom religion figures prominently in life. Huntington's thesis is a theorization of Western agendas and is a commissioned work of immense significance. In its post-Enlightenment bid to globalize Capitalism, Islam and Socialism are the only two hurdles for the West."

"In my opinion it is not realistic to evade and 'prevent' a

<sup>259</sup> As received in writing from Dr. Javed Iqbal by the writer on May 21, 2009.

Clash of Civilizations, but to prepare for it through the establishment of Islam in Muslim societies. Until we achieve that, we cannot claim to represent any civilization at all. The need of the hour is to create a new social order in which our civilizational ideals can have a living presence, even if not fulfilled to perfection. Divided among statist structures, we cannot confront the Western assault. The Islamic ideology for us has become reduced to mere sentimental rhetoric without strategy and productivity. However, the presence of such sentiment keeps the civilization surviving. When the sense of civilizational identity is exterminated, the civilization ceases to exist altogether. A Clash of Civilizations is inevitable and visions for a world beyond it are unnatural and unrealistic."<sup>260</sup>

Another respondent requesting anonymity\_ a writer and scholar interested in Islamic History and Politics opines, "Islamic Civilization is directly opposed to Non Islamic Civilization, because Islam elevates and centralizes the concept of 'ibadah' (submission and obedience to the Creator) as the essence of civilization. 'ibadah' has been defined as the very purpose of human existence by Islam. Ethics, society and politics are all built around this central idea. It is the values, ideals and principles enunciated in the Quran and exemplified in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) that form the civilization of Islam in both its personal and communal aspects. The rise of Islam based on the fundamental doctrine of 'tauhid'(Unity of the Creator) drew a permanent wedge between Islamic and all other civilizations which are based on temporal considerations. In this sense, the world is divided into two civilizations: The Islamic Civilization based on Revealed Law and Non Islamic Civilization based on Secular / temporal man-made Law. A clash between these is inevitable and has been a pattern of history when prophetic missions clashed with civilizations that were rooted in disbelief. While Islamic civilization is based on the concept of 'ibadah', all other civilizations are based on nationalism and secular materialism with attractive slogans of individual liberty and human rights. Hence the clash."<sup>261</sup>

The views documented here provide a broad spectrum of understanding the Clash of Civilizations. They emerge from diverse backgrounds and contexts and present both common and at times conflicting perceptions on the subject. The conclusions emerging from the debate running through the quoted perspectives have both

<sup>260</sup> Written response by Mr. M. Rashid Arshad to questions set by the writer ( see appendix), received by the writer on May 30, 2009.

<sup>261</sup> Written response of Anonymous on the theory of the Clash of Civilizations received by the writer on July 12, 2009.

commonalities and contradictions and hence present a broad-based discussion bristling with diversity. These will be mutually reconciled and dealt with in greater detail in the forthcoming sections.

### **THE FRATERNITY OF CIVILIZATIONS: PROSPECTS FOR DIALOGUE AND THE SEARCH FOR THE 'COMMON THREAD'**

For a fuller and fairer understanding of Huntington, it must not be ignored that after the intense criticism coming from both Western and non Western analysts on his theory, his later work showed important revisions he had made of his earlier contention. Huntington eventually arrived at the conclusion that civilizational conflict is possible but not inevitable\_ clearly a departure from his earlier contention of its inevitability. Importantly, he accepts in his later work that the causes of militancy in the Muslim world are other than the inherent nature of Islamic doctrine or beliefs: "The clash of contemporary Muslim wars lies in politics not religious doctrines".<sup>262</sup> Huntington goes on to actually recommend that hostility towards the West could be reduced by changes in US policy with regard to Israel. Moreover, he also eventually talked about the probability of a world without a 'clash of civilizations'. Clearly, there is an implicit contradiction in this, of Huntington's own earlier thesis. Engin Erdem says that Huntington's Newsweek article, 'The Age of Muslim Wars', deserves great attention as a reconsideration of his own thesis after September 11.<sup>263</sup> This revision of the primary assumptions of the Clash thesis by Huntington himself makes it amply clear that the Clash of Civilizations is an obsolete paradigm that needs to be transcended. The influence it wields over international affairs and policy making in the West, therefore, needs to be curbed through listening to counter narratives and implementing alternative paradigms. The thesis may stand refuted as it very well is, but "refuting the Clash of Civilizations thesis will not stop the Clash of Civilizations concepts being applied to the War on Terror. The issue therefore is not how one can refute it, but how one can challenge its application in the world today."<sup>264</sup>

In order to rise above and move beyond the Clash of Civilizations, some fundamental questions need to be

<sup>262</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Age of Muslim Wars", Newsweek, December 2001.

<sup>263</sup> Erdem, Engin.I, "The Clash of Civilizations Revisited After September 11", Alternatives Journal of International Relations, Vol.1, no.2, Summer 2002.

<sup>264</sup> Michael Dunn, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the War on Terror', 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel, Vol.20 (Winter 2006-2007), [www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk.pdf](http://www.49thparallel.bham.edu.uk.pdf) (accessed May 2, 2009).

asked: "How does one coexist with people whose race, religion and skin colour is different, but who are part of the same species? How do we accept difference without violence and hostility? How do we respect and understand other civilizations without coercion?"<sup>265</sup> The Clash of Civilizations theory, as has been made clear by the preceding discussion, is built on a myth of rigid civilizational blocs incapable of coexistence. On the contrary, however, as Said Shirazi says,

"The idea that most conflicts are between different civilizations is absurd and precisely the opposite of the truth; in fact, it is often easy for people of different cultures to get along if they learn to suspend their standards of judgment. It is only too easy to blow holes in Huntington's theory with endless examples."<sup>266</sup>

Secondly, the Clash of Civilizations obliterates the fact of a 'great, silent dialogue between them. What culture today has not had long, extraordinary, rich interaction with other cultures?'<sup>267</sup>

To begin a discussion on realizing a true civilization that transcends cleavages and schisms, one must first redefine the concept of civilization\_ that it has nothing to do with a particular culture or race, but is about wholesome, collective, intergenerational education of a community through universal values that lie embedded in its historical-cultural-religious narratives. It is not inherent in a culture that may be 'superior' to others, but is acquired through self-education both at the personal and communal level:

"Civilization is social order promoting cultural creation. Four elements constitute it: economic provision, political organization, moral traditions, and the pursuit of knowledge and the arts. It begins where chaos and insecurity end. For when fear is overcome, curiosity and constructiveness are free, and man passes by natural impulse towards the understanding and embellishment of life... Civilization is not something inborn or imperishable; it must be acquired anew by every generation, and any serious interruption in its financing or its transmission may bring it to an end. Man differs from beast only by

<sup>265</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>266</sup> Shirazi, Said, "Your New Enemies" *Dissident Voice*, November 3, 2002, [www.dissidentvoice.org](http://www.dissidentvoice.org)

<sup>267</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

education, which may be defined as the technique of transmitting civilization..."<sup>268</sup>

The fallacies at the heart of the Clash of Civilizations thesis need to be brought out, refuted and transcended, and possibilities of seeking common grounds explored. Edward Said warns, "Unless we emphasize and maximize the spirit of humanistic exchange, profound existential commitment and labour on behalf of the 'Other', we are going to end up superficially and stridently banging the drum for the superiority of 'our' culture in opposition to all others."<sup>269</sup>

It is the notion of the superiority of the narratives of history and culture that lead to conflict between communities. We forget, however, that 'our' history and 'our' culture can also be abstractions that can be created, distorted and manipulated. The task of the interpretation of tradition and history, therefore, becomes extremely important. Edward Said points out that the simplistic yet dangerous notion of 'my history is better than yours' that is embedded in every tradition should be extricated from the discourse: "The task is to understand one's history in terms of other people's histories; to move beyond from a unitary identity to an inclusive one without suppressing one's own identity in the process. One needs to understand oneself in relation to others",<sup>270</sup> and to traverse the great distances which hulk between the Self and the Other.

With all the talk of the Clash of Civilizations, the need for an alternative paradigm which does not use a fallacious abstraction as a justification to extend power and influence is underscored. With the current state of things as they stand, we may be moving towards the clash that Huntington predicted, but the understanding that such a clash is not inevitable, and that it does not have to be so, is extremely important. Such a clash, if approaching, can and must be prevented. There is need for understanding, co operation and dialogue on both sides. Unity and tolerance for each other, respect for cultures or religions that may be different is required. Intellectuals, writers, scholars, academics, the media and political leadership have a very important duty to highlight the grounds for co operation between cultures and civilizations. Only with such an approach can the self-fulfilling prophecy of Huntington's Clash of Civilizations be stopped from happening. In this regard, the effort undertaken by the

<sup>268</sup> Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, Story of Civilization, Part 1, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1954, Introduction, p.ii.

<sup>269</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

United Nations and modern world leaders for a prospective 'Alliance Between Civilizations' needs to be highlighted.

The Alliance of Civilizations initiative was proposed at the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations in 2005. Initiated by the President of the Spanish Republic, it was co-sponsored by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The aim of the initiative was to produce actionable, time-bound recommendations by the end of 2006 for UN member states to adopt.<sup>271</sup> To fulfil the objective of the initiative, the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan assembled a High-level Group consisting of 20 eminent persons drawn from policy making, academia, civil society, religious leadership, and the media. A full range of religions and civilizations were represented. Among the members were former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, who proposed the Dialogue Among Civilizations initiative, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South African Nobel laureate, Prof. Pan Guang, and Arthur Schneier. The HLG met 5 times between November 2005 and November 2006, and produced a report prioritising relations between the Western and Muslim societies. The report outlined recommendations and practical solutions on how the Western and Islamic societies can solve misconceptions and misunderstandings between them.<sup>272</sup> According to the report, "politics, not religion, is at the heart of growing Muslim-Western divide", although a large emphasis is maintained on religion.<sup>273</sup>

The final 2006 report of the High Level Group presented an analysis of the global context and of the state of relations between Muslim and Western societies. It concluded with a set of general policy recommendations, indicating the HLG's belief that certain political steps are pre-requisites to any substantial and lasting improvement in relations between Muslim and Western societies. The report reflected the HLG's view that tensions across cultures have spread beyond the political level into the hearts and minds of populations. To counter this trend, the Group presented recommendations in each of four thematic areas: Education, Youth, Migration, and Media. The Report concluded with outlined suggestions for the implementation of its recommendations. A key issue regarded by the Alliance of Civilizations is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the resolution of which is considered paramount. The report also recommends combating "exclusivism" and extremism. It defines exclusivism as, "those who feed on exclusion and claim sole ownership of the truth". Thus, religious groups who assert one

specific truth to the exclusion of other religious doctrines are considered undesirable by the Alliance of Civilizations.<sup>274</sup>

The United Nations' former Secretary General Kofi Annan's address to the High Level Group in 2006 set the tenor and direction for fomenting a dialogue between civilizations. In his speech the Secretary General asserted that extremists both in the Muslim world and the West should not be allowed to speak for the religions they belong to. Hostile perceptions must be overcome to create better understanding. Annan refuted Huntington's thesis of civilizations being monolithic, pointing out that they often overlap and have several commonalities. For better communication and rapprochement between civilizations, dialogue is necessary, but such a dialogue must be broad-based: "Misperception feeds extremism, and extremism appears to validate misperception. That is the vicious circle we have to break. That, as I see it, is the purpose of the Alliance. We have to ask ourselves an uncomfortable question: how effective are our voices of moderation and reconciliation, when it comes to countering the narratives of hatred and mistrust."<sup>275</sup>

As listed by the official website of the United Nations, the goals of the Dialogue Between Civilizations Initiative are as follow:

- Open the door to a major process of reconciliation in one or more parts of the world.
- Conceive diversity as a step towards peace where dialogue is a means to move forward.
- Strengthen friendly relations among nations and remove threats to peace.
- Foster international cooperation in resolving international issues of an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character and promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedom for all.
- Actively promote a culture of peace – respect for one another – regardless of belief, culture, language, and not fearing or repressing differences within or between societies but cherishing them as a precious asset of humanity.
- Encourage openness to the positive side of globalization, which brings together greater interrelatedness among people and increased interaction among all cultures. Globalization is not only an economic, financial and technological process; it constitutes a human challenge that invites us to embrace the interdependence of humankind and its rich cultural diversity.

<sup>271</sup> Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia, "Alliance of Civilizations", [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com), (accessed May 9, 2009).

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Alliance of Civilizations High level Group press release, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) (accessed May 9, 2009).

<sup>274</sup> Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia, "Alliance of Civilizations", [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com), (accessed May 9, 2009).

<sup>275</sup> Staff Report, "UN Chief Urges Efforts to Counter Extreme Views", [Gulf Times](http://www.gulf-times.com), Monday February 27, 2006.

- Further respect for the richness of all civilizations. Encourage the seeking of common ground to address threats to global peace and common challenges to human values and achievements.

- Transform theory into practice.

“Dialogue knows no geographic, cultural or social boundaries. Even where conflict has created seemingly insurmountable walls between people, the spirit and vision of human beings has in many instances kept alive the flame of dialogue. Keeping that flame burning is one of the goals of the United Nations Year of Dialogue.”<sup>276</sup>

The role of the former Iranian President Khatami has been instrumental in pioneering and helping materialize the dialogue between civilizations. Khatami warns that the absence of dialogue is dangerous and that an alternative paradigm to the Clash of Civilizations must be presented. Such a dialogue must involve the cross migration of ideas between Western and non Western cultures for which it is very important that the West must lend a serious ear to counter narratives from other cultures. This, according to Khatami, is what can lead one to the attainment of a ‘world culture’: “In order for the world culture to assume a unified identity, in form and substance, and avoid the chaos caused by various cultural discords, it must engage all the concerned parties in dialogues aimed at exchanging knowledge, experience and raising understanding in diverse areas of culture and civilization.”<sup>277</sup>

For this purpose, one needs to understand not just other but also one’s own culture for a well-rounded identity that is free of insecurities and inferiorities that lead to fear, hatred, hostility and overweening superiority: “One goal of dialogue among cultures and civilizations is to recognize and to understand not only cultures and civilizations of others, but those of one’s own. We could know ourselves by embarking on a journey for a more profound appreciation of our true identity.”<sup>278</sup> The creation of world culture also involves a new understanding of history as the reservoir of human experience full of lessons to learn from. History must be rescued from bias and prejudice that generates narratives of superiority and inferiority, creating ‘selves’ and ‘others.’ Paradigms for a world order ought not to be built on perpetuation of power but on justice, human rights and egalitarianism:

“In order to call governments and peoples of the world to follow the new paradigm of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, we ought to learn from the world’s past

experience, especially from the tremendous human catastrophes that took place in the 20th century. We ought to critically examine the prevalent, and the glorification of might. From an ethical perspective, the paradigm of dialogue among civilizations requires that we abandon the will-to-power and instead pursue compassion, understanding, and love. The ultimate goal of dialogue among civilizations is not dialogue in and of itself, but attaining empathy and compassion.”<sup>279</sup>

According to Kaveh Afrasiabi, Khatami’s vision of a Dialogue between Civilizations is an antidote to the Clash of Civilizations theory and a counter-thesis which must be earnestly pursued as an emancipatory project. At the heart of this ‘emancipatory project’, Afrasiabi continues, are the ethics of a global community through interfaith dialogue.<sup>280</sup>

This said, however, the imperatives of a successful and effective framework for dialogue between civilizations must first be established, otherwise all attempts to create an alliance between civilizations through dialogue will be in vain and will be little more than chasing an illusory ideal. Dieter Senghaas points out the flawed strategy in contemporary attempts at bringing civilizational representatives to the talking table. He contends that participants in the dialogues sponsored by the West (as in fact all dialogues have been, so far) are not true representatives of the sides to the conflict. Particularly, Muslim representatives in the Dialogue are almost invariably those of the West’s choosing—believers in a ‘moderated’ Islam which does not enjoy any sizeable following in the Muslim world: “On the whole, the Muslim participants are not hard-boiled representatives of Orthodox Islam, be it the traditionalist, Islamist, integrationalist or fundamentalist sense. Believers or non believers, they are all the representatives of a ‘modern’ Islam (whatever that means).”<sup>281</sup> On the other hand, Senghaas notes, Western participants are rather naive and unaware of the Muslim standpoint, with little to offer. Such a dialogue, as Senghaas terms it, is ‘intellectually exhausted’, leading to a dead end.

Another danger the West needs to guard against for a genuine dialogue between civilizations is what Senghaas terms ‘profile essentialism’,<sup>282</sup> which is a belief in one’s own culture to be essentially unique and exclusive. The West must pull itself out of the Cold War mentality of creating and bloating up enemy images in order to direct an ambitious foreign policy at an adversary—real or

<sup>276</sup> United Nations Year of Dialogue Between Civilizations 2001, Introduction, [www.un.org/dialogue](http://www.un.org/dialogue) (accessed May 9, 2009)

<sup>277</sup> “Empathy and Compassion”, *The Iranian*, September 8, 2000.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, “Khatami and the Emancipatory Project of Dialogue between Civilizations”, *Studies in Islam and the Middle East*, [www.majallah.org](http://www.majallah.org) (accessed May 9, 2009).

<sup>281</sup> Senghaas, Dieter, *The Clash Within Civilizations*, Routledge, London, 2002., p. 105.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid, p. 107.

imagined. The West should reject attempts at demonization of the enemy through a greater sense of responsibility, and recognize that

“Contrary to common assumptions, there is at present no potentially highly explosive line of conflict between the Islamic world and the West\_ neither the beginnings of one, nor a developing one, nor even a phalanx-like confrontation... what exist, in fact, are modernization conflicts between the haves and the have nots, similar to what took place within Europe from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, albeit under different circumstances and with a different cultural profile.”<sup>283</sup>

The West needs to understand that its version of modernity cannot be imposed on the Muslim world, and that just as it took thousands of years for the West to evolve, it must allow other communities to develop according to their own orientation and essential values. Besides, the West must engage with authentic, popular representatives of the Muslim world: “An intellectual debate should rather be dealing intensively with the concepts of the democratic representatives of the Islamic world... How do writers, scientists, politicians, the representatives of social and especially religious groups envisage a desirable political constitution for their increasingly complex societies?”<sup>284</sup>

On both sides of the current divide, voices of conciliation, tolerance and peacemaking need to be empowered over and above the call to isolate and avenge. President Obama said while addressing the Muslim world: “So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, and who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. This cycle of suspicion and discord must end.”<sup>285</sup>

Religion has a very significant role in the process of reconciliation. A number of religious personalities, scholars, organisations and institutions are engaged in the task of reconciliation, peacemaking and rapprochement through religion. However, their contribution and potential has largely been unacknowledged and unrecognized: “We do not know most of these people, nor do we understand their impact, because we in the West have had a tendency in the modern period to view religion as only the problem in the human relations of civil society, never part of solutions.”<sup>286</sup> However, it is also true on the other hand

that religion is also misused for generating violence, hatred and conflict. Religion, therefore, has the potential both for peacemaking and conflict resolution as well as violence and conflict. It is the peacemaking and conciliatory role of religion that ought to be highlighted and emphatically asserted, through interpretation of the sources of religion:

“At the end of the day, it will come down to interpretation, selection and the hermeneutic direction of religious communities. That, in turn, is deeply tied up with questions of the economic and psychological health of their members, the wounds of history, and the decisions of key leaders to direct their communities’ deepest beliefs, practices and doctrines towards healing and reconciliation or towards hatred and violence.”<sup>287</sup>

It is religion that can help create a global civil society based on the sanctity of human rights and the necessity of conflict resolution. However, to truly accord that position and role to religion, it must be learnt that “Religion does not kill. Religion does not rape women, destroy buildings and institutions. Only individuals do those things.”<sup>288</sup> This is particularly true for the West to understand in its perception of Islam which has, unfortunately, plummeted sharply after September 11, 2001, bringing the prospects for a clash closer. Instead of viewing violence as an intrinsically ‘Muslim’ phenomenon, the West needs to take responsibility for ill advised policy victimizing Muslims that has raised apprehension and mistrust in the Muslim world. It needs to understand the victim’s experience and world view. It is heartening to note that this theme figured prominently in President Obama’s speech to the Muslim world in June 2009. The President remarked:

“We meet at a time of tension between the United States and Muslims around the world - tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate. The relationship between Islam and the West includes centuries of co-existence and cooperation, but also conflict and religious wars. More recently, tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations. Moreover, the sweeping change brought by modernity and globalization led many Muslims to view the West as hostile to the traditions of Islam.

Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims. The attacks of September 11th, 2001 and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led

<sup>283</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>285</sup> ABS-CBN News, [Text of Obama's speech to Muslim world](http://www.abs-cbn.com), [www.abs-cbn.com](http://www.abs-cbn.com), June 4, 2009, 8:21 PM. (Accessed July 18, 2009).

<sup>286</sup> Marc Gopin, “Religion and International Relations at the Crossroads”, [International Studies Review](#), Vol III issue III, Fall 2001.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Stated by Giandomino Picco, quoted in [United Nations Year of Dialogue Between Civilizations 2001](#), Introduction, [www.un.org/dialogue](http://www.un.org/dialogue) (accessed May 9, 2009)

some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. This has bred more fear and mistrust.”

It is also significant that the U.S President referred consistently to the Muslim religion in his speech, both to soothe aggravated sentiment in the Muslim world and reassure that America was not at war with Islam, and also to make his Western audience realize that Islam and Muslims have to be understood better and dissociated from violence and terrorism in the Western perception. However, this effort and understanding needs to filter through into American policy, and President Obama is well placed to initiate a change.

In his speech at the ‘Dialogue Between Civilizations’, President Khatami spoke of Islam’s role in peacemaking and arbitrating between civilizations:

“I should also highlight one of the most important sources that enriched Iranian thought and culture, namely Islam. Islamic spirituality is a global one. Islam has, all through the history, extended a global invitation to all the humanity. The Islamic emphasis on humane quality, and its disdain for such elements as birth and blood, had conquered the hearts of those yearning for justice and freedom...”<sup>289</sup>

Several writers and intellectuals throughout history have recognized the extraordinary potential of Islam as an arbiter between civilizations through its emphasis on equality, justice and brotherhood that goes beyond all distinctions of nationalism, race or creed. According to H.A. R Gibb:

- "But Islam has a still further service to render to the cause of humanity. It stands after all nearer to the real East than Europe does, and it possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and cooperation. No other society has such a record of success uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity, and of endeavours so many and so various races of mankind . . . Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of East and West is to be replaced by cooperation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition. In its hands lies very largely the solution of the problem with which Europe is faced in its relation with East. If they unite, the hope of a peaceful issue is immeasurably enhanced."<sup>290</sup>

- "The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding achievements

<sup>289</sup> “Empathy and Compassion”, The Iranian, September 8, 2000.

<sup>290</sup> H.A.R. Gibb, Whither Islam, London, 1932, p. 379.

of Islam and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue...”<sup>291</sup>

- "The universal brotherhood of Islam, regardless of race, politics, colour or country, has been brought home to me most keenly many times in my life -- and this is another feature which drew me towards the Faith."<sup>292</sup>

Ample evidence for the aforesaid is present in the sources of Islam. According to Islamic tradition, the Prophet (PBUH), in his Last Sermon made to the entirety of his living followers at that point in time said:

" O people! Verily, Allah says, ‘O mankind! We have indeed created you from a single male and a female, and then We made you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize (or identify) each other. Indeed, the most honoured among you in the Sight of Allah is the one who is the most righteous.’(In the light of this verse), no Arab has a superiority over a non Arab, nor does a non Arab have any superiority over an Arab; and a black does not have any superiority over a white, nor is a white superior to a black, except by one thing: righteousness. Remember, all human beings are the sons and daughters of Adam (A.S), and Adam (A.S) was made from dust. Be warned! All (false) claims of blood and of wealth are under my feet."<sup>293</sup>

The huge stumbling block towards an understanding of Islam as an egalitarian, emancipatory, humanistic tradition in the West is, as mentioned earlier, the Orientalist lens with which the West has always viewed Islam. Due to a very flippant, superficial understanding of it, violence in the Muslim world is seen as intrinsic to Islam and Muslim society, while the role and responsibility of the West in provoking militancy through its policies is overlooked. This mindset becomes obvious in the Palestine-Israel conflict, a weeping sore in the modern world which embodies in itself all the prejudice, misunderstanding, hate, mistrust with which human beings have viewed others on the basis of difference in religion or race or country. Karen Armstrong states, “It is not sufficient for us in the West to support or condemn parties to the conflict. We are also involved and must make our own attitudes our prime responsibility...”

<sup>291</sup> A.J. Toynbee, Civilization on Trial, New York, p. 205

<sup>292</sup> Col. Donald S. Rockwell, U.S.A. Poet, Critic and Author, quoted by Memoona Sajjad (Ed.), Setting the Record Straight: A Rejoinder, Lahore, EPIC Publications, 2008, p.8.

<sup>293</sup> Quoted by Martin Lings, Muhammad (SAW): His Life Based on the Earliest Sources, Vermont, Rochester (USA), Inner Traditions, 2006.

Crusading is not a lost medieval tradition: it has survived in different forms in both Europe and the United States and we must accept that our own views are blinkered and prejudiced. The prophets of Israel\_ the parents of all three faiths, proclaimed the necessity of creating a new heart and a new soul, which was far more important than external conformity. So too today. External political solutions are not enough. All three of the participants in the struggle must create a different attitude, a new heart and spirit. In the Christian West we must try to make the painful migration from our old aggressions and embark on the long journey towards a new understanding and a new self."<sup>294</sup>

In the conclusion to his great book 'Orientalism', Edward Said states that the single greatest failure of Western thinking is its Orientalist frame of thought, and that it must be surpassed. If this is done, the realization of the vision for a global human community would become possible:

"Without the 'Orient' there would be scholars, critics, intellectuals, human beings for whom the racial, ethnic and national distinctions were less important than the common enterprise of promoting human community... I consider Orientalism's failure to have been a human as much as an intellectual one; for in having to take up a position of irreducible opposition to a region of the world it considered alien to its own, Orientalism failed to identify with human experience, failed also to see it as human experience. The worldwide hegemony of Orientalism and all that it stands for can now be challenged, if we can benefit properly from the general twentieth century rise to political and historical awareness of so many of the earth's peoples... This work is a warning that systems of thought like Orientalism, discourses of power, ideological fictions\_ mind-forged manacles\_ are all too easily made, applied and guarded."<sup>295</sup>

Overcoming this stumbling block requires acknowledgement of the West's debt to the Orient and to Islam, and reaching the realization that Islam in fact is central and not extrinsic to Western civilization. In his speech to the Muslim world, U.S President Barack Obama mentioned Europe and America's debt to Islam:

"As a student of history, I also know civilization's debt to Islam. It was Islam -- at places like Al-Azhar University -- that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed. And throughout history, Islam

<sup>294</sup> Karen Armstrong, The Crusades and their Impact on Today's World, New York, Random House, Inc, 2001, p.539.

<sup>295</sup> Said, Edward, Orientalism, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, Great Britain, 1978, p.328

has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality.

I know, too, that Islam has always been a part of America's story. The first nation to recognize my country was Morocco. In signing the Treaty of Tripoli in 1796, our second President John Adams wrote, "The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Muslims." And since our founding, American Muslims have enriched the United States."<sup>296</sup>

The West needs to reinterpret history and do away with the narrow, parochial understanding of an exclusively 'Western' individualism that its history celebrates. It needs to acknowledge the debt, for only through that will mankind be able to seek the common thread buried beneath the morass of clash and conflict. Will Durant writes, "Europe and America are the spoiled child and grandchild of the Orient, and have never quite realized the wealth of their inheritance. But if, now, we sum up those arts and ways which the West has derived from the East, or which, to our current and limited knowledge, appear first in the Orient, we shall find ourselves drawing up unconsciously an outline of civilization..."<sup>297</sup>

Effort needs to be made to create the realization in the Western mind, of the historically attested fact that "The Western heritage is not simply Judaeo-Christian, but rather Judaeo-Christian-Islamic. Islam belongs to the same Abrahamic family of religions as Judaism and Christianity, and modern Western civilization has inherited a large part of Islamic intellectual and scientific culture."<sup>298</sup>

According to Amartya Sen,

"Instead of celebrating the fact that ideas on mathematics, science, literature, architecture, or tolerance have repeatedly crossed the boundaries of distinct "civilizations," the claim is made that Western science is quintessentially "Western" and that "a sense of individualism and a tradition of individual rights and liberties" rampant in the West well before modernity is "unique among civilized societies." That parochial Western perspective has such following today that counterexamples are treated as "merely anecdotal," combined with a determined unwillingness to take any

<sup>296</sup> ABS-CBN News, Text of Obama's speech to Muslim world, [www.abs-cbn.com](http://www.abs-cbn.com), June 4, 2009, 8:21 PM. (Accessed July 18, 2009).

<sup>297</sup> Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage, Story of Civilization, Part 1, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1954, Introduction, p.viii.

<sup>298</sup> Osman Bakar, Islam and Civilizational Dialogue, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, 1997, p.42.

serious note of the plentiful examples of tolerance or of science and mathematics that can be found in the history of Arab people. This disposes, of course, of Arabic math and science, including, just to give one example, algorithmic reasoning, derived from the name of the 9<sup>th</sup>-century Arab mathematician Al-Khwarizmi. But this intellectual surgery is rounded up with the dismissal of the history of tolerance in the Muslim world, which is linked closely to Muslim intellectualism, not to mention its practical political impact on a Saladin.<sup>299</sup>

Sen goes on to hold Western parochialism responsible for the rise of narrow militant extremism in the Muslim world. On the other hand, the Orient must also understand that the response to Orientalism is not 'Occidentalism', because both are exclusivist, supercilious, divisive and false as they cut up humanity into 'Orientals' and 'Occidentals', according rigid, unvarying traits viewed from a tainted lens. The exercise of viewing human beings as 'Others' due to difference in skin, blood, geography or culture is, as Said termed it, 'a degradation of knowledge.'<sup>300</sup>

The task ahead is to overcome the stumbling blocs in order to acquire a balanced world view, through which to strive to reach a middle ground on the basis of a system of sharing, exchange and intercultural communication between civilizations on an egalitarian basis. At the heart of the process is the understanding that we may be different, but we also share our humanity, and must make the most of this shared, indissoluble bond:

"The different civilizations in the world are not inherently prone to conflict... Civilizations embody many similar values and ideals. At the philosophical level at least, world religions share certain common perspectives on the relationship between the human being and the environment, the integrity of the community, the importance of the family, the significance of morality and indeed the meaning and purpose of life."<sup>301</sup>

This does not mean, however, that personal identities ought to be diluted, distinctions erased, barriers eliminated. That is neither practical nor advisable. What is needed is a delicate balance between civilizational (inclusive of religion, culture and all other identities short of singular humanness) and human identity. Quoting Amartya Sen again, "While the demands of a global identity cannot submerge all the other identities we

have—national, religious, political, social, or linguistic—those broader demands are not dismissable, either. Indeed, in a world of real human beings, not miniaturized by singular loyalty to one unique identity, there is room for—and need for—both."<sup>302</sup> Edward Said reiterated the same concept when asked what commonalities can unite the human race:

"There are already commonalities that need to be recognized. (To promote this), education must be de-nationalized and history taught as both the exchange as well as the conflict between civilizations. That is the first step. Inhuman practices like apartheid and ethnic cleansing should be vehemently rejected as wasteful, hopeless schemes to isolate and antagonize... I do not, however, suggest that differences should be eliminated. Things cannot be flattened out and homogenized. However, the other extreme is that everything is clashing. I think that is a prescription for war, and Huntington says that. The other alternative is coexistence with the preservation of difference. We have to respect and live with our differences. I do not suggest a unified, simplified, reduced culture, but the preservation of differences while learning to coexist in peace."<sup>303</sup>

This too is the vision of Islam, which has largely gone unrecognized both in the Western world as well as among Muslim communities. The potential and promise of Islam in fostering the 'fraternity' or the 'alliance' between civilizations is immense, as in fact, Islam has achieved this tremendous undertaking at several high points in its history. Spain under Muslims is an ideal worth emulating. Malaysian Professor Osman Bakar states,

"Was not the civilization built in Spain by Muslims, Jews and Christians under the banner of Islam a universal civilization? A number of Jewish and Christian thinkers think so. Max Dimont makes the remarkable claim that the Jewish Golden Age in the medieval period coincided with the Golden Age of Islam, thus implying that what Muslims, Jews and Christians had built together within the Islamic civilization was truly universal in nature. There exists among some European scholars nostalgia for the Andalusian culture and civilization. They wish to return to the universality of Andalusia because post modern Western civilization has become particularistic and

<sup>299</sup> Amartya Sen, letter to Robert Kagan, "Is there a Clash of Civilizations?" *Slate Magazine*, Posted Friday, May 5, 2006, at 11:52 PM

<sup>300</sup> Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, Great Britain, 1978, p.328

<sup>301</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, "The Clash of Civilizations or Camouflaging Dominance?", *The Clash of Civilizations: Asian Responses* (Ed.) Salim Rashid, Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1997, p.104.

<sup>302</sup> Amartya Sen, letter to Robert Kagan, "Is there a Clash of Civilizations?" *Slate Magazine*, Posted Friday, May 5, 2006, at 11:52 PM.

<sup>303</sup> Remarkd by Professor Edward W Said in his 1998 lecture titled *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations* at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States of America. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Accessed May 2, 2009).

exclusionary.”<sup>304</sup>

President Khatami in his speech on the Dialogue between Civilizations referred to this insight Islam provides into forging a ‘fraternity of civilizations’:

“Dialogue is not easy. But believing in dialogue paves the way for vivacious hope: the hope to live in a world permeated by virtue, humility and love, and not merely by the rein of economic indices and destructive weapons. Should the spirit of dialogue prevail, humanity, culture and civilization should prevail. We should all have faith in this triumph, and we should all hope that all citizens of the world would be prepared to listen to the divine call: “So Announce the Good News To My Servants -- Those who listen to the Word, And follow The best (meaning) in it.” (The Holy Quran). Let us hope that enmity and oppression should end, and that the clamor of love for truth, justice and human dignity should prevail. No ineffable clamor reverberates in the grand heavenly dome more sweetly than the sound of love.”<sup>305</sup>

It is here that a reconciliation between the two apparently contradictory discourses over the Clash of Civilizations existing in the Muslim world needs to be attempted. The conclusion emerging from Muslim viewpoints quoted in the preceding section of this paper was that there are two distinct and rather discordant opinions over the Clash thesis among Muslims. The first is a rejection of the Clash thesis as a fabricated myth for perpetuating Western dominance and justifying its aggrandizing policies. The other opinion is of a Clash being inevitable due to the essentially and radically different ethos of Islam which makes it impossible to be reconciled with the West. With this realization, the Muslims need to prepare for the approaching Clash. The second view is understandable as a natural response to the West’s confrontationist posture vis a vis the Muslim world throughout most of history. It is also true in its recognition of the fundamental differences between Islam and the West.

This said, however, it must also be added that despite the essential differences between Islamic and Non Islamic tradition, historically Islam has never had ‘adjustment problems’ or difficulties in creating pluralistic societies where peoples of diverse religious traditions have lived together and prospered. In fact, as mentioned earlier, Islam has a rich pluralistic tradition unsurpassed by any other civilization. It has a vast experience of interaction and alliance with non Muslim communities. Instances of conflict between Muslims and Non Muslims have never been, it must be observed, over ‘civilizational differences’, but for the exigencies of security and self-

defence. The idea, therefore, that Islam’s differences in worldview with non Islamic civilizations makes a clash inevitable is falsified by the history of Islam itself. Rather, the history of Islam presents a veritable model of a ‘world civilization’, as stated by Professor Bakar:

“Huntington’s view that the idea of the possibility of a universal civilization is exclusively Western conception is not supported by history. It is a historical fact that Islam built the first comprehensive universal civilization in history even if we go by all the modern criteria of universality. Islam was the first civilization to have geographical and cultural borders with all the major contemporary civilizations of the world, and it was Islam that had the most extensive encounter with other civilizations.”<sup>306</sup>

Where, then, does a Clash emerge? It emerges as a corollary to interventionist, adventurist, exploitative policies vis a vis the Muslim world by the ascendant West steeped in the compulsions of its espoused Materialism and Capitalism. The Clash is not inevitable, but it can become possible if such policies are mindlessly and relentlessly pursued by the West and if the Muslim world does not engage in self criticism and undertake a rediscovery of the pristine message of Islam. As long as the West keeps pursuing its ill advised course, insecurity and militant responses will proliferate among the Muslims. In such a case, Muslim opinion leaders will be compelled to rally together their people for strengthening, fortifying and gearing up for the West’s assault on what is most precious to them. Given the insensitivity and superficial grasp of the West over the prevalent mood in the Muslim world, the vicious cycle of hostility will go on. This is exactly the self-destructive path towards the Clash of Civilizations which in the long run will be in the interest of none. The way out, however, is given by the Islamic doctrine itself. It gives a prescription for the reconciliation between these two apparently contradictory views.

Islam recognizes the importance of the maintenance of distinctions, but it also teaches tolerance for and a sacred inviolability of natural and cultural differences, while rejecting any discrimination on the basis of such differences. Islam, while asserting its universal human ethos and appeal, does not warrant alienating or ‘othering’ communities. Rather, it instills in its followers tolerance and respect for different communities with an understanding that diversity in human communities is a Sign of God. It does not harmonize or impose, as is asserted by historical precedent, but integrates and includes through the creation of a participatory culture based on Justice and Equality for all who share in a single humanity.

<sup>304</sup> Osman Bakar, *Islam and Civilizational Dialogue*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, 1997, p. 10.

<sup>305</sup> “Empathy and Compassion”, *The Iranian*, September 8, 2000.

<sup>306</sup> Osman Bakar, *Islam and Civilizational Dialogue*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, 1997, p. 10.

Professor Osman Bakar believes that the Quranic title of Muslims as a 'middle nation'<sup>307</sup> suggests the potential of Islam to act as the arbiter between civilizations through its universal essence:

"In Islam, civilization-consciousness is deeply rooted in such Quranic ideas as a common human ancestry, a common humanity, the universal goodness of man, the universality of divine favours to the human race, ethnic and cultural pluralism, intercultural pluralism and cooperation in the pursuit for the common good of all mankind, global social justice, a common responsibility for the protection of our planet earth, and all this is rooted in the idea of 'middleness.'<sup>308</sup>

This holistic concept of the 'middleness' of Islam as an arbiter between civilizations and an antidote to an inevitable Clash of Civilizations is elaborated upon by the professor hence:

"We may illustrate the idea of middleness as applied to human culture and civilization with the following examples: In politics, Islam strikes a middle position between the kind of theocracy hated and feared in the West and secular modern democracy founded on Western individualism. Islam's 'democracy' harmonizes the rights of God with the rights and duties of man. In economics, Islam strikes a balance between secular capitalism of the 'free West' and the atheistic socialism of the Communist bloc. In theology, Islam seeks to synthesize the idea of a transcendent God and that of an immanent God. In philosophy Islam has struck a balance between extreme forms of rationalism and empiricism... we can go on enumerating these 'middle positions' of Islam in many other areas of human life and thought." Elsewhere, this writer has stated:

"However, despite the loyalty to one's own that Islam demands, it keeps a perfect balance of fidelity to what belongs to you and tolerance and respect for what belongs to another. Therefore, nowhere does Islamic culture reek of or border on fanatical patriotism and narrow nationalism that breeds arrogance, prejudice and intolerance of the other. This is the character of the 'Middle Nation', the 'ummatun wusata', firmly poised in its cultural values of moderation. In Islam, it is not nationalism, territory or racial roots that are important or create identity\_ it is Idea (the central belief in One God and complete submission to Him) and the Way of Life that springs from it that stands taller. This Idea and its accompanying Way of Life is about human values, and is ethically all-inclusive. Therefore, believer in it rise above

the trappings of skin, caste and nationality that subsume true human identity. The idea of Hijrah (migration undertaken by the Prophet PBUH and his followers) too was new to the Arabs. It was inconceivable to be leaving home, family, tribe and kin for an Ideal. But that was just the Islamic Revolution: living for an Ideal. Culture becomes oppressive and imbalanced when power-dynamics enter the scene and begin to dictate the norms. Islam replaces the power-dynamic with its powerful moral imperative of Justice, giving culture a whole new orientation. The Justice and morality of this Ideal Culture is the antidote to contemporary paradigms of clashing civilizations. It is in reverting to this culture of justice and human values that the solution lies. This is the panacea for our world."<sup>309</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In the light of the research conducted by this writer, the following can be listed as the observations and findings: To begin with, the Clash of Civilizations theory is thoroughly rooted in its context, which makes it a post Cold War paradigm giving a theoretical vindication to the course of Western policy after the Cold War. The fact that Huntington was a deeply influential personage in the highest policymaking echelons in the United States both lends importance to his thesis as an instrument of American foreign policy as well as removes the credibility required for genuine scholarship from his work.

Huntington's thought falls exactly in line with the repertoire of Orientalist discourse in the West. Huntington shares Orientalism's fundamental perceptions of what it characterizes as the 'Other', who traditionally happens to be the Arab-Muslim subject of analysis. Huntington draws heavily on the hardcore Orientalism of Bernard Lewis who is a demonstrably significant influence on his work. Huntington's presumptions about non Western civilizations in large part do not bother with reliance on empirical evidence.

The real agenda underlying the thesis presented by Huntington is perpetuating Western dominance and hegemony on the globe after the Communist enemy had been vanquished, through the creation of a new enemy and the generation of fear and hatred against it in the public mind. Broadening contemporary conflict into a civilizational clash magnifies it, garners public support, intensifies security compulsions and eclipses the real agendas of national interest and monopolization of resources. The 'Clash' theory fits well with the growing needs of America's powerful and expansive military-

<sup>307</sup> The Noble Quran, Surah Al Baqarah (Chapter 2), verse 143.

<sup>308</sup> Osman Bakar, *Islam and Civilizational Dialogue*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, 1997, p. 8.

<sup>309</sup> Memoona Sajjad, "Ideal Culture", *Muslim Writers Alliance*, <http://www.oneummah.net/content/view/65/1/>, 13 September 2007. (accessed March 17, 2009).

industrial complex defined by its Capitalist ideology.

The conflict with the Muslim world is about geopolitical interests of the West. The rhetoric of the Clash of Civilizations works well to disguise these and divert criticism of Western policy.

'The West and the Rest' is an artificial construct based on historical fallacies and sharpening cleavages in order to maintain a 'wartime status' in the Western mind, perceiving the Western civilization to be embattled in eternal combat with a hostile, threatening non West.

September 11 apparently vindicated Huntington's thesis. Western policy and rhetoric after September 11 seems to have officially adopted the Clash of Civilizations theory. Despite refutations of it, policy and rhetoric from the White House has only served to lend credence to it. Islamophobia in the West has gone mainstream and has generated an understandably militant response from the Muslim world. This creates a vicious cycle of hostility breeding conflict. If the trend continues, the Clash of Civilizations might become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The voluminous criticism of Huntington's theory of the Clash of Civilizations from analysts in the nonWestern world establishes its flawed basis on the following counts:

First, Huntington's thesis is both simplistic and reductionist. It ignores the complex dynamics of conflict and neatly reduces them to his formula of cultural-civilizational clash. The fact of the matter is that conflicts take place more out of economic and socio-political injustice, deprivation, disempowerment, geopolitics etc, gradually stirring up and involving ethno-religious sentiment, and, at a later stage, what Huntington calls 'civilization consciousness.'

Second, Huntington has been heavily criticized for being selective in his approach towards history. He conveniently overlooks instances which indicate trends of co operation, plurality and co existence among civilizations\_ a pattern that is clearly distinguishable perhaps since times immemorial.

Third, Huntington views civilizations as monolithic, overlooking intra-civilizational diversity and even conflict. Huntington simply refrains from discussing cases of conflict within civilizations because they hurt his thesis.

Fourth, the Clash of Civilizations thesis is a classic example of 'othering': polarizing the parties involved into 'us and them'. This is clear when he chooses to divide civilizations into two hostile, adversarial camps\_ "The West and the Rest.

Fifth, Huntington's position as advisor to the Pentagon leaves his work with little credibility and authentic scholarship.

Sixth, it has been pointed out that Huntington has utterly failed to highlight the numerous commonalities and essential similarities between civilizations. He refuses to see the interacting, overlapping, mingling and merging of cultures and the evolution of civilizations through the debt

they owe to each other. This is particularly so for his superficial analysis of the relationship between Islam and the West. Naturally, therefore, his analysis presents a hostile, horrifying picture of clashing civilizations.

As far as criticism from the Muslim world is concerned, there are two contrasting views: The first is a rejection of the Clash thesis as a fabricated myth for perpetuating Western dominance and justifying its aggrandizing policies. The other opinion is of a Clash being inevitable due to the essentially and radically different ethos of Islam which makes it impossible to reconcile with the West. With this realization, the Muslims need to prepare for the approaching Clash. On a deeper study, however, these apparently conflicting viewpoints can be reconciled. While Islam is a distinct ideology fundamentally different from other cultures, particularly Western Secular-Materialism, coexistence and pluralism are a hallmark asserted by its history. Although the 'Clash' thesis is not inevitable, not working to throw it overboard can bring it closer.

Such a Clash of Civilizations must actively be prevented through the following measures:

History and culture must be reinterpreted in an inclusive, integrative way and the pattern of sharing, interaction and intercultural communication must be brought out. Education must be 'denationalized' and cleansed of embedded prejudice and bias.

The West needs to realize its responsibility in eliminating the root causes of militancy in the Muslim world. The Middle East conflict must be seriously addressed and resolved according to the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Confidence building through conflict resolution and cessation/reversal of interventionist policy needs to be undertaken.

The role of religion as a means for peacemaking and reconciliation must be acknowledged and religion be allowed to begin a 'healing process'. Interpretation of religious texts by credible authorities to emphasize on peace and tolerance must be disseminated and strongly encouraged .

The West must stop viewing the non West from the Orientalist lens and acknowledge its 'debt to the Orient and to Islam' to overcome its self-absorbed profile-essentialism.

A process of dialogue between civilizations must be seriously undertaken on a global scale, with representatives from all communities and civilizations having a say to represent their points of view and develop understanding of each other. The United Nations' initiative in this regard sponsored by the Turkish premier should be supported and expanded. Former Iranian president Khatami's brainchild of interfaith and intercommunal dialogue must be developed and actively pursued.

For such a dialogue to be successful, it must involve credible, popular and genuine representatives from all civilizations. A dialogue must be carried out on the basis of absolute parity of all parties. The Western participants must realize that imposition of their version of modernity or choosing 'moderate' representatives from the Muslim world who are merely on the fringes of mainstream Muslim society will not work.

The Muslim world must seriously undertake a tremendous, multi-pronged effort to inform the Western mind about quintessential Islam and its contemporary interpretation. Muslims, both at the individual, communal and state level, should give intellectual, moral and material support to all those who are engaged in such an effort. Muslims must devise strategies and channelize resources to establish links with and gain access into the academia, the mass media and policy makers in the West. Muslim minorities in the West have a huge responsibility for the establishment of cultural bridges and the promotion of the Muslim image in the West.

Lastly, the extraordinary potential of Islam as an arbiter between civilizations owing to its universalism and egalitarianism which is also attested by its history must be recognized and put to use both by the Muslim world (in order to reject exclusivist interpretation) and the West (to be able to initiate genuinely constructive, conciliatory engagement with the Muslim world).

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## INTERVIEWS

1. Secor, Dr. James L. E-mail response to query on the importance of the Clash of Civilizations theory, received by this writer on May 9, 2009.. Dr. Secor is a China-based American scholar, writer and professor of English Literature and Oriental Studies. (SEE Appendix B)
2. Hasan, Dr. Mehdi, interviewed on July 13, 2009 at the School of Media Studies, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. Dr. Hasan is an eminent Pakistani intellectual, writer and journalist. He is the Dean of the School of Media and Communication Studies at Beaconhouse national University.
3. Abidi, Dr. Razi,, interviewed on July 12, 2009 at the Punjab University New Campus. Dr. Abidi is the former Head of the Department of English Language and Literature at Punjab University, Lahore.
4. Anonymous, Research Scholar, Punjab University, interviewed by this writer on July 14, 2009 at the university campus.
5. Iqbal, Dr. Javed, written repose to queries on the subject received by the writer on May 21, 2009 (see appendix A). Dr. Iqbal is a Faculty Member at the Department of Pharmacology, Allama Iqbal Medical College, Lahore, with a deep interest in Sociology and Political Science and the Islamic perspective on both\_ and a prolific writer on Current Affairs.
6. Arshad, Muhammad Rasheed, written response to queries regarding the subject received by the writer on May 30, 2009 (see appendix A). Mr. Arshad teaches Islamic Studies at the Institute of Leadership and Management, Lahore, and is a prolific writer and Islamic activist.

7. Anonymous, written response on the theory of  
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8. the Clash of Civilizations received by the writer on July 12, 2009 (see appendix A). The anonymous interviewee is a freelance writer with a profound interest in Islamic history and politics.

## APPENDIX A

The text of written interview questions set by the writer for respondents asked for views on the Clash of Civilizations theory is produced below:

1. Is a Clash of Civilizations imminent?
2. What do you think are the roots of a civilizational clash?
3. Is this theory attested by history?
4. How has Huntington's theory influenced world politics?
5. How do you see the impact of this theory on non Western societies?
6. How would you evaluate Huntington's thesis?
7. How would you explain the West's confrontationist posture vis a vis the non Western, particularly Muslim world?
8. How can a Clash of Civilizations be prevented?
9. What is your vision for a world beyond clashing civilizations?

## APPENDIX B

The following is the e-mail response to the writer's query about the credibility of the Clash of Civilizations theory, written by independent American scholar and literary critic Dr. James L. Secor, as received by this writer on May 9, 2009.:

*The most important point to consider, that no one seems to have taken into account, is that Huntingdon wrote from the American Enterprise Institute, a neo-liberal think tank. So, there is an underlying bias right from the beginning. A further basic assumption of his is that war is inevitable and seems to be a never-ending activity. There have always been clashes of civilizations, therefore there always will be classes of civilizations. One of the forenotes of neo-liberalism is war and eternal conflict. I think one might call this intellectually wanting--Huntingdon's terminology and assumption that this is all brought on by the expansion of democratic principles*

*Hmmm....*

*(gosh. . .doesn't that sound familiar?).*

*But there's a further problem: this lies in his interpretation of Muslim civilizations: The Middle East and the Southern Pacific Islands. End of subject. Yes, there is a considerable amount of internal conflict but...he completely leaves out the Muslims of China, including the Uyghurs. Also a problematic assumption underlying this assessment of Muslim states is that Christianity shows no such internal strife. My comment: oh, really?*

*The work is decidedly US-centric. There are no conflicts internally in the US?*

*He arbitrarily divides the world into nation-states that are interested in taking over other nation-states, a kind of hold-over from the Cold War; for Russian style communism believes in taking over the whole world because it is right and everyone else is wrong, inferior, stupid not to see the light of communism. Well...nation-states have been around a very long time, historically speaking. This dividing the world up for political and military purposes completely discounts people; people are not taken into account at all. Thus, the only thing important is government, politics. People are not important. Leaving people out of the equation is rather interesting and limiting and dredges up the question of if there are no people, what is a government governing--and, indeed, is it a government?*

*I think it's rot. I think it is politically motivated. I think that it comes from The American Enterprise Institute is perhaps the most important aspect of the book yet it is the aspect not even considered.*

*Apparently, this theory was put forth in response to Francis Fukuyama's thesis. I find Fukuyama to be just as full of shit and, indeed, his thesis has been shot down.*

*Huntingdon's argument founded with the argument of an innate Italianness is almost laughable. Where does Italianness arise? Where and when, historically? The Etruscans were not Italian and their effect upon Italianness was not wiped out. The French, via the Normans, ruled much of Italy for a very long time. How about the Visigoths and Goths and Huns? The Visigoths in particular had an amazing influence on European civilization. And then...the Celtic settlement of, really, the entire globe, north of the equator. And...isn't the cradle of civilization Middle East? And everyone came from Middle Eastern civilization spreading everywhere? And...Christianity is a Middle Eastern religion, an import to the "west."*

*Deconstruction and Karl Popper-style thinking blow holes in this thesis. Note that the subtitle of the book is "remaking world order."*