A Critical Reassessment of Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" Thesis

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Abstract

My critique of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis is divided into three sections. The first section provides a critical reassessment of his definition of civilization, modernization and westernization from an Islamic perspective, or, more broadly, a religio-traditional understanding of civilization and its various historical manifestations. I also present an academic critique from the perspective of political science and sociology. Consequently, these two perspectives are sometimes set out separately and sometimes intertwined. The second section attempts to demonstrate how his analysis of Islam is based on cultural essentialism, which views Islam as an inherent threat and a stumbling block to democratic development, and to explain how his theories are both inaccurate and extremely dangerous in terms of their political and policy implications. The third section comprises an analysis of his theory's impact on policy and its consequences for the United States.

Introduction

Samuel Huntington's (d. 2008) provocative and controversial "clash of civilizations" thesis has dominated much of the post-9/11 political discourse. His thesis, which leads to internal social unrest and strategic foreign policy errors, is particularly perilous on two grounds. First, it can fuel commonsense misconceptions about the incompatibility of civilizations based on religious, ethnic, and racial differences, which brings about national and international

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intolerance, as the perceived threats of multiculturalism are combined with the new fear of the "enemy amongst us." Second, his rhetoric can serve to legitimize the mistakes of western foreign policy by diverting attention from real issues to imaginary ones. In this case, a serious critique of this theory and its presuppositions has never been more necessary or poignant than it is today, as Huntington's work perpetuates a mentality of denial and fear by diverting attention from serious analysis and creating public hysteria based on ethnic and racial lines. The spread of the ideas contained within his theory, which remains closer to racial prejudice than a scientific paradigm, can only harm American interests and world peace.

It is most distressing that the atrocious events of 9/11 have been viewed as proof of Huntington's thesis. These events are often presented as "mindless acts of terror" or an inherent hatred of western ideals and values, without trying to understand their roots in terms of an in-depth historical and political analysis of the relevant context. Politicians, think tanks, and the media have devoted little effort to understanding the real causes of the terrorist attacks. Instead, they have diverted the public's attention from the real issues at hand to war, which can only have devastating consequences for the United States and the rest of the world. Such blanket and ill-defined terms as *Islam* and *the West* oversimplify a complex reality into an "us and them," a "good vs. evil" scenario that has proven to be most dangerous for anyone even loosely associated with these two broad categories.

The interconnections among religion, conflict, and peace are as varied as they are complex, a reality that makes it crucial for one to be aware of one's own presuppositions and alternative viewpoints. I therefore utilize a framework that compares and contrasts different viewpoints to clarify the Islamic perspective on how religion defines civilization and how this affects the analysis of its role in conflict and peace. As we shall see, Huntington does not adequately analyze the religion-civilization relationship and therefore fails to distinguish between the former's traditional and politico-deviant manifestations. Lacking this central distinction, he overemphasizes its role in conflict and underemphasizes its role in peace. We shall also see that theorists who are presumably diametrically opposed to Huntington, such as Francis Fukuyama, make similar mistakes. I compare the predictions of these alternative views on the relationship between religion and civilization on the one hand, and between conflict and peace on the other hand, with the empirical and historical evidence needed to judge between them. I also scrutinize Huntington's theory from the premise of political and social science, examining the errors and inconsistency of his hypothesis from within his own discipline.

The Structure and Dynamics of Contemporary and Future World Politics

Since communism's collapse, scholars, journalists, and analysts have proposed a diverse range of paradigms for comprehending the world's future landscape from a post-cold war viewpoint. Broadly speaking, the range of analysis offered can be categorized into two main camps: the pessimists and the optimists. Some of the pessimists foresee a return to the unstable multipolar rivalries characteristic of the first half of the twentieth century,[1] while others predict a gradual decline in state power accompanied by lawlessness, resource scarcity, and general social decay.[2] Some even predict an outright "clash of civilizations."[3] The optimists, on the other hand, argue that the end of the cold war will usher in a new peaceful era free of war and the tragic experiences of the past.[4] This new age will bring with it the spread of democracy, the deepening of interdependence, and the final triumph of liberal ideology, all of which will overcome all other ideologies and thus put an "end to history."[5]

Both camps differ markedly in their understanding of the future of liberal democracy and of western civilization in general. The optimists implicitly assume the West's victory in the cold war and, as a result, the triumph of liberalism worldwide. For example, Fukuyama's thesis states that liberal democracy has finally overcome all other ideologies and thereby literally ended history, which he sees as a series of confrontations among ideologies. For him, liberal democracy as developed in the cradle of western civilization is a universally acceptable concept and one that the world is now moving to embrace in a fundamental way.

Although the pessimists tend to be less idealistic about liberal democracy's triumph, they do not negate its universality. Even though Huntington claims to question the universality of western civilization, his work contains an implicit assertion of western moral and cultural superiority. On the one hand he claims to negate its universality, while on the other he laments the loss of western hegemony. He views the failure of institutional differentiation, the development of democratic political systems, and the rule of law – all of which he considers to be exclusively western concepts – in the rest of the non-western (particularly the Islamic and Sinic) world, as the main reason for the ultimate clash of civilizations.

On the whole, the pessimists tend to be less hopeful about the non-western world's peaceful embrace of liberal ideology due to those rival and "backward" ideologies that stand in the way of "true progress." For example, Huntington's thesis rests on the "stubborn unwillingness" of the Islamic and

Chinese civilizations, in particular, to embrace and accept the universality of liberalism, thus leading to an inevitable clash. Regardless of the two camps' seemingly contradictory position, a common premise does connect them in a fundamental way: cultural essentialism. Especially clear in the works of Fukuyama and Huntington, this premise is often perceived as representing conflicting predictions about the world's future for it views obstacles to development in the non-western, non-Christian world as overwhelmingly internal and unchanging.[6]

The logic here is that the present moment in any given history contains all of that history in its structure. Advocates of this core tenet of cultural essentialism have sought to explain the failure to modernize and democratize in terms of the persistent patrimonial influences in politics and internal cultural obstacles to development. Consequently, imported western modernization at the level of both institutions and ideation resulted in a neo-patrimonial state rather than a modern nation-state. Therefore both theses, no matter how contradictory they may appear to be on the surface, share the same cultural essentialist view of history as well as the basic assumption of unilinear historical progress. In other words, they share a common paradigm but express their views in seemingly differing ways.

What distinguishes Fukuyama's theory from Huntington's (and that of the pessimists) is the conclusions that he and the optimists draw from this basic assumption of cultural essentialism. For Fukuyama, western liberal capitalism's ultimate triumph will overcome the non-western world's internal obstacles and failure to modernize. This trend of thinking is neither new nor all that different from the lines of millenarian Christian and economic determinist readings of the Marxist traditions. Although it must be pointed out that Fukuyama notes the threat of Islamic fundamentalism[7] as the only minor threat and short-term setback to liberal capitalism's ultimate victory,[8] he nonetheless remains optimistic about liberalism's final victory.

The pessimists seem to be somewhat less idealistic about liberal capitalism's ability to fulfill its supposed destiny. The most alarmist and potentially dangerous of their theories is Huntington's "clash of civilizations," for not only does it tend to fuel national and international intolerance, it is also blatantly racist. Thus I endeavor to provide a full critique of this thesis throughout this paper.

At best, both theories remain possible scenarios for the future unfolding of sociopolitical and economic development; however, history has demonstrated that, as with many other social science predictions, they do not materialize fully, at least in the form envisaged. So what insights can these two groups

offer us about the world's future? Which of them, if any, seems to be more accurate? Before I embark upon this undertaking, I note that these theories have real implications, particularly if they are taken as a basis for foreign policy and a global vision of future events. Recent events have clearly revealed the optimists' theoretical shortcomings both in terms of liberal capitalism's internal crisis and its failure to smoothly take over the world as the triumphant ideology. On the other hand, the pessimists' argument seems to be more in line with present sociopolitical developments; however, its apocalyptic undertones may prove most dangerous, especially if they are taken as self-fulfilling prophecies. Both positions have serious theoretical and empirical shortcomings and do not offer adequate insight for the possible outcome of future events. Thus their theoretical and analytic accuracy is questionable.

In order to provide a meaningful analysis of the present with a view to arriving at an understanding of the future, these theories need to reassess their assumptions free of any ethnocentric bias and make several analytical distinctions. First, a distinction must be made between pre-modern traditional civilizations and modern secular industrial civilization, for the latter's roots are intrinsically linked to the socioeconomic forces of capitalism and capitalist expansion. The distinguishing characteristics of modern industrial civilization, namely, industrialization, modernization, secularization, and globalization, have made great universalistic claims that vary both in content and pattern from the claims of pre-modern traditional civilizations.

Recent global developments display the relentless triumph of modern industrial civilization. During the last few centuries, the world's dominant political, economic, and military civilization – the West's secular industrial civilization – has not only made claims to globality, but has also done its best to export its cultural values either by force or consensus. Given its dominant and hegemonic position, western civilization has remained somewhat disinterested in dialoguing with other civilizations. Dialogue between western secular industrial civilization and the rest of the world has been further complicated by the lack of a common ground. For example, any dialogue involving a modern secular civilization is based on the inequality of power as well as on one civilization – itself – setting the agenda for the others. Thus the latter's answers are the result of questions posed by the West. What characterizes and distinguishes modern civilization from previous civilizations is its secular character, which forms the basis of its claim to universality and self-acclaimed pseudo-moral superiority.

This brings me to the second analytical distinction, namely, religion's current and ongoing revival in North America, East Asia, the Middle East, and

eastern Europe (although not to any great extent in western Europe). This phenomenon can only be fully comprehended in the context of modernity and responses to secularization, and not in terms of religion per se. Recent religious revivals cannot be understood outside of this context in an abstract manner. Even though the dominant civilization is secular in nature, religion has resurfaced to reclaim its public role, a development that has led many of the original advocates of secularization to revise their position. However, what makes these religious movements distinct form their traditional loci is that they are primarily responses to modernity and its "spiritual crisis." Thus they can best be described as nothing more than modern social movements with a religious guise. Nevertheless, religion remains imperative to understanding future developments not because of the recent rise of religious fundamentalist movements, as various scholars have suggested, but because religion is the major component of every civilization and plays a fundamental role in determining its worldview.

Dialogue is both essential and necessary to what remains of traditional civilizations and modern secular civilization, and the bridge between these two civilizations is religious dialogue. Patrick Buchanan, for example, asks "is a war of civilizations coming?" and concludes that "to defeat a faith, you need a faith."[9] Therefore, if dialogue is going to lead to understanding and be meaningful, it must be centered around a dialogue among religions. If adherents of these various religions come to understand each other not on just a formal level but on the level of inner respect for the same truth, respect over and above the ordinary understanding of tolerance, than we have already laid the foundation for true civilizational dialogue.

Civilizations from an Islamic or a Religio-Traditional Perspective

In his *What is Civilization?*, Ananda Coomaraswamy[10] points out that civilization is not only related to the etymology of the word *civitas* (Latin: city), but actually involves the application of a worldview, a particular vision of reality and of the human collectivity.[11] "Today this definition has become quite ambiguous in the minds of many people because of the eclipse of religion in the modern world and its spread to the rest of the globe since the 19th century."[12] Huntington seems to have been at least partially right[13] in associating civilization with a religious basis, as it seems that most civilizations were founded by religion or, to use the phrase employed by Marco Palis, "a presiding idea."[14] Almost every civilization is in part constituted by and constitutes

a total worldview that can be considered "religion" in the broadest sense of the term. There are many ways to look at the world, and it is a particular civilization's presiding idea that determines how we evaluate and see things, as well as how we understand human life, the goal of existence, and the spiritual quality that dominates us – in short, our worldview.

If we accept the above premise, then how do we define Islamic civilization?[15] The essence of Islam can be said to be the pivotal concept of *tawḥīd* (God's Oneness), for from this imperative flows the value of diversity on the social and metaphysical levels. This diversity, however, remains within the bounds of unity – in other words, diversity within Unity (*tawḥīd*). It is the social implications of this Islamic concept that interests us here, as it forms the basis for eliminating all racial, social, and ethnic biases. The Qur'an proclaims:

> O humanity! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (the one who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (Q. 49:13)

As this is addressed to everyone, as opposed to only the Muslims, humanity's various tribes, races, and nations are no more than convenient labels by which we may know certain differing characteristics. Before God they are all one, and the most honorable are the most righteous. "Thus in the Qura'nic view diversity is a cause for celebration, not fear, discrimination or oppression."[16]

Based on the above premise of how every civilization was founded, it may be argued that the Islamic concept of civilization is based on mutual coexistence and cooperation within the framework of transcendental unity and God's ultimate Oneness. This is very different from the Huntingtonian view of civilizations as competing power blocs headed for an inevitable clash. Thus the threat of a civilizational clash does not arise from the Islamic worldview, but rather from Huntington's own understanding (or lack thereof) of the concepts of civilization and religion. The point of confusion in his analysis arises from his lack of analytical distinction between traditional civilizations and modern secular industrial civilization. As the definition of these two terms and how I employ them will become clear below, I will not define them here.

For several centuries, the world's dominant political, economic, and military civilization has been that of the West's secular industrial civilization,[17] the West has not only claimed globality but also, by and large, tried to export its cultural values to the rest of world either by force or consensus. Given its dominance, western civilization has remained somewhat disinterested in

dialoging with other civilizations, namely, those that it dominates. These usually fall into two groups: those that have tried to protect themselves and their distinct cultural and civilizational identity by distancing themselves from this new encroaching power, and those who chose to get on the bandwagon.

> They were not interested in dialoguing with the West, they wanted to be the West, a second-hand West. This took over as a wave over all non-Western cultures, …, except some were better at mimicking the West than others. Some people were better imitators. But it was always a second-hand imitation; imitation is different from dialogue. In dialogue you give and take but your identity is preserved. Imitation means the absorption of an identity into that of another identity.[18]

So what are the implications of this in terms of civilizational dialogue? Can civilizations engage in meaningful dialogue as long as western hegemony sets the agenda for this very dialogue? For dialogue to be possible and more than a mere political gimmick, both sides need to have a profound change of attitude. The West's dominant civilization must move toward accommodating the existence of non-western civilizations and alternative ways of conducting social, political, and economic affairs, as well as accepting that they have something of value with which to dialogue.[19] The dominated civilizations, meanwhile, must consciously move away from the idea that the only way to develop is to follow the western pattern, both from the outside and from within themselves, and of having enough self-confidence to believe that their own civilizational basis holds the sought-after answers.

Apart from the dominant hegemony's disinterest, this envisaged dialogue is further complicated by the fact that meaningful dialogue requires a common ground, a common measure that makes such a dialogue possible. What characterizes and distinguishes modern civilization from previous civilizations, however, is its secular character, which forms the basis of its claim to universality and self-acclaimed pseudo-moral superiority.

As a concept, secularization refers to the actual historical process of transferring or relocating persons, things, function, meaning, and so forth from their traditional location in the religious sphere to the secular sphere. This concept's presiding idea reflects the general structural shift in western epistemology from transcendence to immanence, or what Armando Salvatore[20] calls a shift from the "politics of beyond" to the "politics of behind." "The Western world first secularized its thought and then created secular science which still further created secularized man in a kind of vicious circle which has brought us to where we are at the edge of the precipice."[21] On the other hand, religion's

presiding idea is the presence of the transcendent and an awareness of life's spiritual and metaphysical aspects. Is it possible, then, to have a meaingful dialogue between two civilizations[22] that do not share a common ground?

But although the process of secularization triumphed in the development of the West's modern secular industrial civilization, western civilization did not originate from a secularist philosophy, but rather from Christianity.

> If now, after 2000 years, only three percent of Englishmen go to church on Easter Sunday, that does not mean a new civilization has been created. It is the deviation from the norm of a civilization that has been founded before and you then look at Islamic civilization, Hindu civilization, Buddhist civilization, South East Asia, Confucian, Taoist civilization, the civilization of the Maori in New Zealand, the North American Indians, the Amazon Indians, wherever you go in the world, the heart of the civilization has always been religion. In any theoretical discussion held today about dialogue of civilizations, it is extremely important not to forget this historical reality.[23]

Therefore, for dialogue to lead to understanding and be meaningful, it must be centered on a dialogue among religions. If religions come to understand each other on not just a formal level but on the level of inner respect for the same truth, respect over and above the ordinary understanding of tolerance, than we have already laid the foundation for true civilizational dialogue. This is precisely why we started this section by defining the Islamic concept of civilization, which remains nothing more than a working definition and does not lay claim to either universality or full comprehensiveness.

An Islamic View of the Interconnections among Religion, Conflict, and Peace

As previously acknowledged, the traditional Islamic view of civilization based on *tawḥīd* implies that the only way we can have peace/equilibrium on any level of reality and in any domain is by conforming to truth (i.e., conforming to spiritual principles). That means that peaceful relations among civilizations can only occur in their traditional forms (the "Islamic/Andalusia quadrant"). Deviation from this leads to an exteriorization and hardening that manifests itself in violent forms of fundamentalism that neglect religion's inner teachings on the one hand and outright secular thought à la Friedrich Nietzsche on the other. There is no (ultimately) sustainable middle position. As Alisdair McIntyre says, it is either the way of Aristotle (things have an essence and *telos*,

consistent with *tawḥīd*) or the way of Nietzsche (the will to power). Contemporary philosophical ethics blows away any pretensions to squeeze norms out of a desire-ethic or a duty-ethic (we can completely refute anybody who wants to argue for utilitarian or Kantian ethics, because there is no ontological basis for distinguishing between values and tastes. In other words, it's all Nietzsche all the time).

As religions age and their respective civilizations become decadent and then deviant, we would expect a move from the "Andalusian quadrant" to the "Nietzschean quadrant." Although a complete eclipse of religious values would be impossible (the world would cease to exist, as the Prophet indicated), the mix between secular and religious thought becomes increasingly dangerous. Increasing conflict occurs based on interests, not necessarily civilizations, for traditional civilizations no longer exercise much influence. Of course, increased conflict will occur with the veneer of religion in the form of violent fundamentalism in these latter stages, but this should not be conflated with traditional civilization.

This is where Huntington makes a critical mistake: He conflates religion-based traditional civilization with modern forms of violent fundamentalism that combine elements of secular and religious thought. He is right in predicting increased conflict, but wrong in attributing it to a strengthening of civilizations. In fact, it results from a weakening of them. Fukuyama makes the opposite mistake: He gets the direction on the weakening of civilizations right, but the direction on increased conflict wrong (as if we could have a Nietzschean world without war). Both analyses are flawed because they are based on orientalist categories that do not properly account for the interconnections among religion, conflict, and peace. Thus they have a common source for their mistakes. Failure to get the relation between religion and civilization right leads to confused analyses on the former's role in peace and conflict. Moreover, history shows that one should have no illusion that increased secularization leads to increased peace and stability.

An Assessment of Civilizations

Huntington rightly points out that human history is the history of civilizations and that civilization has provided the broadest identification for people.[24] He begins his definition of civilization by distinguishing between *civilization* and *civilizations*. Eighteenth-century French thinkers developed *civilization* as the opposite of *barbarism*. The former concept provided the ideological legitimization for European colonialism, for by definition it functioned as a stan-

dard by which to judge societies within a hierarchical framework. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, "Europeans devoted intellectual, diplomatic, and political energy to elaborating the criteria by which other non-European societies may be judged."[25]

The shift from civilization to civilizations signified that there was no longer a single standard for civilized, for "civilizations in the plural sense could be in fact quite uncivilized in the singular sense."[26] He goes on to argue that civilization, in the sense of a universal world civilization, can no longer be sustained. However, if we look closely at the modern world's development, it becomes increasingly clear that modern secular industrial civilization has set the social, political, and economic agenda for the rest of the world and, consequently, for many traditional civilizations. Thus it may be argued that the idea of civilization still holds true today.[27] Furthermore, Huntington considered the definitions of *civilization* and *culture* as more or less synonymous, as both refer to a people's overall way of life and involve values, norms, intuitions, and modes of thinking passed down from one generation to the next – "a civilization is a culture writ large."[28] He mentions religion as one of the most important defining characteristics of civilizations, representing his theory as a new paradigm of foreign policy to replace the First-Second-Third world paradigm.[29]

Huntington's definition of civilization, however, is problematical. By overemphasizing religion's role in culture, he fails to consider that civilization consists of at least two levels, denoting both moral and material values. One cannot be divorced from the other. In Marxist terms, there is a dialectical relationship between the infrastructure (material) and the superstructure (spiritual), for the latter depends heavily upon the former. Furthermore, the concept of culture is not static, but rather an indistinct and multifaceted one consisting of such factors as language, ethnicity, a common history, the constraints of geography, religion, and the material conditions of life. Culture is neither a dynamic process to be seen as independent and understood "in terms of itself," nor a mere reflection of an independently existing base.

On the other hand, philosopher and literary critic Georg Lukacs defines culture, as opposed to civilization, as the "ensemble of valuable products and abilities which are dispensable in relation to the immediate maintenance of life. For example, the internal and external beauty of a house … in contrast to its durability and protectiveness."[30] Culture in this sense is destroyed by capitalist production for the market. Huntington does not acknowledge the material basis of culture and, consequently, of civilization. This leads to his later proposition that modernization does not necessarily mean westernization. He

also offers no standard criteria for identifying civilizations and is typically vague about the particular cultural features that ostensibly distinguish these supposedly clashing civilizations. His negation of culture's material basis leads him to yet another theoretical shortcoming: his failure to acknowledge the role of capitalism and globalization in the creation of "modern secular industrial civilization," as something quite distinct from "pre-modern traditional civilizations."

Huntington maintains that the primary identifying factor in his definition of civilizations is religion: "Religion is a central defining characteristics of civilizations…"[31] He determines major civilizations in terms of religion: the Islamic, Hindu, Confucian[32] (Sinic), Slavic-Orthodox, and Western (Christian) civilizations.[33] He then ignores his own definition by overlooking the differences within each category as well as the exchanges among them. This raises a question: How would he categorize people who belong to the same civilization but not the same religion? For example, would he deny people of western decent their civilizational ties to the West if they were not Christian?[34]

Furthermore, if we consider recent global developments purely in religio-civilizational terms, then how can we account for the recent wars between rivals belonging to the same civilization: Iran and Iraq, Iraq and Kuwait, the civil wars in Somalia and Rwanda, and so on? Huntington's theory overstates the differences among civilizations and ignores what they have in common, particularly the fundamental similarities of the three Abrahamic religions, namely, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He presents a crude view of reality and promotes bloc-based thinking, as if civilizations do not overlap and frequently interpenetrate and engage in cultural exchange, such as the influence of Greek philosophy on both the western and Islamic civilizations.

The emphasis and importance of religion's role in world affairs is not exclusive to Huntington. However, his conclusions in terms of an inevitable "clash of civilizations" are problematic. Religion's role should be taken seriously, but without imposing a political understanding of religion on all its other dimensions. The vast majority of foreign policy conflicts are centered around economic, political, and military power interests, as opposed to religious differences. Although the interplay between politics and religion constitutes a fundamental factor in shaping societal structures and religion has long been used to justify political, economic, and military conflicts, religions do not constitute the dimension of all conflicts. The modern era has shown that religion, in its traditional sense and not in the sense of modern social movements in the guise of religion (e.g., the world's various fundamentalist movements), does not form the basis of most conflicts.

Although Huntington rightly emphasizes religion's role in forming culture and civilization, he does not acknowledge that the highly complex nature of the religion-politics relationship makes it necessary to distinguish between different kinds of politics and culturally-specific differences in religion when interpreting diverse traditions. The mutual interdependence of the religious and political spheres makes scholastic categorization challenging. Moreover, the distinction between the two becomes increasingly difficult to define given their overlapping nature. More challenging than scholastic categorizations, however, is analyzing the relationship between these two spheres in concrete historical cases. This undertaking is further complicated by secularization, which has been an accompanying feature of modernity. It is somewhat surprising that although Huntington bases his definition of civilization on religion, he does not consider the process of secularization and its effects on modern secular industrial civilization, a process that has been accompanied by the most devastating wars history has ever known.

His understanding and implicit definition (or lack thereof) of religion is substantially flawed, for he attempts to define it from the perspective of modern industrial civilization rather than from its sacred tradition and pre-modern traditional civilization. In other words, while his understanding of world religions remains within the paradigm of a modern and neo-liberal worldview, and yet he pays little attention to the process of secularization and how the penetration of modern, secular, and western ideologies in the western world, and particularly in the non-western world, have brought with them about a religious revival. In such historic religious systems as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, history is a fundamental category, one that is linear and fraught with transcendent meaning in the working out of the divine purpose. History-based religious systems have an important function in terms of attempting to develop religious ideologies of social change. Secularization has impacted the modern development of these three Abrahamic religions.

To fully understand religion's historical development, one needs to examine it from within its own sacred history and tradition. Huntington, however, is unaware that the very movements he labels "Islamic resurgence"[35] or "Islamic fundamentalism"[36] are actually modern social movements that have far more to do with mass mobilization and power than with Islam's sacred traditions per se. He even acknowledges this without fully realizing what his assertion implies.

> It (Islamic Resurgence) embodies acceptance of modernity, rejection of
> Western culture, and recommitment to Islam as the guide to life in the mod-
> ern world … The Islamic Resurgence is the effort by Muslims to achieve
> this goal (to be modernized, but not Westernized).[37]

"Islamic Resurgence," at least in his view, signifies those social move-
ments that often oppose a government's coercive attempts to secularize the
political culture and political process from above. However, in the absence of
secular political values, these measures are effective only as long as coercion
is applied. This is evident in the case of Iran. Contrary to popular belief, the
Iranian revolution was not a complete repudiation of the secular, but actually
led to the secularization and consequent politicization of Islam by erecting a
theocratic state. At the same time that the government was implementing poli-
cies of secularization, the political process was becoming more traditional-
religious as clerics realized that religious symbols could be used as powerful
instruments for mass mobilization. In other words, religious symbols were
secularized so they could mobilize political participation.

Donald Smith states that "it should be borne in mind, however, that this
very political process in which the masses become involved is one of the
major components of our definition of political modernization." Further-
more, any analysis of modern religious revival should include some under-
standing of the processes of modernization[38] and secularization, both of
which are missing from Huntington's analysis.[39] Religion provides some
components of the broader civilizational premises and frameworks that de-
termine how religious activity and organizations are related to political
processes. But in terms of contemporary developments, this needs to be un-
derstood within the framework of the processes of modernity and, conse-
quently, secularization.[40]

The development and institutionalization of the perception of the basic
tension between the transcendental and the mundane are closely linked to
how each religion served as a force to integrate various peoples living in vast
geographical regions via common values and social orders. Pre-modern em-
pires arose when these great religions and their universalistic message inter-
acted with and were placed at the service of specific political authorities. As
they became entwined with secular political authority, the great religions' ca-
pacity to survive was greatly enhanced. Pre-modern traditional civilizations
that did not rest their political authority upon a religious basis collapsed rel-
atively easily, as did those religions that lost the support and protection of
secular authorities.[41]

Huntington asserts that the six major civilizations, with the exception of Japan and western Europe (after the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire),[42] are associated with a major world religion. In his definition of civilization, he does not take into account that major differences of substance and quality exist between pre-modern traditional civilizations and modern secular industrial civilization. His lack of clarity is further complicated by the fact that he interprets the latter within the framework of the former, thereby negating the social, political, economic, and cultural forces of modernity and its accompanying process of secularization. This limits the concept of civilizational encounter to encounters between these two types of civilizations. This lack of clarity is closely linked to the fact that he negates the material consequences of modernity in shaping the global system. Many of the concepts that he attributes to western civilization (e.g., institutional differentiation, a democratic political system, the rule of law) are more accurately the products of modern industrial civilization, not of western civilization as a pre-modern traditional civilization.[43]

Modern secular industrial civilization differs substantially from pre-modern traditional civilizations in that its roots are intrinsically linked to the socioeconomic forces of capitalism and capitalist expansion. The distinguishing characteristics of modern industrial civilization, namely, industrialization, modernization, secularization, and globalization, have great universalistic claims that vary both in content and pattern from pre-modern traditional civilizations. The fundamental role of the pre-modern traditional civilization was to maintain and follow the established ways of life, whereas modern secular industrial civilization is characterized by constant change. In addition, its driving force has been the accumulation of profit and the environmental disasters that have accompanied this ethical license to fully exploit nature.

Despite its many pitfalls, modern industrial civilization is still a very attractive and somewhat irresistible option for most people, as the developed countries' affluent consumer lifestyle is envied by the peoples of poorer countries. And in this one finds its universalistic appeal. Secular industrial civilization seems to have prevailed worldwide and unremittingly continues to encroach upon the established forms of traditional civilization. This relentless triumph of modern industrial civilization, however, has brought with it a "spiritual crisis," as one of its fundamental characteristics is secularization. Yet secularization, lacking an ideology of its own, cannot give spiritual meaning to life. Western social scientists have long predicted this spiritual crisis.

Deciphering the Modernization-Westernization Relationship

According to Huntington, modernization does not mean westernization, and therefore non-western societies can modernize without abandoning their own culture. "Somewhere in the Middle East a half-dozen young men could well be dressed in jeans, drinking Coke, listening to rap, and, between their bows to Mecca, putting together a bomb to blow up an American airline."[44] Since modernization and westernization are entirely distinct, a society can modernize without changing its core values. In fact, modernization actually strengthens indigenous cultures, reduces the West's power, and is typically accompanied by an anti-western backlash. In the non-western world, the enhanced resources brought about by modernization are put at the disposal of a political agenda hostile to the West. The processes of modernization, globalization, and democratization, therefore, will lead the world toward civilizational conflict.

In seeking to decipher the relationship between modernization and westernization, Huntington attempts to define the fundamental characteristics of western civilization or "what makes the West western." He outlines the following as the contributing characteristics that make western civilization unique: western Christianity (excluding Orthodox Christianity), European languages, the rule of law, the separation of spiritual and temporal authority, individual liberty, social pluralism, representative governance, and civil society. Although there is a definite implicit superiority of western civilization, which is a characteristic theme throughout the book, Huntington argues that the westernization of other cultures tends to be limited to the practical aspects of life, such as western technology, and does not bring with it a westernization of cultural norms and values. Other cultures tend to stick to their own value systems (based on civilizational lines), thereby producing a "clash of civilizations." In this theoretical schema, the processes of modernization, westernization, and economic expansion neither require nor produce cultural westernization; rather, they tend to promote a resurgence of and a renewed commitment to indigenous cultures. Thus for him, the world is becoming modern but not necessarily western.

Huntington does not dispute that modernization, in the form of economic development and enjoyment of the benefits of science and technology, serves as a near universal aspiration across all civilizations in today's world. Yet he treats it as strangely divorced from culture. Modernization, he tells his readers, does not equate with westernization because the West's unique set of cultural

values, norms, and beliefs were largely in place long before it modernized itself under the guise of the industrial revolution. Other societies, he argues, will seek to emulate the West in their pursuit of modernization and the accompanying enhancement of wealth and power that go with it. But this process will leave their underlying cultural characteristics untouched.

This is yet another sweeping statement, so characteristic of this thesis. Although it may be stated that important elements of contemporary western culture can be traced back prior to the scientific, technological, and economic changes of the past two centuries, asserting that the latter phenomena have proceeded without leaving their own fundamental mark upon the evolution of western culture is untenable. Nor does it seem likely or possible that modernization will fail to produce significant transformations in the culture and values of those societies presently undergoing rapid economic change and development. Moreover, the cultural consequences of modernization may have something in common across societies. In fact, a recent study of values and norms in countries around the world[45] offers evidence that while distinct cultural groupings exist that may be thought of as "civilizations," the direction of change in values over time is consistent across all civilizations. The author attributes this finding to the continuing and insidious influence of modernization worldwide.[46]

Huntington maintains that religion has become the major source of cultural and civilizational identity, one that transcends national boundaries and reaffirms civilizational ties.

> Differences in culture and religion create differences over policy issues, ranging from human rights to immigration to trade and commerce to the environment. Decreasingly able to mobilize support and from coalitions on the basis of ideology, governments and groups will increasingly attempt to mobilize support by appealing to common religion and civilizational identity.[47]

His analysis of religion in the post-cold war era does not account for secularization, and thus his assessment of modernity remains superficial and offers little insight. Consequently, he ignores the emergence and resurgence of religion as a response to both modernity's spiritual crisis and as a direct response to western cultural symbols' penetration of non-western societies. This is linked directly to his absurd claim that modernization does not produce significant transformation in the culture and values of those societies undergoing rapid economic development.

Most modern radical social movements, which often take the form of religious fundamentalism, occur as disenfranchised sections of society voice

their grievances against the more fortunate or ruling classes within their own society, often viewed as being backed by western powers. This combines what Emile Durkheim (d. 1917) terms "anomie" or a state of "normlessness" that manifests itself today in the form of an acute identity crisis, and constitutes the most potentially potent form of intercivilzational conflict. This situation is likely to worsen, as modernization will eventually destroy indigenous cultures and further intensify the ambiguous problems of identity. Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis ignores this intercivilizational clash and, to this extent, remains a shallow, inaccurate prediction of the future of world politics. All the faults of his analysis stem from his fundamental inability to recognize the exact nature of civilization or to be true to his own definition.

There has been much talk of a resurgence of religion or religious movements in recent years. However, the fact that the privatization of religion, thought to be one of secularization's fundamental precepts, did not occur as absolutely and completely as it was once assumed is often ignored.[48] Its effects were largely exaggerated, and while it seems that modern secular civilization is becoming ever more dominant globally, an internal countermovement to this process does exist – the rapid internal crumbling of this very civilization.[49] Values from the dominated civilizations, as well as the religious traditions that it has pushed into the private sphere, are resurfacing. In fact, no civilization is now totally intact and all of them are experiencing tension.

While this tension seems more evident in the non-western world in terms of social, political, and economic instability, partly due to the legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism, it is also present in the West. Here, it seems to be centered on the loss of intrinsic meaning, between those who want to return to a traditional life (many of whom have embraced another religion) or have gone back to traditional Christianity, and the rest of society. This tension shows no signs of decreasing in the foreseeable future; in fact, it is mostly likely to rise. What this means in terms of civilizational dialogue is that dialogue should be both inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational.

In recent years democratization has been linked to modernization and development. Not so long ago the dominant dogma in the West, as well as in the East and South, was that democracy is a luxury that could only come after development had solved society's material problems. Democracy is a modern concept in the sense that it is the very definition of modernity – if we understand modernity as the adoption of the principle that human beings individually and collectively are responsible for their history.[50] Secularization is also part of the underlying basis for the above process. The modernity in question is therefore linked to capitalism, and the democracy it produces is

limited, just like capitalism itself is limited. In this way, the processes of modernization, development, globalization, and democratization are intrinsically linked. They suffer from the same internal contradictions of modernity, which have become so apparent today and can be said to the very basis of the modern world's crisis.

A Critical Reassessment of Modernization and Globalization Trends

Huntington points out that while a shared commitment to democracy may well help strengthen friendly ties among western countries, the spread of democracy in non-western societies simply provides an avenue for religious fundamentalists or indigenous cultural movements to take power. This result will lead to increased conflict with the West, as these groups often espouse values far removed from those characteristic of western democratic societies (viz., universality and respect for human rights). Consequently, he asserts that democratizing the non-western world will lead to a clash as electoral systems are easily hijacked by anti-western cultural traditionalists. What he fails to recognize and even connect to his earlier comments about the West's efforts to maintain its international predominance,[51] however, is that its push for non-western civilizations to adopt western ideas of democracy and human rights are often carried out with a political agenda designed to maintain its current global dominance and hegemony.

One of the central questions raised by Huntington is whether institutions of modernity (e.g., liberal democracy and free markets) work only in the West or if there is something broader in their appeal that will allow them to take root in non-western societies. In terms of democracy, he argues that democratization is most successful in countries where Christian and western influences are strong.

> New democratic regimes appear most likely to stabilize in the Southern and Central European countries that were predominantly Catholic and Protestant, and less certainly, in Latin American countries … democratic prospects in the Muslim republics are bleak. By [the] 1990s, except for Cuba, democratic transitions had occurred in most of the countries, outside Africa,[52] whose people espoused Western Christianity or where major Christian influences existed.[53]

> The people to the east and south of this line are Orthodox or Muslim; they are generally less advanced economically; they seem much less likely to

develop stable democratic political systems. The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line in Europe.[54]

Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures.[55]

His failure to recognize that these ideals can assume different forms blinds him to philosophical and ideological nuances of these terms as well as to the unique ideological and philosophical traditions of other civilizations. Since he does not believe in multiculturalism, whether national or international, the West's superiority remains very much a given and must be preserved at all costs; hence his "academic" endeavors to warn us of the "clash of civilizations."

This line of unlinear development has been around in various forms in the social sciences, ranging from the modernization theory to the "inevitability of secularism" thesis. All of these theories are connected by the theory of cultural essentialism, which views obstacles to development in the non-western, non-Christian part of the world as overwhelmingly internal and unchanging.[56] The "logic" of this assumption is based upon the core tenant of cultural essentialism: The present in any given history contains all of that history in its structure. Its advocates have sought to explain the failure to modernize and democratize in terms of persistent patrimonial influences in the political field and internal cultural (for Huntington, essentially religious) obstacles to development. Consequently, imported modernization at the levels of both institution and of ideation brought forth a neo-patrimonial state rather than a modern nation state. For Huntington, those modern nation states that did develop were deprived of western values and ideals and thus prone to extremism and religious resurgence.

Following his basic premise of the West's superiority, Huntington does not appreciate that every civilization must be allowed to determine its own definition of human rights, the rule of law, market form, and so on. In so doing, his work marks yet another chapter in the continued attempts at ideological colonization that the West has been pursuing since the Reformation. For centuries it has set the agenda for the rest of the world with a kind of unmatched secular missionary zeal. Most academic disciplines have implicitly integrated this as a taken-for-granted a priori, and such theorists as Huntington and his predecessors have blatantly abused this to further their own eth-

nocentric and dogmatic views in the guise of exporting "liberty" and "freedom" to the world's "oppressed" peoples.[57] Although non-western civilizations are too weak to set the agenda for the West, they at least must be able to set their own agenda. The movement toward this goal has set off many alarm bells for the supporters of western superiority, among them Samuel Huntington.

Huntington's claim that Islam and democratization are incompatible is based on the somewhat ambiguous claims that Islam is inherently theocratic and that secularism is alien to the Islamic polity (Islam recognizes no separation of temporal and spiritual authority). However, if one examines this claim within a historic perspective, it does not seem to be valid. The idea that Islam is both a religion and a state is, in fact, a very recent concept that may date back, at the earliest, to the second decade of the twentieth century.[58] All that "political Islam" retains from the past is the juristic tradition linking politics to religion. Islam, being a religion of collective morals, contains very little that is specifically political: how to form states, run governments, or manage organizations. The ability to monopolize a certain religion has always been one of the state's usual instruments for ensuring ideological hegemony.

The historical Islamic state inherited this tradition. It was against a background of religio-political opposition movements against the state, such as that of the Shi'ah who challenged the legitimacy of the government, that the official juridic theory of the state emerged by a way of counterargument. The new official theory had to justify and legitimize the government and its activities in religious terms. This can be considered as the historic origin of the convergence between religion and politics in Islamic history. Ideologically, this convergence was expressed in a body of literature produced by state-employed jurists with the implicit intention of conferring religious legitimacy on the political rulers. This has led many scholars to mistakenly identify this development as evidence of Islam's "inherently theocratic" nature and hence its incompatibly with democracy.

The slower pace of democratization in Muslim countries cannot be attributed to their Islamic cultural essence and internal obstacles to development. These processes should be viewed in terms of the Muslim world's ongoing historical development and, to some extent, its resistance to incorporate "western ideals" wholesale. Huntington, who does not define democratization, nevertheless argues that it is purely a western inspired and implemented concept. If this is true, than how can it not lead to westernization in the long run? Part of the Muslim world's alleged rejection of democratization is based on its on-

going efforts to redefine this term in ways that are more compatible with the region's history and cultural developments. The other crucial point, which Huntington opportunely ignores, is that the changes brought about by modernization, especially the growth of industrialization and urbanization, were often inspired by the modern industrialized nations' economic, political, and social penetration of the industrializing nations.

Finally, despite Huntington's claim that modernization and democracy have no cultural influence, both of these processes are not empty procedural shells that exist in the abstract, away from the cultural values of the surrounding society. When they occur in a country, it is inevitable that their underlying culture values also take root and fundamentally effect and bring about new cultural formations. The spread of modern and democratic institutions presupposes a degree of hegemony in associated values, norms, and aspirations. This further reduces cultural distance across societies, which is then further intensified by the process of economic globalization. Huntington's claim that "[t]he interactions among peoples of different civilizations enhances the civilizational-consciousness of people that, in turn, invigorates differences and animosities stretching or thought to stretch back deep into history"[59] does not seem to hold true in the light of empirical reality.

In fact, with only a few exceptions, western ties with non-western countries have improved substantially in the wake of the movements toward democratization. These countries are far less likely to adopt anti-western rhetoric and foreign policies than are non-democracies. Due to this development, some scholars view the West's recent promotional efforts to spread democracy as a neo-colonial project that seeks to secure indirect control through global trade and democratization.

Western Decline and Images of the World System after the Cold War

Huntington's overall theory is riddled with contradictions. While apparently arguing for greater political, economic, and military integration and encouraging westernization, he simultaneously claims that western intervention in the affairs of other civilizations is "most dangerous." He seems to be lamenting the perceived loss of the "good old days" of western dominance, but remains fearful that any more intervention would further reduce the West's power. He perceives western culture and civilization as inherently superior, but does not want to risk its further decline by exporting its values because non-western (viz., inherently inferior) civilizations neither appreciate nor understand a truly

superior civilization. This supposed ungratefulness is marked by anti-western movements worldwide. This level of analysis suggests that either Huntington seriously lacks any historical knowledge, or that he takes for granted the history of colonialism and imperialism as a process of "civilizing" the "uncivilized," for which the "uncivilized" remain "ungrateful." Due to this "ungratefulness," the West must reevaluate its policy of intervention in order to ensure its survival and superiority.[60]

Furthermore, he warns of two more "evils" threatening western civilization: immigration and multiculturalism. "Western culture is challenged by groups within Western societies."[61] One such challenge comes from nonwestern immigrants who refuse to assimilate by maintaining their own customs, values, and culture. This is most noticeable among Muslims in Europe and Hispanics in the United States. If assimilation fails, internal strife will follow. "The erosion of Christianity among Westerns is likely to be at worst only a very long term threat to the health of Western civilization."[62]

The other great threat are the multiculturalists, for "[i]n the name of multiculturalism they have attacked the identification of the United States with Western civilization, denied the existence of a common American culture, and promoted racial, ethnic, and other subnational cultural identities and grouping."[63] "A multi-civilizational United States will not be the United States; it will be the United Nations."[64] He goes on to assert that the clash between the mulitculturalists and the defenders of western civilization is the real clash: "Are we Western people or are we something else? The future of the United States and the West depends on Americans reaffirming their commitment to Western civilization."[65]

In this one statement, Huntington manages to exclude one in five Americans, for since 1965 one in five children in the United States is either an immigrant or the child of an immigrant, mostly from Hispanic and Asian ethnic groups, not to mention the African Americans, many of whom identify more with their non-western roots.[66] It is not clear to what extent he views these people as "American," for they clearly do not fit into his definition of what it means to be an American. In response to his question of "[a]re we Western people or are we something else?" one must answer that, no doubt much to his dismay, current population projection reveal that by 2030 white Americans will no longer be the majority population.[67]

By rejecting multiculturalism as intrinsically negative and dangerous to the survival of the country's western heritage, Huntington fails to recognize the positive and important cultural and other contributions made by its various ethnic groups. For example, by deeming Africa as constituting only "half a

civilization," he belittles its people's momentous and ongoing contributions to American political culture, economy, history, and civilization. To cite just a few, enslaved African Americans contributed to and fueled the American economy. Their struggles for freedom pushed the American creed of liberty to its limits by highlighting the contradictions between theory and practice. The ensuing civil rights movement, yet another milestone, was a wake-up call for a country founded on claims of liberty and equality. Huntington is so afraid of multiculturalism's possible detrimental effects that he greatly overemphasizes its results. Although it is true that the country is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic, most important and influential positions are still occupied by white Americans.

Huntington fails to realize that multiculturalism may not mean one culture defeating another, but rather a beneficial process of mutual borrowing leading to a gradual synthesis of cultures. The multicultural movement in the United States and the growing impact of immigration on Europe provide the best examples. It seems that there have been efforts in both places to adapt to a multi-civilizational and increasingly interdependent society. Of course there will be strains and conflicts, because individuals and groups will clash over what sort of adaptations are necessary or desirable and how fast they should be implemented. However, the underlying process appears to be irreversible and irresistible. Thus it seems that non-western societies are transformed by their contact with the West, and that the West itself is altered in substantial ways by immigration, multiculturalism, and similar realities.

There also does not seem to be much empirical proof of his claim that the West is declining vis-à-vis other civilizations. One possible exception here is what he calls the "Sinic" civilization. This potential threat represented by its ongoing rise is easy to exaggerate, because China remains a relatively poor country despite its size and recent rapid economic growth. Average incomes for its citizens are less than one tenth of those in the United States, and only 30 percent of its population is urbanized. For all of its problems, the demise of the West has been greatly exaggerated.

Africa, still suffering from years of imperialism and colonialism and their legacies, remains ensnared in political fragmentation, ethnic turmoil, and poverty. Much the same can be said of the Subcontinent. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia and its successor states (Huntington's "Slavic-Orthodox" world) will need decades to recover from the wreckage of political and economic collapse. Latin America has only recently begun a weak recovery from a decade of debt and economic recession. Japan, which peaked in

the late 1980s, is going through a period of economic stagnation and retains only limited political and military clout.

In terms of the Islamic world, Huntington claims that the centuries-old military interaction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline. In fact, it can only become more virulent[68] because "Islam has bloody borders"[69] Thus the ongoing Islamic resurgence is potentially the greatest threat. He cites the Islamic world's demographic and religious surge as a source of strength and potential danger. Once again, by blatantly ignoring history in his analysis, he conveniently forgets to mention that the initial spread of Islamic fundamentalist movements is the result of a deliberate British – and later on American – foreign policy objective to prevent the spread of communism, nationalism, and pan-Arabism. The West actively pursued this "green crescent" policy to ensure that communism met with a resistant rival: Islam. Recent events, such as Washington's support of the Afghan Mujahideen throughout the 1980s, are proof of this.

Furthermore, in recent years the major oil-exporting countries have witnessed steep declines in their export revenues as the real price of oil continues to decline. The Gulf war also revealed the West's vast military superiority. Although there seems to an element of truth in Huntington's claim that recently the West has often found itself in conflict with parts of the Islamic world, he ignores the fact that it has been the West, and not the Islamic world, that has typically prevailed. Moreover, if we consider recent global developments purely in civilizational terms, then how can we account for such intracivilizational wars as Iran vs. Iraq, Iraq vs. Kuwait, and the civil wars in Somalia and Rwanda?

His theory overemphasizes the differences among civilizations and neglects to consider what they have in common, particularly the fundamental similarities between Judaism, Christianity. and Islam. He presents an overly simplistic view of reality and promotes bloc-based thinking, as if civilizations do not overlap and frequently interpenetrate and engage in cultural exchange. If he were to acknowledge this simple historical and well-documented fact, his whole analysis would become redundant and might even cause him to realize its overall absurdity.

The Policy Implications of Huntington's Thesis

Given his thesis' historical and factual errors, essentializations, generalizations, and oversimplifications, one can only hope that the world's policymakers will not adopt his propositions as guidelines, for his thesis has the potential to be

extremely dangerous. In addition to being both inaccurate and wrong as regards his citation of historical facts,[70] it contains deeply embedded prejudices that most academics, save a few remaining Orientalists[71] and neo-Orientalists, abandoned long ago. If the leaders of the major world powers, particularly those of the United States, accept this worldview and systematically adopt and implement policies based upon it, countries belonging to "other civilizations"[72] would be forced to take countermeasures. This would, in turn, cause a series of interactions that would turn Huntington's propositions into a terrifying self-fulfilling prophecy. One must remain hopeful that the numerous criticisms his thesis has received from around world will cause policymakers to reject his propositions.

His thesis also seems to ignore the fact that Islamic movements are diverse and that most of the puritanical reformist movements are no different in character than most other modern social movements: They represent a general disenchantment with the status quo and seek change through the political process. The only distinguishing factor of puritanical reformist movements is that they use religious slogans as rallying points for their political agenda in an attempt to widen their mass appeal. For all their rhetoric of a return to traditionalism, these movements remain very modern in character, using the avenues of "differentiation of spheres" (made possible by secularization) to further their political motives, taking religion "hostage" en route.

Huntington's claim that the cold war has been replaced by a "clash of civilizations" is hardly a new thesis, for it has roots in historic encounters between Christendom and the Islamic East.[73] For Europe, the memory of the fear caused by the Ottoman Empire's military advance as far as Hungary is not so distant. The early part of the twentieth century saw the empire's dissolution, and by the mid-twentieth century most urban Muslims could not but be aware of the westernization[74] that has affected of much of their daily life.

The global effects of integration into the global economy have been inescapable for even the remotest parts of the world. The geographical mapping of the Middle East, as we know it today, is a twentieth-century development. Turkey, for example, only achieved independence in 1922, whereas some Arab countries had a limited degree of independence from around that period but only obtained full independence between 1945-62. A western military presence, colonialism, and imperialism are fundamental components of the region's historic development, for the West mapped out its borders and the division of land. In the second half of the twentieth century, most parts of the Muslim world acknowledged that western education was vital for the achieve-

ment of material progress. The new group of western-educated thinkers only accelerated this process. Education was viewed as one of the main secrets of the West's success.

As Lewis has noted,[75] this view was common at the end of the nineteenth century among the Middle Eastern explorers of Europe. It was thought that political freedom was the secret source of western power and success, the "Aladdin's lamp with which the East might conjure up the genie of progress and win the fabulous treasures of the gorgeous and mysterious Occident."[76] Muslim intellectuals tended to be optimistic about their ability to copy successful foreign education systems[77] in the hope that other social, economic, and political processes would follow automatically. Thus the civilizational development of the West[78] and the Muslim world have not been in total opposition, without ever overlapping, as Huntington seems to suggest.

Many critics of Huntington have pointed out that the Islamic world is very diverse in terms of culture, traditions, and language. Furthermore, its main national and international players are states that are driven by their own interests and often have more conflict with their neighbors than they do with the West. This point can be best illustrated by Saudi Arabia and Iran, both of which continually invoke Islam to legitimate their rule. Yet Saudi Arabia is a staunch American ally, while Iran is an active opponent of American foreign policy. Furthermore, after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait many Muslim countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt) joined the American war effort against that largely Muslim state.

Huntington's thesis ignores not only the friendly and strategic relations that the United States has with several Muslim countries, but also the historical evolution of American policy toward Islamic movements and the changing rhetoric about them in the West. During much of the cold war, the biggest American fear in the Middle East was of secular Arab nationalism, which seemed hostile to the West and friendly toward the Soviet Union. Islamic movements looked like far more compliant allies when compared with Gamal Abdel Nasser, who fanned the flames of secular nationalism throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Israel had the same idea, especially after its 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Viewing the secular Palestinian Liberation Organization as a threat, it encouraged the rise of Islamic movements that were competing with it; later these movements would give birth to the militant Hamas.

The role of western foreign policy in aiding and in some cases sponsoring Islamic movements cannot – and should not – be overlooked. In the late

1970s and early 1980s the West came face to face with its own creation, gone terribly wrong as in the case of the Frankenstein monster. The genie was now out of the bottle, western-funded and trained, and militantly pursuing its political goals under the guise of Islamic ideals. These very same liberation movements have now become the new enemy: Islamic fundamentalism.

The American experience in Afghanistan is a prime example; Washington placed the highest priority on combating the communist government in Afghanistan, which led it to provide significant support that helped the Mujahideen overthrow it. After the cold war, a hostile Islamic regime appeared and became the target of many of the very same CIA-trained guerrillas.

History suggests that American interests in the Islamic world cannot be based on whether a movement or a regime professes to be Islamic. Strategic interests vary across time and place and are independent of any actor's Islamic nature. The nature and structure of most of these groups suggests that they are essentially modern militant social movements, often foreign-inspired and funded, operating under an Islamic guise to broaden their mass appeal. Most Islamic countries do not see themselves as being in conflict with the United States. In fact, many of those states that opposed it in the 1950s and 1960s were nationalist, like much of the non-Muslim non-western world. Furthermore, had a Saudi-supported Islamic movement managed to overthrow Nasser's nationalist government, the resulting consequences would have been against the Soviet Union. If such an event had in fact taken place, the relationship between Egypt's Islamic government and the United States would most definitely have been friendly.

Conclusion

We conclude that Huntington's analysis completely ignores the role of states in the international arena, a somewhat surprising stance for an international relations expert and political scientist. This absence is neither accidental nor careless theorizing, but rather a deliberate attempt to redefine world politics based on the supposed fault lines of ethnicity, race, and religion. "Civilizations do not control states, states control civilizations."[79] Recent events have shown that states move away from civilizational ties and reembrace them when it is in their interests to do so. For example, France and the United States belong to the same civilizational category, according to Huntington's definition, yet France continues to reject Pax Americana's hegemonic claim or trust its security to the United States. Another such example is Iran's siding with Christian Armenia in its conflict with Muslim Azerbaijan.

One more major stumbling block is the logical shortcomings inherent in neo-liberal theory: its failure to consider that the prospects for peace are tightly linked to calculations about military power and expenditure. The role of these two factors are not considered to be a function of international economic considerations, for modern states (or, in Huntingtonian terms, western civilization) are supposed to be primarily motivated by the desire to achieve prosperity. Thus the basis of stability is the creation, expansion, and maintenance of a liberal economic system. Here Huntington departs from neo-liberalism: he does not believe that the spread of economic liberalism will prevent war or civilizational clashes.

Nonetheless, both theories fail to acknowledge the role of military expenditure in the liberal economic system and how it dictates its terms on the world order. A clear example of this is the Bush administration's increased military expenditure almost immediately after 9/11. Furthermore, if we consider the long war between Iran and Iraq that completely devastated both countries, once among the region's strongest military powers, we realize that its major benefactors were the western powers both in terms of arms sales to both sides and the internal destruction of two possibly troublesome states.

Even if one accepts Huntington's thesis, it would be more accurate to argue that civilizational differences are manipulated and exploited in order to maintain and perpetuate western hegemonic control. This process has a lot more to do with economics and economic supremacy than it does with civilizational clashes. This point can best be illustrated by how Hindu and Jewish fundamentalism, both strong and active agents and at least theoretically at odds with the West's liberalism, do not generate the same concern and anxiety as does Islamic fundamentalism. No theory of the potential clash between Islam and the West is complete without a thorough analysis of the volatile relationship of the West and oil, yet another theoretical consideration that Huntington does not address.

Furthermore, history has shown that although Muslim unity has been the ideal of many Muslim societies, it has remained elusive. In contemporary history, the Muslim world has failed to become a unified political entity and a single actor on the international level. If one compares it with Europe, one realizes that the latter has been far more successful in its efforts to integrate and act in unison. Moreover, in terms of western security the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has acted with a degree of unity rarely achieved by Muslims. From a cultural essentialist view, this may be explained in terms of the Muslims' supposed internal failures that can be traced back to Islam itself. However, a closer

examination reveals that this deplorable situation has more to do with foreign interference and interests than anything else. The West has a long history of exploiting sectarian differences to maintain its hegemonic control. Thus, quite naturally, the motto "divide and rule" still holds true today.

Huntington's thesis remains closer to racial prejudice than a scientific paradigm. His perceived threats originate from his fear of multiculturalism and its consequences, based on his own personal conviction of western superiority. His thesis is dangerous on two grounds: (1) It fuels "commonsense" misconceptions about the incompatibility of civilizations based on religious differences. This perpetuates both internal and national intolerance, as the perceived threats of multiculturalism are combined with the new post-9/11 fears of the "enemy among us." One consequence of this has been the mindless murder of some innocent turban-wearing Sikhs who supposedly resembled bin Laden, the looting of mosques, and acts of violence against Arab-looking children (many of whom were actually not Arab); and (2) Huntington's rhetoric legitimizes the mistakes of western foreign policy by diverting attention from real issues to imaginary ones based on the old western fear of "inferior races" gaining ground. Adopting such a perspective will harm the United States and its security, as well as result in even more destruction and violence. There is a long overdue need to revise American foreign policy and learn from past mistakes instead of perpetually creating new ones.

Finally, if we have refuted the "clash of civilizations" theory, then what of the "dialogue between civilizations" theory? As shown above, any dialogue with modern secular civilization is based on the inequality of power, the West's setting the agenda for the rest of the world, and all non-western civilizations being reduced to answering questions posed by the West. However, dialogue is both essential and necessary between what remains of traditional civilizations (none of them are completely intact) and modern secular civilization. The most appropriate bridge is religious dialogue. In addition several elements, all of which are based in one way or another (but are not identical with) religion, must be addressed in any serious civilizational dialogue. Therefore, if dialogue is going to lead to understanding and be meaningful, it must be centered on a dialogue among religions. If the adherents of these religions can come to understand each other on both the formal level and on the level of inner respect for the same truth, respect over and above the ordinary understanding of tolerance, then we will have already laid the foundation for true civilizational dialogue.

Endnotes

1. John Mearsheimer, "Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War," *The Atlantic Monthly* 266, no. 2 (August 1990).

2. Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) and *The Ends of the Earth* (New York: Random House, 1996); Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld: How the Planet Is Both Falling Apart and Coming Together and What This Means for Democracy* (New York: Times Books, 1995).

3. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

4. John Mueller, "War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 2 (summer 2009) and *Retreat From Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

5. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

6. For an extensive critique of this approach, see Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993).

7. Yet another point of convergence between Fukuyama and Huntington.

8. Here we must also acknowledge the "recycled" Orientalists or neo-Orientalists like Bernard Lewis who maintain that the "next threat to West" is still the "old demon" that has long haunted it – namely, Islam.

9. Pat Buchanan, "Is a War of Civilizations Ahead?" December 7, 2002 (italics added). Available at www.theamericancause.org/patcomingclashprint.htm. Ibrahim Kalin examines these and other uses of Huntington's thesis in post-9/11 discourse, pointing out their roots in the received categories of Orientalism. Unfortunately, these categories cannot analyze all of the interconnections among religion, conflict, and peace.

10. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *What Is Civilization?* (Great Barrington, UK: Lindisfarne Press,1989).

11. Ibid.

12. Seyyed H. Nasr, "Religious and Civilizational Dialogue," *Islam21* 29 (2001): 1.

13. I will look at this point in greater detail in the following section.

14. As quoted by Nasr, "Religious and Civilizational Dialogue."

15. I have looked in great detail at the definition of civilization from an Islamic perspective, because Huntington names Islam or the Muslim world as one of the major players in the forthcoming "clash of civilizations." By looking at the Islamic definition of civilization, however, we can begin to comprehend the absurdity of his assertions and his lack of knowledge not only about Islam and the Muslim world, but also about the very definition of religion itself.

16. Azizah al-Hibri, A. (2002), "Qur'anic Foundation for the Rights of Muslim Women in the Twenty-First Century" (forthcoming), 2.

17. It must also be noted that there are far stronger religious elements in this civilization than is often acknowledged. However, western civilization is essentially controlled by a totally secularized, intellectual elite that tends to be far more secularized than the population as a whole and that determines, or at least reflects, the values held by the ordinary population. For a further analysis of this point, refer to Nasr, "Religious and Civilizational Dialogue."

18. Ibid., 3.

19. This point can be further explored by a quote from Nasr, which fully embodies the sense of "narcissistic superiority" that can be said to be the by-product of western secular culture: "Those people in the West who reject all other values are not called fundamentalists. They are open-minded secularists. But they are just as powerful fundamentalists in their own way. They reject all other worldviews. They are in favor of freedom provided you accept their point of view. They are in favor of human rights provided you accept what they say human beings are. If you believe that human beings are an image of god and made for the transcendent than of course you are not accepted. We have this pseudo-openness." Ibid., 6.

20. Armando Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1997).

21. Nasr, "Religious and Civilizational Dialogue," 7.

22. By *two civilizations* we mean modern secular industrial civilization and what remains of traditional civilizations.

23. Nasr, "Religious and Civilizational Dialogue," 9.

24. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 40.

25. Ibid., 41.

26. Ibid.

27. This is precisely why we have employed the term *modern secular industrial civilization* rather than *modern secular industrial civilizations* throughout this paper.

28. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 41.

29. We will go on to argue that although Huntington is correct in basing his definition of civilization on religion, his analysis remains entirely flawed in that he does not define religion and seems to confuse modern political manifestations of "religious revival" with the sacred traditions of each religion. This confusion arises from his inability to make an analytical distinction between modern secular industrial civilization and traditional civilizations.

30. Georg Lukacs, "The Old Culture and the New Culture," in *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. Tom Bottomore (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 110.

31. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 47.

32. In which he includes Southeast Asia and Korea. Ibid., 45.

33. Ibid., 45-48.

34. Such as the Serbian Muslims or western converts to Islam (Islam is the fastest growing religion in the West).

35. Ibid., 109.

36. Huntington points out that "Islamic 'fundamentalism,' commonly conceived as political Islam, is only one component in the much more extensive revival of Islamic ideas, practices and rhetoric and the rededication to Islam by the Muslim populations." Ibid., 110.

37. Ibid. (Emphasis added)

38. I will discuss in depth the relationship among modernity, secularism, and globalization in the next section.

39. Donald. E. Smith, ed., *Religion and Political Modernization* (London and New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 10-11.

40. The relationship between religion and politics, as well as their societal and institutional power and their effect upon the "legitimacy" of the structure of domination, are fully explored in the works of Max Weber and the more recent works of such neo-Weberians as Bryan Turner. A similar sophistication of analysis is clearly missing from Huntington's analysis.

41. In his *Economy and Society*, Weber deals with the relationship between religious (hierocratic) and political (temporal) power in terms of the ultimate sources of legitimacy. In relation to the institutionalization of charisma, he mentions two fundamental sources of charismatic authority: the charisma of the divinely inspired and the charisma of the world. Religious (hierocratic) and political (temporal) charisma are equally fundamental in their institutionalized form in that one cannot be reduced to the other. Political and hierocratic domination, as the ultimate sources of legitimacy, form the underlying basis for Weber's typology of the varying role of religion in the charismatic legitimization of domination. He provides a tripartite typology, namely, theocratic, hierocratic, and caesaropapism. Each classification represents the relative predominance of one of the two autonomous charismatic types of domination: the religious or the political. Max Weber, "Political and Hierocratic Domination," *Economy and Society* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 1:1158-211.

42. For in both cases, religion was not entwined with political authority in the same way as in other pre-modern traditional civilizations.

43. It must, however, be noted that although it is true that these ideals were first articulated in western Europe, today many of these values and institutions have taken root in a number of non-western regions. Furthermore, if the birthplace of concepts or ideas is the issue, one should bear in mind that Christianity was not born in the West and classical Greek civilization is not of western origin.

44. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 58.

45. Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 7.

48. This process did not occur as completely, as it was once assumed, even in the West. The United States is a case in point.

49. Interestingly enough, even Huntington acknowledges this. Please refer to the section entitled "Western Decline and the Images of the World System after the Cold War."

50. Samir Amin, "Imperialism and Globalization," *Monthly Review*, June 2001.

51. Ibid., 17.

52. Huntington views Africa as constituting only half a civilization!

53. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 193.

54. Ibid., 8-9.

55. Ibid., 18.

56. For an extensive critique of this approach, see Zubaida, *Islam*.

57. Or more precisely, in the case of Huntington, to save the world and western superiority from a fatal "clash of civilizations" that may end in the loss of the West's privileged and much-guarded position as the "master of the world." This "clash" will not only be detrimental to the West but also to the rest of the world, because if the West loses it superior position, then who will lead the "uncivilized" into the realms of freedom and liberty?

58. Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 1990), 4.

59. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 11.

60. For Huntington, the West's superiority is a "given" and must be preserved; hence his "academic" endeavors to warn us of the "clash of civilizations."

61. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 304.

62. Ibid., 305.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., 306.

65. Ibid., 307.

66. Andres Cherlin, *Public and Private Families* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 172.

67. Ibid., 143-73.

68. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 9.

69. Ibid., 12

70. Or more accurately, "historic fiction" in Huntington's case.

71. We use *Orientalist* as used and defined by Edward Said in his *Orientalism*. Orientalism may be described in terms of the hierarchical generation of a systematic discourse that explained the Middle East, its history, and its people in terms of the "other," by which was meant that which is decidedly different and inferior to the West and western civilization. Said argues that just as the West has subordinated women to men, the East has been "feminized" in relation to the West. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1999).

72. Although this assumption is highly problematic, as has been effectively argued previously.

73. For a comprehensive historical analysis of the relationship between the West and the Islamic world, see Kalin, "Roots of Misconception."

74. Being pursued at the expense of spiritual progress. For further details, see Joseph Lumbard, "The Decline of Intellectuality and the Rise of Ideology in the Modern Islamic World," in *Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition*, 2d ed., ed. Joseph Lumbard (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2009), 39-77.
75. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990): 47.
76. Ibid.
77. For further analysis on the role of Muslim intellectuals and the education system, refer to Lumbard, "The Decline of Intellectuality."
78. It was the infusion of and encounter with Islamic civilization, according to historians, that fueled Europe's Renaissance and scientific revolution. (Not to mention that the intellectual meeting of Arabia and Greece was one of the greatest events in history. "Its scale and consequences are enormous, not just for Islam but for Europe and the world." Dr. Abdelhamid Sabra)
79. Fouad Ajami, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, p. 100. (Collection of reprinted articles from the pages of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, 1993).