

Terrorism

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Samuel P. Huntington formulated a theory named, ' The Clash of Civilizations', which was published in Foreign Affairs, summer 1993. [1] His theory was based on the changing source of conflict in global politics. Huntington believed that the reason for significant conflict would no longer stem from ideological or economic origins; it would be due to cultural conflict. [2] Civilizations – an advanced state of social development- vary from each other by factors including language, tradition, culture, history and most importantly in this case, religion.

The diversities of each civilization are now the basis for conflict, Huntington argues. The clash of civilizations formulated widespread opinion and criticism from public figures and elites. One such individual who refuted Huntington's Clash of Civilization theory was Professor Edward Said. The debate began with Said's October 22, 2001 article published in The Nation, The Clash of Ignorance. [3] This article was a direct response to Huntington's theory. Professor Said argued The Clash of Civilizations oversimplified the explanation of global conflict between nations.

However with current examples of terrorism and political unrest occurring prior to the publication of The Clash of Civilizations in 1993, the relevancy of such theories can now be discussed in 2010. Discussing the relevance of The Clash of Civilizations does not need to be brought forward to 2010 for analysis. September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks were by far the most significant single event after the Cold War. It was here in which America's foreign policy was brought to attention and particular its policy towards the perpetrators who originated from the Middle East.

The world's superpower, in the United States was proven it too could not escape the forces of the current international situation. Interestingly, preceding the September 11 attacks, Huntington's Clash of Civilizations was predominantly discussed to see if any correlations existed. Huntington himself added to the debate by publishing an article titled, ' The Age of Muslim Wars' features in the Newsweek publication of December 2001. [4] Huntington makes revisions to his original, primary statements which featured in ' The Clash of Civilizations. '

Huntington says that civilizational conflict is possible but not inevitable while previously he stated that it was indeed inevitable. [5] Straying further from the ideas made previously in 1993, Huntington now recommends that bitterness towards the west could now be reduced if the US made changes to their policy toward Israel. These contradictory affirmations made by Huntington, indicate a progression to modern or contemporary ways of deciphering the core basis for terrorism. The need to get a clear understanding of why the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 occurred, Western media directed attention to the ' Islamic roots' for a possible explanation.

Consequently terms such as ' Islam', ' Islamism' and ' Islamic fundamentalism'[6] became regularly reported in the media. This attributed to a public generalisation of all Islamic people are terrorists. The events of such attacks on the United States subsequently lead to U. S invasion of Afghanistan. Contrary to Huntington's theory of the dominating sources of conflict will be cultural, the US gained substantial support from the Muslim

communities. Turkey and Iran have also supported the U. S in their campaign to stop the war on terror.

However Huntington does not take into account the issues of global justice or origins of colonialism. In simplistic terms, global justice describes an individual believing they have a greater responsibility towards their family member, friends and acquaintances than they would towards a stranger or an unknown figure. For a political standpoint, global justice describes the longstanding conflict between smaller entities and larger entities. Civil wars and conflict within a state was absent in Huntington's theory.

He is assuming that each state is already a functioning entity to begin with. However certain states are having difficulty gaining justice to begin with. Thomas Nagel, a speaker in philosophy and public affairs describes the fundamental step in achieving justice is... 'the coordinated conduct of large numbers of people which cannot be achieved without law backed up by a monopoly of force. [7]' Cultural incompatibility between the East and west is plausible; however incompatibility is occurring within states and Huntington's theory denounces that occurrence.

Edward Said describes Huntington's theory as '...compellingly large, bold and even visionary. '[8] Said goes on to say that, 'neither Huntington...has much time to spare for the internal dynamics and plurality of every civilization,'[9] meaning that for instance, the West are having their own internal problems and it is not just an West verses the East type of conflict as Huntington puts forth. The Clash of Civilization helped result in particular types of discourse in the days immediately preceding the terrorist attacks of September 11.

The media freely used terms such as good versus evil and freedom against fear which Said says was 'drawn out of Huntington's alleged opposition between Islam and the West, from which official discourse drew its vocabulary in the first days after...the attacks. '[10] This gave evidence that the relevancy of Huntington's theory, written in 1993, held credence in contemporary examples of terrorism and the worst the 21st century had ever witnessed. Around the world prejudice quickly formulated across the United States and across Western parts of the world towards Arabs, Muslims and Indians.

Verbal assaults and physical violence towards these particular types of nationalities were common, however still prevalent, but somewhat subdued in today's environment. Islamic people are no longer on the outskirts of the west, but are at its centre. [11] Racial attacks against Islamic cultures are always going to feature in that of a Western culture. The United States government was not immune from discourse relating to an 'us versus them' type of reply following September 11.

'Clash of civilizations' was believed to exist within the term, 'war on terror', however in defense of this notion; United States President George W. Bush himself distanced his government from any association with this mentality, stating 'there is no clash of civilizations. '[12] Contradicting himself on September 20, 2001 in his speech to congress Bush suggested to the need for 'civilized people' to unify against the evil, by describing his vision for the 'war on terror' by reporting that '...this is civilizations fight. '[13] One may

ask who does not encompass the civilization description; perhaps he is excluding Islam and the East.

The US government sought extensively to exclude the belief of a clash between Islam and the West to avoid the prejudice from spreading but in the end the ever descriptive word, 'civilizations' still couldn't refrain from being spoken by the leader of the United States. The Italian Prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi memorably referred to the '...superiority of our civilization'[14] over Islam, 16 days after the September 11 attacks. Disasters such as the 911 attacks help bring out an individual's true feelings and this was certainly the case with Leaders of both the United States and Italy.

Interestingly, Huntington's Clash of Civilizations is a very successful book in the Middle East. The theory is 'the top reference for all Islamist militants, thrilled by the cultural riff that gives credence to their confrontational ideology[15]. 'The relevancy of Huntington's vision is absolutely true in both sides of 'civilization. 'The idea for Islam to simply be incompatible with the West, gives credence to the Islamic cause, particularly extremists and militants seeking additional support for their activities.

This 'us verses them' mentality supports the Islamic militants drive to recruit greater numbers and improve commitment toward their cause. The fear of the uncertainty is what these terrorists strive to implement in their fear tactics. It is successful as it draws attention from governments and citizens alike. The act of modern terrorism is not a new phenomenon, however the difficulty in defining terrorism is broad in its range of definitions. It has occurred in nearly all parts of the world and all periods of

history. Terrorism ' has not been specific to any society, culture, religion...or to any historical period, ancient, medieval or modern. [16]

Suicide missions are not even contemporary in its nature. Al-Qaeda is the most recognised terrorist group operating today, largely due to their orchestration of the September 11 attacks on the US. Defining contemporary terrorism is a difficult task due to the varying beliefs of each individual. The Dictionary for International Affairs (1998 edition) defines terrorism as, '...One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' and so international law has not thus far been able to encompass the phenomenon. '[17] When It comes to the category of ' state terrorism', even greater amounts of variance occurs.

Professor Khurshid Ahmed, an Islamic activist, believes there is no reason why the concept of terrorism should be confined to simply individuals and small extremists. He believes that the authority for state to use force is '... conditional by legitimacy of actions,'[18] and in doing so should be classified under the same terms as that of ' conventional' style terrorism. This generalisation of the Islamic faith being completely dangerous and supportive of extremist terrorism attacks is another unfounded belief. This West verses the East is quite general in its definition.

Muslim people, leading Muslim scholars and leaders in Islamic movements, in particular have flatly condemned the actions of the terrorists and in particular immediately following the attacks on September 11. [19] A significant portion of the citizens in the East do not support terrorism and this is contrary to Huntington's Clash of Civilizations in today's world. As a

result, it is no longer an 'us versus them' issue, as generalised by Huntington, but a select group of Islamic terrorism supporters. Edward Said's Clash of Ignorance makes light of this generalisation and traditional western oriental thinking.

Said believes this type of thinking results in greater cultural misunderstanding and disapproval of Eastern cultured individuals. Said explains that even the term 'West' has many misconceptions and he believes it is used by the Western media to convey certain differences between 'West' and 'Islamic'[20] often on a whim, solidifying the cultural incompatibility in which the 'Clash of Civilizations' sought strongly to make apparent. Said then makes his own suggestion as to improving the segregation between the West and East.

He believes that in order for unity and reduction in the violence contemporary terrorism creates, Said introduces the notion of looking for parallels instead. Instead of battling each other ideologically, we should instead reconcile with other ideologies. Said states that the world has a universally shared history[21] and it is very important for differing cultures to understand each other, not just basing our ignorance towards each other through the public media and sphere. Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations was described as visionary and bold by Edward Said.

Huntington's theory gave very interesting possible explanations for why conflict primarily between West and East exist and resulting terrorist underpinnings. This notion of cultural incompatibility seems to favor an efficient explanation for reasoning's behind contemporary terrorism.

President George W. Bush made light of differences in 'civilizations' and as did Italy's Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi more so directly, openly stating a superiority of the Western civilizations. Edward Said's 2001 article, *The Clash of Ignorance*, sought interesting but obvious solutions to bring the world closer together.

His notion of looking for parallels and common ground when interacting or discussing respective cultures or 'Civilizations', he believes will help solve contemporary terrorism by state and non state institutions. The world changed forever on September 11, 2001. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* was debated rigorously as to the relevance of his theory in a world proceeding September 11. There are certainly alternatives to viewing a post 9/11 world rather than a 'clash of civilizations' viewpoint. Seeking an alternative perspective on why this segregation between West and East exist could avoid continuing violence of the 'war on terror'.