

# [The myth of the clash of civilizations](https://assignbuster.com/the-myth-of-the-clash-of-civilizations/)

It is a lecture by Edward said’s, held in the University of Massachusetts, it is about clash of civilization and how people think about it. He is mainly responding back to what Samuel Huntington’s and Bernard Lewis said about the clash of civilization. Edward had his MA in 1960 and a doctorate from Harvard University in 1964. The most important work of him was the Orientalism, which was a part of postcolonial studies. In this video, Said argues that Lewis and Huntington’s had the wrong idea and thoughts about the clash of civilization.

In this lecture, Edward is responding back to what Huntington and Lewis said about clash of civilization and he critic their ideas. Huntington believes that in the future, there will be clash between countries; this clash will be mainly a clash of religions. Huntington said that the West should be strong and keep others weak. It is clear here that he wants the West to attack other countries and occupy them by using force against them, which consider colonization. In his argument, he focused on the Islamic religion and he says that it is the main reason of the clash. He said that Islam is anti-Western, and Muslims are using violence against non-Muslim and the government and other Muslim organizations are encouraging violence against them.

Moreover, Huntington’s ideas and thoughts were mainly based on what Lewis Bernard said in his book Islam and the West. He compares religion not to a religion but to geographical political countries suggesting that Muslims and Arabs are backward uncivilized people and they are savage without any manner; according to the Western culture. According to what he said, the West will find an excuse to attack and invade other countries, just what the UK did to India and they called it, we want to bring advancement and teach them how to be modernized just like the West, but instant they take over their country and stayed there for two centuries. Taking whatever they want from there and do whatever they want. Edward criticism is more on the fact that Huntington book is for the policy makers in the US, thus is a main danger when the policy maker takes what Huntington said seriously; these people will misunderstand the views of the Muslim world.

Lewis and his book Islam and the West shows that the all the problem around the world is because of the Muslims and to solve this problem they have to deal with them. Lewis mentioned that there are billions of Muslims in the West and they want to take over the country and he called it rage on the West (Lewis, 1993). What he meant is that before they take over our country lets invade them first. As we say in Arabic, lunch on him before he dine on you. This excuse is really baseless. He just wants to start a religious war. He also saied that Islam is not modernize and never speared between church and state. Bernard must know one thing that in Islam the State rules are made by the religion rules, which can not be separated from each other. One example of that is when the US had the economic crisis, all the banks got affected and most of them did not have any money, but because Muslim banks used the Islamic rules in the banks they have not been affected like the Western banks. And about modernize, Islam is modernize but they can not see it, because to the West it is not matching the Western standers. As the West see it, you have to be like them to be modernize which is wrong. In his book Islam and the West, He wrote:

It should be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement in Islam for transcending, the level of issues and polices and the government that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilization. The perhaps irrational, but surely historic receptions, of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the world-wide expression of both, it is crucially important that we, on our side, should not be provoked into equally historic, but also equally irrational reaction against our arrival. (p. 78).

It is clear from Lewis statement that he is saying that clash is religion and it is between Islam and Christianity. And Islam is spreading all over the world and they the West must do something to stop it. He thinks the Western religion is more superior than the others and it should not be equalized with other religions. What he is trying to say that in the past Islam used violence to spread all over the world and now after more than 1200 years they are trying to do the same thing with the West. Lewis also said in his book that Islam can not understand other civilization, which is wrong. Muslim people travelled around the world before Marco Polo did. They went to Spain and China. They lived over there and took from their knowledge and become a part of them. Islam can understand any civilization but their always be a limit what to take and what not to take from other civilizations.

Saied’s belief that there is no part of Islam, which is fundamentally against the West. Over the last decade, we have seen numerous cowardly attacks on Western countries, for example, the Swedish-Iraqi attack in Stockholm and the 9/11 attacks. The US governments do not have any clear evidence that the attacks were done my Muslims. Do not believe the idea that Muslim extremists are driven by a justifiable rage, they are driven by the political issues that they are having from the West. It is never related to the religion. Islam and Western cultures are inherently different, and this is why we have conflict. Moreover, that does not mean Edward is anti-Western. He was very critical about some of the ways Western hegemonic thought has used to describe Arab societies and to design political relations with this part of the world. He is not bias because he was educated by British, on British-Egyptian Christian schools.

Furthermore, Said mentioned that, some civilization that has power and technology advancement gave to them self the right to colonize other in the name of Nobel idea, which is to civilize them but in fact, they want something else. Competing imperial power invent their own theory of cultural destiny in order to justify their action aboard. I just want to know who gave them the right to judge on people and the way they live. You can not change something that is related to culture. Examples of these countries, USA, Germany, and UK. Which the real purpose is to have more power, conquest, and unrestraint self pride. The West believes that each raise has a special destiny or job to do. For Example, the Chinese raise is to serve, the black raise must be the labor, because they are strong and they can work hard. Here we can see that the West had the wrong idea about people, they thing that they are the superior raise because they are white and other people are below them so they must serve them.

Edward said that for a country to have it truly independent. They must speak their own Language, Which he meant nationalism. You have to be proud of your language and used it to have truly independence. For instance, in India conquers party, only by supporting Indian language the political independence can accrue. Only by supporting their word against the West, they will be able to stand on their feet. Edward said that the Culture and civilization is spread then each other. The core of Islam is to be separated from everything else, and the core of the West is to be separated from all the other. Also that, it is not a clash of civilization, but clash of definition. Defining the culture is hard; each culture defines its enemy. “ People are fighting over us vs. them, ideas of good and evil, belonging or not belonging. Islam like the West is not a single or uniform thing”(Edward, 1998). Islam is different in Indonesia, different in Egypt. For example, in Egypt, there is a conflict in the Islamic movements. In the lecture, Saied has quoted from Aime Cesasre, which he wrote:

But the work of man is only just beginning, and it remains to conquer all the violence entrenched in the recesses of our passion and no race possesses the monopoly of beauty, of intelligence, of force. And there is a place for all at rendezvous of victory. (p. 48).

Cesasre meant that there are no boundaries or block between cultures. Anyone can take whatever he wants form other culture. And there is no standers for civilization or beauty or intelligence. Every people or culture has their own stander, which differs from one culture to another and all of them are right. At the end of the lecture Edward discussed the Palestinian Israelian conflict and how it is a good example of colonization. The Israelian uses the excuse that plastain is the promise land for them, so they keep killing people and force them to leave their houses. It seems this clash between them is related to religion but in fact, they just want a place to live and a country. Edward said that you can not victimize others because you were victim yourself, there has to be limit. It is not a reason to invade other people and take over their country.

Additionally, Edward said it was a “ clash of ignorance.” That Huntington had a monolithic view of Islam and he over generalized the situation and did not understand the complexity of the conflicts and the people involved in them. He is touching on the growing influence of those who advocate tensions and clashes, and subsequently benefit from this sort of contaminated atmosphere to prepare the people, particularly of the USA, to engage in war, such as the case now. The media ï»¿has become nothing more than a blowing horn for such a paradigm of tension and hate. The West mainly sees Islam through distorted, ï»¿ Orientalist, lenses. Also, correlation alone is not sufficient to prove that what you said must mean there is a ‘ cultural clash’. There could be a clash in some areas, but this is created by powerful people to make Islam seem threatening so regions, like Iran, can be dominated for oil. More people should be aware, that it is never about religion. He covers the topics of how Muslim/Arab people have more to do than to “ think about the West with hatred,” how Huntington is not a student of Arab/Muslim cultures but wants to prolong and depend the conflict. Saidï»¿ observes how the French used the notion of a “ civilizing mission” to justify brute force against the nations whose land and resources they wanted. This imperialist mission gives rise to wars of national liberation among the colonized.

What Huntington and Lewis predicted that in the future there would be a clash between religions and that what happened, but it is not true. People think that nowadays there is a clash between religions. When US invaded Iraq, people thought that it is a Holy War and because they think Muslims are behind the 9/11 attacks. What happened is that US invaded Iraq for a political issues, which was that Saddam had a mass distraction weapons but they did not find anything over there. It was mainly about oil and recourses. US media are showing to people that US are in a religious war in Iraq and they are trying to bring freedom and democracy to Iraqi people. I cannot understand how the 9/11 attacks is related to Iraq. They just wanted an excuse to invade Iraq in the name of freedom. West media showed the stereo type of Muslim and how they are angry all the time, they just misrepresent the Islam. What Edward said is completely true there is no clash between religions, but the US government wants the people to think that what is happening. As I see it, the history is repeating itself. When the British went to Africa, they said we are here for a Nobel cause, but in reality they are here to take over the country. The same scenario is happening in Iraq, but in this case, their excuse is religion, which is completely wrong. To solve this dilemma, the West should solve their political issues with the East and not to connected with the religion. Another Example is the current crises that US facing with North Korea. North Korea has a clash with the West and they are not Muslims. This support my point that the clash is not about religion, it is about politics.

I found another articles which discusses the clash of civilizations, In Rami G. Khouri article ” rescuing Europe’s failed middle east policy” he is saying that the Europe’s policy is failing in Middle East. So they don’t add anything to solve this problem and their policy don’t have the power to change anything and solve this issue. Morover, Khouri thinks that they can’t change anything because the Europe’s are following what US and Israel policy. Without saying their own opinion. So they become with Israel in this conflict between East representing by Palestine and West which is representing by Israel in this conflict. His advice for Europe is to stop following US and Israel policy. Because it will lead to a clash between the East and Europe, like the West and the East.

Furthermore, he wrote an article “ Rewinding the reel to root causes” and he said that the root for the conflict between East and West is the Israel- Palestinian conflict. If the root of the conflict between East and West is the Israel- Palestinian conflict, what do you think if you see some countries like America or Europe countries, which support Israel? They will feel same as Samuel Huntington idea that the clash between East and West is about religion. All the people who study the history and read about the crusades will know that the conflict between the Israel and Palestine will take him back in time of the crusades period because the two situations are same in a lot of sides. The Israelian are doing the same thing that Crusades had done, which is invading the country and killing people and turn it to a religious war.

But in the other hand, Amartya Sen in her article “ What clash of civilization? Why religious identity isn’t destiny?” strongly disagree with Samuel Huntington argument, because she think that Huntington make civilization too simple and equalite with religion. Amartya think that human has so many aspects that make him what he is. You should not judge on a book based on its cover. What she meant that there is another reasons of clash which is not related to religion.

Kofi Annan mentioned in his article “ Annan says politics, not religion, at heart of Muslim-West divide”. He thinks that there is no relation between politics and religion and he believes that the religion is not the root for any conflict in this world. I agree with him the root of conflict is related to the political issues that the country have against each other. It was never about religion. I agree with him that the Israel- Palestine conflict is the root of the conflict between East and West and this conflict is the main cause of the clash between the two sides.

Moreover, Mohsin Hamid and his article” why do they hate us” he says that Muslims hates West because of the America policy. In this point I might agree with Mohsin Hamid, because Muslims sees that America foreign policy is always unfair with Muslims in different issues and different places all over the world. Muslims don’t have any problem with America, if their policies change not with what Muslims want, but with the justice even if it was against the interests of Muslims. Therefore, this is another point that supports my argument that the clash is about politics not religion.

Another Article wrote by John L. Esposito, which is “ It’s the policy stupid”. It’s an interesting article, because John L. Esposito think that the root of the problem started from America policy. Because they did a lot of mistakes in their foreign policy toward the East and when they try to solve their first mistakes, they made new mistakes, which made the situation even worse than before. Another political issue, which is not related to religion.

In Fawaz Gerges article which is titled” America and political Islam”. He believes that there is no clash between civilization and the clash is between benefits. Any Western countries who are against the west will be “ Terror”. I agree with him that it is really a clash of benefits and interests. We see that some countries policy change from day to day. They change their policy because their interest change and they change their allies depending on their interests. For example, Saddam was a friend of the US government, but when the interests changed they just removed him.

An article wrote by Edward said which is Imperial Perspectives. He is saying that after World War 2 the US goal is to control the oil supply in the Middle East and make sure that Israel is the dominate power in the Middle East. He said that US claim to educate people and liberate them but in reality they just want to control and rule. The US want to see Arabs and Muslim in the way they like, not with the way Arabs and Muslims are which an imperialist perspective is. He also said that US think Arabs and Muslims are anit-democratic and anti-Semitic. These are enough reasons for US to invade another country in the name of democracy and freedom.

All in all, The west uses the clash of civilizations myth as a means of western intervention and expansion, and that western culture is dominant, which presents a Eurocentric dichotomy. What Huntington and Lewis predicted came true but in reality, the US government uses the religion as an excuse to invade other countries. What Edward said it is true that the clash is not about religion. US media want people to think that it is about religion, which will make their job easier. In the past when a powerful country invade another country their excuse was to modernize and educate them, now they are using the democracy and freedom excuse to invade other countries. Different excuses but they have the same goal, which is to colonize.