Is a Clash between Islam and the West Inevitable

Minhas Majeed Khan[*]

Abstract

Religion and religious issues have increasingly moved into political and public life around the globe. Instead of using religion as a tool for promoting peace, it has been manipulated for political and economic purposes. Confrontational religious issues are creating an environment of intolerance that leads to conflicts among civilisations. The contemporary debates about the clash between Islam and the Christian West demands comprehension of the deeply divergent values between both the civilisations. While it is mostly discussed that the Islamic world does not share the liberal values or the electoral democracies present in the Western world, the political reforms initiated in Islamic world exemplified in Turkey, Indonesia and many other parts of South Asia are often ignored. Moreover, the policies and wars and the role of the West in Muslim countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen and many others and the reaction to it clearly illustrate the fault lines between the Islamic and Western societies. The question, however, remains whether a clash between the two worlds is inevitable or not.

Keywords: Religion and Politics, West and Islam, Islomophobia, Clash of Civilizations, Crusades, Peaceful Coexistence.

Introduction

The 21st century started with a new phase of struggle for global hegemony, again, centered on religious and civilizational issues.[1] The end of the Cold War in early 1990s brought an end to the ideological war between the two blocs led by the United States (US) and the Soviet Union, leaving the former as the sole super power. For a brief period of

---

[*] *The author is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.*

[1] Hans Koechler, "After September 11, Clash of Civilisations or Dialogue," (lecture given at the University of the Philippines, Asian Center Manila, March 14, 2002), http://www.i-p-o.org/koechler-civilizations-dialogue.pdf

time, it brought relief to the Muslim world since most of the Muslim states were allies of the Capitalist bloc to fight the 'infidel'— the Communist bloc. This short-lived respite took a turn when Samuel P. Huntington's article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 and later in his book *The Clash of Civilisations* in 1996 stirred the world as it gave new policy direction to the West vis-a-vis the Muslim world.

It is argued that the term, *Clash of Civilisations,* echoed much earlier in the academic circles before Huntington highlighted it. For example, the writings of Arnold Toynbee in 1923 and Basil Mathew in 1926 deliberated on the civilisational conflicts. Similarly, Bernard Lewis, in his essay "The Roots of Muslim Rage", highlighted the rivalry between the West and Islam as the *Clash of Civilisations*.

It was, however, Huntington's thesis that attracted global attention. His theorization of civilisational clash suggests that the end of ideological wars does not end the conflicts because the world will be characterized by conflicts on cultural and religious lines. He suggests that the division of the world during the Cold War into, the First, Second and Third World is no longer relevant. It is important to group countries on the basis of their culture and civilization instead of political or economic system or level of economic development. For him, civilisational identity is important as he suggests that the world will be shaped, in large measures, by the interactions among the seven or eight major civilizations. These civilisations include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilisation, of which the conflict between the Christian West and Islam gets the lion share of his attention.[2] Emphasizing on civilisations, he further writes that religion is a central defining characteristic of civilisations.[3]

The provocative and controversial claims presented in the theories of the *Clash of Civilisations* received strong and repeated criticism by various scholars like Amartya Sen, Paul Berman, Edward Said, Noam

---

[2]Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs,* 72 (3), 24-25.

[3]Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 47.

Chomsky and Hans Koechler. While some refute Huntington's thesis as anti-Islam propaganda, others have argued that there are no Western and non-Western civilisations. On account of its baselessness or reality of the clash between Islam and the West, 9/11 brought the world to a point where this debate has become more intense. Not only the increasing extremism and violence is alarming but also the existence of 'Islamophobia' and 'Westophobia'.

The study advances by using terms such as Islamophobia that is well known and Westophobia found in the Muslim world but very rarely used in the debates on the *Clash of Civilisations*. The term Westophobia arose in a period of Muslim decline in the world order and rise of the European hegemony. As explained by Ron Geaves (2010) and Helen Velia Bonavita (2011), the term refers to the perception of cultural decay in the [Christian] West and encourages the young Muslims to engage in the affirmation of Islamic identity and revival of religious values. In opposition to this decay, Islam posits moral precepts of justice, equality, opposition to materialism, greed and egoism and a correct appreciation of family values. [4] Moreover, the *Clash of Civilisations* theory in the present study focuses on the relations between the Islamic or Muslim world that include countries in the Middle East and Asia and the,predominantly Christian West that includes the US, the United Kingdom (UK) and Europe.

Methodology of the Study

The current study is an analytical research. It is aimed at analysing the relationship between Islam and the Christian West while focusing on the scholarly writings on the *Clash of Civilisations*. Also that whether these models have some grounds to validate the ongoing conflicts in the Muslim world, where the nature of conflicts is seen as the absence of democracy and liberal values of the West. This account offers an insight to academia as well as the policy makers in the Islamic and Western worlds on the root causes of violent religious conflict in the Islamic world, the West's responses to it and prospects for bridging the gap between the two.

---

[4]Ron Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain: The life of Abdullah Quilliam* (UK:Kube Publishing, 2010), 311 and Helen Vella Bonavita, *Negotiating Identities: Constructed Selves and Other* (USA: Rodopi, 2011), 113.

This study advances in three parts. The first part introduces and examines the academic writings on the relationship between Islam and the Christian West and outlines the conflicts in the Muslim world as characterized in various studies on the subject. The second part analyses the theories of the *Clash of Civilisations*, focusing mainly on the Islamic and Western civilisations and the responses by the critics. The final part of the study summarizes the study and reflects on the implications of this clash by offering policy recommendations.

The study sets out to achieve the two objectives: a) to evaluate the root cause of hostility between the Islamic world and the Christian West; b) to examine whether a clash between Islam and the Christian West is inevitable or not.

Relationship between Islam and the West

The interest of social scientists in studying the social consequences of religious belief and action is as old as their interest in religion itself. Machiavelli in the 16th century gave a functional analysis of the Roman religion in his 'Discourse' which is said to have significant influence on politics. Similarly, Spinoza, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Comte also developed the analysis of the political impact of religious commitment and the problems related with the influence of religion on personal morality and social solidarity.[5]

The debates on the *Clash of Civilisations* involve the role of religion in the lives of individuals and politics. Khan (2013) argues that religious belief has always had its way within a state with regard to domestic policies and in relations with other countries. Religion has become a decisive force in the contemporary world affairs. It was in this scenario that, on many occasions, secularist attempted to separate religion from politics and reduced it to a private matter for each individual so that it does not influence politics. However, these attempts were challenged on

---

[5]David L. Sills, "The Sociology of Religion," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (London: Collier-Macmillian), 192, 142.

the basis that religion offers more appropriate set of rules for establishing moral norms in a society and, hence, government.[6]

Sack (2013) argues that religion has to be a force for good and conflict resolution and not conflict creation, otherwise it will become part of the problem instead of solution. Despite attempts to segregate religion, it has returned globally as a powerful force and more so in conflict zones, for example, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Kashmir, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and some parts of Asia. Conflicts are often religion based, for example, in the Balkans, among Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs, and Muslims, despite having one race and language, religion is the dividing factor among them.[7] Contrary to the above argument Karaman notes that religion is thought to be present since time immemorial as an aspect of human value and having functional value.[8] Whalen argues that "Jesus of Nazareth's execution was blatantly political"[9] and the establishment of the city-state of Madina also indicates the historical relationship between religion and politics. It implies that religion has remained in public spheres since long.

Rourke (2002) contemplates that religions are not ideologies yet many contain ideological features affecting spiritual and secular life when believers of a religion apply their beliefs to secular political objectives.[10] The rise of fundamentalist movements and their followers among most of the great civilisations became a matter of concern for de-secularization theorists. These movements resulted as a justification

---

[6]Minhas M. Khan, "Evangelicals Influence on US Foreign Policy: Impact on Pak-US Relations (September 2001–November 2007) ," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, (University of Peshawar: 2013).

[7]Jonathan Sack, "The Dignity of Differences: Avoiding the Clash of Civilisations, " FPRI, June 2013, I, file:///Users/minhasmajeed/Downloads/fpri.org-The%20Dignity%20of%20Difference%20Avoiding%20the%20Clash%20of%20Civilisations.pdf

[8]M.Lutfullah Karaman, Religion, Politics and Mobilization: A theoretical Perspective with a special Note on "The Indian Khilafat Movement," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 3(1), 36.

[9]Pierre Whalon, "Religion and Politics are Inseparable: Get over it,"*Huffinton Post*, June 9, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bishop-pierre-whalon/religion-and-politics-are-inseparable_b_1412559.html

[10]John T. Rourke, "Transnational Religion," in *International Politics on the World Stage,* 9th Ed (Washington D.C.: McGraw-Hill/ Dushkin, 2002), 180-181.

against modernity because of the ensuing factors like, modern individualism, ethical relativism, and commercialization in modern society, which brought anomie and perplexity. Therefore, it is believed that traditional form of religion would take over modernity once again.[11]

Huntington, in his article, argues that economic and social changes are separating people from the long-held local identities, consequently weakening nation states as a source of identity. However, religion is one of the factors filling this gap in the shape of fundamentalist movements that are present in all faiths such as Western Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.[12]

While dividing the world into major civilisations, the clash between Islam and the Christian West appears to be a concern for the policy makers in the West and is much-debated subject in the subsequent writings on civilisational conflicts. The series of historical conflicts between Islam and the West or to be more specific Christianity have come to occupy an extremely large space in the memories about the centuries old relationship. The existing clash between the two in one form or the other takes us back to the history of Jihad and Crusades.

The most visible aspect of religio-political connection was that of the Islamic march towards the Western world. A permanent feature of the Middle Ages was the conflict between Christian and Muslim powers. Islam spread into the Fertile Crescent and beyond in the seventh century. Few decades after the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Muslims conquered Near East, the whole of North Africa, Spain and entered France. They conquered Sicily and, two hundred years later, captured parts of Southern Italy.[13] When Jerusalem was captured, the era saw religion as a source of conflict amongst Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

When Muslims captured Jerusalem in 637 AD, the Pope Urban II called for the First Crusade on November 25, 1095, at the council of Clermont, advising the knights of the Europe to unite against the

---

[11]Bernhard Giesen and Daniel Suber eds., "Politics and Religion: An Introduction" in *Religion and Politics: Cultural Perspective. (*Boston: Brill, 2005), 3.

[12] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs,* 72 (3).

[13]Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam* (Britain: The Thetford Press, 1982), 80-82.

Muslims for the liberation of Jerusalem.[14]The Crusaders were temporarily successful in bringing Christianity and Christian rule to Jerusalem in the 11th and 13th century.[15] The period during the 12th century was the reconquest of Jerusalem by Muslims under Saladin.

During the First Crusade, the struggle for superiority between the Eastern and Western churches resulted in the destruction of the Roman Empire in the West. However, Byzantium or Rome in the East remained unscathed. Pope's wars of liberation extended the power of Western Church to the Muslim territories of Spain and Sicily. Later on, Emperor Alexius Commnenus I of the Byzantium asked the Pope for military assistance. The First Crusade made the West a great world power in which Jews were victimized and blamed for Crucification of Christ and loss of the Holy land. Later on, however, the Crusaders turned against the Muslims. After 1095, Europe completely became a different place and this is because, the Crusading is directly associated to the present day conflict in the Middle East.[16]

Viorst (2003) also notes that the war between Israel and Palestinians is causing regional instability and is a hurdle to any hope of reconciliation between Islam and the West.[17]Armstrong (1994) connects the age-old conflict of Christians, Jews, and the Muslims with the existing conflicts in the Middle East. She argues that the present dilemmas, which are unreasonably attributed to Islam, are the result of Pope Urban's first Crusade. She further states that the Holy Wars were a response to human sufferings and it was the First Crusade that led to the revival of the spirit of Jihad that had abandoned until the invasion by European Christians.[18] Lewis (1990), on the other hand, presents his case by stating:

---

[14]Karen Armstrong , " In the Beginning," in *Holy war: The Crusades and their Impact on Todays World* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001), 3, 66 - 67.

[15]Salim Rashid, ed., " The Clash of Civilisations?" *Asian Perspective* (Dhaka. University Press Ltd., 1997), 9.

[16]Karen Armstrong, "In the Beginning, " *Holy war: The Crusades and their Impact on Todays World,* 49 - 50, 66, 70 - 75 & 201.

[17]Milton Viorst, "The Road Map to Nowhere," *The Washington Journal,* 26 (3), (Summer 2003): 177.

[18]Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books), 1994.

> For the first thousand years Islam was advancing, Christendom in retreat and under threat…however, for the past three hundred years, since the failure of the second Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683 and the rise of the European colonial empires in Asia and Africa, Islam has been on the defensive, and the Christian and post-Christian civilisations of Europe and her daughters has brought the whole world, including Islam, within its orbit. For a long time now there has been a rising tide of rebellion against this Western paramountcy, and a desire to reassert Muslim values and restore Muslim greatness.[19]

According to Blake (2001), at the end of the Middle Ages (1440), Western thoughts were controlled and confined to monasteries by the church. Moreover, there was widespread corruption and the Pope was more interested in politics than religious affairs. In that scenario, a liberal intellectual thinking revived, known as the Renaissance, in the city of Florence which later spread to Northern Europe and England.[20]

The conflict in the Middle East persists even today dividing the world into the West and Islam where the West seems to be united against the followers of Islam but there is no unity among Muslim. For instance, Palestine that is the land of three Abrahamic religions has witnessed bloodshed on its soil since centuries, and at present, has become a theatre of war for religions where peace is nowhere to be seen despite international community intercessions.

The Israel-Palestine issue and the US support to Israel have destabilized the whole region. It is also to be noted that Israel has the same importance for Muslims as it is for Christians. Pawson (2003), on the other hand argues, that Israel is such an offence to the Muslim world, especially since the Israeli government reclaimed Jerusalem as their eternal capital. It lies behind the declared radical intention to drive Israel into the sea and the widespread loathing of Americans for their support to Israel, enabling her to stay in her promised land.[21]

---

[19]Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic* (1990):49.

[20]Jeremy Black. "Religion, Belief and Thought," .*MICROPEDIA World history* (Paragon Book, 2001), 96- 97.

[21] David Pawson, *The Challenge of Islam to Christians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003), 60.

This struggle created mistrust and led to Islamophobia in the West and Westophobia in the Muslim world. It is also debated that Western media, academia and intellectuals have misrepresented the Islamic history in Europe thereby, establishing a perception that peaceful co-existence between Islam and the Christian West is impossible. After the 9/11 attacks, a new wave of anti-Islam sentiment got established in the West, which not only created tension between the Christian West and the Muslim world but also gave rise to non-state actors to instrumentalise religion for their own interest and agenda. Rashid (1997) argues that the Cold War started and wiped away the Iron Curtain[22] but the ideological division of Europe was changed into cultural division of Europe, between Western Christianity, on the one hand, and Orthodox Christianity and Islam, on the other.[23]

Why a Clash of Civilisations

Inspired by Bernard Lewis' article, "The Roots of Muslim Rage" written in 1990 Huntington's theory has given a new direction to policy makers in the West that religions and ideologies other than Christianity are a threat to global peace and security. Coincidently, the phrase appeared in a book titled, *Young Islam on Trek: A Study in the Clash of Civilisations* in 1926 by Basil Mathews. Mathew's choice of title plays off , and energizes, the book title, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilisations* by Arnold Toynbee which was published three years before.

For all their differences, however, the coincidental employment of the same phrase for essentially the same subject shows that the anxiety many American observers of the Muslim world have felt since the

---

[22]Iron Curtain, the political, military, and ideological barrier erected by the Soviet Union after the World War II to seal off itself and its dependent eastern and central European allies from open contact with the West and other noncommunist areas. The term Iron Curtain had been in occasional and varied used as a metaphor since the 19th century, but it came to prominence only after it was used by the former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in a speech at Fulton, Missouri, US, on March 5, 1946, when he said of the Communist states, "From Stettin in The Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron has descended across the Continent," http://www.britannica.com/event/Iron-Curtain
[23]Salim Rashid, ed., *The Clash of Civilisations?*,4-5.

Iranian Revolution is not entirely new but harboured ill-disguised contempt for Islam that looms in the background of today's increasing vitriolic debates about Islam and the West.[24] Bernard Lewis views this conflict as:

> 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 Civilisations*– perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both.[25]

Lewis and Huntington phraseology attracted the attention of pundits and scholars, some stand as its supporters, while others criticize it. Cizakca (2006), on the other hand, not only disagrees with the theory but also highlights the commonalities between Islam and Christianity, he states:

> The new religions of Europe, Lutheranism and Calvinism may have been influenced by Islam. Indeed, some of the most important principles of Lutheranism such as the 'Priesthood of All Believers', 'Justification By Faith', 'Primacy of Scripture' and 'Iconoclasm' also represent the key principles of Islam. The possible influence of Islam on both is supported by the fact that Luther had thoroughly read the Quran and had even written the preface to the first ever printed version in Europe, the so-called Bibliander Quran printed in 1543. Finally, Al-Ghazali's concept of work as a form of worship/prayer also constitutes the cornerstone of Calvinism.[26]

Similarly, Bhutto (2008) argues, that Islam is "an open, pluralistic and tolerant religion" which sadly has been hijacked by extremists. She believes that Islam and the Christian West must not move towards a clash of civilizations.[27]

The history of the acrimonious relationship among the three Abrahamic religions, documented in the published scholarships, have

---

[24]Richard W. bullet, *The Case of Islam-o-Christian Civilisations* (USA: Columbia University Press), 2006, 1-4.

[25]Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," 60.

[26]Murat Cizakca, "Islam and Christianity: symbiosis of Civilisations, " *INCEIF, MPRA Paper* no. 23095 (October 2006): 9.

[27]Benazir Bhutto, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

developed a passionate argument in the West, which contributes a lot to anti-Muslim sentiments. The global progress towards modernity, popular in the quarter century following the World War II, resonates the line of thought that Huntington presented in his thesis. His argument focuses on comparing an idealized 'Western civilisation', based on democracy, human rights, free enterprise, and globalization with economic, social and political structures in other parts of the world that he sees unsympathetic, confrontational and incapable of betterment.[28]

The clash can be examined, in view of the different levels of economic developments, which has divided the world into developed, developing and under developed countries. Junhui (1995) argues that the developed countries are fighting proxy wars in third world countries for the latter's resources. The developing countries, for example D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, in order to realize their own economic growth, are also struggling to establish a new world economic order with certain developed countries. So, how it could be subjectively emphasized that to group countries by their culture and civilisation is far more meaningful.[29]

Huntington, in his thesis, suggests 'unity and cooperation among Western civilisations to prevent and limit the expansion of military strength of the Confucian and Islamic states. Moreover, he thinks that international institutions should be strengthened that reflect and legitimate Western interests and values and should promote the involvements of non-Western states in these institutions'.[30]

In the West, the belief of the Muslims in the basic teachings of Islam leads to marginalization of Muslims and, on many occasions, they have been associated with religious extremist and conservative school of thought. What is ignored is that the Christians' belief in the fundamentals and traditions of Christianity is much more similar to the Muslims

---

[28]Richard W. bullet, *The Case of Islam-o-Christian Civilisations* (USA: Columbia University Press), 1-3.

[29]Jin Junhui, "The Clash of Observations," *Strategic Studies*, XVIII (1), 1995, 32-38.

[30]Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs,* 72 (3), 48-49.

thinking on their own beliefs. However, it does not mean that all Christians consider Muslims as terrorist or religious extremists

Said, while challenging the theory of the *Clash of Civilisation* in his 2001 article, "The Clash of Ignorance" published shortly after 9/11, claims that the theory is a bold academic flirtation with the concept called civilisation. Presenting civilisations as a unit of analysis, Huntington has tried to identify the differences in civilisations as one of the important sources of the conflicts in the world. In this regard, he is futuristic in his approach and yet his argument is visionary.[31]

The debate also centres on the grouping of civilisations where, some argue that the West and Islam can be placed in the same group because both are Abrahamic religions. Moreover, there are Greek and Hellenistic, Mesopotamian and Egyptian influences on both, besides the contemporary importance of the Enlightenment, not just for Western reform movements but also for secularizing and modernizing movements in the Middle East. Therefore, Europe and the Middle East, especially the Mediterranean countries, have more in common with each other than they do with their co-religionists in Africa and further east in Asia.[32]

Said (2001) claims that both Lewis and Huntington did not have much time to spare for the internal dynamics and plurality of every civilisation. Also, the major contest in most modern cultures concerns the definition or interpretation of each other. He argues further that the term *Clash of Civilisations* and using label, such as, Islam and the West has produced tension and conflict between the two.[33]

Amartya Sen's arguments also reflect a rejection of the *Clash of Civilisations* model. Defining the major differences, he argues that it is difficult to understand relations between human beings in different countries or cultures in unidimensional terms in terms of religion-based civilisational definitions since people interact in many different ways. Moreover, each civilisation has a lot of internal diversity, for example

---

[31]Edward Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," *The Nation,* 273(12), (New York, October 22, 2001 issue), 349-353.
[32]Khaled Diab, "The Invasion of Iraq and the Clash Within Civilisations," *Huffington Post*, May 21, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/khaled-diab/clash-of-Civilisations-iraq_b_2922448.html
[33]Edward Said, "The Clash of Ignorance, "The *Nation* (New York),11-14.

India may be described as a Hindu civilisation, but it has had sizeable number of Christian, Jews, Buddhist Sikhs, Parsees and Jains, and it has more Muslims than nearly every country in the Muslim world.[34]

Sen further argues that clashes can take many different forms. The 20th century was dominated by world wars, in which Germans fought the British twice, the Japanese were in alliance with the Germans against the members of the Western civilisations. The Catholic-Protestant violence in Ireland is another example of intra-civilisation conflict. In this ways the oversimplification of past and the present go wrong in the understanding of the world in terms of *Clash of Civilisations*.[35]

It is also to be noted that within Islamic world many wars and conflicts emerged between Muslim states which negates the theory of *Clash of Civilisations*. The Iraq war in 1980s and Iraq-Kuwait war in 1990s can be quoted as examples. Similarly non-state actors like Taliban and al-Qaeda are fighting for their supremacy, illustrating a conflict within a civilisation. Moreover, the rise of ISIS and its declaration of a state also reflect Sunni-Shia conflict. Outside the Muslim world, the Crimean issue of independence from Ukraine and annexation with Russia, despite other issues, also show the intra-civilisational conflict.

Karim and Eid (2012) highlight the reinforcement of Huntington's theory in foreign policy and assert that he developed and adopted a primary framework for foreign policy formulation, disregarding the complexity of human identities and relationships. Moreover, to present the hugely pluralist West and Islam as static, monolithic units is to misunderstand the dynamics of culture. The growing relationships between segments of different civilisations produce changing parameters of belonging.[36]

Highlighting the role of individuals in the *Clash of Civilisations*, Lancaster argues that terrorist grievances are often over control of land, assets, or other resources. He further claims that grievances can also be

---

[34]http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2006/06/08/ DI2006060800699 . html
[35] Ibid.
[36]Karim H. K., and Mahmoud Eid, "Clash of Ignorance," *Gobal Media Journal,* 5 (1), 2012, 10.

over values, for example, the perception that an ethnic, religious, or political organization is infringing on the rights of others or that there are some fundamentals flaws in a society, which must be reformed. Terrorists think they can achieve their objectives, usually in the hope that the state in which they act will be too weak to preempt them.[37]

Esposito (2010) points out, "there should be some distinction between the terrorist minority and the mainstream Muslims like Christian or Jewish terrorists are separated from the mainstream. Religious extremists have appropriated their theological world view to demonize others and justify their acts of terror."[38] Religion cannot be blamed for the criminal acts of individuals and groups. These people distort the image of Islam by their radical and extremist acts and that is why Islam and the Muslims faith might be looked at with suspicion.[39]

The history of rivalry between Islam and Christianity is very much alive in the US politics with the religious rights' negative opinion of Islam and the Muslims, for example, Pat Robertson, Jerry Vine, Franklin Graham, and currently presidential candidate Donald Trump's anti-Muslim statements, during election campaign, has helped create Islamophobia and triggered anti-US sentiments in the Muslim world resulting in attacks on US personnel and citizen in the conflict zones. These elements were also attacking their own governments, which were supporting US global war on terror.

The US unilateralism was seen as a greater threat and is criticized that it is taking action against the Muslim states but is silent on the brutalities of Israel against the Palestinians. The gap between Islam and the Christian West is further widened by political statement, for example, John David Ashcroft's (the US Attorney General from 2001 to 2005) presented Islam as a violent religion,[40] as the 9/11 perpetrators were from the Muslim countries. There is a deep concern in the Muslim world regarding those people who have been misrepresenting Islam.

---

[37]Carol Lancaster, Poverty, Terrorism, and National Security, (N.D), https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ACF59B2.doc (accessed, February 26, 2016).

[38]John L. Esposito, *The Future of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167.

[39]From interview with Michael Cromartie. op. cit.

[40]From interview with John L. Esposito.

The acts of violence around the globe and the association of terror groups identified as Muslims, for example, Hamas, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, Taliban and ISIS, has led to a Western thought that associated violence, extremism and terrorism with Islam. For their part, Muslims accuse the West of rampant Islamophobia and look at the conflicts around the world in Gaza, West Bank, Chechnya and elsewhere and see themselves on the losing side.[41]It is important to mention the terrorist acts of IRA in Northern Ireland, Tamils in Sri Lanka, or Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain, disapprove the assertion that terrorism and violence are only associated with Islam.

The Islamophobia, the writings in the Western media, academia and intellectuals have thereby, established a fear that peaceful co-existence between Islam and the West is impossible. Therefore, it is believed that the US policies towards the Muslim world are shaped according to these biased writings on Islam.[42] Moreover, critics like Noam Chomsky, have maintained that the idea of *Clash of Civilisations* is an indication and justification for the expansion of empire, i.e. Pax Americana, after the Cold War.[43]

The post 9/11 wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and the US policy towards Iran, Syria, Yemen and other Muslim states, are seen as war against Islam. Soon after 9/11 President George W. Bush's determination to start a crusade against the 'evil doers' alarmed the Muslim world though, later on, he corrected his statement. While a majority of Muslims does not support this analysis, the others see it as a threat and conspiracy against their religion, leading to creation of Westophobia in some circles of the Muslim world.

Koechler argues that power politics, issues of cultural or civilisational identity, particularly the use of religion should be avoided.

---

[41]"Concerns about Islamic Extremism on the Rise in Middle East," Pew Research Centre, July 1, 2014, http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/01/concerns-about-islamic-extremism-on-the-rise-in-middle-east/

[42] Michael. A. Sells & Emran Qureshi, eds.,*The New Crusade: Constructing the Muslim Enemy* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[43]Khaled Diab, "The Invasion of Iraq and the Clash Within Civilizations," *Huffington Post*, May 21, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/khaled-diab/clash-of-civilizations-iraq_b_2922448.html

Emphasizing that "the intellectuals should not give weight to the *Clash of Civilisations*, which has been nurtured among the less informed. The civilisational legitimization of mainly economic 'clash of interests' may give to an otherwise clearly defined, though undesirable conflict, a 'metaphysical' aspect the dynamics of which may be hard to confine to the original set of conflicts. Therefore, the real danger is in the propagation of the *Clash of Civilizations*".[44]

It is also important to note that the relationship based on misunderstandings between the Christian West and Islam is real despite the history of mutual reliance on each other in the form of trade and exchange of knowledge. At present, in a globalized world, if on one hand the West is dominating the world technologically, the geography of the Western countries, on the other, is considerably changing due to Muslim diaspora, their places of worship and religious schools.[45]

Rashid (1997) believes that centuries old military reciprocity between the West and Islam will decline rather it could become more bitter and hostile. Both sides see this interaction as the *Clash of Civilisations* as it is believed that the West's next conflict is certainly going to come from the Muslim world.[46] Other criticisms focus on the probability that after the end of Communism, the West would seek a new enemy on which to use its modern technology. There also exist views that "Islam is going to be the next enemy of the West after the fall of Communism".[47]

The incidents of 9/11, attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015, and San Bernardino shooting of December 2, 2015, endorsed the *Clash of Civilisations* theorists. Therefore, it is argued that equating Islam with violence is unfair as a survey conducted by Pew Research Centre in spring 2014 shows that more than 70 per cent of population in Muslim countries rejects extremism. This percentage is in effect much higher. By and large, it is interesting to note that few scholars term this conflict as

---

[44] Hans Koechler, "After September 11, Clash of Civilisations or Dialogue."
[45] Roger Hardy, "Islam and the West: Bridging the Divide," http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/special/islam/3182669.stm
[46] Salim Rashid, "The Clash of Civilisations?," 9.
[47] Shireen T. Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West: Clash of Civilisations or Peaceful Coexistence* (CSIS: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 12.

not between Islam and the Christian West but between the fundamentalists in Muslim, Christian, Jews and modern world.[48]

Bridging the Divide between Islam and the West

To have mutual understanding among different faiths and for peace and security, religion cannot be separated from politics. It is believed; "religions need to be engaged, in order to communicate that global peace is a virtuous and submissive effort before God. This is not to communicate that religion does not have the power to resolve present day problems. Having sacred values, religion and religious forums are an alternative approach to complementing other methods."[49] In promoting peace and reconciliation, religious leaders and organizations play an important role in mobilizing different communities for the promotion of reconciliation among them.[50]

There are various quarters which advocate reforms in Islamic laws and teachings and stress on dialogue between the Christian West and Islam. However, scholars in the West argue that it is not up to the West to reform Islam, but Muslims have to be in dialogue with each other about the future of Islam and what the role of Islam ought to be.[51]A variety of civilizations in the world, Murat argues, leads to learning from each other experiences. Muslims played a crucial role in the development of Western civilisation. Comparative historians of science now argue that Western science is a continuation of Islamic science.[52]

The history of relationship between Islam and the Christian West and the post 9/11 tension has fuelled the fear that both are in collision with each other. However, the differences and commonalities set the way to consider and devise strategies upon which both can peacefully coexist.

---

[48] Craig Unger, *The Fall of the House of Bush* (London: Pocket Books, 2008), 15.

[49]M. Hilaly Basya, "The Role of Religion in Creating Global Peace," *Jakarta Post*, June 27, 2008, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2008/06/27/the-role-religion-creating-global-peace.html

[50]David Smock, "Religion in World Affairs: Its Role in Conflict and Peace," *Special Report 201* (Washington DC: USIP, February 2008), 4.

[51]From Interview with Michael Cromartie, held at Washington DC on June 28, 2010.

[52]Murat Cizakca, "Islam and Christianity: symbiosis of Civilisations," *INCEIF,*MPRA paper no. 23095 (October 2006):1-3.

Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President of UN General Assembly in 61st Session on June 8, 2006, states:

> Promoting a true dialogue among civilisations and religions is perhaps the most important political instrument that can be used to reach out across borders and build bridges of peace and hope.[53]

It is important to quote the ex-President of Iran in his historic speech at the UN, though it was before 9/11, on the occasion of 'UNESCO Celebrates the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations" in September 2000 when he said:

> Dialogue is not eas A belief in dialogue paves the way for vivacious hope: the hope of living in a world permeated by virtue, humility and love, and not merely by the reign of economic indices and destructive weapons. Should the spirit of dialogue prevail, humanity, culture[s] and civilization[s] should prevail.[54]

Since 9/11, the global debate on a dialogue between civilisations, particularly between Islam and the West, has become very emotional, at times even unreasonable. Therefore, it is essential to be fully aware of the relationship between the two and the rising inter and intra-religious conflicts. It is argued that interfaith dialogue develops mutual understanding of values and a common ground between religions. While respecting the diversity of beliefs, it allows different religions to understand and appreciate the individuality of each other. It is an instrument that advances and promotes peaceful co-existence.[55]

The first step towards interfaith dialogue and harmony among different faiths for world peace was the formation of World Congress of Faiths (WCF) in 1936 in London.[56] Another landmark victory was the creation of International Faith Centre (IFC) in 1994 at Oxford in

---

[53] David Smock, "Religion in World Affairs: Its Role in Conflict and Peace," 8.

[54] "Round Table: Dialogue Among Nations," September 2000, http://www.unesco.org/dialogue/en/khatami.htm

[55] Minhas Majeed Khan, "Evangelicals Influence on US Foreign Policy: Impact on Pak–US Relation (Sep 2001–Nov 2007)."

[56] Bray Brooke, *Faiths in Fellowship* and, *A Wider Vision: A History of the World Congress of Faiths*, also McConnell, H., *A Venture of Faith for All Faiths*.

collaboration with International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) and Westminster College.[57]

Clash between the West and Islam is confronted by liberalist inspired vision by building an Alliance of Civilisation (AoC) launched in 2004 at the United Nations. This effort was to sort out ways to bridge the divide between the two and to encourage governments and leaders to establish appropriate measures on a global scale to prevent a clash, which may jeopardize international peace and stability. It was encouraged by UN Secretary General, Kofi Anan by appointing a High Level Group of internationally known persons drawn from all religions and civilisations.[58]

On October 13, 2007, Muslim leaders in an open letter "A Common Word between Us and You" called on the Christian leaders to work together for common grounds and mutual understanding for peace between the two faith communities. The initiative, which opened the doors for dialogue between the two, was awarded, 'Eugen Biser Award' and the 'Building Bridges Award' from the United Kingdom based Association of Muslim Social Scientists.[59]

The inter-civilisational and interfaith initiatives created after 9/11 include: the World Economic Forum's Council of 100 leaders (C-100), the UN Alliance of Civilisations, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Building Bridges project, the Vatican-al-Azhar Dialogue, the Parliament of the World's Religions, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).[60]

The positive aspect of these efforts is that people from all faiths see religious plurality as a necessity, a matter of faith and citizenship. This interaction is producing new ideas and actions, and dialogue and exchange programmes are set for mutual respect and understanding. In

---

[57]For further information see, http://www.worldfaiths.org/, official website of the WCF.

[58]Koussay Boulaich and Soren Dosenrode, "The Alliance of Civilisations: The Spanish Approach to Bridging the Divide between Islam and the West," in Wolfgang Zank,ed., *Clash or Cooperation of Civilisations?: Overlapping Integration and Identities* (UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 65-66.

[59]The ACW Letter, *A Common Word,* October 13, 2007, http://www.acommonword.com/the-acw-document/

[60]The Future of Islam, (New York: Oxford University Press), 182, 201.

the US, Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding at the Georgetown University and the Hartford Seminary's Duncan Black Macdonald Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations are joined by numerous new centres and international initiatives dedicated to promoting interreligious understanding.[61]

> Qazi Hussain Ahmad, the former Amir of Jamaat-i-Islami in his speech to US-Islamic World Forum, organised by Brookings Institution, held at Doha in January 2004 said:

> > While there might be several breaches from both sides the most enduring factor of the US-Islamic World relations is the sheer inconsistency between high moral ideals that the US advocates and the practice of successive US governments in their relations with the Islamic World. When it comes to US policies, the Islamic World seems to be more familiar with US support for authoritarian regimes, unilateral sanctions, trade embargos, inspections of strategic defen[c]e installations, and a hostile approach in regional conflicts. Manipulation of the policies of international institutions like the World Bank and the IMF to force sovereign states to comply with its agenda is another irritant in our relations. All these foreign policy instruments are eclipsed only by the recent outright invasion and occupation of two sovereign Muslim states – Afghanistan and Iraq.[62]

Graham (2004), while supporting interfaith dialogue, suggests that involving political, civil society and media in faith-based dialogue can foster economic growth and enhance business opportunities. Business leaders can advance corporate cultures attentive to growing cultural and religious diversity in both Muslim majority and the non-Muslim majority countries. As active corporate citizens, business leaders bring a vital, result-oriented philosophy to the challenges [63] present in form of *Clash of Civilizations*. Also, by involving the faith communities of the West and the Muslim world, a way can be paved for greater understanding and cooperation between the two, which are labelled as civilisations in conflict.

---

[61]John L. Esposito, *The Future of Islam* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2010), 181.
[62]Qazic Hussain Ahmad's son Asif Luqman Qazi sent the text of this speech via email on December 11, 2015.
[63] Graham E. Fuller. (2004), 9.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is very unfortunate to note that the strained relations between Islamic and Western world has its roots in the centuries old conflicts between the two. Bridging the divide between the Christian West and Islam is a challenging task. There is an increasing use of stereotype and discriminatory rhetoric against Muslims over the last few decades. Such reporting often relates the teachings of Islam to terrorism and conflict. Similar forms of stereotyping and criticism can be found in some Muslim interpretations of Western societies.[64]

The clash exists, but that does not mean that they did not have commonalities or have not lived peacefully. Since 7th century, the Islamic world had contributed, directly or indirectly, to the success of the West. We see many parts of the West steeped in Islamic civilisation, whose culture, language, architecture and knowledge have left indelible mark on modern European thought and renaissance. Similarly, Europe has left a strong impact on the Middle East, Africa and Asia and shaped Muslim world wide, proving that an interface of culture already coexists.[65]

It is significant to understand that a civilisation's ability to relate itself to other civilisations can help it grow and flourish exclusively. Therefore, it can be said that dialogue among civilisations is grounded in a non-subjectivist philosophy of self realization, individually as well as collectively by interaction with different traditions, cultural expressions, value systems and life-styles.[66]

Majority on both sides wants good relations and sees interaction as constructive rather than a threat. The trust deficit between the two presents an important opportunity for a greater dialogue. Education and rethinking is as necessary as reducing the power of terrorists. In this regard, the important task is the attempt to eliminate the injustices,

---

[64]Karim H. K., and Mahmoud Eid, "Clash of Ignorance," Gobal Media Journal 5 (1), 2012, 6.

[65]Minhas Majeed Khan, "Journey into Europe," Documentary Report (Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, December 23, 2015), 10.

[66] Hans Koechler, "After September 11, Clash of Civilisations or Dialogue."

poverty and despair that breeds the desperation that consequently leads to terrorism.[67]

We have witnessed and we are witnessing a world where the minority, like always, will take advantage of the situation. The creation of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence between the West and Islam depends on the will of both sides. The world has reached at the threshold of a very dangerous era. We have to realize that for a stable, secure and cohesive global society, the West should help the Islamic world. It is equally important the Islamic world makes its own judgment about its weakness and work towards social cohesion in their own societies, promote democracy that guarantees human rights and women rights. It is important for the Muslim world to demonstrate that those who perpetrate acts of violence are the minority and their actions bear no relation to the teaching of Islam or the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Thinkers, politicians, statesmen and citizens from all walks of life, therefore, have come to a common conclusion that the prevailing situation of intolerance and anti religious sentiments must be negated.

To conclude, a major challenge faced today is not the *Clash of Civilisations* but the clash within civilisations. This internal cultural struggle is largely caused by the increasing socio-economic disparities in every country of the world. If these injustices are not addressed, at the local as well as global levels, intolerance and conflicts will grow and continue to consume individual societies. The uprisings in the Muslim world, for example, MENA region and unrest in the Western world demonstrate that it is clash of interest and not *Clash of Civilizations*.

Based on the above analysis of the historical relations between Islam and the Christian West, the following recommendations are put forward:

- It is important to accept that difference can only be reconciled through mutual acceptance. While many believe that the differences between Islam and the West are cultural and not religious, it is also a fact that both have complemented and lived peacefully with each other for centuries. Therefore, it is important that the widening cultural and historical gap between the Christian West and Islam is to be bridged.

---

[67] Jonathan Mangnot, *Talking to the other: Jewish Dialogue with Christians and Muslims* (London : I.B.Tauris, 2003), 2.

- A sincere and unbiased evaluation of the differences between the two and their root causes is the need of the hour.Islam and Christianity are the two growing religions and peace and justice between the two communities can bring meaningful peace in the world.

- The West should seriously address the global issue of Islamophobia. Europe sees hundreds of terror attacks each year, however, the media focuses only on those carried out by the so-called Muslims and not the ones by ethno–nationalist or far right extremists.

- For the pursuit of national interest inherent in foreign policies of the major world powers, issues of civilisational identity and the use of religion should be avoided.

- The intellectuals should not give importance to the idea of *Clash of Civilisations*. Moreover, since freedom of expression and speech is widening the gap between the West and Islam, it is important that the US takes notice of expressions that hurt the religious feelings of other faiths