

Number 6, Spring 2012

Just Peace Diplomacy Journal

International Peace Studies Centre (IPSC)

www.peace-ipsc.org

ISSN 2043-9016 (Print)

ISSN 2043-9024 (Online)

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Persian Articles 79-254



IPSC

International Peace Studies Centre

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Just Peace Diplomacy Journal's primary areas of interest are peace, security and stability, militarism, energy and international presence in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Contributors are invited to submit papers to the Journal by emailing a digital version of their paper to the Executive Manager (sadreddin@peace-ipsc.org).

The Mailing Address of the journal:

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2 Greville Rd,
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Email: sadreddin@peace-ipsc.org

Subscription:

Individual subscription is £20 per issue
Organisational Subscription is £60 per
issue.

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ISSN 2043-9016 (Print)
ISSN 2043-9024 (Online)

Our Vision:

In the beginning all people were one nation (Holy Qur'an, 2:213)
Throughout human history, peace has always been the 'primary state' and war the 'accidental state'. Peace is beautiful, compassionate and constructive, while war is fearsome, merciless and destructive. Unfortunately, despite this, war has been one of 20th century's most major problems, and has proved to be the symbol of the beginning of the 21st century. As portrayed by the contemporary history of international relations, particularly in the Middle East and Central Asia, war is not the solution, nor is it constructive or helpful in solving problems; rather, it causes problems and is the root of the continuation of violence, instability and insecurity.

War is not the solution to the differences between governments and nations. Only with peace which is based on justice, i.e. '*Just Peace*', can we reach a stable and permanent solution to our differences. Diplomacy and constructive dialogue which take into consideration the rights of both parties, is the only path to establishing '*Just Peace*', stability and world security. Our aim is to change international relations with the active participation of nations on the basis of '*Just Peace*'.

Let there be a group among you who will invite others to good.
(Holy Qur'an, 3:104)

We, as part of the international network of intellectuals, are able to play an important and constructive role in the establishment of mutual understanding, of dialogue and in the reduction and amelioration of global problems. Our intention is to provide solutions and means for the positive and just cooperation of nations with each other, and to reach this end independent of governments, through a realistic understanding of nations and governments from each other, and through clear, truthful and constructive dialogue.

The Principles of Establishing 'Just Peace':

1. Establishing justice between the countries of the South and the North.
2. Mutual respect between different nations and different governments.
3. Respecting and considering the valid interests of all parties which have a vested interest in any given conflict.
4. Thinking globally and acting against extreme nationalism.
5. Realistic understanding of the realities of the world.
6. Upholding and respecting human rights and the principles of democracy.
7. Accepting and moving towards the destruction of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world/on a global scale

Our priorities in the current situation are to analyse the issues and problems of conflict-zones such as those of the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and Central Asia.

Our tools for aiding in the establishment of world peace are:

1. Inviting and facilitating for intellectuals from different parts of the world to engage in dialogue with each other.
2. Dialogue between intellectuals and international organizations.
3. Preparing the groundwork for dialogue between on the basis of mutual respect between opposing governments.
4. Organising international scientific conferences dealing with regional and global issues.
5. Publishing scientific research work on peace studies in the form of books and journals.
6. Providing education internationally on the culture of dialogue, understanding, compromise, justice, freedom and spirituality.

We are a private, non-governmental organisation. Our offices are based in Europe and the Middle East.

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International Peace Studies Centre (IPSC)

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A Critical Analysis of Huntington's Doctrine of 'The Clash of Civilization'

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Abstract

Huntington's theory regarding 'the clash of civilisations' has been discussed and developed by scholars all over the world since he first introduced it in 1993. This paper argues that close scrutiny of this doctrine demonstrates that it is a hastily drawn and biased theory that neglects crucial post cold war factors, and is grounded on a biased account of American and Muslim civilizations and a poorly constructed notion of civilization itself. Furthermore, I argue that he adopts an overly pessimistic and fatalistic approach to human history and culture, and in doing so it fails to give enough credence to the possibilities for strengthening political cultures, encouraging cultural cooperation and creating mutual understanding.

Keywords: Huntington, the clash of civilisations, the cold war, Muslim civilizations, Western civilization.

Section 1: Introduction

Close scrutiny of the doctrine of ‘the clash of civilizations’ demonstrates that it is a hastily drawn theory that neglects some crucial post cold war factors rather than being based on meticulous observation and analytical thought. Since Huntington introduced his theory regarding the clash of civilisations in the journal *Foreign Affairs* in 1993, it has been discussed and developed in different ways by scholars all over the world, and has led to a major shift in socio-political discourse concerning the relations and conflicts between different cultures and civilizations. Yet it is clear that Huntington’s doctrine is itself a response to a major global swing. For about fifty years after the Second World War, the disparity between the two blocks of East and West – the capitalist and the socialist countries – played an important role in the spectrum of global relations. All the political and cultural theories developed during the period were affected by this rivalry, which was christened “The Cold War”. The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, brought an end to this period and heralded the start of a new one, the most important characteristic of which – at least for the USA – was the lack of a foreign enemy.

In brief, the collapse of the Soviet Union surprised US policy makers by creating a situation in which a superpower lacked foreign enemies, and the world demanded new theoretical foundations for international relations. The theory of the clash of civilizations was a timely response to this demand, and aspired to fill the vacuum left by the absence of foreign enemies and present a new theory of international relations. Thus, it is clearly important to conduct analytical assessments of this theory’s assumptions and conclusions from various points of view, particularly because it predicts a dangerous future for all civilizations without offering any strategies for the prevention of unwanted disasters. Such prophecies are likely to cause identity crises and suspicion among civilizations, and as human beings have always desired peace and comfort, it is our duty to open the gates of honest dialogue.

The primary focus of this paper is to answer the question of whether this doctrine is based on external realities or not. To evaluate the

doctrine and to answer this question, I will discuss a variety of views supporting and opposing Huntington's theory in the light of the socio-political facts of the present world. The objective of the paper is to familiarize the reader with Huntington's doctrine and critically assess its suppositions.

The paper is divided into five sections. The introduction provides the reader with some background information on the topic, explains the importance of the analytical assessment of this subject and states the research question, method and structure. The second section compares and contrasts the definitions that other writers have provided for 'civilization' and offers some theoretical explanations about the role of civilization and other influential factors in historical and international transformations. These explanations are provided in order to contextualize the topic and make the analyses of the Huntington's ideas possible. The third section will examine Huntington's doctrine, outlining its theoretical components and his arguments about the nature and structure of various types of civilizations and why they are likely to clash. The fourth section identifies the main factors that Huntington holds to be responsible for the clash of civilizations and critically analyses them. The concluding section offers the author's recommendations concerning various ways of approaching the existence of tensions between civilizations.

Section 2: Background and Literature Review

2.1. The Theoretical Definition of Civilization

The last decade of the 20th century involved intense debates about civilization and the controversial issues that have arisen as a result of the relationships between various civilizations. These discussions provide a theoretical and practical framework for the study of human beings and their relationships with each other and their environment, and have received interdisciplinary focus in fields including politics, sociology and economics. It is thus necessary to analyze and define 'civilization' before discussing Huntington's theory.

The first entry for 'civilization' in a formal dictionary was witnessed in France in 1835, and it was here characterized as a new term that

detonates adjustment with the behaviour and the traditions of urban life (Ghafoori, 2002: 137-138). The connotations of the term, however, are extensive, and there are various interpretations of the concept and its various implications. One of the most accurate interpretations of civilization is provided by Lalande, who acknowledges the relationship between the constituent parts and the general concept of civilization by defining it as consisting of a complicated collection of social phenomena that can be transferred, and that have religious, ethical, aesthetic and technical directions that can be common in all the parts of an expanded community or within several related communities (Jebelli, 2002: 35). Toffler's definition (1993: 256) is more economic in its approach: 'Civilization refers to a way of life associated with a particular system for wealth production — agrarian, industrial, and now knowledge — based or informational'. Eshpengler, on the other hand, believes that civilizations are independent and separate from one another and that they follow their own patterns of genesis, fertility and death. The civilization is the last stage of culture, which forms (with all its material aspects) when a culture's growth ends. Therefore, the last days of a culture will be spent in a decline into urbanity and civilization (Foruhar, 1990: 12).

2.2. The Theoretical Basis of the Current Research

Various thinkers have talked about the genesis of the modern scientific and industrial civilization, which is considered unique with regards to its unprecedented achievements. They argue that this currently dominant modern civilization can be considered as an intellectual, liberal and technological civilization, and that other civilizations, which are usually based on religion, will eventually dissolve in it.

Arnold Toynbee believes that human beings in our era have, for the first time in history, come to feel that achieving global peace is a necessity. Pain and suffering have taught us two stark realities in the length of only one generation: firstly, war has always been prevalent in Western communities and, secondly, any war that happens in the current situation will be very dangerous. Toynbee believes that the basis of civilizations can be destroyed by war and violence. In fact, as

war is the child of civilization, civilization itself can be damaged by war (Rezaei, 1994: 1, 16). Toynbee (1946: 552-554) states that Western civilization is currently strong and that other civilizations will dissolve in it. He argues that the children of Western civilization presently go forward alone, seeing the other civilizations around them as damaged. According to him, sixteen civilizations have thus far disappeared and nine more will be destroyed, but western civilization – the 26th civilization – need not accept death like other civilizations.

Nevertheless, there are other theorists who argue for multiculturalism and who enumerate various civilizations at national and international levels. For instance, Francis Fukuyama's 'optimistic theory', first introduced in an article and then expounded in a book – *On the End of History and the Last Man*, represents an attempt to analyse the international situation after the cold war. In this, Fukuyama notes that: I argued that a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government had emerged throughout the world over the past few years, as it conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently communism. More than that, however, I argued that liberal democracy may constitute the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the "final form of human government," and such constituted the "end of history." That is, while earlier forms of government were characterized by grave defects and irrationalities that led to their eventual collapse, liberal democracy was arguably free from such fundamental internal contradictions (Fukuyama, 1992: xi).

The polar opposite to this optimistic account is the theory of the clash of civilizations, which was first introduced by Bernard Lewis (1990) to refer to the resurgence of conflicts between Islam and the West, but was later developed by Samuel Huntington in an influential article published in 1993 ('The Clash of Civilisations') and a book of the same title (which has proved particularly influential) published in 1996 (Mellor, 2006: 1). According to Week (1993: 25), neither Huntington's methodology nor his concept wee new, and Lewis (1994: 157-158) asserts that:

We shall be better able to understand this situation if we view the present discontents of the Middle East not as a conflict between states or nations but as an encounter between civilizations. The Great Debate, as Gibbon called it, between Christendom and Islam has been going on, in one form or another, since the advent of Islam in the seventh century.

Section 3: Huntington's Doctrine of the Clash of Civilizations

Huntington's arguments, as he himself explains, are not developed through scientific methodology but via an empirical approach to historical facts. He provides evidence such as the Crusades, the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflicts, and the tragedy of Bosnia-Herzegovina to support his theory. He also emphasizes that he does not consider his doctrine to be a theory without any errors or weaknesses, but he believes that his theory represents a Kuhnian paradigm shift in international studies, in which culture and civilization play an important role:

Intellectual and scientific advance, as Thomas Kuhn showed in his classic *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, consists of the displacement of one paradigm, which has become increasingly incapable of explaining new or newly discovered facts, by a new paradigm that accounts for those facts in a more satisfactory fashion. 'To be accepted as a paradigm', Kuhn wrote 'a theory must seem better than its competitors, but it need not, and in fact never does, explain all the facts with which it can be confronted' Huntington (1993a: 186) .

3.1. The Theoretical Definition of Civilization and its Different Types

According to Huntington (1993b: 23-24):

A civilization is a cultural entity. Villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, religious groups, all have distinct cultures at different levels of cultural heterogeneity ... A civilization is thus 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 ... Civilizations obviously blend and overlap, and may include sub civilizations. Western civilization has two major variants, European and North American, and Islam has its Arab, Turkic and Malay subdivisions.

Huntington (1993b: 25) then depicts a future in which human beings will define their existence more and more in terms of the civilization to which they are born and this civilization's interactions with other competing ones: 'Civilization identity will be increasingly important in the future, and the world will be shaped in large measure by the interactions among seven or eight major civilizations. These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization'.

In Huntington's opinion, the Western civilization will be the strongest and most important in the coming decades. Some civilizations will be its companions and followers, whilst others (such as the Islamic and Confucian civilisations) will try to strengthen themselves against Western civilization.

3.2. The Hypothesis

Huntington (1993b: 22) explores the political implications of his theory by detailing the sources and probable directions of future conflicts: World politics is entering a new phase, and intellectuals have not hesitated to proliferate visions of what it will be ... 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. Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world.

Huntington (1993b: 48) specifies the type of conflicts he expects in the near future and explains the consequences of these conflicts for the West:

This paper does set forth the hypothesis that differences between civilizations are real and important; civilization-consciousness is increasing; conflict between civilizations will supplant ideological and other forms of conflict as the dominant global form of conflict; international relations, historically a game played out within Western civilization, will increasingly be de-Westernized and become a game in which non-Western civilizations are actors and not simply objects. Violent conflicts between groups in different civilizations are the most likely and most dangerous source of escalation that could lead to global wars. A central focus of conflict for the immediate future will be between the West and several Islamic-Confucian states.

Huntington (1993c: 22) suggests – as a likely hypothesis rather than a decisive prediction of global events – that the fault lines of the conflict will be between ‘the West and the rest, the West and the Muslims, the West and an Islamic-Confucian alliance, or the West and a collection of other civilizations’ (Bartley, 1993: 15).

3.3. Reasons for the Clash of Civilizations

Huntington (1993b: 25-28) suggests that the major sources of conflict between civilisations that lead to them clash are as follows:

1. Differences among civilizations are not only real; they are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion.
2. There is an increasing consciousness and awareness of the differences between civilizations and the commonalities within civilizations.
3. The revival of religion has led to it filling in identity gaps.
4. The growth of civilization-consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the West.

5. Cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones.
6. Economic regionalism is increasing.

These potential sources of conflict are then shown through concrete examples in an article that concentrates on the conflicts between Islam and the West:

- 1- Muslim population growth
- 2- The Islamic resurgence
- 3- The West's efforts to universalize its values and institutions
- 4- The removal of a common enemy of the West and Islam through the collapse of communism
- 5- The increasing contact between Muslims and Westerners (Huntington, 1996: 211).

3.4. Recommendations

Huntington (1993b: 48-49) suggests that the purpose of his article is not to defend conflicts between civilisations, but rather to develop a hypothesis that can help us to understand what the future may be like. If the hypothesis is correct, it will be essential that Western policy-makers consider its implications. He divides these implications into two categories: the short-term and the long-term benefits. In the short-term, the West has to develop closer relationships, unity and integration within its own civilisation, especially between Europe and North America. It should also limit the military power of Confucian and Islamic countries and fortify international institutions that benefit Western values.

In the longer term, other processes should be heeded. According to Huntington, Western civilisation is both Western and modern, but other civilisations have tried to make themselves modern without becoming Western, and this leads to the West keeping its economic and military power to guard its interests against other civilisations. Western civilization also needs to gain a deeper understanding of the original religious and philosophical thoughts underlying other civilisations. The

common elements between Western and other civilizations should be recognized, because there will never be a global civilization, but only a world with different civilizations that everybody needs to learn about and coexist with.

Consequently, it seems that rather than considering the clash of civilizations as something that requires resolution, Huntington believes that the nature of the relationships between nations simply involves dispute, and that the clash of civilizations is an inevitable outcome of cultural differences. Nevertheless, it can be argued that, contrary to Huntington's claims, conflict is not the only form of encounter that takes place between cultures, and that open dialogue can be used to change the model between them. Furthermore, as Larijani (1995: 279) observes in his attempts to depict a realistic view of future events, Huntington considers America to have the leader's role in enforcing a reasonable hegemony. This does not mean that other civilizations should be subordinated, but that other countries are weak and America has to keep its hegemony.

Section 4: An Analytical Assessment of the Subject

There have been numerous responses to the doctrine of the clash of civilizations from a variety of intellectual, religious, cultural and political respondents. However, despite the numerous criticisms of this theory, some scholars continue to support it. This is due to the fact it has made some positive observations through its assumptions about other cultures and the future of international relations. First and foremost, Huntington has assigned an important role to civilization, culture, and the issue of thoughtfulness, and he believes that in the future there will be a world with different civilizations. Second, moving beyond the experience of the cold war, he has been able to see that with the widespread propagation of human sciences and systems of knowledge, various communities that have conflicting truth claims are now voicing new hypotheses and different outlooks about the world. However, his doctrine has the following defects:

1. Huntington does not pay any attention to the distinction between the meaning of culture and civilization. Civilization deals with society, whereas culture relates to individuals and society together. However, individual and society interact.

2. Huntington divides Western civilization into two major variants – European and North American. He sees Latin America as another civilization, separate from North America. This separation may be due to its religion as, unlike North America, most people in Latin America are Catholic. One issue for Huntington, addressed by Kirkpatrick (1993: 22-23), concerns the classification of civilizations. She disagrees with his extensive classification, arguing that:

Huntington's classification of contemporary civilizations is questionable. He identifies "seven or eight major civilizations" in the contemporary world and this is a strange list. If civilization is defined by common objective elements such as language, history, religion, customs and institutions and, subjectively, by identification, and if it is the broadest collectivity with which persons intensely identify, why distinguish "Latin American" from "Western" civilization? And what is Russia if not "Western"? In a global context Slavic/Orthodox people are Europeans who share in Western culture.

3. Huntington classifies civilizations according to religion, while ignoring other values such as those derived from economic, social, cultural and political factors. For instance, America does not like Eastern countries (such as China) being powerful. So America may, to solve its economic problems, enter into conflict with China in the future. In fact, after the cold war, 'conflicts of economic and political interests are becoming more and more common among the major nations of the world, and more and more tense' (Binyan, 1993: 19). This means that 'war likely takes place between Western-style or liberal capitalism and Confucian-style or state-guided capitalism, as a long series of economic conflicts, human-rights disputes with an economic dimension, and trade wars' (Kurth, 1994: 3-15).

4. During the cold war, American leaders, under the pretext of the influence of communism, gathered all the Western and European countries and ‘exaggerated the Soviet Union’s military capabilities ... in effect creating the enemy they needed in order to justify the policies they pursued’ (Hogan, 1992: 5). In the period since the end of the cold war, Huntington has exaggerated the strength of Islamic power and warned that a common enemy in the form of Islam is threatening both Europe and America. In fact, he not only fails to observe numerous subdivisions within the Islamic world, he also fails to see the double standards of Western governments that lead to its conflicts with Islamic civilization: i.e. he confuses the political and economic opportunism displayed by some Western government’s with the rational expression of their civilization’s identity. Complications similar to the one detailed below have become a recurrent pattern, which not only alienates the average thinker from the West, but also brings many people to perceive America as an evil impostor that claims to possess values that it most bitterly lacks:

In the shorter run – meaning within the next year or so – something may happen in North Africa that could throw at least a temporary spanner into the works ... A series of mistakes – first by the generals running Algeria, then by most of the West’s governments – seems likely to bring to power in Algeria a group of men who will, for a time, be very hard to deal with. They are for good reason angry both with the corruptly authoritarian regime they will be replacing and with the West for having supported that regime, even when it had plainly been rejected by the Algerian people. If this happens in Algeria ... Europe and Islam will, for a period, be at it again (Beedham, 1994: 5-6).

To this criticism, Huntington (1994: 6) replies: ‘Beedham is, however, right on target with his comments on Islamic fundamentalism, and particularly Algeria, and we all lost by not giving democracy a chance in Algeria’.

5. The USA has fears about forming a united Europe with the presence of Russia, because they believe that it could pose real threats to the West (Bigdely, 1998: 323). Therefore, Huntington has created a unique

enemy in the form of Islam, which he says, is threatening both Europe and America.

6. Islamic nations are among the most rapidly developing countries in the modern world, and Islam is a living religion with various institutions and cultural formations that are rapidly assimilating the values of the modern world. In spite of this obvious fact, and the fact that Islamic civilization has been very influential in the history of civilization – creating some of the most honourable political, social and cultural institutions and playing a prominent role in the historical progress of human beings – Huntington considers Islamic civilization to be essentially fundamentalist. This is, of course, the result of Huntington's biased stand, which turns a blind eye to the exploitive nature of the relationship between western governments and authoritarian governments in Islamic countries that distorts the process of development and makes religious groups reactionary and suspicious of anything associated with the West. The most fundamentalist and radical forms of Islam are observed in countries under pro-Western governments. Where Islamic groups are allowed to participate in democratic and semi-democratic process, they gradually replace their so-called fundamentalism with a desire for rapid development and modernity. Thus, Islamophobia is Huntington's most obvious shortcoming, turning his doctrine of the clash of civilizations into a form of political theory rather than a work of unbiased scientific research.

7. Huntington argues that the collapse of America will be the result of external elements, while the internal crisis – caused by factors such as multiculturalism – is the most important factor in the gradual decline of American hegemony. Brzezinski (1993: 2) believes that the hegemony of the USA will be reduced by Western secularism, not by the clash of civilizations, and that:

The West may have developed structural weaknesses in its core value systems and institutions. Budgetary discipline is disappearing. The work ethic is eroding. Leadership is lacking. Any politician who states hard truths is immediately voted out. Americans freely admit that many

of their economic problems arise from the inherent gridlock of American democracy. Since 1960 the U.S. population has increased [by] 41 percent, while violent crime has risen by 560 percent, single-mother births by 419 percent, divorce rates by 300 percent and the percentage of children living in single-parent homes by 300 percent. This is massive social decay. Many societies shudder at the prospects of this happening on its shores (Mahbubani, 1993: 14).

To these potentially destructive elements, one might add the gradual overextension of the American army, the increasing gap between the poor and the rich, the nation's self-obsession, its ignorance of what is happening outside its shores, and its recent reactionary attitudes towards multiculturalism. For Huntington, however, this civilization is whole and intact, without any blemish in its institutions.

8. Huntington (1996: 183) has predicted that relations between groups from different civilizations will almost never be close; they will usually be cool, and often hostile. Therefore, if there is another world war, it will be a war between civilizations, and the most important element in civilizations is religion. Therefore, it will be a war between the West and an Islamic-Confucian alliance. It seems that Huntington is wrong here, because if the dispute were grounded in religion, then there would be a much greater opposition between Islamic civilization and China and North Korea than there would be between Islamic and Western civilizations. Furthermore, if the Western opportunistic craze for natural resources and the reactionary responses it creates among Muslims were cured, then 'there is no insuperable reason why Muslims and Westerners cannot live peaceably with each other and nothing exists in the essentials of either civilization to make harmony impossible' (Beedham, 1994: 5). In fact, the similarities between Islam and Christianity (especially between Islam and Protestant Christianity) are so extensive that the followers of the two faiths can easily see themselves in terms of a continuation of each other, with the historical influence running from Judaism to Christianity to Islam to Protestant Christianity. Islam, 'like Christianity, is formulated in a universalist idiom. In that way Islam resembles Christianity rather than Judaism.

Both are religions of “the book” and appeal to humans as such rather than as members of any particular society’ (Siedentop, 2000: 207).

In an interview that I conducted with Professor Neil L. Whitehead on Sunday 26th June 2011, he claimed that the solution to this problem is to begin educating people about the fact that current wars do not revolve around the difference between Christianity and Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism, or Sunnism and Shi’ism, but around the desires of powerful countries to make profit from the resources of third world countries. However, the justifications provided for these wars are that they are necessary for cultural survival and for maintaining westerners’ way of life. The solution, as Marx told us many years ago, is that we must dismantle the social system that solely promotes the capitalist ideology, and bring other values into our political system. We think we fight for various freedoms, democracy, and human rights, but this is just a smokescreen to cover the relentless search for money and power.

9. It is more acceptable to define the fault lines in terms of the interests of states. As an international expert in Middle Eastern affairs, Ajami (1993: 9), states:

We have been delivered into a new world, to be sure. But it is not a world where the writ of civilizations runs. Civilizations and civilizational fidelities remain. There is to them an astonishing measure of permanence. But let us be clear: civilizations do not control states, states control civilizations. States avert their gaze from blood ties when they need to; they see brotherhood and faith and kin when it is in their interest to do so.

10. The prospects for conflicts in the 21st century do not confirm Huntington’s or Fukuyama’s theories. Toffler (1993: 18, 256) rejects Huntington’s and Fukuyama’s doctrine on the grounds that:

We think the traditional definition of civilization on which Huntington relies is inadequate, and that the many clashes he foresees, if they occur, will occur within a much larger framework — a world increasingly

divided into three distinct and potentially clashing super-civilizations. We shall continue to use the word “civilization” to refer to first Wave agrarianism or Second Wave industrialism or to the emerging Third Wave society, and assume the adjectival “super” is understood. In fact, once we grasp the wave theory of conflict, it has appeared that the biggest shift of power now beginning on the planet is not between East and West or North and South, nor is it between different religious or ethnic groups.

In brief, the doctrine of the clash of civilizations is not based on external realities, but is a dangerous conspiracy that is used to trample the interests of developing countries. Most countries around the world are in crisis, and require peace and calm to function well. Every kind of violence and conflict can hinder the natural growth and development of these countries. Thus, the most conscientious leaders of developing countries are attempting to turn the tide of international affairs towards a balanced, non-exploitative form of cooperation that might only be possible through open dialogue:

When Khatami, ex-president of Iran, first presented the initiative for dialogue among civilizations on 11 December 1998 at the Eighth OIC Summit in Tehran, few ever thought at that time, that it would catch the attention of so many scholars, thinkers and intellectuals and so quickly become a new paradigm for the promotion of peaceful relations among the nations of the world (Bekker and Pretorius, 2001: 3, 8).

This provided the basis for the United Nations’ resolution to name the year 2001 as the year of Dialogue among Civilizations. In fact, dialogue among civilizations seems to be the only way for facilitating understanding and tolerance among different ethnicities and civilizations. Its goal is to reject ethnic and racial subordination of human beings by establishing appropriate channels of cooperation aimed at removing those destructive misunderstandings that have always embittered human relationships. Its project is simple: every country should transform its internal and external monologues into multi-sided dialogues.

Section 5: Conclusion

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing collisions among its former republics disrupted the balance of power in the world and led to the need for new theoretical foundations to define the nature of future relationships among nations. As a result, various theoretical systems were created, with two of these proving more popular than the others. The first theory is provided in “The End of History and the Last Man” by Fukuyama, and depicts an optimistic image of future. The other is “The clash of civilizations” by Huntington, which foresees a perilous future for the world. From Fukuyama’s point of view, the values of liberal democracy have become victorious over rival ideologies like fascism and communism during the last fifty years. He contends that liberal democracy has become legitimate throughout the world, and that we cannot imagine a rival ideology to replace it. Liberty is the main requirement of mankind, and thus liberal democracy will be the final form of human government.

Huntington, however, appeals to history to predict a clash of various civilizations. Huntington’s convincing but biased arguments – which accept rather than challenge cultural stereotypes – terrify the west (especially Europe) and cause Islamic and Confucian communities to become suspicious of the Western world. Huntington believes that a civilization is the highest cultural grouping of people, and is defined by both common objective elements (such as language, history, religion, customs and institutions) and by the subjective self-identification of people. Thus, it is likely that the world will be largely shaped by the interactions between seven or eight major civilizations. Differences between civilizations are real and important for Huntington, and conflict between them will supplant ideological conflict as well as other forms of it as the dominant global form of conflict. A central focus of conflict in the immediate future will occur between the West and several Islamic-Confucian states. Huntington has made some minor modifications to his position in response to the challenges that numerous cultural critics, thinkers, politicians and even American authorities have made to it.

It seems that in creating his doctrine, Huntington was not concerned with the conditions of humanity in the various racial, geographical and religious divisions he identified, but with protecting the universal hegemony of North America. Therefore, he attempts to mobilize Western countries (especially European countries) to support his idealized America, using the pivot of religion and modernity against Islam and Confucian civilizations.

Though posing as a scholar presenting a scientific analysis of future international relations, Huntington provides US policy makers with guidelines for increasing their hegemony over the Islamic world in military, economic, intellectual and theoretical aspects. This is clearly a direct violation of the purported aims of his theory because, rather than introducing cultural approaches that might benefit all humanity, he is concerned only with preserving American power. Nevertheless, he considers his theory as providing only probabilities that are dependent on the reactions of human beings, and he has also asserted his interest in the extension of the dialogue among civilizations proposed by the ex-president of Iran, Khatami.

Huntington assigns a high value to the identity-shaping role of civilization and attempts to develop his theory on the basis of this role. However, other theories and ideas that have been developed along these lines have revealed numerous shortcomings in his vision, including: an ambiguity in the terms 'culture' and 'civilization' in his work; a carelessness in the classification of contemporary civilizations; an emphasis on religion that wrongly ignores the influence of cultural elements such as economic and social values in civilizations; an exaggeration of Islamic power; a failure to acknowledge and take into account the internal crisis in the USA; falsely equating Islamic and Confucian civilizations with each other; and seeing an irreconcilable difference between Christian and Islamic civilizations.

The world is currently confronting a lack of system and theoretical foundation, and nations need theories that encourage peace on the basis of beneficial coexistence and common values. Human beings have achieved a level of maturity and urbanity that enables them to engage

in dialogue about their mutual interests and to embark on critical appraisals of each other's thoughts instead of demonizing and slaughtering each other. Thus, rather than theorizing about ways to dominate each other in fatalistic approach to history and culture, they might be better off if they develop strategies to strengthen the international political culture, encourage cooperation among states, and pave the way for the formation of an international civil society. They have to attempt to link micro and macro levels of cultural cooperation and to create a kind of mutual understanding, which is, after all, the foundation of peaceful coexistence and cooperation among nations. Although this aim might seem too idealistic, and thus illusory, it is nonetheless more in line with the aims of the founding fathers of all religions and, ironically, with the aims of the founding fathers of American democracy.

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