

# [Huntingtons clash of civilization thesis history essay](https://assignbuster.com/huntingtons-clash-of-civilization-thesis-history-essay/)

Samuel P. Huntington is a political scientist who in 1993 wrote an article entitled The Clash of Civilizations in which he discussed his thesis about the order of the world after the conclusion of the Cold War. In his theory, the feuds that will develop between nations would go from wars over differing ideas but would develop into diverse cultural battles. The belief is that nations that have similar cultural backgrounds would join together and eventually fight as one against other rival cultures. He introduced what he believed would be the eight major world civilizations to develop, and they are the Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic, Latin American and African. Of these eight major world powers, three of them would step to the top and be the most powerful, Islam, Western and Confucian. Western power would be on the decline if factors such as the members of this culture not joining together to allow them to defend their position at the top. Religion would play a major role in hindering the power of the Western world, and Islam would be one of the major factors and sources for further battles against the West. This will cause the world to become more unstable, and anarchy would be on the rise.

Many scholars have refuted the claims laid forth in Huntington’s article. This could possibly be happening due to the controversial nature of the themes put forth and some flaws in the methodology in his essay, which could lead to many differing opinions and interpretations of his work. When he lays his thesis out for the reader, he uses the works of other scholarly writers in a miniscule matter, and his data he uses does no justice to strengthening his argument that he is trying to lay out. He is considered a Realist, and his arguments that are laid out seem to rest with this background and his personal view of the world through the eyes of a Realist. This allows other scholars who view the world in a different matter the opportunity to argue against his views. While his work has gathered quite a following and many have believed his writing to be correct, many other social scientists cannot confirm or agree with his arguments.

Many of the arguments Huntington put forth in his essay were written in a Western perspective. “ People on each side allege racism on the other, but at least on the American side the antipathies are not racial but cultural” (Huntington 93). Many times throughout his writing he oversimplifies the reality of the world. His thinking throughout his work is that the Western values are representative of all that is good with the world. His paper written on his theory contained eight footnotes and had support from scholars who were all mainly scholars with Western views also. For a paper that is written with the purpose of defining a new world order that is based on cultural identities, this makes his thesis seem limited in differing views and opinions. Many of the statements that are made throughout his works lack the evidence needed to back them up. Some examples are “ Over the centuries, however, differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and most violent conflicts”, “ economic regionalism may succeed only when its rooted in a common civilization”, and “ political reactions and violence against Arab and Turkish migrants have become more intense and widespread since 1990” (Huntington 93).

Terms are defined rather loosely also throughout his work, among them the words Islam, Civilizations, Western and Identity. The diversity of both the Islamic and Christian cultures has been pointed out by a plethora of scholars making generalized statements about either one of these religions a virtual impossibility. In another section of his work he seems to incoherently ramble on stating, “ Western civilization has two major variants, European and North American, and Islam has its Arab, Turkic and Malay subdivisions” (Huntington 93). Comparing the different geographical regions to that of one religion and several ethnicities is not a valid point while trying to prove an argument. These things are drastically different and should not be grouped together as a whole. He presented the West as one unified area and many times appeared to give the culture of the West to what were solely the beliefs and ways of he United States of America.

He rested the majority of his arguments on History and his own personal interpretations of what has taken place over through the years. He has clearly avoided the importance of many intra-civilization wars that have taken place throughout the years, such as Iran-Iraq war and the Serbo-Croatian war. When he was forced to mention the intra-civilization clashes that have taken place, he limited his arguments to mainly the conflict that has been taking place amongst the Arabs and Israelis. Several of the arguments that Huntington has laid forth in his work are entirely based on his own political and personal beliefs. This could explain while Google searching his article there is a mass amount of writings that have emerged to refute the things he has written.

Historically, Huntington’s arguments lead the reader to believe that there is a divide between the West (which he mainly implies is Christianity) and Islam. His argument is that the difference between the two religious cultures has been there since the beginning, and that the West held the superiority between the two sects. If he would have taken his argument back further into the past before the 1500’s, the west was extremely beneficial of other cultures and civilizations, even so of the Islamic people. “ Those often nonviolent exchanges often proved useful” (Adib-Moghaddam 2008). Western philosophies and Islamic philosophies both grew and established themselves in the same region back then, and they shared similar beliefs, such as monotheism. “ Arabs have learned from Rome and Athens as much as the Judeo-Christian West from Muslims” (Rizvi, 2011).

Still other scholars take the side of Huntington that strong cultural identities were forged and globalization did not eliminate them, but only reinforced them. They believe that the phenomenon of globalization began to take shape well before the end of the Cold War came about, though they still struggle to come to a conclusion on a date when it actually did begin to take place. Disputing this then could be as easy as seeing that cultural consciousness could not have began, or grown, at the end of the Cold War. John Tomlinson argued in his article that identity was not a zero-sum game and that globalization promoted new, more complex versions of identity, rather than challenged existing ones.

The problem can be seen as not one of a civilization conflict, but as a clash of two systems, the West and Islam. The West is led by the United States of America, which is promoting globalization, while Islam is fighting for the need to replace that system. Islam wants to create a state based on the authority of Allah, and not under the rule of a man-made constitution. They show a strong opposition to the design of secular governments that are formed on the basis of Western policies. Completely opposite of the Western way of thinking, Islam combines both religion with its political policies. This proves that there is no compatibility between Western concepts and Islamist extremes.

During the Cold War the United States used a series of institutions to maintain and ensure their position of world power. This allowed at the end of the Cold War for the Western system to absorb many other states into their system. The growth of the Western System has not come without its differences within though, as some of the nations have argued if the system really does satisfy the question of fairness. Huntington said that the question was not “ What are you?” but what constitutes a good life? Friction has sprung not just between the Islamic world against the Western World, but also between the Western governments that are established within the Middle East. “ If clashes were to occur within the Islamic World, it would be between moderate Islamic elites, benefiting from the Western driven globalization and militant Islamists who believed that the elites had accepted a godless, corrupt and immoral system to exploit their own people” (Harvey 2005). Many of the Islamist movements’ hatred stem from the United States foreign policies in regards to leadership in the Middle East.

One way to view this would be to split the world between the lines of what some consider being rich and what some consider to be poor nations. States that benefitted more from capitalism would have to battle hatred from the nations that were not benefitting as much. These battles would align the world into the different types of nations. Huntington pointed out that there have been eighteen major wars that were fought between 1600 and 1945, but only six of these wars involved the two or more countries. The worst of these wars that have resulted in the most casualties have been fought between countries that could be considered Western states. This tends to disprove Huntington’s philosophy of a long history of conflicts that have happened between different civilizations.

Individual leaders from the nations also play a big part in the decision making process. The difference lies in the way Muslims and Christian states select who their leaders will be. Some countries separate religion and politics, while others like Muslim nations favor their leaders to be selected religiously. This would seem to support Huntington’s philosophy on leaders, but at closer look you can see that factors such as the governments favor of the citizens, how the country is developing, and how the laws are being carried out throughout the lands. Choosing leaders based on religion has declined when the rise of the Western policies came into effect. Increased education and monetary up rise have also pushed countries in an opposite direction of religious political leaders.

Rizvi noted that people need to have an identification to fulfill their psychological needs, based mainly on faith, blood and beliefs. He doesn’t believe that Huntington’s theory is a coherent one and that it is a political myth that has a self-fulfilling prophecy. People need cultural myths to connect to the world of which they are a part of. People also use myths to understand political conflicts, and were used to describe the horrific events of 9/11 in religious terms instead of political or economic ones. “” Myths are always selectively, for their accuracy and their significance, but always in the service of the new social imaginary” (Rizvi 2010). Rizvi showed that both the Western and Islamist worlds use both the same social imaginary based on the falsehood of political absolutes and moral certainties.

Huntington translated the post Cold War differences as two major clashing entities in a cultural frame, and the question is why? Maybe he had a desire to create a common enemy to bring together the United States after the fall of the Cold War consensus. His failures lay in the fact that he didn’t explain why state sovereignty was boosted as the most important concept until the Cold War, when things went back to culture as being the major factor. He viewed the world through the eyes of a realist, putting the emphasis on military power. Most battles tend to use culture, identity and religion as a tool to mobilize their society, but military power and obtaining new territory are still the major reasons that battles take place. Huntington has failed also in giving the reader sufficient evidence of there being a serious contender to the Western power in the world. Future wars that will be fought will depend upon a certain set of factors, such as scholars, policy makers, interests of powers in the different regions and the United States as a hegemony of power and much less emphasis on the cultural commonalities throughout the world.