

HUNTINGTON'S CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE U.S FOREIGN POLICY (AN ANALYTICAL STUDY)

Prof. Dr. Adel Abdul-Aziz Algeriani¹
Mawloud Mohadi²

Abstract: *This paper analyses the Huntingtonian's approach to world civilizations. Samuel. P. Huntington is a very well-known figure in the United States and worldwide, among academics, policymakers, journalists, as well as the public audience. He achieved such fame, mainly, thanks to his controversial Foreign Affairs article published in summer 1993 under the title: 'The Clash of Civilizations?' It, uniquely, spurred hot debate for the following three years and it is still influential after more than twenty years of its first publication. This study attempts to comprehend and investigate Huntington's paradigm whose main claim is that post-Cold War world future is to be dominated by 'civilizational' conflicts triggered in the 'fault lines' between the major seven or eight civilizations of the world. In this work, the researchers will shed some light on the analytical as well as critical aspects of Huntington's theory. The study shall also defragment the theory and reveals its weaknesses and the way it paved the way for a new U.S foreign policy. The article is basically following a qualitative research based on historical, political and analytical methods through which the authors have collected data and interpreted it accordingly.*

Key Words: *Huntington thesis, Clash of Civilization, Demonization of Civilization, Political Interest, post-Cold War. U.S Foreign Policy*

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Introduction

Samuel P. Huntington's theory on the Clash of Civilizations is among the several influential theories in international relations which emerged after the end of Cold War, explaining the New World Order; now well-known for its unique cultural perspective. The importance of civilizations in relations among states is improperly overemphasized in Huntington's thesis; this can be demonstrated by three political theories: Realism, Liberalism and Lateral Pressure theory. These theories emphasize national interests, political identities and domestic pressure, respectively, as fundamental in determining international relations rather than cultural identity. Regardless of their different perspectives towards international affairs, all three are able to prove that Huntington's theory about the Clash of Civilizations is ultimately flawed. (Jiang, 2014).

¹ Coordinator of Islamic Heritage University Islam Malaysia (adel@uim.edu.my)

² PhD student. and a Research Assistant at University Islam Malaysia (mouloudmohadi@gmail.com)

Huntington's piece in Foreign Affairs has received much criticism from wildly different paradigms, with implications, methodology, and even the basic concepts as frequent targets. (Hovgaard, 2010). Huntington's academic literature to date has mostly been critical, and quantitative studies have shown that Huntington's claims cannot be systematically substantiated by empirical evidence. However, such attempts at testing Huntington have failed to properly take into account the very complex relationships of a constructivist model such as the civilizational one. Therefore, the debate needs a more qualitative approach in order to build a proper model before proceeding to quantitative testing.

While Huntington's Civilizational thesis has enjoyed significant support among politicians and media, there has been little support in the way of scientific studies presenting evidence to confirm Huntington's hypotheses. A major problem of most critical studies is the failure to test all of Huntington's theory at once. Fox (2001, 2002) has focused on ethnic conflict within states while Russet, O'Neal and Cox (2000) focused on interstate conflict. Statistical evidence has proven Huntington to be wrong, but it has also failed to demonstrate that it is capable of capturing and measuring the nuances between different types of civilizational conflict at different levels, and to test identification beyond simple majority/minority group differences. If quantitative methods wish to conduct a proper test of Huntington's hypotheses more robust solutions to Huntington's inherent problems are needed. (Egefjord, 2004)

Huntington's critics often mention his intentional misinterpretation of certain phenomena and excessive emphasis on the qualitative superiority of West over the other civilizations. This is closely linked to the accusations of racism, particularly in the context of author's other publications such as *Who are we? - The Challenges to America National Identity and Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* where he presents his preference of Western civilization based on Christian-Jewish cultural tradition. Concerning the inner American debate, he calls for maintaining the traditions of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP). (Taterová and Darkwah, 2014)

The Theory and its Background

The main fallacy of Huntington is that he formulates a political paradigm on the basis of concepts originating from other disciplines such as history and anthropology. While these artificial and very general concepts can serve as useful analytical tools to discover patterns of similarity between different times in history or different societies, they always entail the risk of being confused with objective reality. The more or less unforeseen consequence of applying this kind of general and simplified paradigms to current events is the risk of providing them a theoretical justification and fixing them into unchangeable patterns. Huntington seems to have more or less consciously fallen into this trap. (Paolucci, 2010)

The empirical findings from Henderson and Tucker's study led them to claim that Huntington's Foreign Affairs article of 1993, in which he first promulgated his Clash of Civilizations thesis, is not the post-Cold War equivalent of Kennan's Long Telegram; instead, it resembles a post-Cold War Schlieffen Plan that, if followed, is likely to provide the same result in the future as its namesake provided in 1914. (Henderson and Tucker, 2001)

It also appears that Huntington's utilization of Richardson's (1960) Findings to support his contentions regarding the enduring conflict between Islam and Western Christendom ignores the more complex relationships uncovered by Richardson. First, it is important to remember that Richardson's (1960) study, which provides the earliest systematic treatment of the impact of cultural similarity on international conflict, focuses on disparate types of conflicts (most of which are not interstate wars) and is restricted to the period from 1820 to 1929. Second, Richardson found that, in the main, common religion did not have a dampening effect on the incidence of war (nor did common language). Although shared Confucianism appeared to be associated with a decreased likelihood of war, no such relationship obtained for Islam or Christianity. While there appeared to be a relationship between religious dissimilarity and conflict in the case of Christianity versus Islam, Richardson also found that Christianity more than Islam was subject to internecine conflict. Therefore, Richardson's (1960) findings do not provide the unequivocal support for either the Clash of Civilizations thesis, in general, or Huntington's conception of "Islam's bloody borders," specifically. (Henderson and Tucker, 2001)

The Huntingtonian Definition of the Concept Civilization and its Characteristics

The ambiguities manifested regarding the definition of the fundamental concept of civilization are a weakness that many critics have highlighted. In Huntington's own words:

Civilizations have no clear-cut boundaries and no precise beginnings and endings. People can and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and shapes of civilizations change over time." ... "Civilizations are nonetheless meaningful entities, and while the lines between them are seldom sharp, they are real. (Egefjord, 2004, p. 11)

Huntington's definition given to 'civilization' was followed by a list of eight major civilizations. This list might have been convincing if Huntington had identified their core "values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking." Curiously, there is no room in Huntington's taxonomy for Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, or Tibet. At the same time, there exists a strong correspondence between Huntington's civilizations and Western notion of races. All but one of them can be identified with a 'race': the West with Germanic, the Orthodox with Slavic, and Latin American with Mestizo, the Sinic and Japanese with the 'yellow race', the Hindu with the dark Caucasians, and the African with black. Islam alone does not fit this description. (Alam, 2002)

Huntington seems to be not absolutely clear about the number of major civilizations or the boundaries between them. The incongruence between maps, tables, text and conclusions in the book has been the subject of many introductions to critical studies of the theory. The fact of the matter is that Huntington admits to the number of civilizations not being fixed. Huntington uses the term "major civilizations" which suggests that there must also be "minor civilizations". Huntington does not elaborate on this apparent differentiation, but it fits with his idea of civilizations changing over time. This may explain some of the ambiguities in the drawing of borders between civilizations. New civilizations emerge, old ones change or disappear. This makes the problem of allocating the states of the world into the appropriate civilizational category very complicated indeed.

According to Tuscisny:

[There] are several problems with Huntington's concept of civilizations". He fails to explain how and why cultural factors-religion, ethnicity and language-form a civilization. His explanations of why there is a fault line between the Western and Orthodox civilizations but not between Catholics and Protestants. Similarly, he claims there are significant differences between Japan and China, but less so between China and Vietnam. And why "is fragmented sub-Saharan Africa supposed to be as unitary as the single-member Japanese and two-member Hindu civilizations? (Egefjord, 2004, p.19)

Except for the distinction between the West and the civilization of Latin America (and the ambiguous African Civilization), religion seems to be the most important element of Huntington's definition of a civilization. The Orthodox, Hindu and Islamic Civilizations are even named after their dominant religion. (Egefjord, 2004).

Scholars who held quantitative analyses on Huntington's theory, found difficulty in the operationalization of the concept of 'civilization', that is the categorization of each majority and minority groups within determined civilizations. This difficulty resides in: Huntington divides the world into eight major civilizations based on religion. He seems uncertain about Buddhism either it makes up a dependent civilization or it is joined to the Sinic/Confucian one. Also, the doubt aroused by joining Israel to the Western Civilization despite the disparate natures between Jewish and Christian cultures.

Another problem raised by Huntington's definition and classification of civilizations is the difficulty to put minority groups (Afro-Americans in USA and Black Muslims in Africa, for instance) within the frame of any of the major 'eight' civilizations. Indigenous people, in respect to Huntington's division, don't fit any of Huntington's civilizations. (Fox, 2002)

Although Huntington claims that religion is "a central defining characteristic" of civilizations, the correlation between his civilizations and religion is quite weak. The West, Orthodox and Latin American civilizations are all Christian. Latin America is set apart because it is mostly Catholic; but so are Spain, Portugal, Belgium, France and Italy. More importantly, if there can be three Christian civilizations, what prevents Huntington from splitting Islam along sectarian (Shiite and Sunni) or racial lines (Arab, Iranian, Turkic, African and Malay). Finally, there are two civilizations on Huntington's list, the Sinic and Japanese, which have no clear religious affiliations-at least, as the term is understood in the West. (Alam, 2002).

Non-Western Perspectives of the Clash of Civilizations:

The voluminous criticism of Huntington's theory of the Clash of Civilizations from analysts in the non-Western world (mainly from these scholars: Edward Said, Said Shirazi, Manojehrr Dorraj , Fouad Ajami, Shireen T. Hunter, Professor Sato Seizaburo, Abul Kalam, Amit Gupta, Chandra Muzaffar, D.r Razi Abidi, Mr. Muhammad Rasheed Arshad) establishes its flawed basis on the following counts:

- 1). Huntington's thesis is both simplistic and reductionist. It ignores the complex dynamics of conflict and neatly reduces them to his formula of cultural civilizational clash. The fact of the matter is that conflicts take place more out of economic and socio-political injustice, deprivation, disempowerment, geopolitics and so on, gradually stirring up and

- involving ethno-religious sentiment, and, at a later stage, what Huntington calls ‘civilization consciousness.’
- 2). Huntington has been heavily criticized for being selective in his approach towards history.
 - 3). Huntington views civilizations as monolithic, overlooking intra-civilizational diversity and even conflict. Huntington simply refrains from discussing cases of conflict within civilizations because they hurt his thesis.
 - 4). The Clash of Civilizations thesis is a classic example of ‘othering’.
 - 5). Huntington’s position as advisor to the Pentagon leaves his work with little credibility and authentic scholarship.
 - 6). It has been pointed out that Huntington has utterly failed to highlight the numerous commonalities and essential similarities between civilizations. He refuses to see the interacting, overlapping, mingling and merging of cultures and the evolution of civilizations through the debt they owe to each other. This is particularly so for his superficial analysis of the relationship between Islam and the West. (Sajjad, 2013).

The New Foundation of Policy-Making and The Influence of Clash Theory

In his famous book, *Imagined Communities*, political scientist Benedict Anderson argued that modern nations emerged as collective bodies simply when people imagined them—thanks to modern technology and the propaganda ability it gave the nation-state. In a way, the late Samuel P. Huntington did something similar by introducing the concept of “civilization” to our imagination. This has been especially true for the two specific civilizations between which Huntington saw the greatest potential for a clash: The West and the Islamic world. (Burns, 2007).

Despite the fact that the Islamic intra-civilizational wars are more likely than the inter-civilizational wars which leads to the conclusion that policymakers should worry less about Islam’s ‘bloody borders’ and more about conflicts within Islam as well as other sub-civilizational conflicts; among state failures, the majority of the West’s civilizational conflicts, both during and after the Cold War, are with the Islamic civilization. Even though this trend has been weakened with the end of the Cold War, it can explain why Huntington may have come to believe that Islam is the greatest threat to the West.

This finding highlights the potential influence of paradigms on policy. When the Cold War paradigm was the dominant one, any threat to the West by the Islamic civilization was considered at most secondary to the more important threat of Communism. In fact, many ‘Islamic versus West’ conflicts were probably interpreted as proxy conflicts involving challenges by communist-supported groups. That is, policy makers saw what they expected to see. When those expectations change, what people see will also change. Thus, if policymakers come to the conclusion that Islam is the next great threat to the West, then that is what these policymakers are likely to see. Given this, the fears expressed by Hassner (1997a), Pfaff (1997), Singhua (1997), Smith (1997), Tipson (1997) and Walt (1997), among others, that Huntington’s predictions amount to a self-fulfilling prophecy should be taken seriously, especially in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001. (Fox, 2002)

Huntington's thesis undoubtedly gained support after 9/11. In fact, it is argued that such notions as the Clash of Civilizations theory have diverted attention from the real causes of terrorism and have so been instrumental in shaping the American perception of and foreign policy on Islamic fundamentalism. In addition, Huntington shares with Lewis and Perle the same view that the Muslim mind is 'pathologic' and Muslims from Indonesia through Iran to Senegal hate the West. With such a view widespread among the American public, it is not surprising that the attacks of 9/11 were treated as a direct and personal attack on Americans. (Kone, 2013).

Whatever the precise terminology, the more the language has turned towards Islamic or Islamist terrorism, the more the religion of Islam itself appears to be implicated in the definition of the enemy. In some measure, therefore, it may appear that something akin to a 'clash of civilizations' was precipitated by 9/11. Ostensibly, the Huntington thesis seems to have been, if not proven, remarkably prescient. (Bonney, 2008).

In the talk about the American efforts to maintain its 'Imperial' interests, influence and power on a global scale, the global competition in the Caspian Sea region constitutes an excellent example for illustration. The Caspian Sea region is one among other regions such as the Middle East that will be dealt with in further details in the following pages.

Today, the geopolitical vacuum left by the USSR has begun to dissipate as Russia, China, and the US approach new levels of engagement in the region. The two primary motivations driving these states to greater involvement are their respective energy (oil) and security interests. Thus, it can be argued that the era of a New Great Game has arrived. Once again these powers fit into Huntington's divisions of civilizations, reinforcing the Caspian's relevance to Huntington's paradigm. (Burns, 2007).

Conclusion

This paper dealt, most importantly, with the critiques of Huntington's Clash of Civilizations paradigm and Huntington's response to them. So, we summarize these critiques in the few following paragraphs. First of all, Huntington is criticized for being too vague and indistinct addressing many specific issues. Many specialists say that Huntington's anecdotal style is simply not suitable enough to account for the rationalizations and arguments he represents in such a serious work. A comprehensive analysis accomplished by Jonathon Fox for the period 1989-2002 concluded that the precise contrary of what Huntington predicted occurred in fact. (Smith, 2007)

Other criticisms of Huntington's theory include: That Huntington got his facts wrong or even ignored or bent the facts to fit his theory; that his theory is an oversimplification; that his list of civilizations is incorrect; that he often contradicts himself; that his evidence is wholly anecdotal, leaving room for others to cite counterexamples; that he provides no systematic analysis of the link between civilizational controversies and political behaviour, and that his predictions amount to self-fulfilling prophecies.

The results of previous quantitative studies have also tended to be critical of Huntington's theory. Russett, O'Neal and Cox's (2000) study on militarized inter-state disputes from 1950 to 1992 finds, among other things, that intra-civilizational conflicts were more likely than inter-civilizational conflicts; civilizational conflicts, if anything, waned as the Cold War ended and that Huntington's the 'West versus the 'Rest' and 'Islamic threat to the West' predictions were

unfounded. They also show that, while civilizational variables are not important, aspects of the realist and liberal theories are important predictors of international conflict.

These findings are also consistent with those of Henderson that cultural factors do not have a unidirectional impact on international war. Henderson and Tucker (2001) found that, if anything, civilizational differences make states less likely to go to war. Henderson and Singer (2000) show that political factors have a greater influence on civil wars than cultural ones. Gurr (1994) found no support for Huntington's theory among major ethno-political conflicts. Ellingsen (2000) found that there is no real change in the dynamics of ethnic conflict from the Cold War to the post-Cold War eras. Fox also found that, globally, there has been little change in the ratio of civilizational versus non-civilizational ethnic conflict since the end of the Cold War and that there has also been little change in Islamic involvement in civilizational ethnic conflict since the end of the Cold War. (Fox, 2002).

However, Davis and Moore (1997) and Davis, Jagers and Moore (1997) find a connection between international ethnic alliances and international conflict. While this provides some confirmation for Huntington's predictions of civilizational influence in conflicts, it is only limited confirmation for two reasons. First, these findings do not address whether this phenomenon has increased or decreased in strength since the end of the Cold War. Second, the evidence refers to ethnic conflict and not civilizational conflict. Now, it is the time for intellectuals both Western and Muslims to explain the notions in such a way that harmonious atmosphere could be created in the world. Finally, it can be stated that despite some academic weak points, Huntington's the Clash of Civilizations theory has presented some brilliant points for analyses. His article has started unending debate and attracted surprise amount of attention and reaction. (Ashraf, 2012)

And as it was mentioned earlier, Huntington's theory was intended-since he was a Pentagon advisor- to provide the American policy makers with an alternative paradigm to the post-Cold War world and to guide them towards a strategy to proceed in order to maintain the American supremacy and interests. The practicability of this paradigm is prevalent in the adopted American foreign policy, especially, after the September 11 attacks.

The researchers believe that on top of the political and economic issues that have come into existence because of the civilizational clash theory. Academicians and Organizations such as the OIC have already started addressing issues. There are plenty of steps to done in promoting education, wisdom, scientific and technological advancement, support the role of women in society, actions to eradicate gross violations of human rights, effective roles for civil society groups, humanitarian assistance for the homeless and refugees, etc. All of these activities would definitely promote ideas of peace, respect and co-existence that may contribute to renew our civilization and prevent its decay.

The researchers would introduce the following recommendations:

- The Muslim organizations should establish an independent think-tank that promote dignity, human rights and wisdom to address the question of civilizational crisis.
- The confusion within Western "scientific" methodology in understanding history and civilisation has to be academically re-interpreted and re-addressed. We believe that the values of the Holy Qur'an might provide useful guidance in achieving this aim and put it into practice

- The certification of good governance given to institutions should only be accorded when the institutions evidence their subscription to human values and their wise governance.

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