

The ‘Clash of Civilizations’: Revisited after September 11

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The dissolution of the Soviet Union not only ended the Cold War era but also it terminated simplistic understanding of world politics, which was dominant during this time. The bloc mentality of the Cold War has no longer provided an outlook to delineate the picture of the new period. By the end of the Cold War, henceforth, students of international relations have witnessed several ‘contending images of world politics’¹. The images are basically concerned with redefining the newly emerging world politics. Interestingly, all of these images originate in the West and in the United States in particular.² The linkage is in fact significant as it demonstrates knowledge-power relationship in international relations. Of these ‘western’ images of world politics, especially Francis Fukayama’s the ‘End of History’³ and Samuel P. Huntington’s the ‘Clash of Civilizations?’ have earned utmost attention. In contrast to Fukayama’s optimistic vision of future, Huntington has called forth World War III that stems from clash of civilizations.⁴ He predicts that ‘fundamental’ differences among the seven or eight major civilizations will more likely pave way to global turmoil in years to come.

This paper, aims at revisiting the ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis in post-September 11 world, is consisted of six parts. After introductory section, second section will deal with Huntington’s arguments, which take place in his article, book, and his respond to the criticisms. In the third part, seven categories of criticisms on Huntington’s thesis will take place. Then, the

thesis will be re-examined in aftermath of September 11. The fifth section will briefly touch upon Islam-the West relations. Finally, there will be a concluding part, which offers several remarks about the clash thesis and the delicate nature of Islam-the West relations in the new epoch of world politics after September 11.

INTRODUCTION

George F. Kennan's 'X' article in *Foreign Affairs* of July 1947⁵ not only pioneered the U.S policy of containment during the Cold War but also the article overwhelmingly framed the agenda of international relations (IR) and U.S foreign policy thereafter. 'X' article later became one of the most cited studies in the field of international relations. In similar to Kennan's article, Harvard professor of political science, Samuel P. Huntington's 'The Clash of Civilizations?' article, which published in *Foreign Affairs* of Summer 1993 has significantly shaped the post-Cold War discourse(s) of IR and U.S foreign policy. Proponents of the civilizational clash thesis and its critics afterward have created a 'clash of scholarship'⁶ in the field. The clash of scholarship indeed has primarily induced 'fruitful debates'⁷, and it has brought the following questions into the forefront of disciplinary agenda.

What is the nature of the newly emerging international system in aftermath of the end of the Cold War? Which theory, paradigm or model of IR does have the most descriptive, explanatory, prescriptive and predictive power⁸ to portray the post-Cold War world politics?

What causes to international conflict and war? Do either a clash of 'national interests' or divergent values, ideas, cultures, identities, and civilizations primarily lead to conflict at both regional and global levels?

How should the U.S foreign policy be re-formulated according to the changing nature of world politics by the end of the Cold War? How should the United States re-define its 'national interests' and re-assess its 'strategic priorities'?

How the West-Islam relations are going to be developed in the new era of global politics? Does/Should the United States, who is the world's only superpower of the new era have a policy towards Islam/the Muslim World, if yes and, how should the U.S have a policy? What is the likely future of Islam-the West relations; conflictual or cooperative?

Does Islam compatible with democracy? Should the U.S continue to support autocratic/authoritarian regimes in the Muslim Middle East in order to pursue its 'strategic' interests or should the United States reconsider and even change the policy?

While Samuel P. Huntington's the 'Clash of Civilizations?' thesis has directed substantial attention to these questions, the critics of Huntington have also extended the discussion further. The debate, on the other hand, has come back into world agenda in the aftermath of September 11 attacks.

The September 11, which is the single most remarkable event after the Cold War, no doubt has created numerous expectations about the changing nature of post-Cold War international system and global politics. Ironically, it has demonstrated that how the world's only superpower is not immune from the dangers and fragility of current international system. On the other hand, the September 11 has seriously questioned patterns of U.S foreign policy and especially its policy towards the Middle East. Not surprisingly, Samuel P. Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis has frequently taken place in post-September 11 debates. Henceforth, fourth part of the paper will be about the clash thesis in connection with the 9/11. Prior to Huntington's critiques and the September 11, however, one should first look at essentials of the clash of civilizations thesis, which take place in the ensuing section.

WALKING THROUGH HUNTINGTONIAN WORLD

Well before Huntington's 'the Clash of Civilizations?' article in *Foreign Affairs* of Summer 1993, Bernard Lewis, well-known historian and scholar of Princeton University, talked about the 'clash' in September 1990 as follow.

It should by now clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but equally irrational reaction against that rival.⁹

Three years after Bernard Lewis's *Atlantic Monthly* article, Samuel P. Huntington came with a similar argument. In the first page of his famous article, Huntington presented his civilizational conflict paradigm;

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be battle lines of the future.¹⁰

Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis first of all endeavors to offer a new paradigm of world politics. Hence, it is basically about international relations theory. In contrast to state-centric realist theory and system-dominated neo-realist model, Huntington primarily focuses on cultural-religious-civilizational factors. He calls forth a paradigmatic shift to understand the post-Cold War global politics. He argues that his 'civilizational conflict paradigm' is superior to the alternative models, which have been developed after the Cold War. Since inter-civilizational

issues are replacing inter-superpower ones in the new era, he argues, his paradigm provides better than any alternative.¹¹

Huntington asserts that civilizational differences, which stem from divergent cultural and religious values will be primary causes of regional and global conflicts in the post-Cold War epoch. The clash of civilizations is inevitable though not necessarily to be violent. The fault lines between civilizations stem from differences in social and political values. Civilizations, Huntington says, have 'different values on the relations between God and man, the individual and group, the citizen and state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy'.¹² Of seven or eight major civilizations, he claims, especially Islamic and Western civilizations have more likely to be clashed because Islam is the only civilization that aspires universalist values and poses a significant challenge to the West. On the other hand, Huntington talks about an Islamic-Confucian connection against the Western civilization. In doing so, he recommends that the West should limit expansion of Islamic-Confucian states' military and economic power and the West should exploit differences between the two civilizations.

Besides, Huntington is highly concerned with de-Westernization and indigenization of elites as well as non-Western modernization in many non-Western countries. The West and the United States especially, Huntington argues, should be cautious about this development. In this regard, the West should control immigration and assimilate immigrants in order to preserve and reify civilizational homogeneity. As he extensively concerns with the status of Western power and unity, Huntington also calls for improvement of Western unity. In this respect, he recommends empowerment of the Atlantic partnership between the US and Europe. In order to realize civilizational homogeneity of the West he attributes NATO a 'civilizational mission'¹³.

Then, he recommends that Turkey and Greece should be out of NATO for the purpose of West's civilizational coherence.¹⁴

Huntington argues that the rest can hardly copy the West since the West is not universal but unique. For this reason, the West should not aspire universalism. Otherwise, it will lead to resentment in the non-Western world since universalism is perceived as imperialism by the rest.¹⁵ In the words of Huntington;

Western universalism is dangerous to the world because it could lead to a major intercivilizational war between core states and it is dangerous to the West...Multiculturalism at home threatens the US and the West; universalism abroad threatens the West and the world, both deny the uniqueness of Western culture¹⁶

Moreover, Huntington favors Americanization and denounces multiculturalism. He criticizes multiculturalist tendencies in the United States since it weakens the 'American creed'¹⁷. 'A multicivilizational United States will not be the US, it will be the UN'¹⁸. The anti-multiculturalist standing, however, has far-reaching implications for minority groups including the Muslims in the United States.

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

For Domestic Politics

Tightening immigration and assimilating immigrants and minorities in order to increase the civilizational coherence. Otherwise the US would be a 'cleft country'.

Instead multiculturalism pursuing policy of Americanization

For the US Foreign and Security Policy

Maintaining Western technological and military superiority over other civilizations.

Enhancing the Western unity by means of pursuing Atlanticist policy.

Hence, the US should empower trans-Atlantic cooperation

Limiting the expansion of Islamic-Confucian states' military and economic power and exploiting differences between these states.

Avoiding universalist aspiration since the West is unique not universalist.

Not to intervene in the affairs of other civilizations.

In case of a World War III, which civilizational differences are high likely to cause the United States should get Japan, Latin American states and Russia in her side against potential Islamic-Confucian cooperation.¹⁹

These policy recommendations, which are tremendously provocative, have generated great amount of attention in both the United States/West and the rest of the world. Henceforth, it has drawn several criticisms. Critiques to Huntington's policy recommendations as well as other criticisms of the clash thesis will take place in the following section.

BEYOND HUNTINGTONIAN WORLD

Not surprisingly, Samuel P. Huntington's 'thought-provoking' and/or provocative the 'Clash of Civilizations?' essay has attracted voluminous attention in all over the world and it has resulted in a 'clash of scholarship'²⁰. Though the thesis touches upon rich array of issues, international relations theory, the U.S foreign policy and Islam-the West/Islam-democracy relations have become the major areas of contention. In this section, the paper incorporates major

criticisms of Huntington's civilizational clash thesis. In doing so, seven types of criticisms deserve the most attention.

First of all, Huntington has been criticized for his presentation of 'new paradigm'. He argues that the dominant Cold War paradigm of state-centric realist model can no longer be useful to understand the post-Cold War era and claims that civilizational differences will be primary source of regional and global conflicts.²¹ The critics suggest that Huntington's 'civilizational conflict paradigm' is reductionist and deterministic since there are multiple causes of conflict, in which civilizational factors do not play significant role.²² In opposed to Huntington, many also have argued that 'clash of interests' rather than 'clash of civilizations' will continue to be real cause of conflict.²³ For instance, Shireen T. Hunter argues that problematic relations between the West and the Muslim World are hardly stemmed from civilizational differences as Huntington argues but from structural-political and economic-inequalities between the two worlds of 'have' and 'have nots'.²⁴ On the other hand, Fouad Ajami contends that Huntington overestimates cultural differences between civilizations while he underestimates the influence of the West in the hostile relations with the Muslim World.²⁵ The critics argue that Huntington does not come up with a 'new paradigm' since his thesis fits into 'political realism' par excellence²⁶. They contend that Huntington follows bloc based Cold War mentality while he is basically concerned with the West's technological and military superiority.²⁷ They also suggest that Huntington's 'Machivellian' advice of exploiting differences between Islamic and Confucian civilizations can only be considered within the 'realist' realm.²⁸ On the other hand, G. John Ikenberry argues that Huntington calls forth a new Cold War. In similar to Ikenberry, Rubenstein and Crocker assert that Huntington proclaims;

'long live the new Cold War'.²⁹ In sum, Huntington has received several criticisms on the basis of his 'new paradigm'.

Second category of criticisms is about Huntington's 'monolithic' conception of civilizations and ignorance of intra-civilizational differences and domestic conflict. Many critics argue that Huntington has monolithic conception of the 'West' and 'Islam', in which polycentric structure of both worlds has been totally neglected.³⁰ On one side, there is a serious contention of multiculturalism vs. Americanization in the U.S, which James Kurth labels it as the 'real clash'.³¹ Kurth argues that the idea of West has undergone a significant transformation in turn of the 21st century, and the real clash will happen not between the West and the rest, as Huntington assumes, but it will arise between pro-Western conservatives and post-Western liberal multiculturalists in the U.S/West.³² On the other side, the critics contend that Huntington ignores internal dynamics, plurality and 'myriad complexities'³³ of Islam/the Muslim World.³⁴ They argue that there is no single Islamic culture as Huntington implies but there are multiple centers of Islam and various types of political Islam and Islamism in the Muslim World.³⁵ For this reason, some critics call for 'de-constructing monolithic perceptions' of Islam and the West.³⁶ Furthermore, there are numerous conflicts within civilizations. For instance, M.E Ahrari and S. Hunter ask Huntington how Iraqi and Turkish treatment of Kurds can demonstrate civilizational unity and coherence.³⁷ Besides, it may happen more cooperation between two countries that come from different civilizations than those of the same civilization. Hunter gives the example of Turkey's strategic relations with Israel in the 1990s when a time its relations with the Arab World and Iran were generally problematic.³⁸ In sum, second sort of criticisms focuses on diversity and dynamics of each civilization and intra-civilizational differences/domestic conflict.

To these critics, neither the West nor other civilizations is monolithic and domestic conflicts/intra-civilizational differences matter more than civilizational conflicts.

Third, Huntington has pulled many criticisms because of the alleged inconsistencies, methodological flaws, and overgeneralizations in his thesis as well as for his reading of history and ‘selective perception’.³⁹ For instance, Robert Marks argues that Huntington mostly uses secondary sources in his book and he has weak scholarship of Islam, China and Japan.⁴⁰ Marks also suggest that Huntington’s theory is methodologically flawed because of his frequent overgeneralizations in the analysis of civilizations. On the other hand, many argue that Huntington’s thesis has several inconsistencies. For example, he mentions both ‘Arab’ and ‘Islamic’ civilizations.⁴¹ Moreover, many have also criticized the cases, which Huntington uses to support his thesis. Fouad Ajami, for instance, contends that the Gulf War is a case for ‘clash of state interests’ par excellence not a case for ‘clash of civilizations’.⁴² Interestingly, Huntington upholds his thesis with King Hussein of Jordan, which he said the war happens between the West and Islam.⁴³ However, Huntington probably should know that the coalition that formed against Saddam Hussein was composed of several Muslim states including Turkey and Saudi Arabia. In similar to Ajami’s criticism of the Gulf War case, Hunter criticizes Huntington’s use of Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict as civilizational clash since she argues that Muslim Iran had more friendly relations with ‘Christian’ Armenians than ‘Muslim’ Azerbaijan.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Seizaburo Sato asks Huntington why he suggests getting Japan against potential Islamic-Confucian alignment while he earlier defined Japan as economic threat to the West. Sato also questions Huntington’s advice to get Russia into the EU since he also puts Russia as the core state of Slavic-Orthodox civilization.⁴⁵ In this respect, the critics have focused on vast generalizations and ‘inconsistencies’.

Fourth, the clash of civilizations thesis has attracted considerable amount of criticism on the basis of its language of ‘us’ and ‘them’ or its embedded epistemology of ‘othering’.⁴⁶ The critics generally hold that Huntington’s understanding of Islam-the West relations is fundamentally based upon orientalist scholarship of Islam, in which Islam is perceived as a problem and even a threat to the West.⁴⁷ Edward Said, a well-known critic of orientalism, contends that Huntington’s thesis has orientalist backdrop, hence it always privileges the West and ignores the other (Islam). For Said, this approach is less likely to lead any critical understanding of ‘other’ but it only feeds self-pride. He also argues that there is a ‘clash of ignorance’ rather than ‘clash of civilizations’.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Manochehr Dorraj, argues that the clash thesis reifies, distorts, and de-humanizes the Muslims.⁴⁹ Finally, the critics argue that perceiving the ‘other’ as a ‘threat’ instead a ‘challenge’⁵⁰, leads to ‘siege mentality’, which originate from ‘Western hubris’.⁵¹

Fifth category of criticisms is about Huntington’s policy recommendations on the basis of his interpretation of post-Cold War global politics. The critics, first of all, questions Huntington’s ‘enemy’ discourse, in which Islamic and Confucian civilizations are perceived as a threat to the West. Monshipouri, Petonito and Battistella contend that Huntington looks for new enemies, which replace the adversary of the Cold War, the Soviet Union.⁵² Said and Wasim, on the other hand, argue that Huntington’s theory is an ideological and strategic theory that aims at influencing the US foreign and defense policy.⁵³ In this regard, Hans Kung pinpoints the fact that Huntington was an advisor to Pentagon in 1994 while his thesis has become so popular in all over the world. Kung also suggests that Huntington’s scenario of World War III that stems from clash of civilizations interestingly fits best into military and representatives of arms industry.⁵⁴ In this respect, the ‘clash of civilizations’ is considered as ‘purposeful thesis’ as it aims at guiding

the US foreign and security policy. Moreover, some scholars criticize Huntington's advice to pursue 'Atlanticist policy', by increasing the relations with Europe against 'Islamic-Confucian connection'. According to John Ikenberry, Huntington's vision originates from bloc mentality and his approach is significantly dangerous for the United States and international peace. In sum, Huntington has taken many criticisms for the policy recommendations.

Sixth, as stated above, the 'Clash of Civilizations?' article has produced 'fruitful debates' within the discipline of international relations. Then the discipline has witnessed several empirical studies about the thesis. These studies constitute the sixth type of critiques. Of these empirical studies, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart's study is especially remarkable. They have compared political and social values of the Western and Muslim societies by using World Values Survey database. Norris and Inglehart, 'surprisingly', have found that Muslims have no less democratic ideals than the West and 'the West is not distinctive to Islam in its faith in democracy'.⁵⁵ In this respect, their study has considerably falsified Huntington's assumption that Islam and the West have fundamentally different political values based upon predominant religious cultures. The study demonstrates the existence of similar political attitudes in the Muslim World and the West. Manus Midlarsky's empirical study has also produced a similar conclusion that there is no negative association between Islam and democracy, which Huntington assumes to lead civilizational conflict.⁵⁶ Moreover, Bruce Russett, John Oneal and Michaelene Cox have looked for the significance of cultural/civilizational variables in causing international conflict. Their study is based on University of Michigan's Correlates of War Project, which keeps data of all militarized inter-state disputes from 1885 to 1994. They have finally found that realist and liberal variables of conflict (realist variables-geography, power, alliances and liberal variables-democracy, economic interdependence and international organizations) not

civilizations matter most in international conflict and cooperation.⁵⁷ Hence, all these three empirical studies pose significant challenge to the clash of civilizations thesis.

Last but not least, Samuel Huntington's thesis has been harshly criticized as claiming that the 'clash of civilizations' will likely to be a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. It means that Huntington's thesis causes the expected event-clash of civilizations- to occur and so the thesis confirms its own 'accuracy'. On the other hand, John Ikenberry says that Huntington's thesis is civilizational equivalent of 'security dilemma', in which misperceptions about the other eventually increases the tension and then leads to conflict⁵⁸. He also suggests 'if ideas by prominent thinkers have any impact on the real world' the clash thesis is potentially dangerous.⁵⁹ On the other hand, both Mahbubani and Sato contend that Huntington's policy recommendations, if applied, will be so dangerous and they will cause a disaster for international peace and security.⁶⁰ Furthermore, many have criticized Huntington for his pessimistic vision of future and ignorance the fact that cooperation and dialogue among civilizations are possible. For this reason, it is not coincidence that several conferences on civilizational dialogue have been organized recently, probably as a response to the 'clash of civilizations'.⁶¹

The seven types of criticisms, which are mentioned above constitute a substantial challenge to Samuel Huntington's thesis. Huntington responded some of these critiques in his "If Not Civilizations, What?:Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World" article in *Foreign Affairs* of November/December 1993 and his 'Clash of Civilizations' book. The debate has however continued thereafter. Finally, the September 11 has greatly influenced the debate. The following section will deal with the issue especially focusing on the question; how the debate will likely to make a sense for the post-9/11 world politics?

A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS IN POST-SEPTEMBER 11 WORLD?

To what extent the September 11 has influenced the debate for the 'clash of civilizations'. Is the post-September 11 world fitting more to Huntington's frame? How Huntington has revisited or even 'falsified' the thesis by his own article in Newsweek of December 2001? These are interesting questions come into mind. This section will mainly deal with these questions. Yet, one should first look at major developments that happened after the tragic events of September 11.

First of all, Islam-the West relations have gained an increasing attention after September 11. Even though many in the West have rightly reiterated that Islam is religion of peace⁶² and Al-Quida cannot be considered as representative of Islam, Islam vs. terror debate has frequently come into agenda.⁶³ Not unexpectedly, the Western media looked at 'Islamic roots' of the terrible attacks. Thereafter, 'Islam', 'Islamism', 'political Islam' and 'Islamic fundamentalism' became the most frequently used terms in the media. Not surprisingly, the 'clash of civilizations' has also extensively taken place in this time.

Second, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has overwhelmingly topped into regional and global agenda as a result of increasing tension in the region. The conflict has accelerated the debate for 'clash of civilizations', asking the question; to what extent the conflict can be considered within the realm of clash of civilizations?

Third, anti-Americanism has significantly increased in the Muslim World in aftermath of the September 11. According to the recent Gallup poll, there is considerable distrust of the United States after September 11.⁶⁴ This is also other important development that increased interest over the clash thesis.

Does post-September 11 world really fit into the clash thesis? The answer seems to be no because of the following reasons. First, the United States led- campaign in Afghanistan has acquired significant support from the Muslim World. Even Iran has supported the U.S led campaign and Turkey has played an active role in the campaign⁶⁵ One may talk about global coalition against terrorism, which across different civilizations. The growing anti-American sentiments, however, is not limited to the Muslim World since it is a fact in elsewhere including 'Western' Europe.⁶⁶ The growing anti-Americanism is in fact not about civilizational values but primarily about the U.S's Mideast policy. The United States is criticized especially for its alleged unbalanced, pro-Israeli policy in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and because of its cooperation with authoritarian-repressive regimes of the Middle East.⁶⁷ Anti-Americanism is, on the other hand, especially very related to the Bush administration. The administration's 'axis of evil' rhetoric has attracted serious criticisms not only from the Muslim world but also from Europe.⁶⁸ Furthermore, US hegemony and unilateralism not 'Western-Christian- values can be considered as cause of growing anti-American sentiments in the Muslim world. In this respect, ignoring the different political perspectives within the 'Western' civilization and talking about 'clash of civilizations' is considerably questionable.

In revisiting the clash thesis after September 11, it is noteworthy mentioning about Huntington's 'The Age of Muslim Wars' article in Newsweek of December 2001. Though Huntington argues here that 'the makings exist for a clash of civilizations between Muslim and non-Muslims and he also argues that reactions to September 11 and the American response were strictly along civilizational lines'⁶⁹ he makes fundamental revisions in his earlier standing, which take place in his 'Clash of Civilizations?' article and book. First of all, Huntington now begins to argue that civilizational conflict is possible but not inevitable while he had earlier said it is

inevitable. Second, he now maintains that ‘the age of Muslim wars has roots in more general causes that do not include the inherent nature of Islamic doctrine or beliefs. The clash of contemporary Muslim wars lies in politics not 7th religious doctrines’. In this regard, he refutes his earlier point that ontological differences of the Western and Islamic civilizations-without talking about political factors- inevitably produce the clash. Third, Huntington now underscores the fact that the Muslim people reacts to the Western governments as they support ‘corrupt, ineffective, and repressive’ governments. Fourth, interestingly Huntington now recommends that hostility towards the West could be reduced by changes in US policy toward Israel. In doing so, he accepts the difference between the clash of civilizations, which based upon divergent ontological worlds and anxiety towards to US policies. Fifth, he also now talks about probability of peaceful –‘clash of civilizations’ free- world politics in the future. This also constitutes a great contradiction with his previous standing. In sum, Huntington’s Newsweek article, ‘the Age of Muslim Wars’, deserves great attention to reconsider the clash thesis after September 11.

A BRIEF NOTE ON ISLAM-THE WEST RELATIONS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

The tragedy of September 11, not unexpectedly, deeply sensitized Islam-the West relations and especially the U.S relations with the Muslim World. Then, the following questions have become of critical importance; how does the ‘clash of civilizations’ discourse make an impact on the post-9/11 relations between the Muslim World and the West/the U.S? How the event will influence perceptions of Islam and the Muslims in the mind of Western elites and people? How will the Muslims in the United States and Europe likely to be influenced by post-September 11 developments?⁷⁰ These questions are obviously of profound importance and they will most likely to be centerpiece of numerous debates thereafter.

Samuel P. Huntington's clash of civilizations paradigm unquestionably has menacing implications for Islam-the West relations.⁷¹ As mentioned earlier, Huntington's understanding of Islam basically bases upon orientalist scholarship of Islam, in which Islam-'the other' is being depicted as a threat and even an enemy to the West. It also fosters and/or justifies negative images and stereotypes of Islam/Muslims such as 'violent, terroristic, backward, and immoral'.⁷² The negative stereotypes eventually distract the West from the search for critical understanding and dialogue with Islam/the Muslim World. In this respect, Huntington's perspective of Islam is considerably parallel to orientalist scholarship's story of conflict rather than dialogue or at least peaceful coexistence between the two worlds. Neo-third worldist or anti-orientalist scholarship of Islam, on the other hand, portrays a different scheme of Islam-the West relations. As pointed earlier, this scholarship deeply criticizes orientalist 'epistemology of othering',⁷³ and the depiction of Islam as a threat and enemy. It also has a different historical perspective of Islam-the West relations. This scholarship emphasizes long periods of peaceful coexistence between the two worlds. Moreover, anti-orientalist scholars, such as John Esposito emphasize diversity and plurality of the Muslim World by drawing attention towards various 'Islams', and 'Islamisms'.⁷⁴ Finally, they recommend that critical understanding and dialogue between the two sides are of crucial importance especially in the increasingly transnational and interdependent world.⁷⁵

The mentioned differences between orientalist and anti-orientalist scholarship of Islam also appear in regard to divergent views of 'political Islam', 'Islamism' and 'Islamic fundamentalism'.⁷⁶ Monolithic perceptions of orientalist perspective are also clear in understanding of these phenomenons. This perspective generally depicts those phenomenons as a great threat to 'Western civilization' as well as to Western interests. On the other hand, anti-

orientalist perspective emphasizes the plurality and multi-dimensionality of ‘political Islam’, ‘Islamism’ and Islamic revivalism’ by underscoring various historical and political contexts within the Muslim World. Moreover, the divergence between orientalist and anti-orientalist scholarship of Islam also appears on Islam vs. democracy debate; whether Islam and democracy is compatible. Expectedly, orientalist scholarship underscores the inherent incompatibility while the other side argues that Islam and democracy are compatible.⁷⁷

The clash of civilizations thesis, no doubt, has considerably negative implications for Islam-the West relations. First of all, it creates a great setback for the West to recognize diversity and plurality of the Muslim World and various interpretations of Islam. It closes all avenues for dialogue with the ‘other’. Moreover, it draws a very pessimistic outlook for future of the relations, as Huntington foresees, Islam and the West will inevitably clash though it may not be violent.⁷⁸ Keeping Huntington’s confrontational vision in mind, the 9/11 might at first be seen as a case to validate the thesis. Yet, the reality is hardly like that because of the two major reasons

First, American campaign against al-Quida terrorist organization has received full support from the Muslim World including Iran, which has the very hostile and problematic relations with the United States. Yet, it does not necessarily mean that the whole Muslim World supports the Bush administration’s ‘war against terrorism’ and ‘axis of evil’ discourse. The criticisms, however, are hardly related with ‘civilizational differences’ but they are mostly about the Bush administration’s unilateralism.⁷⁹ Besides, as mentioned above, these criticisms are not restricted to the Muslim world.⁸⁰ European elites and people have considerably criticized the Bush administration before and after September 11 too.⁸¹ In this respect, it is wrong to say that American campaign against al-Quida and the growing anti-American sentiments in the Muslim World after September 11 validates the clash of civilizations thesis.

Second, the growing anti-Americanism in aftermath of September 11 is also significantly dealt with the US policy towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and its policy of supporting authoritarian and repressive regimes for the sake of the ‘strategic interests’. As many- including Huntington⁸²- argue that, the U.S may alleviate the negative sentiments if she revises its policy toward the region.⁸³ In this respect, the Muslim anxiety towards the United States is deeply related to ‘clash of policies-interests’ not ‘clash of civilizations’. This also seems to be remained as a fact in post-9/11 period.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

“The Clash of Civilizations?”, ‘X’ article of the post-Cold War, period has resulted in ‘clash of scholarship’ in both academic and policy circles. This paper, first of all, endeavors to examine Huntington’s thesis and its critiques. Then, it briefly evaluates the thesis in the post-September 11 world. In this final section, several concluding remarks take place.

First of all, Harvard Professor, Samuel P. Huntington is right in the sense that culture and religion considerably matter in aftermath of the Cold War.⁸⁴ Cultural and religious elements not played considerable role during the Cold War especially because of the strict bipolar system in this time. The new era of global politics, on the other hand, allows various ethnic, religious and cultural elements come into forefront of regional and global politics. Numerous ethnic conflicts and wars after the Cold War such as in Bosnia, Kosova, Somalia, and Rwanda demonstrate the increasing importance of culture and ethnicity. However, it does not mean that civilizational differences, overlooking the struggles for power and interest, are primary sources of conflict in this period. Besides, it is hard to accept that Huntington’s clash of civilizations model offers a ‘new paradigm’. Premises of classical realism- ‘balance of power’ ‘interest’ and ‘alliances’ essentially circumscribe the clash thesis. Huntington deeply concerns with state of Western

power vis-à-vis other 'civilizations' power'. (Remember, for example, his advice to empower Atlantic partnership against 'Islamic-Confucian connection')

Second, Huntington's thesis basically depends on orientalist understandings of Islam, in which Islam-the 'other'- is perceived as culturally inferior to the West and identified as threat and even enemy. This understanding ignores the diversity, plurality and various dynamics of Islam/the Muslim World as well as that of 'Islamism' and 'Islamic fundamentalism'. This approach, however, closes the avenues for mutual understanding and dialogue as well as it leads to 'clash of misunderstandings'.⁸⁵ Moreover, Huntington has a selective perception in choosing cases in order to enforce his argument. For instance, he probably should know that the Gulf War is dealt with 'clash of interests', yet he exemplifies the War as a case for 'clash of civilizations'. Furthermore, Huntington underestimates probability of cooperation and dialogue among civilizations and between states, which come from different civilizations. Besides, as one of the most problematic points is that Huntington ignores the role of Western colonialism and hegemony in Muslim anxiety towards the West. However, as James Scott rightly suggests that 'wherever there is domination one also finds resistance'⁸⁶.

Third, US action is very crucial for the future of Islam-the West relations. As the world's only superpower, the United States should be cautious about Muslim concerns in related to both Palestinian-Israeli conflict and democratization process in the Middle East. The United States encounters a dilemma in this regard; how it converges its ideals of democracy and freedom with concerns of 'power and interest'. The Muslim peoples have a conviction that the West/U.S pursues double standards when democracy and human rights deal with the Muslim World. The U.S should not enforce this belief in the Muslim World by ignoring people's democratic demands for the sake of stability of its "strategic interests'. As Henry Nau rightly proposes, the

United States should follow a coherent policy towards the Muslim Middle East by converging his identity and power⁸⁷. Otherwise, the growing anti-American sentiments in the Muslim World will continue to harm the relations between the West/U.S and the Muslim World.

Fourth, the West and the Muslim World should be open to critical dialogue and mutual understanding. The ‘clash of civilizations’ discourse creates a great obstacle for this effort. The need for dialogue between the two worlds in particular and among all civilizations in general is especially clear in increasingly transnational and interdependent world. Otherwise, the ‘clash of civilizations’ would be self-fulfilling prophecy. To blame the other and to abstain from self-criticisms does not produce a sustainable solution for the problems between the two worlds. Dialogue and mutual understanding is the only way for a promising future.

Fifth, as frequently stated above, the ‘clash of civilizations’ has resulted in a ‘clash of scholarship’ in the fields of international relations, American foreign and security policy as well as in dealing with Islam-the West relations. In this respect, the clash thesis has made important contribution in these areas. Lastly, the September 11 has vitalized the debate and sensitized the relations between the West and the Muslim World. As asked earlier, the following questions have become of profound importance; how does the ‘clash of civilizations’ discourse make an impact on the post-9/11 relations between the Muslim World and the West/the U.S? How the 9/11 will influence perceptions of Islam and the Muslims in the mind of Western elites and people? How will the Muslims in the United States and Europe likely to be influenced by post-September 11 developments? This paper has only touched upon these issues in brief; hence they urgently call for further studies.

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⁷⁹ On unilateral- multilateral debate, see Joseph S. Nye's recent study; *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

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⁸⁷ "Henry Nau, "Chapter 7: Beyond Indifference: American Relations with the Developing World" in *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy* (Cornell Studies in Political Economy), (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 190-236