CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

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FANTASY OR INEVITABLE

Civilization covers a wide variety of essential elements which are required to constitute a civilization with its development, refinement and improvement. The elements are not only available but exist in abundance within most of the regions around the world. Those only need to be searched or explored and benefits drawn to the utmost in order to gradually establish a civilization by using our body and mind bestowed by the Creator as the best of all the creations on earth. It takes time to attain any level of civilization in any country or region. It is a slow process which grows with the extent of time given to it and the amount of efforts made on it. There is hardly any standard parameter by which to judge the level or the measure of civilization attained except their standings as projected at the world stage in terms of progress and development.

When a civilization develops in any region it takes into account many sectors such as social, political, economy, agriculture, education, industry, health care, trade and commerce, science and technology, art and culture and moral and ethical values, the refinement and the steady improvement of each one is to be insured which constitute the foundation of civilization. When a civilization emerges in one part of the world developed by the people it carries with it the enlightenment visible to other parts that provide enough encouragement to establish their own civilizations. People of every part of the world draw benefits from each other's civilizations and thus get induced to improve further upon their own civilization. They get inspired to excel in all fields in order to surpass others. This initiates healthy competition among various civilizations. Eventually the one with higher values, both moral and practical, generally prevails over others. Thus there is no question of any clash or conflict among the civilizations. It surely is not a war by any definition in order to win over others for territorial gains or for any other advantage. It may at best be termed as some sort of competition on the basis of progress, prosperity, refinement and enlightenment and definitely not any clash of civilizations.

With human progress, prosperity and development, enlightenment started growing in every country, every region and every continent. Types of governance kept on changing. The world saw many forms of governments in many nations around the world. Slowly but steadily the term civilization started emerging, first under regional context, then on to continental context and finally to global context.

Civilization is always linked with knowledge, development, progress and refinement that place one region ahead of another. Every religion which emerged on earth always brought with it some new and specific knowledge and refinement on moral values and some direction to life and living which helped in development and advancement of the followers .But civilization primarily evolves on the basis of regions with ethnic viewpoint as the main factor and hardly have any bearing on religion except its moral and ethical components that could perhaps influence the character and quality of the followers. Since the ancient days civilization generally emerged in one region or the other but hardly confined to the same region all the time but spread over to other regions. If history is any indicator one has to agree that the world saw many civilizations emerging in many parts of the world, one eclipsed by the other, one surpassed by another and one overtaken by the other such as Babylonian, Chinese, Persian, Byzantine, Egyptian, Roman, to name but a few. None was ever attached to any religion. That has always remained as the true concept of civilization since long past until the present time and as such any prospect of future conflicts to be seen as the clash of civilizations should be viewed purely as fantasy and nothing more, let alone consider those as real and inevitable.

The concept that in the future most conflicts will be between civilizations as put forward by Samuel R Huntington in his remarks under "Clash of Civilizations" does not hold good and in sharp contrast to the fact that there is hardly any history of such clashes ever recorded both in the past and the present. History recorded only smooth transition following some healthy competition peacefully executed, distinction achieved in 'Most of the contesting fields and the change-over willingly accepted on merit both by victors and those defeated. Therefore Samuel Huntington's remarks have no credible foundation as proved by the facts on the ground and such a notion could at best be termed simply as hypothetical.

Incidentally civilizations have already been linked with specific religious beliefs both by the media coverage and in the printed materials. However, people already know how and under what circumstances different civilizations are generally formed and emerged at different regions on earth that carry with it the legacy of language, culture and tradition of the region. It never had any strong relevance to religion. If anything only the noble values of a religion when incorporated could influence on the refinement, enlightenment and purification and in guiding people to take the right path in life as dictated by heart and mind, the very exceptional blessings bestowed to humankind alone and not to any other creations.

Defining Civilization

Civilization and culture are related concepts. A way of life is called a culture. A culture that includes millions of people and has developed complex systems of art, literature, music, social, political and religious institutions may be called a civilization. There are hundreds of cultural groups but only a handful of civilizations. Huntington has identified seven or eight contemporary civilizations in the world. These include the Western (Europe and North America), the Slavic (Russia and Eastern Europe), the Islamic, the Chinese, the Hindu, the Japanese, the Latin American, and the African. Historians tell us that civilizations rise and fall with some frequency. Many ancient civilizations, once glorious and powerful, exist no more. Where are Rome, Greece, Egypt, Persia and Babylonia? Arnold Toynbee studied 26 civilizations, and of that number only some half a dozen survive today. The Chinese and the Hindu civilizations are unique in their longevity. They go back at least 4,000 years. The Hindu Brahmins chant hymns from the Vedas composed nearly 2,000 years before the birth of Christ. This is an amazing record of continuity for a civilization. In contrast, Islam born in the 7th century has the shortest history at 1,400 years. Some have argued that the relative youth of Islam is the cause of its belligerence. Islam is said to be in its adolescence.

Islamic History

Islam may be dated to 610 AD, when Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) began having conversations with archangel Gabriel. Prophet Mohammad's (Peace Be Upon Him) message of one true God named Allah attracted a number of followers. But the leaders of

Mecca rejected his new teaching. Conflict ensued. In 622, Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) was forced to flee to Medina, some 240 miles to the North. Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) became the leader of Medina and within a few years felt emboldened to raid Mecca. Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) actions were brilliant and bold. Mecca signed a treaty of friendship and allowed Muslims to enter the city for pilgrimage. By the time Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) died in 632 AD at age 62, he had become the supreme figure in all of Arabia.

Muslim conquest did not stop with the death of Prophet Mohammad(Peace Be Upon Him). In less than 100 years since Prophet Mohammad's (Peace Be Upon Him) death, the Islamic rule stretched from the frontiers of India all the way to Spain. Victories resumed after a hiatus of three centuries. Believers captured Anatolia (Turkey) in 1071, the throne of Delhi in 1201, and Constantinople in 1453.

Islamic History reflects that Islam was not restricted to one civilization and culture. Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) revolutionized the fragmented Arab societies and tribes by unifying them under Islam. It was this very notion of universalism that broke away from the previous clashes within this region. His endeavours to create a society, whereby peoples of diverse cutures and relgions would co-exist peacefully is the core essence of Islam. This is clearly illustrated in the successive spread of Islam eveen after his death.

Why a Clash of Civilizations?

First, differences among civilizations are basic. They involve history, language, culture, social life and religion. Different civilizations have different views about the nature of God (male or female, personal or impersonal, benevolent or malevolent), and relations between God and Man. Civilizations also differ with respect to the concept of the state, liberty, democracy, secularism, pluralism, tolerance and the rule of law.

Second, the communications and the information revolution has engulfed the globe is a two edged sword. This communications revolution narrows differences among the various cultural and ethnic groups. It tends to melt different cultures into a homogenous whole.

People the world over begin to look, think and act alike. The processes of Globalisation allows people to identify more with their roots.

Third, modernization erodes local identities. The world over, people have lost affinity with the village, the neighborhood and the family. Fundamentalist religious movements have captured the space thus vacated. In the first part of the latter century, it was the characteristics of nationalism, patriotism and cultural practice that people tended to identify themselves with. This was probably due to the fact that many developing nations were breaking away from the clutches of colonial rule. Therefore, issues of national freedom were more pertinent. But with this process also came the the consequences of religious divide within these countries. It was this fact along with the negative reperecussions of globlisation which explains the development of religious and cultural conflict.

The clash of civilizations explores the conflicts that mark the borders of the Islamic world. A new cold war, a clash of civilizations, which has often been translated to a global holy war. Such are the broad brush strokes used to paint the background of the conflict in Afghanistan. The conflict broke wide open Sept. 11, but experts say its beginnings are deeply rooted in religious and cultural tensions sharpened by the end of the cold war. As Mr. Huntington put it, "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."

The chief cultural fault line in the post-cold war world, Huntington argues, occurs where the West meets Islam. The "clash of civilizations" hypothesis is just that – a hypothesis. And Huntington himself has emphasized the hope that the West and Islam can find ways to peacefully coexist. As he wrote in his book, "In the final analysis, however, all civilizations will have to learn to tolerate each other."

World politics is entering a new phase, and intellectuals have not hesitated to proliferate visions of what it will be-the end of history, the return of traditional rivalries between nation states, and the decline of the nation state from the conflicting pulls of tribalism and globalism, among others. Each of these visions catches aspects of the emerging reality. Yet

they all miss a crucial, indeed a central, aspect of what global politics is likely to be in the coming years.

We assess the degree to which propositions from Samuel Huntington's The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order can account for the incidence of militarized interstate disputes between countries during the period 1950-92. We find that such traditional realist influences as contiguity, alliances, and relative power, and liberal influences of joint democracy and interdependence, provide a much better account of interstate conflict. Pairs of states split across civilizational boundaries are no more likely to become engaged in disputes than are other states ceteris paribus. Even disputes between the West and the rest of the world, or with Islam, were no more common than those between or within most other groups. Among Huntington's eight civilizations, interstate conflict was significantly less likely only within the West; dyads in other civilizations were as likely to fight as were states split across civilizations, when realist and liberal influences are held constant. The dominance of a civilization by a core state, democratic or not, does little to inhibit violence within the civilization.

Contrary to the thesis that the clash of civilizations will replace Cold War rivalries as the greatest source of conflict, militarized interstate disputes across civilizational boundaries became less common, not more so, as the Cold War waned. Nor do civilizations appear to have an important indirect influence on interstate conflict through the realist or liberal variables. They help to predict alliance patterns but make little contribution to explaining political institutions or commercial interactions.

Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world. For a century and a half after the emergence of the modern international system with the Peace of Westphalia, the conflicts of the Western world were largely among princes-emperors, absolute monarchs and constitutional monarchs attempting to expand their bureaucracies, their armies, their mercantilist economic strength and, most important, the territory they ruled. In the process they created nation states, and beginning with the French Revolution the principal lines of conflict were between nations rather than princes. In 1793, as R. R. Palmer put it, "The wars of kings were over; the wars of peoples had begun." This

nineteenth-century pattern lasted until the end of World War I. Then, as a result of the Russian Revolution and the reaction against it, the conflict of nations yielded to the conflict of ideologies, first among communism, fascism-Nazism and liberal democracy, and then between communism and liberal democracy. During the Cold War, this latter conflict became embodied in the struggle between the two superpowers, neither of which was a nation state in the classical European sense and each of which defined its identity in terms of its ideology.

These conflicts between princes, nation states and ideologies were primarily conflicts within Western civilization, "Western civil wars," as William Lind has labeled them. This was as true of the Cold War as it was of the world wars and the earlier wars of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the end of the Cold War, international politics moves out of its Western phase, and its centerpiece becomes the interaction between the West and non-Western civilizations and among non-Western civilizations. In the politics of civilizations, the peoples and governments of non-Western civilizations no longer remain the objects of history as targets of Western colonialism but join the West as movers and shapers of history.

Theories negating the existence of a threat

Hunungton's theory has often been criticised for its over-generalization. Whilst taking the standpoint of Imperialism, he has been arguably accused of rejecting the inctricate details of culture, language, and diversity within a particular civilization. Long before Sept. 11, professors and foreign policy experts weighed in about Huntington's model for viewing the future of international relations. Consequently, many also found flaws in his analysis. The following are some arguments that have been presented which take a crtical approach to Hunington's theory.

David Skidmore: "...big bets, whether in poker or in academics, often fail. Such is the fate of Huntington's ambitious but seriously flawed effort to chart a new direction in thinking about the future of international relations in the post-Cold War period."

Felix Marti: "The basic problem with Huntington's theory, however, is the conviction that all cultures aspire to imperial power."

R.F.M. Lubbers: "Huntington has a point when he gives attention to the phenomenon of resistance against Western dominance, against Western "imperialism" as it is understood in the non-Western world."

Seizaburo Sato: "Huntington is not only inaccurate ... but his thesis has the potential to be extremely dangerous if taken as a prescription for making policy."

Mahmood Monshipouri: "Huntington's thesis maximizes the significance of cultural factors and minimizes the importance of nationalism."

Vincent Ferraro: "The West obviously differs from all other civilizations that have ever existed in that it has had an overwhelming impact on all other civilizations that have existed since 1500."

Shibley Telhami: "Most Islamic countries do not see themselves to be in conflict with the United States."

Tanju Çataltepe: "Huntington paints an aggressive picture of the non-Western civilizations – particularly Islam – while ignoring the (mis)deeds of the Western civilization whose dominance is being challenged."

"The Clash of Civilizations is a computer strategy game that will sketch out pretty much the whole of history in game form."

"ISLAMIC THREAT: MYTH OR REALITY"   I

However, one particular aspect could well be brought to focus now that is most pertinent under the present day context where Islam has been projected as a threat to others. When one observes so much division among the people of Islamic faith, from region to region, from one ethnic entity to another ethnic entity, from one cultural field to another, one language area to

another, even the attempt to establish the concept of Islamic brotherhood to bring in the unity among Muslims worldwide has yet to find success till to this day despite the formation of OIC to reach that end, how on earth can the world conceive the idea of unified Islamic nations with the apprehension of threat emerging from such united Islamic front that they like to call "Islamic Threat". The very thought of a unified group of followers of Islam spanning the entire globe with wide variations in languages, cultures and ethnic unified enough to pose a global threat is inconceivable and could at best be called a myth.

For a group, a community or a section of people based on ethnicity or religion, to become a threat to any other they have to possess some powerful and sustainable deterrents and strong unity among them. People of Islamic nations have none of those. One really fails to understand how they could ever constitute a threat to anyone, much less to highly develop and stronger Christian world. Such an image of Islam is being propagated worldwide and obviously used as a political tool to reach some specific political goals. In view of the widely dispersed state of Muslim population around the world, the vast differences in their ethnic type and pattern, language, color, feature, culture and habit they have obviously failed so far to bring unity among them, at least up until now, despite the adversity they are confronting, both imposed and dictated from outside and evolving from within the nations and regions. Added to those is the monarchy, autocratic or dictatorial nature of most of the rulers of countries in Islamic world who are found just unwilling to share, at least to some extent, of the nation's resources with their own people but avail the fortunes from most of the resources for themselves.

However, through the ages religion has always been used as a political tool to attain and consolidate power for themselves and with it the vast fortunes which they hardly could ever use up all of it, even a part, in their lifetime, nor could they ever aspire to take it with them at the end of their mortal life. This happens in any part of the world and there is no discrimination on the basis of regions. That is how monarchy, autocracy or dictatorship survived and even flourished since long past until the present day.

The Islamic world should try to truly project the noble values of Islam which are not confined to only prayers and other rituals but include those as main components in the code of life. They should invite with open arms the people of other religious beliefs and never develop

animosity of any kind towards them. They should only retaliate in self-defense and correct themselves from taking the wrong and distorted meaning of jihad like those adopted by the press and media and also by themselves. Rather they should avail the true meaning, their application and the great values attached to those.

Such an approach could clearly serve some dual purpose. Firstly, the people of non-Islamic world would be attracted towards Islamic faith that would allow them to look for the complete teachings of Islam and eventually let them acquire enough knowledge of Islamic tenets, their application and impact in the day to day life with their enormous significance. Secondly, the universal nature of Islamic teachings that are not confined to the believers of Islam alone, but applicable to humanity. This would open up before them the realistic approach which would have better and stronger appeal to them because of its firm attachment to daily life with its good and evil parts specifically delineated to make the correct choice dictated by their conscience through hearts and minds. In line with the concept of world as a global village that they themselves believe and propagate around the world, slowly and steadily the same very people would eventually find that Islam promotes universal fraternity and global unity.

Global peace and peaceful coexistence among humankind clearly calls for some specific and determined approach. In introspection one should view peace and peaceful co-existence as both essential and immediate. Once we could effectively cease targeting a particular religion and culture, we can avoid the path of confrontation, refrain spreading fear in the minds of people on future conflicts and wars and remove apprehension of expected clashes among them such an approach could go a long way to attain the cherished global peace which has so far remained illusive.

The religion of Islam is based primarily on Universalism. Of course every other religion gives the same message to its followers. Islam clearly defines the right path is the mandatory code of life that should be followed by mankind to whom the Creator has given everything to make them the best of all creations. Universalism is the only goal which the entire humankind has the moral obligation to contribute as the best creation in order to see it accomplished, not by mere words and noble motives unless that is transformed into action and application in our

lives. Let all of us strive hard in all possible way to unite and not divide humanity and make the earth a better place to live with enough happiness for all.

While the focus lies on preserving the distinctive needs and wants of different races and ethnic groups Islam does not loose focus on the oneness of mankind and the universal demands for preservation of their social, cultural and economic rights. Almighty has created one mankind and there is no majority and minority issue in the eyes of the Holy Quran. The unity of mankind is aptly conveyed in the following verses of the Holy Quran.

> *"O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allâh through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allâh is Ever an All Watcher over you."* **(Quran 4:1)**

Islam is a proponent of multiculturalism. Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) SAW, expressed an opinion that was revolutionary in Arabian society of his time: all humans have the same value. The Holy Qur'an states:

> *"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Almighty is the most righteous of you. And Almighty has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)."* **(Quran 49:13)**

It is clear that from the perspective of the Holy Quran, which forms the core of the Islamic tradition, the divine purpose underlying human diversity is to foster knowledge and understanding, to promote harmony and co-operation among peoples. The Almighty did not create diversity for it to become a source of tensions, divisions and polarization in society. Indeed, whether humans recognize it or not, human diversity is a sign of divine genius. The verse also envisages a world in which people, regardless of their differences, are united by

their devotion to the Creator. These sentiments are, in fact, echoed in another Quranic verse, in which Almighty addresses humankind and affirms the principle of unity in diversity:

> *"Surely this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord; so worship me"* **(Quran 21:92)**.

Respect for the "People of the Book", the believers in revealed religions, is anyhow inherent in Islam. Belief in all prophets and the revelations they received is as binding as the belief in Almighty Himself.

> *"Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians - any who believe in Almighty and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."*
> **(Quran 2:62)**

Islam recognizes the differences among men and enjoins respect for the beliefs and values of difference races and religions. Belief in the Prophets of other religion is an article of faith in Islam. The unity of the Creator and of the mankind, call for love, patience, peace, justice and equality- these are the essence of all the religions which came through the Holy Prophets and Messengers of Almighty starting from Prophet Adam, Prophet Nooh (Noah), Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), Prophet Daud (David), Prophet Musa (Moses), Prophet Isa (Jesus) (Peace be upon them), and the last Prophet Mohammad, (Peace Be Upon Them). Islam not only recognizes all the Messengers but makes no discrimination between them.

> The Holy Quran says *"the Messenger Mohammad (Peace be upon him) believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord and so do the believers. Each one believes in; (a) Almighty, (b) His Angels, (c) His Books and (d) His Messengers. They say We make no distinction Between one and another of His Messengers. We hear and obey, oh! Lord and seek your forgiveness"* **(Quran 2:285)**.

SUMMARY

The essence of Islam is Peace. Recognition of the Holy Books and Prophets is an article of faith in Islam. Human rights and rights of minority are held in utmost regard as is respect for diversity. These essentially and comprehensively dispel the concept of Islamic Threat and clash of Islamic Civilization. One has no choice but to bring universalism within the humanity and remove the imaginary fear that in the future most conflicts will be between Civilizations and even more imaginary notion of Islamic Threat as apprehended most unrealistically by Samuel Huntington. As stated earlier, from its inception, the teachings and examples set by Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be upon Him), reflects on the essence of universalism and peace. Therefore, Islam in its true quintessence cannot threaten the values of humanity that Samuel Huntington has argued in his theory. Rather, it functions to do just the complete opposite; it allows Man to be united under the laws of universalism of our Creator.

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